

The Church With Unhealed Wounds – Thyatira

Text: Revelation 2:18-29

Revelation 2:18-29 – “And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;” “I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.”

“Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.” “And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.” “Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.” “And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.” “But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.” “But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.” “And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:” “And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.” “And I will give him the morning star.” “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

I. INTRODUCTION – THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST

-To briefly reiterate the order by which the seven churches of Asia are addressed we find the following order by which the Apostle writes:

- The Commission addresses the church by name which is actually its location.
- The Character paints a portrait of that church's actions.
- The Commendation shows the favorable conditions that exist within this church.
- The Condemnation lists the adverse criticisms in sequence.
- The Correction comes in form of varied commands of obedience for change

of spiritual condition.

- The Call always begins with the words “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith.”

The Challenge is given to those who are overcomers and rise above the temptations and perils of his particular church.

-The detail that immediately stands out in the address to the church at Thyatira is how the Lord is described. The other churches find Him among their midst but not in such a dramatic way as does Thyatira.

Ephesus – 2:1 – He that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. . . .

Smyrna – 2:8 – The first and the last, which was dead, and is alive. . . .

Sardis – 3:1 – He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars. . . .

Philadelphia – 3:7 – He that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth. . . .

Laodicea – 3:14 – The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. . . .

-Thyatira finds a far different Christ who is coming to deal with them. In Revelation 2:18, He is described as “The Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;”

-He is going to walk through their midst with a judgment that will be penetrating. The Lord looks at the church in Thyatira and looks upon a harvest of wickedness that has grown from the influence of Jezebel.

His Eyes – Are described as a flame of fire. He can see directly through their flaws. Hidden from men but not hidden from God. Those eyes blaze with righteousness not with madness. The wrath of God is not some personal affront against those whom He frowns upon but rather it is His revulsion against sin.

His Feet – Are likened to fine brass. He is ready to trample the sins of the perpetrators under His feet. Biblically treading on anything has to do with victory and contempt. Victory over the defeated (Psalm 91:13) and contempt for the things trampled under the feet as worthless (Matthew 5:13).

II. THE CHURCH AT THYATIRA

A. The Geographical Location

-Thyatira is the fourth church that the Apostle John writes about. Up to this point, if you have been following along on the map, in the circle of the seven churches, we have been going north. From Ephesus to Smyrna on to Pergamos.

-Now we began to turn south and east in the circle of cities. The distance between Pergamos, the capitol city of Asia, between Sardis, the capitol of Lydis, is about sixty miles. Halfway between these two places lay Thyatira.

-Thyatira was a city that was established around 290 B.C. It had been a military town and housed Roman soldiers. The Romans in their ingenuity used cities around their capitol to serve as sentinel blocks. When an attack came, the enemy would have to fight through a “sentinel” city before progressing on to the main battle.

-These outposts served nothing more than as an outpost that would delay the enemy soldiers while the capitol city was preparing to attack. These cities were destined to be destroyed, to be rebuilt, to be destroyed, to be rebuilt. . . . again and again.

-In the ancient days, this city became a commercial city because it lay along a great trade route that existed. It became the center of the wool and dying industry. In fact when we revert back to Acts 16, we find Thyatira’s most famous convert, Lydia, the merchant princess of purple.

-The purple dye came from two sources:

A tree root, indigenous to the area of Thyatira.

A small seashell fish called the murex.

-From the throat of the tiny fish, one drop of the precious dye could be extracted. One historian listed one pound of this dye as being worth 1,000 denary. One denarius was the common pay for an ordinary working man. For the average man to purchase one pound of this material, it would have taken 3 years and 10 ½ months of work to obtain such.

B. The Character and Commendation of Thyatira

-When John proceeds to write the words of the church at Thyatira, the early words are almost glowing:

- He finds works. The lifestyle directed by holy principles.
- He finds charity. The love of Christ constrained them.
- He finds service. The active involvement of ministry to those who needed help.
- He finds faith. The active faith that had confidence in a strong God.
- He finds patience. The ability to calmly endure the attack over evil of which the church had no control.
- He then mentions works again.

