

7 CHURCHES OF REVELATION

Seven Churches // Sermon 5

Thyatira: The Tolerant Church // Revelation 2:18-29

Let's turn to the book of Revelation.

- We will be back in **Revelation 2** today.

Tolerance is one of the biggest buzzwords in our world today.

- If you disagree with someone, you're labeled hateful.
- If you call sin what it is, you're called judgmental.

But here's the problem: the very thing the world applauds – tolerance – is the very thing Jesus rebuked in Thyatira.

- They weren't persecuted for their faith; they were praised for their tolerance.

And yet, when Jesus looked beneath the surface, He wasn't impressed – He was grieved.

- Because what the church tolerated, He confronted.

Big Idea: *Be careful not to tolerate what Jesus confronts.*

Here's the question we must ask this morning: *Are we tolerating the very things Jesus saved us from?*

This is a church stuck in sexual sin.

- They didn't confront it – they tolerated it.

They became what we might call a *progressive church*.

- Instead of standing on truth, they bent to culture.

- They had “coexist” bumper stickers on their cars and banners of *inclusion* on their walls.

But what looked like *progress to the world was a compromise to God.*

- This is Jesus’ warning to them (and us).

He gives us three (3) powerful truths we need to hear today:

1. Jesus sees beneath the surface.

Look at how Jesus introduces Himself:

[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** (strength and purity).

Jesus introduces Himself as the Son of God with *eyes like a flame of fire.*

- **This means His gaze is penetrating.¹**

He sees through the outer shell of believers.²

- Jesus looks beneath the surface, past the mask, into the heart.

Jesus knows what’s real and what’s fake.

He says: [19] “**I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first.**

On the outside, this was an impressive church.

- They had love (the only church praised for love).
- They had faith, service, and perseverance.
- They weren’t declining; they were growing.

If you visited Thyatira, you’d probably leave impressed.

- Everything looked good on the surface.

But Jesus said, “When I pop the hood, this church is a hot mess.”

Jesus wants depth and devotion, not decoration.

- He’s not looking for the most glamorous; He’s looking for the most genuine.

Think about Instagram.

- People can filter their pictures, adjust the lighting, edit the background – and make the picture perfect.

¹ <https://www.preceptaustin.org/revelation-2-commentary#19a>

² Charles Swindoll.

- But it's not real. It's a projection.

That's how Thyatira was.

- They had a perfect filter....but Jesus saw through it.

And we can fall into the same trap today.

- As a church, we can have cool branding, great music, powerful programs, and still be rotting away inside.
- As believers, we can wear our *Jesus is King* shirts, post our Bible verses, have church stickers on our cars, and wear a Sunday smile – all while hiding behind a mask.

But the eyes of God see through the façade/smoke.

Let me ask you: When Jesus looks at you...what does He see?

- I'm not asking what we see.
- I'm not asking what social media says.

What does Jesus see?

- Is it real or fake?
- Is it sincere or superficial?

Jesus sees beneath the surface.

2. Jesus confronts what we tolerate.

Jesus praises Thyatira for their love and service, but then he confronts the problem:

[20] But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel...

This name should make your stomach turn.

- In the OT, Jezebel was the queen who seduced God's people into idolatry and sexual immorality (1 Kings 16-21).

In fact, she was ~~calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants~~ God's people **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.**

She was *teaching and seducing God's people to practice sexual immorality...and she refused to repent.* (20-21)³

³ James M. Hamilton Jr., *Preaching the Word: Revelation—The Spirit Speaks to the Churches*, ed. R. Kent Hughes (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 97.

- To call someone “Jezebel” wasn’t a compliment – it meant they were seducing you away from God.

It appears there was a woman in Thyatira named Jezebel – and she apparently lived up to her name.

- She claimed to be a prophetess – but instead of pointing people to God, she seduced them into sin.

And the church tolerated it.

Notice the word *tolerate*.

- They didn’t endorse her sin, but they allowed it.

Silence in the face of sin is agreement with it.

- Sometimes we are too loud about the wrong things.

They didn’t confront her lovingly; they looked the other way.

- **They excused her sin in the name of being “non-judgmental, open-minded, and gracious.”**

But here’s the truth: what the church tolerates, Jesus confronts.

Tolerating sin is like tolerating weeds in your garden.

- You can ignore them, but they’re not going away – they spread.
- Eventually, they’ll choke out the good stuff in the garden.

Parents: What sin(s) are you tolerating in your home? Is there something you’re excusing as “just a phase”?

Child of God: What sin(s) are you ignoring in your own life? What shows, habits, relationships have you excused under the banner of “*it’s just once*” or “*It’s really not that bad.*”

Church: What sin(s) are we tolerating in our body? Are we lovingly confronting those sins or quietly hoping they disappear?

The sins you tolerate will eventually begin to dominate.

Tolerate – accept – be dominated by.

Remember: *The most unloving thing we can do is see a brother/sister in sin and choose to ignore it.*

- Real love steps in – lovingly, graciously, and mercifully.

Jesus continues with a chilling warning:

[22] Behold, **I will throw her onto a sickbed** (a bed of suffering), **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.

Judgment was coming – tribulation, suffering, and even death.

- This is so sobering because it reminds us that Jesus is serious about holiness in His church.

Jesus confronts what we tolerate.

3. Jesus rewards those who remain faithful.

But notice the hope in verse 24:

[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.

Even when most people were tolerating sin, not everyone gave in.

- Jesus says to the faithful: ***hold fast until I come.***
- Don't quit. Don't compromise.

Don't let go of God and the gospel.

And here's the encouragement: *Jesus rewards those who endure.*

He makes two (2) promises:

[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.'

There are two (2) rewards:

A. Authority with Christ.

[26] ... **I will give authority over the nations**, [27] **and he will rule them with a rod of iron**

This is the reward of ruling and reigning with Jesus.

- The world may see you as weak, but one day, the faithful will sit on the throne with Jesus.

B. Intimacy with Christ.

[28] And I will give him the morning star.

The “**morning star**” is Jesus.⁴

- In Rev. 22:16, He calls Himself the “bright and morning Star.”
- The reward isn’t just authority – it’s intimacy.
- It’s not just crowns – it’s Christ.

The greatest reward of faithfulness is Jesus Himself.

I remember when Cayla and I got engaged.

- We spent time saving up and picking out the perfect ring.
- When I got the ring, it burned a hole in my pocket.
- I couldn’t wait to ask her – so I didn’t.

But we didn’t get engaged because we loved the ring.

- We got engaged because we loved and treasured each other.

That’s what the promise is like.

We live in a world today that says: Don’t offend anyone.

- Ignore the sin. Just tolerate it.

But Jesus is calling us to *be holy and to be faithful*.

Let’s close with some questions to consider this week:

1. What sin am I tolerating in my own life?
2. What am I allowing in my home that Jesus would confront?
3. Am I loving people enough to confront sin with grace and truth, or am I choosing my own way?
4. Am I more concerned about *keeping peace* or *keeping purity*?
5. Am I holding fast? Or is my grip getting weaker?

BULLPEN:

Lydia was from Thyatira.⁵

⁴ Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Revelation*, ed., 77.

⁵ <https://biblehub.com/topical/t/thyatira.htm>

- The church was commended for its deeds, love, faith, service, and perseverance. However, it is also admonished for tolerating the false prophetess Jezebel, who led believers into immorality and idolatry.