

The Danger of Compromise

NKJV Notes by Pastor Mike Sasso

Introduction

We are now at the halfway point in our study of Jesus' message to the seven churches of Asia. The church of Thyatira was a church of compromise. Though Jesus has some very good things to say about this church, the compromise in her midst negated the good that was there. In this letter we learn the lesson that one major sin in the life of any Christian can overshadow all the good things that may exist in his or her life. Open your heart and let the Lord use this text to flush out any sin or compromise that may exist in your life.

BACKGROUND

- The city of Thyatira was the least important of the seven cities we will be studying. Yet Jesus' message to the church of Thyatira is the longest of the seven.
- Some consider this letter the most difficult to understand of the seven.
- Thyatira was known as an exporter of purple cloth. See Acts 16:14 - the story of Lydia who was from Thyatira. Purple cloth was considered the clothing of the rich and affluent, since the purple dye produced in this city was very rare. So the export of purple cloth was probably the thing that gave this city any significance.
- There were many trade guilds in this city. These trade guilds each had patron gods and their membership meetings centered on the worship of their patron gods. These meetings would often include sacrifices to their gods and acts of sexual immorality. A laborer would have a very difficult time making a living without being a member in good standing in one of these trade guilds. Therefore, a Christian in this city was faced with a serious challenge. If they wanted to make a living and feed their family they were pressured to idolatry and immorality. This compromise threatened the very life of the church of Thyatira.
- Many consider the church of Thyatira a picture of the church era of around 600 to 1500 AD when a universal church system arose with great compromises, one of which was the emphasis of the worship of a woman. This era is also known in world history as "the Dark Ages."

Before beginning these study notes read through Revelation 2:18-29 out loud with your small group.

STUDY NOTES: verses 18-29

v. 18 And to the Angel of the Church in Thyatira Write, "These things says the Son of God" - Once again Jesus commands John to write this message to the pastor of the church that He is addressing. This is the only time in the book of Revelation that Jesus identifies Himself as the Son of God. The title "Son of God" is used 47 times in the New Testament, but only once in the book of Revelation. This may be because there was a temple in Thyatira dedicated to Apollo

- the sun god. It could also be that this church needed to see Jesus as the “Son of God” because they have been compromised and distracted by the influence of a false prophetess known as Jezebel who in history past was known as the “Queen of Israel.” When a person is called the “son of” someone the emphasis is being placed on the fact that they are of the same nature as their parent. This title emphasizes the deity of Christ and establishes His supreme authority. It is also true that among the Pagan gods there are so-called “sons of gods” among their gods. Jesus here identifies Himself as the true Son of the true God. He is THE Son of God.

Who has Eyes Like a Flame of Fire, and His Feet Like Fine Brass - As we have previously discovered, fire and brass speak of judgment. (Rev. 1:14-15 and study notes).

v. 19 I Know Your Works, Love, Service, Faith, and Your Patience; and as for Your Works, the Last are More than the First – Jesus knows all about this church as He knows all about you. He knows completely and does not fail to recognize every good attribute. This church was an active, working, loving, and serving church. They had a legitimate faith and displayed patience during trial.

Jesus acknowledged that their works were even more now than they were at first. It seemed as if they were moving forward in good works. If the reader stopped here he could easily conclude that this was a healthy church growing spiritually and pleasing to God. But this is not the case.

Before moving on to Jesus’ criticism of this church, let’s take a closer look at all the things one can be doing right and still miss the mark;

Works – They were not just a church that sat in the pews, but they were doing things that Jesus considered work. They were not a lazy church but a laboring church. They were not a people of words only but a people of action.

Love – They had the right attitude of love toward God and man. This is the Greek word for love expressing affection and good will - agape.

Service – They were ministering to the needs of others.

Faith – This is the Greek word pistis (pis'-tis). It is a word used to describe true faith in God. They had a real belief, trust, and reliance upon the true God.

Last More than the First – The church of Thyatira was increasing in their labor rather than slowing down.

