

Theme: The church must not embrace a false 'tolerance' for those who compromise essentials which leads to an idolatry and immorality within the church.

I. Intro - J. Gresham Machen

- A. Raised in faith; crisis while studying in Germany
- B. Saw Bible was true; rejected 'liberalism'
- C. Forced out of Princeton for holding to orthodox faith
- D. Wrote 'Christianity & Liberalism' - major doctrines compromised - God & man; Bible; Christ; salvation
- E. Liberalism was a different faith - too far gone!
- F. Church in Thyatira in similar place

II. Jesus Speaks To His Church In Thyatira

A. The Church In Thyatira

To the angel of **the church in Thyatira** write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. Revelation 2:18

- 1. About 45 miles southeast of Pergamum; inland
- 2. Not as large or important as previous cities
- 3. However flourishing trade guilds - including bronze
- 4. Lydia purple cloth seller was from here (Acts 16:14)
- 5. Guilds had common meals monthly dedicated to their pagan deity patron - Apollo, son of Zeus one of the most important
- 6. Once gain, great pressure for Christians to conform - or suffer economically and socially
- 7. How will the church in Thyatira respond?

B. Jesus the Sovereign Son of God speaks to His church

To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of **the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.** Revelation 2:18

- 1. Deity of Christ is again stressed symbolically
- 2. Son of God - only here in all Revelation
 - a. Stresses His Deity of course
 - b. Counter to title given to Apollo and Emperor as 'son of Zeus'
 - c. This will be picked up in v27 with Psalm 2 quote
- 3. Eyes like fire - piercing gaze that sees everything
- 4. Same phrase in Revelation 19:14 as Jesus returns
- 5. Feet of burnished bronze - appropriate to Thyatira

C. The One Who speaks to the church is the Sovereign One whose eyes see everything, before Whom nothing is hidden.

III. Jesus' Word to the Church in Thyatira

A. A word of praise for growing good works

I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first. Revelation 2:19

- 1. Jesus praises them for their good works
- 2. Good works of love, faith, service, & perseverance
- 3. These good works are actually more than before
- 4. Thyatira is cast as the opposite of Ephesus

- a. Deeds, love, perseverance, first in both letters
- b. Ephesus shrinking in love's deeds, Thyatira growing
- c. Ephesus rebuked, commanded to do deeds of love, but Thyatira commended for growing in deeds

5. Thyatira is a church that is full of deeds of love and ministry, and they are actually doing more of these than ever before

B. A word of correction for false 'tolerance'

Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. Revelation 2:20

1. But I have this against you; Ephesus, Pergamum
2. You tolerate/permit false teaching - this is wrong!
3. Opposite of Ephesus in every way (2:1-7; 2:18-20)
 - a. Deeds of love - growing while Ephesus shrinking
 - b. Testing & rejecting false teachers - Ephesus commended for doing well; Thyatira rebuked for 'toleration'
 - c. Jesus calls the church to grow in deeds of love, but at the same time to test and reject false teachers and their ideas
4. The false teaching of immorality and idolatry
 - a. See last week for long discussion on these two
 1. Often related to one in Scripture
 2. The relationship between sexual immorality and idolatry is symbiotic, with each sin feeding off and fueling the other.

- b. The cultural ideas regarding God, 'tolerance', and sexual immorality posed a major issue for Christians in the 1st century - and today!

5. Jezebel and her teachings

- a. Jezebel was the Sidonian wife of Ahab
- b. She lured Ahab & Israel into idolatry (1 Ki 16:31-33)
- c. She supported 850 prophets of Baal and Asherah (1 Kings 18:19)
- d. She persecuted and killed the prophets of Yahweh (1 Kings 18:3-4)
- e. Summary - Jezebel urged Ahab to sell himself to do evil more than anyone else (1 Ki 21:25-26)

6. Jezebel - idolatry and immorality

- a. Jezebel clearly encouraged idolatry
- b. Immorality not mentioned in OT (but 2 KI 9:22)
- c. We know idol feast often included sexual sin
- d. But immorality here seems mainly to be metaphor for spiritual unfaithfulness to God

Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. ²¹ I have given her time to repent of **her immorality**, but she is unwilling. ²² So 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**. ²³ I will strike **her children** dead.... Revelation 2:20-23

