

Pursue Purity
Revelation 2:18-29
Rev. Brian Bill
February 21-22, 2026

I'm grateful to Pastor Daniel for jumping in at the last-minute last weekend. We finally had some good preaching around here! Two weeks ago, I lost my voice while preaching on Saturday night and barely made it through the 9:00 service on Sunday. I'm glad to be back in the saddle. In an effort to be compassionate, Kim Hawkins told me to keep it short today, so I don't strain my voice. That's not going to happen.

As we continue in our "Revelation Unveiled" series, please turn to Revelation 2:18-29. Here's a helpful summary of our passage: *Because it's inexcusable to tolerate the intolerable, commit today to hold fast to the truth so you won't compromise tomorrow.*

1. The character of Christ. Revelation 2:18 begins: "***And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write...***" Compared to the other six churches located in Asia Minor, Thyatira was the smallest and least important city. Interestingly, this church received the longest letter. Thyatira was home to more trade guilds than any other city. A guild was like a trade union of today, but each guild had a god, and each member was required to participate in idolatry and to take part in immorality.

This proved to be a big challenge for Christians. Some compromised and joined these guilds, which led to idolatry and immorality, while others held fast to their commitment to Christ and suffered socially and economically.

Notice how Jesus reveals His character in the second part of verse 18: "***...The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.***" The title "***Son of God***" was likely chosen to emphasize the majesty of His person and His position because Thyatira was also home to a massive temple to Apollo, the son of Zeus, who was known as the "Sun God." This reference to Jesus as the Son of God has its roots in Psalm 2:7: "***The Lord said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you.'***" To say Jesus is the "Son of God" means that when we worship Him, we are truly worshiping God Himself.

The description of King Jesus in 2:18 comes from Revelation 1:14-15: "***...His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze...***" This phrase is a

fulfillment of Daniel 10:6: “...*his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze...*” The city was known for its purple dye and for high-quality bronze weapons that when polished gleamed like gold. His eyes blazing like fire refers to His penetrating gaze that sees all things and overlooks nothing. His feet like burnished bronze represent strength and splendor and how He will pursue all that is evil and stamp it out. Jesus is the saving one, the searching one, and the Sovereign one.

Much of the false teaching in the early church had to do with the minimizing of Jesus. Many people thought Jesus was important, but not essential. They had given Him a place in their lives without recognizing He demands first place. Jesus may have been prominent to them, but He certainly was not preeminent.

Sadly, today many teachers and churches offer a version of Jesus which emphasizes friendliness, tolerance, and acceptance.

In essence, some have made Jesus into a bobblehead who simply nods at everything we do. According to a quick online search, you can get a Jesus bobblehead which portrays Him with a huge smile as He winks and gives a perpetual thumbs-up to you. It’s called the “Buddy Jesus Christ Bobblehead” for only \$39.95. Customers are urged to order soon because there are only nine of them left. Interestingly, when I clicked on the item, I saw something I’ve never seen before, a warning that said, “Frequently returned item.” I’m not surprised because this fake Jesus is ultimately disappointing.

We must move away from “What can Jesus do for me?” to “Am I living in light of His Lordship?” We don’t simply add Jesus to our lives like He’s some sort of app on our phones; we must adore Him with our lives through our allegiance, adoration, and obedience.

If you don’t get your idea of who Jesus is from the Bible, you may end up believing in a false Jesus. Ray Ortlund explains how many people today follow a fabricated Jesus commonly depicted in one of two ways.

- **The “feel-good Jesus.”** This false Jesus is always smiling, always agrees with you, never disapproves, and is grateful when you come to church every now and then. This Jesus tells you that everyone is going to Heaven because everyone is basically good at heart.

- **The “feel-bad Jesus.”** This Jesus is always serious and stern, pointing out your failures at every turn. He’s harsh and tells you to keep working harder to get to Heaven.

The real Jesus is a good Shepherd and a glorious King who responds to human sin with truth and grace. The true Jesus didn’t come to make us feel good or feel bad. He came to seek and save lost sinners like me, and like you (see Luke 19:1–10).

The fake feel-good Jesus isn’t honest with you about your sins and the false feel-bad Jesus isn’t forgiving when you do sin.

Jesus didn’t condemn the woman caught in adultery, but He also told her to live differently: **“Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more”** (John 8:11). Jesus gave grace to a sinner so she could be healed, and He told her truth by calling her to holy living.

In short, we must be convictional about sin while being compassionate toward sinners.

The real Jesus is not politically correct, but He is always perfectly correct. We must settle whether we will follow what Scripture says or what society says. Let’s not compromise by caving to culture, but let’s not clobber sinners either.