No one would argue that the above things are not essential for a healthy church. Yet when you add the ingredient of compromise the good ingredients become spoiled. It really is a frightening thought that we can have so much going for us and still incur our Lord’s displeasure. Let’s read on to discover what could ruin such an apparently good church.

v. 20 Nevertheless I Have a Few Things Against You - Nevertheless here means, “in spite of all the good.” We should never assume that because there is a list of good things to our credit our Lord would have no evil to be thought of us.

Because You Allow that Woman Jezebel, who Calls Herself a Prophetess, to Teach and Seduce My Servants to Commit Sexual Immorality and eat Things Sacrificed to Idols – Jezebel may not have been this woman’s actual name, but perhaps Jesus placed upon her a “title”

which would clearly identify her sin. The original Jezebel that Jesus was comparing this woman to was a wicked pagan queen who married Ahab, king of Israel, and led God's people astray into idolatry, immorality, and many great evils. The majority text renders this phrase here in verse 20, "your wife Jezebel." This would indicate that the church in Thyatira was acting like King Ahab in its compromise of being married to wickedness somehow. Some commentators suggest that the pastor of this church may have even been married to a wicked woman who set herself up as a prophetess and was thus leading this church astray. Others suppose that this church was married to the world by compromising with the idolatrous and immoral trade guilds in order to make a living. Whatever the case may be, this title "Jezebel" suggests a powerful guilty verdict of compromise within the Thyatira church.

Jesus indicates here that Jezebel was actually teaching and seducing His servants into sin. This is not doubt referring to true Christians being led astray by this wicked woman. Be aware that false prophets can and do lead true Christians astray. Christians must never become overconfident in their walk. We must keep our guards ever up and our minds ever-keen to the many tricks and charms of the devil.

Notice also that it is not enough to merely not be led astray by a false prophet or wicked woman. The church of Thyatira's sin according to Jesus was that they allowed this woman to do what she did. They tolerated her. This places the responsibility upon church leadership to rise up and expose and oppose false teaching and immorality when it creeps into the church.

For further background study:

The "The New Chain-Reference Bible" lists the following information about Jezebel –

JEZEBEL, wife of Ahab, the wicked queen

(1) General References to 1Ki 16:31 18:4 19:1 21:5,23 2Ki 9:10,30,36

(2) Characteristics of

- A patroness of idolatry 1Ki 18:19
- Revengeful 1Ki 19:2
- A murderess 1Ki 21:5-13
- Incited her husband to evil 1Ki 21:25
- Vain 2Ki 9:30
- Met a terrible death 2Ki 9:33-35

v. 21 And I Gave Her Time to Repent of Her Sexual Immorality, and She Did Not Repent –

It is an amazing thing to realize that God does not immediately execute judgment upon sinners. In His great mercy He gives time to repent (2 Pet 3:9).

This statement would indicate that this condition of compromise was not something new, but had existed for some time.

v. 22 Indeed I will Cast Her into a Sickbed - Our Lord uses great irony here when He in so many words says, "Since you love to pursue the pleasure of sin upon your bed I will punish you upon a bed of suffering." Sometimes God uses physical affliction or sickness to chasten His people. Notice that even after giving her time to repent and she doesn't, Jesus still does not

threaten immediate destruction or hell. It seems that His plan of action here is in hopes of redemption for His people. Compare this with Hebrews 12:5-6.

And Those who Commit Adultery with Her Into Great Tribulation - Not only will Jezebel be punished for her sin, but all who partner with her will join in her suffering. Some see here the possibility of this church being left behind in the rapture if they do not repent since Jesus threatens to cast them into “great tribulation.”

Unless they Repent of their Deeds – This is a statement of hope. But the hope is conditioned upon the word “repent.” This word repent is the Greek word metaneo (met-an-o-eh'-o), meaning to change one's mind for better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past sins, according to Thayer's Greek Dictionary. Repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change of action (Cp. Is. 30:15).

v. 23 I will Kill Her Children with Death - This phrase sounds redundant. But it has been said, “All men die, but all are not killed with death” (Trapp). The children of immorality will certainly suffer the fate of the second death (Rev. 21:8).

