

Revelation 2:18-29: Thyatira

Review:

Ephesus Lesson: Strive to maintain the purity of God's word and the purity of Christ's church without losing love for one another. Every church must have doctrinal truth and love for one another.

Pergamum Lesson: Remain faithful despite severe persecution, but do not tolerate false doctrine which leads to sinful compromise and practice because this is not acceptable to the LORD of the church.

Intro: Thyatira was a commercial city and famous for its trade guilds. The modern equivalent would be labor unions. (All steelworkers in Pittsburgh had to join the United Steelworkers of America. The steelworkers paid dues and the union bosses negotiated with management.) The trade guilds required attendance at feasts in the temple of the god or goddess whose patronage was acknowledged by the trade or profession. Attendance at the feasts involved eating meat sacrificed to idols, alcohol, and sexual immorality.

Lydia was one of Paul's first converts in Philippi, Macedonia. Acts 16:14-15: *One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.*

Lydia was a "worshiper of God" and seller of purple cloth from Thyatira. If a businesswoman like Lydia refused to attend the idol feast of her trade guild then her business would be boycotted. She could lose her business. Maybe that's why she moved from Thyatira to Philippi. As a worshiper of God she would not be forced to attend the trade guild patronage of a false god. Maybe she moved back to help start the church in Thyatira. (I could make an interesting movie of how God moved her to Philippi to hear the Gospel from Paul and believe.)

2:18: The focus is on the Son of God's eyes and feet. His eyes search a person's mind and heart. He sees what is invisible to human eyes. He sees thoughts and motives. His feet remain firmly planted and cannot be moved. "Hold on firmly to what you have until I come."

Increasing works: 20:19

"I know your deeds, and your love and faith, and service and patient endurance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first."

Jesus complemented the church for its growth in love, faith, service and patient endurance. Patient endurance presupposes persecution. Despite persecution the church increased in *agape* love and faith which led to more service. Jesus expects his churches to increase their works of service, not decrease and cut back and lock down in fear.

(This is why I admire the churches in CA ignoring the government restrictions and increasing their ministries! They fought the unreasonable COVID restrictions all the way to the Supreme Court and won based on the First Amendment.)

Jesus' parables always focused on increase. Consider the parable of the talents: Matthew 25:14-30 (5-2-1 talents).

Jesus expects every individual Christian to increase in love, faith, service, and patient endurance. Are you increasing?

2:24: Jesus placed no other burden on the church members because they were increasing in love, faith, service, and perseverance. GR for burden is "baros" and it is a linguistic link to Acts 15:28-29. The Apostles at the Jerusalem Council decided by the Holy Spirit to lay no other burden on Gentiles than three requirements: 1) abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, 2) abstain from blood and strangled animals, and 3) sexual immorality (GR = porneia = any form of sexually deviant behavior and pornographic websites). This is the only "burden" the HS and the Apostles laid on Gentiles and Jesus agreed with it.

Jezebel the False Prophetess: 2:20-24

The OT Jezebel led the Israelites into idolatry and sexual immorality: 1 Kings 16:29-33; 21:25-26. She incited King Ahab to worship Baal. The

death of Jezebel was gruesome as foretold by Elijah (1 Kings 21:23; 2 Kings 9:30-37). Dogs ate her body and left only her skull, feet, and palms of her hands.

This was probably the same teaching as the Nicolaitans; it was a rejection of the Jerusalem Council guidelines from the Apostles and a compromise with the pagan culture.

Jezebel's solution to the trade-guild problem was similar to the teaching of Balaam and the Nicolaitans. Jezebel advocated "cheap grace." She may have taught, "An idol is really nothing. So, it is OK to participate in the feasts. Enjoy the benefits of membership in your trade guild. You can always ask for forgiveness."

[There is an equivalent to the first century trade guilds other than labor unions. Some American companies are making political decisions that are not good business decisions. Companies are forcing employees to celebrate "Gay Pride" and LGBTQ agenda. Kroger supports gay pride. Some Kroger employees refused to wear a LGBTQ symbol (rainbow heart) during Gay Pride week and were fired. Kroger and many other companies are boycotting Mike Lindell of *MyPillow* because he made a comprehensive video proving there was election fraud in the 2020 presidential election. The video is called "Absolute Proof." Lindell has also been banned from Twitter, Facebook, and other social media. This is now referred to as "cancel culture." So, if you do not compromise with the pagan culture then you will be cancelled. The First Amendment of the Constitution prevents Christians and the Bible from being cancelled.]

