

REVELATION: HELP FOR LIVING, HOPE FOR LEAVING

## Sermon no. 5

### HOW DO YOU SOLVE A PROBLEM LIKE THYATIRA?

Revelation 2:18-29

As we continue this diagnostic checkup for churches today in the seven churches of Revelation, we come across a paradoxical church named Thyatira.

In some ways, Thyatira has the best description of the four churches we've studied so far. It has the good works of Ephesus along with the love Ephesus lacked. It has the perseverance of Smyrna and the good theology of most of the church at Pergamum. Jesus even says, "You are doing more than you did at first." He means that the congregation was growing in faith, love and hope.

To Ephesus, Jesus said, "You were strong but now are getting weaker."

To Thyatira, he says, "You are good and getting better." That's high praise from the Lord.

But it was a very problematic church. And the problems that plagued it are common to many churches today. Look at how Jesus points this out:

#### 1. The good news (seemingly)- vv. 18-19

a) The Son of God Himself addresses you.

- Only here in the entire book is Jesus directly called "Son of God", a warning of strong words to come.

b) You are doing a great job!

- They were getting better at love, faith, service, and perseverance.

#### 2. The bad news: vv. 20-23

a) You tolerate a leader who leads people to sin ("Jezebel").

- It takes only one wrong person to do so much damage to any church. She/he is the one with the wrong heart, serving at the wrong place – as a leader.
- Yet if taken well, the Bible consistently shows that pronouncements of judgement also serve as a gracious warning, like in the case of Nineveh and Jonah.

- b) Your tolerance reveals your view of spiritual and sexual immorality.
- While the harshest judgment is specific to the erring leader, it is obvious by implication that judgement is also forthcoming to those who share her views on spiritual and sexual immorality.
- c) Your tolerance invites the judgement of Christ.
- Like Ephesus, we can be zealous and doctrinally sound, but lose our devotion to Christ. Or, like Thyatira, our love can be increasing yet lacking in the kind of discernment that is necessary to keep the church pure (Phil. 1:9–11). Like Pergamos and Thyatira, we may be so tolerant of evil that we grieve the Lord and invite His judgment.

### **3. The solution: “hold on to what you have” - vv. 24-29**

- a) Jesus doesn't ask for anything more: “I will not impose any other burden on you”.
- b) Jesus gives these encouragements:
- I will give authority over the nations.
  - I will also give him the morning star.

#### **Final Thoughts:**

What was the problem with Thyatira? Two words: “you tolerate”. Spiritual immorality often starts as something you tolerate, and ends up as something you do.

Remember this: spiritual immorality always precedes sexual immorality. Any of these are an abomination to God, that God always knows, and God always judges.

Let us ask the Lord's eyes, and our own, to sweep through the church and look for anything that invites His judgment, then ask God for the wisdom and courage to deal with it.