-There is no mention of removing the candlestick out of its place. Instead He mentions the powerful work of this church in that He says “thy works;. . . the last to be more than the first.”

-Thyatira overcame the common trend with most all people and churches. They were seemingly going to finish stronger than they started. In so many ways the church at Thyatira was living beyond those churches around it.

- It had the love that Ephesus had abandoned.
- It had preserved the faith which had been at risk in Pergamos.
- It had shared with Smyrna the patience needed to endure suffering.

-So instead of backsliding, from the surface this church appeared to be advancing instead of backsliding.

C. The Condemnation of Thyatira

-But then the eyes of the Spirit began to seek out and in its seeking comes the startling revelation that all is not right with Thyatira.

-One man (John Stott - What Christ Thinks of The Church) reminds us of Satan’s strategy: “If the devil cannot conquer the church by the application of political pressure or the propagation of intellectual heresy, he will try the insinuation of

moral evil. This was the dragon's strategy in Thyatira."

-Thyatira is tolerating the vices of Jezebel. This Jezebel of Thyatira came under the form of religion and pretending to be inspired of God began to lead the church away with false doctrine.

-The old Apostle is urged by the Spirit to remove from the Old Testament a character associated with treachery, idolatry, immorality, and murder. She was the wife of the wicked king Ahab who persuaded her husband to allow the worship of a goddess named Astarte. It reeked of immorality.

-Thyatira literally became a hotbed of heresy because of the presence of this woman who influenced so many.

-There were some traits about this church that allowed the influence of Jezebel to run its course.

1. An Indulgent Permissiveness

-The heresy was tolerated among those of Thyatira because of the permissiveness that they had developed.

-There was the prevailing sense that no one wanted to offend someone else. What the true Church must understand about doctrinal issues is that we are not offending when we take a stance of the Word of God but rather we are actively contending for the faith that was once delivered to the saints (Jude 3-4)

Jude 3-4 – "Beloved my whole concern was to write to you on the subject of our common salvation, but I am forced to write you an appeal to defend the faith which has once for all been committed to the saints;" "For certain persons have slipped in by stealth (their doom has been predicted long ago), impious creatures who pervert the grace of our God into immorality and disown our sole liege and Lord, Jesus Christ." (Moffatt's)

-Consider the following as a sign of the tolerance of the "church," and I use that term loosely. These are some things gathered by George Barna:

A minority of regular attenders described evangelism, having meaningful

relationships with other people in their church, and giving 10% or more of their income to their church as very important endeavors.

After exploring the religious life of adults attending a variety of Protestant churches, only three types of churches - Pentecostal, Assembly of God, and non-denominational churches - had a majority of adherents who had shared their faith in Christ with a non-Christian in the past year.

Based on people's reactions to a series of moral issues, Americans are comfortable legalizing activities - such as abortion, homosexuality and pornography - that they feel are immoral.

Religious teaching or values minimally affect people's moral choices.

Adults who attend Pentecostal churches were more likely to possess biblical beliefs than were those attending other Protestant and Catholic churches.

A plurality of adults support the legalization of same-gender sexual relations, and even one-third of born again Christians support this aspect of gay rights.

After the 9-11 attacks, religious activity surged, but within two months, virtually every spiritual indicator available suggested that things were back to pre-attack levels. The majority of those who quit attending was because they had no "life-changing" experience.

Compared to teens throughout the past 20 years, today's teenagers have the lowest likelihood of attending church when they are living independent of their parents.