1. Unlike Balaam, immorality not part of Jezebel in OT
2. Terms seem to imply immorality as metaphor
 - i) Her immorality - from a prophetess??
 - ii) Many commit **adultery** with her?
 - iii) Repent of her ways - but not their own?
 - iv) Her children implicated in her sin?
 - v) All seem to speak of followers rather than actual sexually immoral people
5. Common metaphor in OT

During the reign of King Josiah, the Lord said to me, "Have you seen what faithless Israel has done? She has gone up on every high hill and under every spreading tree and has committed adultery there....⁹Because Israel's immorality mattered so little to her, she defiled the land and committed adultery with stone and wood. Jeremiah 3:6,9
6. Immorality in Revelation usually refers to spiritual unfaithfulness unless in a list of vices
7. Jezebel is very similar to the whore of Babylon see in Revelation 14-18, who commits adultery with kings and merchants of the earth - clearly not physical but spiritual adultery in view

7. When a false sense 'tolerance' leads a church to allow false teaching, its faith is compromised, and it becomes an unfaithful bride to Jesus.

C. A word of judgment and warning'

I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. ²² So 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. ²³ I 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. Revelation 2:21-23

1. God gave 'Jezebel' time to repent; she refused
2. She will now be judged in accord with her unfaithfulness
 - a. Cast on the bed - place of adultery
 - b. Lovers judged with her - they will suffer
 - c. Children of her adultery will die
3. Churches that 'tolerate' false teachings, idolatry, and immorality will suffer the judgment of a slow painful death
4. Interestingly no direct command to repent here - it is really too late, the disease is too advanced
5. This is a warning to all the churches - Jesus does not abide sin or unfaithfulness, and if we do, we will be judged

D. A word of encouragement for the faithful

Now 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): ²⁵ Only hold on to what you have until I come. Revelation 2:24-25

1. To the faithful - hold on to what you have
2. Don't be seduced by Satan's so called deep secrets
3. You may not change all of them - just be faithful

E. A word of reward for the overcomers

To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations— ²⁷ 'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery'— just as I have received authority from my Father. ²⁸ I will also give him the morning star. ²⁹ He

who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Revelation 2:26–29

1. Quote from Psalm 2 installment of Messiah as King
2. If we remain faithful - we will rule with Him
3. You may not change all of them - just be faithful
4. I see - and I will reward my servants

IV. Applying the Word

- A. Do we see the deadly lie of false 'tolerance'?
1. This was a major temptation in 1st century
 2. External voices called the church to compromise and embrace the idolatry and sexual immorality of the surrounding culture
 3. This led to the disease of compromise in Pergamum, which had metastasized into a deadly disease of false 'tolerance' in Thyatira
 4. By compromising with 'Jezebel' the entire church was being overrun by idolatry, a false gospel, and an increasing embrace of the immorality of the surrounding culture
 5. We have seen this process in our day as 'liberal' churches, in the name of 'tolerance' accepted false teaching, have given way to immorality, and are in a death spiral
 6. Those who compromise in order to be relevant, and in the name of 'tolerance' allow false teaching and immorality, will find themselves utterly irrelevant - and eventually become intolerant of orthodox believers!

7. Our modern, false 'tolerance' will tolerate any belief or perverse behavior, except the idea that there is truth and error, good and evil - that they will not tolerate!
 8. There are many voices in even the evangelical church today calling for 'tolerance' within the church to allow questions in areas of essential doctrine and morality - and eventually they compromise biblical truth in these very areas (Rob Bell, Brian McLaren, etc.)
 9. NOTE: this is not speaking of how we treat the lost trapped in sin, but those within the church professing to be believers - especially those who call themselves leaders and teachers
 10. Am I more committed to biblical truth than cultural trends or popularity?
 11. Am I willing to be considered 'intolerant' to be faithful to Jesus?
- B. A prayer for BRCC to be faithful to Jesus - now and in the future

Thyatira - The 'Tolerant' Church

Revelation 2:18-27

March 19, 2017

Prayer

Jude 1:24-25

Teaching keywords: false teaching and heresy; idolatry and false gods; sexual sin; confession and repentance

To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—²⁵ to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen. Jude 1:24–25

To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. 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. ²⁰ Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. ²¹ I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. ²² So 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. ²³ I 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. ²⁴ Now 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): ²⁵ Only hold on to what you have until I come. ²⁶ To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations— ²⁷ 'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery'— just as I have received authority from my Father.

Revelation 2:18–27