**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 1-24-2021
 To the Church in Thyatira…**

I don’t know about you, but I love how Jesus would reverse man’s perspective on things.

Jesus told his followers that the poor widow, who offered 2 coins, put in more than all the others because she gave out of her poverty.

Jesus said that we need to become like little children if we are to enter the kingdom of God. Children were considered rather unimportant in that culture. To be seen and not heard, so to speak. But Jesus reverses man’s perspective.

Jesus does this once again when it comes to his message to the Christians in Thyatira. Thyatira was considered the **least important city of the 7 churches in Revelation.** Little is written about it in ancient history. It was founded as a military outpost and spent much of its early history as a battleground between opposing cities.

And by the time that the Romans took firm control over Thyatira, it became known for its position within trades’ routes. And Thyatira became the center for commercial and manufacturing for many things.

But while this city would have been considered the least significant of the 7 cities, it interestingly is put in the most important stop – right in the middle.

Often in Scripture, when there are 7 things listed or 7 sections of something, the middle section is seen as being especially important.

It would kind of be like Jesus saying, **“*If you are to only read of one of the seven churches in Revelation, this is the one to really focus on*.”**

Today we are going to especially highlight what makes Jesus’ words to the church in Thyatira so significant.

But before we turn to the Scripture, I just want to share a little bit about the city of Thyatira that I believe will help us to better grasp the environment that the Christians there found themselves in.

You may recall that in the book of Acts we meet someone that was from Thyatira. Her name was Lydia. She was from Thyatira, but was residing in Philippi when Paul led her to faith in Jesus Christ.

Lydia, we are told, was a dealer of purple cloth. Thyatira was a place that there were all different trades people could learn. The producing of cloth was likely one of them.

As Silicon Valley in California became the center for computer technology, Thyatira became the hub for manufacturing and industry in that part of the world.

And there were guilds that people could join that specialized in the different trades. It would be similar to a trade union or association. A guild would be a community group that would train people to learn a trade and succeed in a trade.

This all seems well and good. But here’s the catch, here’s the problem. A big expectation in being a part of these guilds was participation in the pagan religious feasts that they held. It was at those feasts that worship was offered to false gods or idols.

So picture yourself as a believer in Thyatira. You were faced with a difficult choice. Do I take part in these pagan feasts in order to boost your chances for advancement in the business world? Do you refuse to take part, but risk being judged as a prude and being not fully committed to the group?

And so, with that in mind, let us consider Jesus’ words to the Christians in Thyatira found in Revelation 2:18-29.

**18“To the angel of the church in Thyatira write:”**

In these words, Jesus again begins with mention to the angel of the church of Thyatira. We know that the Lord has His angels working amongst every church community.

Jesus then describes Himself by saying, **“These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.”**

One thing that I didn’t mention about Thyatira was that Apollo was the most prominent pagan god that was worshipped in Thyatira. This would be different that Apollo Creed, one of the boxers in the Rocky movies. No, this was Apollo. And Apollo was considered the son of the god Zeus.

And here in Jesus’ greeting, He instructs Him that He is the true apollo, so to speak. Jesus is the true Son of God.

And Jesus’ eyes are like blazing fire. Hotter than the sun.

So it’s just fascinating how Jesus encourages them right where they are at. And here He is reminding them that they don’t need to worship Apollo, for Jesus is the True Son of God.

Next, Jesus, in one very important verse, gives the church high praise for some things that they were really doing well.

He states in verse 19 “**I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.”**

Each of these things are important measures of a healthy church. Christians are to be people of love and faith and godly service and steadfastness or perseverance through challenges and trials.

And not only this, Jesus tells them that He knows that they are now doing more than they did at first.

So, they are growing in these things, it appears. This sounds like the perfect church.

But then Jesus goes on to explain one big concern within this church. They had given a platform to a false teacher.

Jesus states this in verses 20-25

**20Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. 21I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. 22So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. 23I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.**

**24Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan’s so-called deep secrets, ‘I will not impose any other burden on you, 25except to hold on to what you have until I come.’**

There is nothing wrong with having a charismatic personality, but sometimes there are folks that are naturally gifted in this way but who do not truly know the Lord. These folks may be eager to teach or influence others. Especially if they claim that they have secret knowledge and things like that.

In the Old Testament, there was a very wicked woman named Jezebel. It’s a shame, Jezebel is a pretty name, but she kind of ruined it for most people. I do not know of anyone named Jezebel. Likely this woman that had gained control over a number of the Christians there was not named Jezebel. It was likely that how actions were similar to the Jezebel in the Old Testament, so the Lord refers to her in that way.

This woman claimed to be a prophet. As Christians we are told to not despise prophecy and there are people that are gifted as prophets within God’s church. However, this person seemed to be self-appointed and she most likely was encouraging the Christians that it was just fine for them to take part in the idolatry and sexual immorality that took place in the guild feasts that were common in Thyatira.