Heaven – There is a growing tendency to believe that all good people, whether or not they consider Jesus Christ to be their savior, will live in heaven after they die on earth. Half of all adults (51%) believe that if a person is generally good, or does enough good things for others during their life, they will earn a place in Heaven. (2001)

Hell – Three in ten adults (31%) see hell as an actual location: "a place of physical torment where people may be sent." (1996) Four in ten adults (37%), say "hell is not a place, but it represents a state of permanent separation from the presence of God." (1996) Describing hell as merely a symbolic term, not referring to a physical place was true for two in ten Americans (19%). (1996)

-Our tolerant age calls anyone who takes a stance on anything, intolerant. The spirit of the age has begun to creep into this church. To denounce a belief as heresy is to be branded "narrow." There is no room in a church for bigotry, but to accept anything in the name of Christianity is very foreign to Scripture. In fact, the harshest words from Scripture come to those who have departed from the

revealed truth of the Word and Spirit.

-There are some things that we can never depart from:

- The New Birth experience of the Early Church.
- The Necessity of Water and Spirit Baptism.
- The Monotheistic/Oneness View of God.
- The Principle of Biblical Separation.

-One can be doctrinally right and spiritually wrong. However, one can never be doctrinally wrong and spiritually right.

-The prime concern: What kind of church are we leaving to our children? That is the ultimate question.

2. An Influential Personality

-This Jezebel was so influential that she had her followers believing that there was some revelation beyond the parameters of Scripture. When error is injected into a system of truth, there always has to be some air of mystery touted.

-Why that this woman was not turned out of the church remains a mystery. Perhaps it was wealth and riches or perhaps profile and rank among the Thyatiran society. For whatever reason she was allowed to stay.

-She represented the influences of the world, yet knew enough of the church to fit in both places.

D. The Correction of Thyatira

-But all was not at loss. There were the penetrating eyes of the Lord that looked beyond all the outward pretense of success and saw beneath a wound that would not heal.

1. A Wound That Would Not Heal

On March 13, 1933, a large redwood tree fell in California. It had stood for

over twelve centuries. As the tree began to be cut up to be hauled away, a tree ring expert began to understand the story behind the tree merely by looking at the rings.

In 1147, a “ring shake”, possibly an earthquake, left a stringy white rot in a crevice. The tree was strong and the stamina of the tree managed to fend off the white rot and instead of the tree dying, the white rot was squeezed out.

The rings told the story of the fat years but also of the lean years too. Sometimes there had been long periods of rapid growth and other periods were marked by seeming stagnation. At one point, 112 rings occupied only eight inches, but the next 100 rings covered thirty-six inches.

In 1595 there was a fierce burn and a fungus grew beneath the scorched bark. But the tree managed to push away the ruin with new bark and killed the fungus. Another burn followed almost two-hundred years later in 1789. This burn in 1789 was followed with subsequent burns in 1806 but the most serious burn occurred in 1820.

In 1820, a thirteen foot fire scar marred the tree’s beauty. No one is for sure where the fire came from. Perhaps from a grass fire started by lightning or maybe a campfire that got out of control. The source isn’t really important. but it’s reaction to the fire was. The strong supporting roots began to lean in that direction. This redwood was in its prime—320 feet tall, weighing 500 tons, and for over a century it grappled and struggled to overcome the 1820 burn, but it was a wound that would not heal.

So on that quiet spring dawn, the point of a very critical balance was reached. Perhaps it was a gentle breeze that accomplished what storms never do. Or perhaps it was the gentle brush of a jay’s wing on one of the lower limbs. Or maybe it was the slight change in temperature as the heat began to expand on that spring morning. Yet, needless to say, the tree found that critical point and toppled over under the stress of the wound that never healed.

-The health of a church or individual is measured by the ability to heal over wounds and isolate infections by growing new bark and pushing forward with an upward growth. A well rooted Christian need not fear the ability of attack as much as the ability of recovery.

-There were those in Thyatira who could not resist the sway of this wicked influence and found themselves perishing spiritually.

-But God is a giver and gave the church a space to repent:

Revelation 2:21-23 – “And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.” “Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.” “And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.”

-How long will a man wait? The time for repentance was spurned because of darkened minds and insensible hearts. How long will you wait?

