

THE TOLERATING CHURCH
Revelation 2:18-29

Thyatira was on the road between Pergamos and Sardis. It had a reputation for the manufacture of scarlet cloth. It was the headquarters for several trade unions. The principal deity of the city was Apollo. The longest of Christ's letters goes to the least significant, least known, and least remarkable of the seven cities. Yet no other church is quite so commended or quite so condemned.

I. THE COUNSELOR – v. 18

A. The Son of God

1. He wanted the church to know that the message was straight from God.
2. This is the only time in Revelation Christ is called the Son of God.

B. Eyes like a flame of fire – Symbolizes the all-knowing and discerning mind of Christ.

1. He knows everything, both good and bad.
2. Nothing escapes his attention, not even sin.

C. Feet like polished brass – Bronze speaks of His majesty.

D. The all-knowing majestic Son of God was going to bring judgment on Jezebel and her followers.

E. The all-knowing majestic Son of God was going to bring honor to the overcomer.

II. THE COMMENDATION

Thyatira possessed everything the Ephesian church had. They practiced the perseverance of Smyrna and exercised the faith of Pergamum.

A. What good qualities are they practicing – v. 19?

1. Good works, the last was better than the first. Spiritual growth is taking place.
2. Love for both God and man
3. Service, faithfulness, things done in the name of and for the glory of the Lord
4. Faith – not only saving faith; but also accomplishing faith
5. Patience – perseverance, steadfastness – enough to keep them in the faith and on the job

B. It seems that He was commending only a small segment of the congregation because verse 24 mentions those who remained faithful in the midst of the wickedness enveloping this church.

1. He challenged the faithful to hold fast to that which they had until He comes.
2. To the remainder of the church, He promised nothing but discipline.
3. The faithful few were separated from the large body of wicked ones.

III. THE CONDEMNATION

A. The Spiritual Leadership tolerated a Jezebel – v. 20.

1. The real issue is tolerance toward false teachers.

B. She called herself a prophetess.

1. Prophets were called by God and recognized by others.
2. She usurped authority.

C. Jezebel was:

1. Teaching men, which is forbidden in 1 Timothy 2:14-15.
2. Seducing Christians to commit immorality.
 - a. May have been physical or spiritual or both.
3. She encouraged her followers to become part of the world.
She encouraged Christians to take part in the local trade guilds. Each had its own patron deity to whom it paid homage in exchange for economic blessing. Social

events centered on their worship. The pressure for Christians to participate in this idolatrous lifestyle, both for economic and social reasons, was great. Because Jesus is Lord, a tradesman who became a Christian could no longer entertain idolatry. No more idolatry meant no more trade guild membership and severe personal economic hardship. Jezebel taught that one could still practice the idolatry found in the trade guild and find favor with God.

- D. The spiritual battle being waged at Thyatira is parallel to the battle to be waged in the end times (Rev 14-18).
 - E. Her Punishment
 - 1. How did God show His patience with the woman – v. 21?
He gave her and her followers an opportunity to repent, which they refused to do. Grace came before judgment as it always has and always will.
 - 2. What will God do because she did not repent – v. 22?
 - a. She and those who follow her will experience severe torment, trials, tribulation, and death. Those remaining would know that the Lord was still in charge.
 - b. Unless they repent – Second offer to escape punishment
 - 3. The second generation will also be punished. Jezebels need children, disciples – 23a.
- IV. THE COUNSEL – Rev. 23b-28
- A. Every church shall know that:
 - 1. “I Am the I Am” searches the minds and hearts.
 - 2. I will give to each one of you according to your works.
 - 3. The letter begins and ends with, “I search the minds and hearts and I give according to your works.”
 - B. To the pastor and those who do not follow Jezebel, who have not known the depths of Satan – v. 24
 - a. “The depths of Satan” is a general description of the teaching of Jezebel – unbelievable libertinism and license.
 - 1. I will put on you no other burden – You have done enough living with Jezebel.
 - 2. Hold fast what you have till I come.
 - C. To the overcomer (every Christian is an overcomer), and the one who keeps My works until the end, to him:
 - 1. They will co-reign with Christ.
 - a. Rule with rod of iron – shepherd them with an iron rod.
 - 2. As Christ is the Morning Star (Num 24:17; 2 Peter 1:19; Rev 22:16), they will possess Christ Himself.
 - D. To the one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Conc: The Lord will reward. He keeps His promises. All Christians will receive a reward. The question is, will it be the reward of the followers of Jezebel or the reward of the faithful? When confronting error, we will make the right choice if we do not make our choice in the light of what others may think but in the light of the Son of God, who has “eyes like a flame of fire” and “feet like fine brass.” Thyatira was a good church with many commendable attributes. It had become tolerant of evil, likely worn down by the philosophy of the day. We face the same wearing philosophy. We sometimes accept things that are unacceptable.

“The toleration of evil is usually as serious as the evil tolerated.”