Historicist interpreters identify this church with papal church of the Middle Ages because it introduced the worship of Virgin Mary, "the Queen of Heaven," just as Jezebel caused Israel to worship the Canaanite mother-goddess Asherah the Queen of Heaven (Jeremiah 44:17-25). Mariolatry (Mary worship) is pure idolatry. Mariology (4 doctrines of Mary) is also idolatry. But neither promote sexual immorality, so I do not agree with historicist interpreters. We do not need to go through Virgin Mary to pray to Jesus. Mary has no power to do anything.

There was a religious "Jericho March" for Trump before the election. What I found disturbing was the Roman Catholics who prayed to Mary. They asked Mary to have mercy and intervene. I thought, "I don't think Mary can do anything to help Trump's re-election or save the unborn."

There are false prophets and prophetesses in the church today. Many Charismatic prophets predicted Trump's re-election for 4 more years. I watched them on *YouTube*. I said to myself, "If it happens then maybe they are true prophets. If not, then they must be considered false prophets. Nobody should pay attention to their prophecies."

The "deep things of Satan" was the phrase used to describe Jezebel's false teaching. It was probably a secret phrase used by the followers of Jezebel, but Jesus knows what they said in secret. Jesus exposed it to the "angel" (pastor or elders) of the church in this letter. The "deep things of Satan" was probably Gnosticism and was also a problem for churches in the first century. Gnosticism refers to secret knowledge and would be like "New Age" occult beliefs today. Occult is definitely the "deep things of Satan."

Jesus' solution for a church's sin is always repentance.

What does Jesus do if there is no repentance?

Jesus gives warnings and time to repent. If no repentant response, then Jesus strikes with sickness and tribulation. If sickness and tribulation still do not lead to repentance, then it's death.

Jesus searches the mind and heart. Jesus knows our thoughts and motives. Jesus judges based on works and a deeper judgment based on thoughts and motives. We can only judge based on what we see, the works. We cannot judge motives.

Reward for Faithfulness: 2:25-29

2:26-27: The one who overcomes, and the one who keeps My deeds until the end, I will give him authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are shattered, as I also have received authority from My Father.

OT reference is Psalm 2. Read or recite Psalm 2.

Jesus will delegate to faithful believers the authority the Father gave him to rule the nations.

During the Millennial Kingdom faithful believers will reign with Christ, Rev. 20:6: *Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him for a thousand years.*

Thyatira Lesson: Keep increasing in works of love, faith, service, and patient endurance and do not become lazy or grow weary. Do not compromise with the godless culture. Any compromise with godless culture will lead to a decrease in love, faith, service, and patient endurance and make the church an ineffective witness.

Application: Jesus expects every individual Christian to increase in love, faith, service, and patient endurance.

Are you increasing in love and works of love? Ephesus had fallen from its first love and so its works of love were decreasing. Rev. 2:4-5: *But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first.*

The "first love" Jesus referred to was most likely "love one another as I have loved you." This was Jesus' command to his disciples. The church proved its love for Christ by maintaining doctrinal purity. But an overzealous quest for doctrinal correctness had created a judgmental climate. We love Jesus by loving one another.

Do not let the hatred, injustice, and persecution of the world cause your love to grow cold. Jesus said about the end times: Matthew 24: 9-12: *"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold."*

Do not allow the fears of this world to suppress your faith. I look back over my 34 years of ministry and I can see times my faith increased and times it shrank back in fear. I often reminisce on the times I felt increasing faith displace fear and I stepped out on faith to do mission work with no assurance of financial support.

When Faith meets Fear on the battlefield of the world, Faith must keep its focus on the victorious Jesus Christ who overcame the world. 1 John 5:4:

For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. "Faith is the victory that overcomes the world."

Do not let a selfish desire for safety cause you to lock down and decrease your service for Christ and His church. I feel this selfish desire for safety freezing my witness. This COVID is demonic because it makes me look at other people like they are infected and dirty. They may be asymptomatic and spread the virus to me. I am afraid to give someone a *TrueLife* card because it may have the demonic little virus on it!

~ Mr. Sit has not decreased his service of preparing food for us.

Persevere through whatever the godless world throws at you. Jesus is coming soon.

Love, faith, service, and perseverance all work together. We cannot increase in one without increasing in all.

All 7 church letters end with "Pay attention to what the Spirit says to the churches." Pray and ask yourself, "What is the Spirit saying to FCBC?"