E. The Challenge to Thyatira

-As with all of the churches, there were a group who were marked by destiny. They were the overcomers. They were the persistent, they were the devoted, they were the committed who realized that even if life dealt them a terrible blow that there was a better life beyond this one.

Revelation 2:24-28 – “But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.” “But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.” “And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:” “And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.” “And I will give him the morning star.”

III. CONCLUSION – HOLD FAST

“That which ye have already hold fast till I come.” Hold fast what you have because it is very valuable.

God has placed you in possession of it.

It is connected with the salvation of your soul.

Even though it is just a small portion, it has the ability to yield an incredible increase.

-If you only had a single grain of corn, you would plant it and gain more next year. But what most do not realize is that within a time frame of eight to twelve years the harvest yield from that one single grain of corn would be enough to feed the world.

-When you have sown and reaped, sown and reaped again, the corn begins to wave not only from the valleys but from the mountains too!

-What man can set limits on the smallest work of the Spirit? What man can place a value on the smallest of efforts of righteousness?

-Hold fast that which you have because there is enough power in the Spirit within you to do a great work.

-Some would say that the church is in trouble today. Too worldly, too liberal, too conservative, too hard, too soft, too this, and too that. But I read something a few days ago about Douglas MacArthur's last speech at West Point just a few days before he died. He spoke about Duty, Honor, and Country, a portion of his speech went like this:

From your ranks come the great captains who hold the nation's destiny in their hands the moment the war tocsin sounds. *The Long Gray Line has never failed us. Were you to do so, a million ghosts in olive drab, in brown khaki, in blue and gray, would rise from their white crosses thundering those magic words-Duty-Honor-Country.*

-The whole impetus of his speech to those West Point graduates before his death, basically affirmed that there is a soldier somewhere, either in life or in death. Even if the life is crushed out of the soldier, there is a force that lies within the grave that will come roaring forth with passion and vengeance to continue the cause.

-To you and I, when God chose to call us and fill us but He also called us into a fight. Paul is constantly affirming to Timothy to endure, fight, keep the faith, lay hold on things, and struggle until the very end. There is a group in the grave currently that has emboldened us in 2002 and beyond.

- The resilient faith of Abraham,
- The admirable persistence of Jacob,
- The dauntless courage of Joshua,
- The lofty eloquence of Isaiah,
- The weeping heart of Jeremiah

-These are but a few of those from whom your own spiritual prodigy comes. Even in our modern days, there are great soldiers of the Cross whom we could mention who have been faithful in the discharge of their duties.

-So when Barna and his crowd or even those from within our own ranks began all the hand-wringing, complaining, etc., I remain unconvinced that the apostolic church is in trouble. I remain incredibly convinced that the Church is indeed in her finest hour.

-The apostolic church *will overcome* doctrinal calamity, personal agendas of demagogues, fumbling incompetence, lukewarmness, nepotism, anarchy, corruption of character, mad hunger for power, in-fighting, petty politics, and anything else you can think of to add to this short list.

-The reason that I know this is because of what is commonly being reported among us.

- Rob McKee, involved in home missions work went from an attendance of 38 to over 100 with folks in the altar hungry for God in a time frame of less than two years.
- Jim Oddo who has had an incredible number of people to be filled with the Holy Ghost since last May.
- Mike and Jill Patterson, (my brother-in-law and sister-in-law) foreign missionaries in Romania recently alternating on a forty-day fast, are planting their lives on foreign soil for revival in eastern Europe.
- Kelsey Griffin, one of the most incredible men to ever walk, is traveling all over the world now preaching, teaching, and discipling for his former Bible College students who are missionaries.
- My father-in-law, Joe Patterson, who is still just as hungry for revival as he was when he came out of Bible College in the mid-sixties and the church here in Dothan is moving.

-All of these are just a few of the examples afforded to us in this hour.

-I don't know about you, but I'm marching on.