

The Church Belongs to Christ

When reading these seven letters to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3, it is very easy to focus on the problems that these churches have rather than the work that Christ is doing. In the letter to the church at Thyatira, it is interesting to note what the Lord is doing amidst their problem.

Though Thyatira was the smallest and least important of the seven cities, it receives the longest of the letters. The city was not on the coast or a major river, but it was part of a trade route that fueled its economy. There were many trade guilds in this city and being a part of these trade guilds required participation in pagan festivals that often degenerated into sexual immorality. In this way, the city was similar to Pergamum. But where in Pergamum the pressure to compromise came from outside the church, in Thyatira, the pressure to compromise came from within the church. What we see in this letter is Christ's love for His Church and the seriousness with which He protects her.

Revelation 2:18-29

18 “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: ‘The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.

19 “I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. **20** But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. **21** I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. **22** Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, **23** and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works. **24** But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden. **25** Only hold fast what you have until I come. **26** The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, **27** and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. **28** And I will give him the morning star. **29** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

In this passage we learn three things about Christ and His relationship with His Church:

- I. The Church is encouraged in Christ. As they seek to follow after Christ, He “sees” and “knows” their good works and commends them for it.
- II. The Church is protected by Christ. The Lord will not tolerate anything or anyone that might threaten His bride. And though He is merciful and long-suffering, He will act with judgment on those who refuse to repent.
- III. The Church prevails through Christ. The Lord will see His Church to a victorious end.

Discussion Questions

1. How does Christ describe Himself to this church? Why is that important to the context of this letter?

2. Christ tells this church that He “knows” their works, and then commends them for four specific things. What makes that commendation so important?
3. What would lead a church to tolerate someone like this “Jezebel”? Why was her message of compromise so inviting?
4. Why is the decisive and serious response of Christ appropriate to the situation? What are some things we learn about Christ through His response in verses 21-23?
5. In verses 24-29, Christ encourages those in the church who have remained faithful. How is His encouragement specific to the context of this church?
6. Verses 26-27 are drawn directly from Psalm 2. Why is that Psalm such an encouragement to believers who are struggling to remain faithful?

Going Deeper

1. As Christ “knows” and sees us, we ought to know and see each other. What are some of the “works” you need to commend in your fellow brothers/sisters in Christ? How can you go about that this week?
2. In what ways are you tempted to tolerate a message of compromise in your life? In what ways are you “teaching yourself” to compromise?
3. What are the descriptions of Christ or characteristics of Christ that are most encouraging to you in your daily walk?