The question is not whether you believe in Jesus. The question is which Jesus do you believe in?

- Is He a manageable Jesus who fits into your plans and purposes?
- Is He a motivational Jesus who nods at you, gives you a thumbs-up, and cheers you on?
- Is He a condemning Jesus who keeps you in sin and shame?

Or is He the risen Lord, **“the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze”** (Revelation 2:18)?

The real Jesus will not take second place or be reduced to an accessory in your life. He is Lord and He stands full of grace and truth.

Don’t just admire Him today. Don’t just agree with Him. Bow before Him like the Apostle John did in Revelation 1:17: **“When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though dead.”**

Give Him first place in your affections and ambitions, your sports and your social media, your calendar and your checkbook, your faith and your family, your relationships and your reputation, your attitudes and your actions, your disappointments and your distractions, your suffering and your sickness, your work and your worship, your public witness and your private world, your fears and your future, because He already holds first place in the universe.

In other words, make sure He is preeminent in your life, not just a prominent part of your life as Colossians 1:18 says: ***“So that in everything He might be preeminent.”***

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2. The commendation from Christ. Jesus has some sweet words of encouragement for these believers in verse 19: ***“I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first.”*** Once again, we hear Jesus say, ***“I know”*** as He celebrates six specific qualities about them. J. Vernon McGee refers to them as the “credentials of Christians.”

- **Their works.** This word referred to their deeds done for the Lord.
- **Their love.** In contrast to the Ephesian church which had left their first love, the church at Thyatira was known for their love.
- **Their faith.** These Christians could be counted on.
- **Their service.** They gave themselves sacrificially and joyfully to others. The word carries the idea of *“those who kick up dust.”* In other words, they were so committed that they kicked up a cloud of dust as they served.
- **Their patient endurance.** They persistently persevered.
- **Their latter works exceed the first.** These Christians were not coasting but were growing in faithfulness and fruitfulness. They were not standing still, stagnant, or satisfied with the status quo. The word ***“exceed”*** means, *“to the utmost.”* They were doing more than ever! This makes me think of how Psalm 92:14 urges us to finish well: ***“They still bear fruit in old age.”***

Many churches rely on traditional metrics like bodies, budget, and buildings. The more evangelistically minded add a fourth B: baptisms. While these numbers are

easy to track and provide some operational insight, they are inadequate or even misleading indicators of true church health, discipleship, or mission fulfillment.

Here are the types of questions we should be asking ourselves about our church:

- **Is our worship leading to working for Him?**
- **How are we doing at loving God and people?**
- **Are we being faithful to the Lord and to others?**
- **In what ways are we sacrificially serving?**
- **Are we enduring our problems with patience?**
- **Are we growing in each of these areas?**

As the Vanderbloemen search team works at identifying candidates for our Celebrate Recovery and Counseling Pastor and for a Young Adults pastor, our trust is in the Lord to provide these positions. These open positions are scheduled to go “live” this week. The Lord has always provided gifted pastors at Edgewood and I’m confident He will do so again. In light of that, let’s pray Jeremiah 3:15: ***“And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.”***

Our task is to seek the Lord and to pray for God’s provision for these pastoral positions. This month, we’ll be hosting five different focused times of prayer.

Sunday, March 8, at 12:15 p.m. in the Family Life Center

Tuesday, March 10, at 6:00 p.m. in the Worship Center

Sunday, March 15, at 5:00 p.m. in the Student Center

Friday, March 20, at 5:30 p.m. in the Worship Center

Sunday, March 22, at 8:00 a.m. in the Student Center

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3. The confrontation by Christ. After commending them for these good things, in verse 20, Jesus confronts them for their tolerance and compromise: ***“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.”*** The phrase ***“against you”*** is pointed and personal and carries the idea of *“opposition or being set*

against someone.” It’s courtroom language. Jesus is saying, “I have a serious charge against you.” The word “**tolerate**” means “to permit or allow.”

The name “**Jezebel**” has always conjured a reaction of revulsion because she was the most wicked queen in Israel’s history. Here’s a brief overview of Jezebel’s life:

Jezebel was a pagan princess who was married to King Ahab of Israel. She is depicted in 1 and 2 Kings as a quintessential wicked queen who aggressively promoted the worship of Baal and Asherah, challenging the exclusive worship of Yahweh and promoting unrestrained immorality. She manipulated her husband to secure power, ordered the systematic murder of prophets, and orchestrated the killing of Naboth to steal his vineyard. Her defiance of the prophet Elijah led to a violent, prophesied downfall, where she was thrown from a window and devoured by dogs, cementing her reputation as an archetype of evil.