And All the Churches Shall Know that I am He Who Searches the Minds and Hearts – All that our Lord does is to the end that His people might better know His ways and His character. Seventy-seven times in the Old Testament alone God declares that He does things in order that people might “Know that I am the LORD.” And we know that the LORD searches the minds and hearts of all men. He knows you intimately. He knows you better than you know yourself.

And I will Give to Each One of You According to Your Works – This thought is repeated in various ways throughout the scriptures (Ps. 62:12; Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6, 11; 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10).

v. 24 Now to You I Say, and to the Rest in Thyatira, as Many as Do Not have This Doctrine, Who Have Not Known the Depths of Satan, as They Say, I will Put on You No Other Burden – Jesus indicates that there are some in this church who are innocent of this sin of compromise.

Jesus also indicates that this doctrine was called “the depths of Satan.” Perhaps because like so many cults today, Jezebel was claiming that her teaching was revealing the “deeper spiritual things,” truths that others had missed but she was able to give. But in reality they were the depths of Satan.

But to those believers in this church who were innocent and clear of this charge of compromise, Jesus had no other burden to place upon them.

v. 25 But Hold Fast what You Have Till I Come – Hang in there and keep doing what your doing! Notice when we can finally relax and cease our warfare... when Jesus comes. It's not over till He comes.

v. 26 And He Who Overcomes, and Keeps My Works Until the End, to Him I will Give Power Over the Nations - Jesus makes a different promise to each individual church who overcomes. To the church of Thyatira He promises that rather than casting them into great tribulation (v. 22), He will exalt them to the place of ruling and reigning with Him in the millennial reign.

When Jesus exhorts us to “keep My works” He is not putting an overbearing set of laws on us. He is simply calling us to the works of faith and love. See John 6:29; Romans 2:7; 1 Thessalonians 3:5; Hebrews 10:38,39; James 2:20; and 1 John 2:19; 3:23.

v. 27 He Shall Rule Them with a Rod of Iron; They Shall be Dashed to Pieces like the Potter’s Vessels – as I also Have Received from My Father - This is a direct quote from Psalm 2. By quoting this phrase, Jesus identifies Himself as the Son of God and the promised Messiah who welcomes His overcoming church to rule and reign over the nations of the world with Him. “I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel’” (Psalm 2:7-9, NKJV).

v. 28 And I will Give Him the Morning Star – Jesus is the morning star (22:16). There is a reward much greater than receiving a kingdom. The greatest reward of all is to live in union and harmony with the King!

“After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward’” (Genesis 15:1, NKJV).

v. 29 He Who Has an Ear, Let Him Hear What the Spirit Says to the Churches – This exhortation is repeated to each of the seven churches. The obvious implication is that these seven exhortations are not exclusively to be applied only to one of the seven churches but are universal in nature. Every Christian should listen to what Jesus has to say to every church. Just like the rest of God’s Word, it is all good for all the people of God.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16, 17, NKJV).

TRUTH APPLIED:

1. In what modern ways can today’s church easily compromise like the church of Thyatira?
2. What do we learn from Jesus’ statement in verse 21?

3. What have you learned about repentance from today's study?

4. Jesus' condemnation to the church of Thyatira was that they "allowed" Jezebel. What would be the antidote to such a sin? What would the church have to do in order to make things right?

5. In today's world where tolerance is politically correct, where should the Church and the Christian draw the line of who and how to tolerate and when we should refuse to tolerate views that oppose our own?

6. What will be the consequences for the church of Thyatira if they do not repent? What do you think this means?

7. What is the promise made to the overcoming church in today's text? What do you think this means?

8. What does this text teach us about Jesus Christ?

9. What is the Lord is specifically speaking to your heart through this text?

10. Before closing in a time of prayer, open up a time of group discussion for any remaining questions or comments your small group may have.

CONCLUSION:

The more I study Jesus' words to the seven churches, the more I am convicted and concerned for the precise condition of my own soul. How can any of us think that we would be clear of all wrong doing after being carefully examined by the One whose eyes are like a flaming fire and feet are like fine brass? Truly the studies of these letters are lessons in humility.

Humbled by His Word,
Mike Sasso