And while the church was loving and strong in faith and good deeds, they were failing when it came to stopping this person from leading many people astray.

Sometimes we forget that part of love involves protecting God’s people from harmful teaching. This person should not have been given the pulpit or Sunday School teacher position so to speak.

As your pastor, one of my responsibilities, along with our Leadership Team, is to make sure that our teaching and preaching ministries are faithful and sound according to the Scriptures. We are very blessed to have Blain as our Lay Leader, for example. He is a man of the Word and he even shares his notes with me before he would deliver them. I do not require this, because I trust him, but Blain seeks to make especially sure that his messages are consistent with God’s Word.

I promise as your pastor to have guest preachers as well that I know are faithful to God’s Word.

Jesus uses some very strong words in his address to this situation. First, he says that ‘he will cast her on a bed of suffering.’

Jesus had the authority to bring sickness to people. Certainly, not every sickness is sent by him. In fact, I think that very few are. But Jesus’ patience had run out on the leaders there who had refused to deal with this very dangerous teaching that they were refusing to put a stop to. And Jesus’ judgment was now imminent.

Jesus also mentions that he would “**strike her children dead**” (her children would not be referring to biological children. Jesus is speaking of those that had so bought into her teaching that they were influencing others as well). We do not know if Jesus was literally speaking of their physical or that they would suffer serious affliction. But either way, it was a serious situation.

This reminds us that just because someone is not the head of something very dark and evil, there is still blame to go around for people that promote the lie.

A more contemporary example would be that Hitler was not the only one to blame, with it came to the evils that the Nazis did.

Additionally, “**Those who commit adultery with her**” would refer to the people that are being led astray. They were not her “children” yet, but were beginning to follow her dark and deadly path.

These folks needed to repent. They needed to rid themselves of that destructive teaching before it was too late.

All of this was very serious to Christ. As much good as this Christian community had going for it, Jesus was furious that this one person was destroying His church from the inside. And He was very close to bringing judgment. He was patient and gave this woman time to repent, but she was not willing.

\*This section also gives us the key to Jesus’ entire message to the 7 churches. It is found in the second part of verse 23. Jesus says, “**Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.”**

Jesus wanted all of the churches to know, loud and clear, that He is the One who searches hearts and minds. In other words, Jesus knows people completely. He knows our hearts and minds.

And Jesus is looking for people that have their hearts and minds fully devoted to Him.

And when our hearts and minds are healthy in Christ, our deeds should follow. And Jesus will repay each person according to their deeds.

***So the key of everything in these 7 letters to the churches is for God’s people to have their hearts and minds fully devoted to Christ.***

Finally, Jesus concludes His words to the Christians in Thyatira with these words, found in verses 26-29.

**To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations – that one ‘will rule them with an iron scepter and will dash them to pieces like pottery – just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give that one the morning star. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**

There is a lot of symbolize in these words of Jesus. But Jesus is basically telling those that remain faithful to Him that He will give them authority to rule over the nations.

The morning star is Venus and the symbol of Venus was something that the Romans used to express being invincible.

I believe that Jesus, in giving the faithful the morning star, is telling them that Jesus makes us truly invincible to any evil that we would ever face, because Jesus Christ is Lord and we are His.

Friends, how does all of this tie all this together for our lives today; what are 3 things that we can take with us? While there are other applications, I would like us to highlight 3 in particular.

**First, we are called to be like the church in Thyatira in every way except one**. Like these Christians from many years ago, may we be people of deep love and deep faith and who are doing many good deeds in the name of Jesus. May we grow in each of these ways as well.

And may we persevere in our faith, no matter what pushback or challenges we are faced with. We can learn a lot from this church.

**Second, may we avoid the trap that they had largely fallen into. The trap of letting false teachings lead people astray.**

I will do my best to faithfully preach and teach God’s Word to you and, along with our other leaders, we will be committed to allowing dangerous teachings be advanced within our church.

This is particularly true when it comes to idolatry and sexual immorality. While we are to be compassionate to people that are struggling in these ways, it is important to never promote things contrary to God’s will in these important matters.

1 Tim. 4:16 teaches us to “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.”

**And third and finally, we are to daily offer to our Triune God our whole heart and mind to be used for His glory**. And this goes back again to Jesus placing this church in the most important position within these 7 churches.

The Lord searches the earth to find those whose hearts and minds are completely His. May that be the case for every one of us. And if there is anything unhealthy about our hearts and minds, let us ask God’s Spirit to make us whole and holy in every way.

Let’s pray…

**Resources:**

BibleGateway.com

The Jesus Letters b David Ravenhill

Revelation by Grant R. Osborne