By using the name “**Jezebel**,” the radiant and risen Christ evokes the Old Testament image of false teaching, spiritual compromise, and corrupt influence within God’s people. The issue was not merely immorality in the culture, but that rampant immorality was being tolerated inside the church.

Here’s what we know about this woman in the church at Thyatira.

- She claimed to be a prophetess. She claimed to receive revelation directly from God, telling them what they wanted to hear, especially that it was ok to gratify their carnal desires and appetites.
- She taught believers that it was acceptable to participate in pagan guild feasts.
- She encouraged sexual immorality and idol worship as we see in the phrase, “**...is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.**”
- She used her powerful personality, persuasive speech, and a seductive smile to lead believers into compromise with the surrounding culture.

In verse 21, we see the Lord’s graciousness in giving this false prophetess an opportunity to repent but she rejected the offer: “**I gave her time to repent, but she refused to repent of her sexual immorality.**” In Ezekiel 18:23, 32 God says, “**Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live? For I have no pleasure in the**

death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live.” 1 Timothy 2:4 says God “desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

Because she wouldn't repent, and the church tolerated her evil teaching, God will carry out His justice according to verses 22-23: ***“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, and I will strike her children dead...”*** Her bed of immorality will be turned into a bed of illness.

Notice that this call to repentance is also directed to compromising Christians in the church: ***“...unless they repent of her works.”*** God is patient but His patience is on a timer according to 2 Peter 3:10: ***“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.”*** God takes sin seriously and so should we. 1 Corinthians 11:30 describes what happened when people were taking communion in an unworthy manner in the church at Corinth: ***“That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.”***

God intends for this to be a lesson not just for Thyatira, but for every church according to the last part of verse 23: ***“...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.”*** As 1 Samuel 16:7 says, the Lord sees what is inside us, judging our thoughts, attitudes, and motives: ***“For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”***

I think of what happened after Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead after lying to the Holy Spirit in Acts 5:11: ***“And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.”*** Acts 9:31 summarizes the impact on the entire early church: ***“So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.”*** Likewise, we need to recapture awe for the Almighty because according to Exodus 20:20, the fear of the Lord can keep us from sinning: ***“...that the fear of Him may be before you, that you may not sin.”*** Recently, Mike Burns passed along something Oswald Chambers wrote: ***“Jesus Christ is both the sternest and gentlest of Saviors.”***

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4. The call of Christ. After describing the reality of judgment, Jesus encourages the believing remnant to remain strong in verses 24-25: ***“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. Only hold fast what you have until I come.”*** One of the reasons false teaching is so seductive is that it often promises deep and hidden things.

Thyatira was also a center of occult worship, with a temple dedicated to fortune-telling. The word “occult” comes from the Latin *occultus*, which means “*hidden, secret, or concealed.*” It refers to knowledge or practices that claim to reveal hidden spiritual realities which are supposedly beyond ordinary understanding. Check out these popular occult book titles:

- The Secret Teachings of All Ages.
- The Secret Doctrine.
- The Book of Shadows.

One source puts it well:

*“They portrayed their teaching as deeper, more enlightened truth reserved for the initiated. But what they labeled “deep” was actually dark. What they marketed as advanced spirituality was satanic deception. The danger of the occult mindset is that it appeals to pride (“You’ll know what others don’t”), curiosity (“There’s more beneath the surface”), and rebellion (“You’re ready for deeper truth.)” But Christ never calls His followers to hidden darkness; He calls them to revealed truth. The gospel is not a secret code for the elite; it is the openly proclaimed good news of Jesus Christ. That’s why His command is simple and steady: **“Only hold fast what you have until I come.”** You don’t need secret knowledge. You don’t need deeper mysteries. You need to cling to the truth already revealed in Christ.”*

Tragically, sometimes “so-called” Christian books also promote things like unveiled mysteries, ominous omens, speculative typology, and secret insights. Be discerning, church. Here’s a helpful grid to keep in mind:

- Does the teaching exalt Christ clearly and centrally?
- Does it handle Scripture in context, or does it rely on extra-biblical revelation from a so-called prophet or prophetess who claims to speak for God?

- Does it ground itself in the gospel?
- Does it avoid date-setting?
- Does it produce repentance and holiness rather than fear, pride, and fascination?

Friends, be wary of those who promote themselves as prophets and prophetesses because everything God wants us to know is already in the Bible. Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 24:11: ***“And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.”*** Let’s keep 1 John 4:1 in the forefront of our minds: ***“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.”*** The issue isn’t whether something is “deep” because Christianity has profound depth. The real question is whether the depth comes from the faithful exposition of the revealed Word of God.

Not long after the church at Thyatira received Christ’s warning, the region became home to a movement called Montanism, which claimed fresh revelation from God beyond Scripture. When churches tolerate extrabiblical voices, it doesn’t take long before “new revelation” begins to rival the written Word of God. When Scripture is no longer sufficient, the church is no longer stable.

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5. The comfort of Christ. In verse 26, we’re challenged to conquer and to finish strong: ***“The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end...”*** Pergamum experienced persecution on the outside by the sword and Thyatira was persecuted on the inside by a seductress. The key to conquering is found in Revelation 12:11: ***“And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.”***

Believers are given two amazing promises.

- **We receive the authority of Christ’s power.** We see this in the second part of verse 26 and verse 27: ***“...to him I will give authority over the nations, 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.”*** We know from Revelation 19:15 that Christ will rule the nations: ***“From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.”*** This is a

fulfillment of Psalm 2:8-9: ***“Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”***

Amazingly, we will be co-regents with Christ, ruling and reigning with Him as we see in Revelation 20:6: ***“...they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.”*** In Heaven, we won’t be sitting on a cloud, stumming a harp because we’ll be busy serving, worshiping, and ruling.

- **We receive the assurance of Christ’s presence.** This gift is described in verse 28: ***“And I will give him the morning star.”*** The morning star, which is most often the planet Venus, appears when the night is at its darkest, just before the first light of dawn. It signals that the darkness is about to break and a new day is coming. Interestingly, Balaam prophesied in Numbers 24:17 that ***“a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel.”***

2 Peter 1:19 says, ***“And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.”*** In Revelation 22:16, Jesus identifies Himself as ***“the bright morning star.”*** That means this promise is not merely about a reward but about relationship. The overcomer receives Christ Himself! Jesus is saying something like this: ***“It’s mighty dark now, but hope is coming. Hang on, I’m coming to get you and when I do, we’ll rule and reign together.”***

In a world filled with temptations for idolatry and immorality, Jesus assures faithful followers that the darkest hour will not have the final word. For believers in Thyatira facing discouragement and deception, this gift meant they could hold on. It’s dark now but the Son is coming. When Christ rises like the dawn, the darkness cannot remain.

As with every letter to the churches, in verse 29, every Christian and every church is urged to lean in and listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying: ***“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*** The question is not merely what is He saying to Thyatira, but what is He saying to you today? What is the Spirit saying to Edgewood?

One day a father asked his 15-year-old daughter, “*What is a name that kids in your school do not want to be called?*” To which she answered, “*The worst thing you can be called at our school is ‘intolerant.’*”

Being seen as inclusive and tolerant has become a core social virtue for many kids and teens. To be called “intolerant” isn’t just an insult; it’s moral exile because it’s often used to signal moral superiority and shut down disagreement. It ties directly into the broader cultural emphasis on inclusivity, where the expectation is to affirm and celebrate sinful behavior without critique, especially around identity, beliefs, or lifestyles.

I wonder if you’re ready to make a commitment to truth today. While we must be kind and loving toward people who believe differently than we do, we don’t have to agree with them. We must stand up for what the Bible teaches, without wavering or waffling.

It’s time to be courageously convictional about sin and compassionately committed to sinners. Are you ready to make a commitment to truth today?

I’m going to put our main idea up on the screen again, but this time make it more personal. *Because it’s inexcusable to tolerate the intolerable, I commit today to hold fast to the truth, so I won’t compromise tomorrow.*

Read it again silently and if there’s anything you need to make right with God, spend some time confessing and repenting right now before we celebrate communion. 1 Corinthians 11:28 says we’re not to take communion flippantly: ***“Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.”***

Silent Prayer

If you’re ready to stand on God’s word, let’s declare this commitment together: *Because it’s inexcusable to tolerate the intolerable, I commit today to hold fast to the truth, so I won’t compromise tomorrow.*

Communion

We practice open communion, which means you don’t need to be an Edgewood member to participate, but you do need to be a born-again believer.

Our deacons and pastors will distribute the trays by passing them down each row. When the tray comes to you, simply lift a cup straight out. You'll notice there are two cups stacked together. Give a little twist and hold one in each hand until everyone is served so we can partake together.

BTW, the bread we use is gluten free, and we use grape juice instead of wine.

Distribution of Elements

Forever family, before we take the bread, let's focus on these words from 1 Corinthians 11:23-24: ***"For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when He was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, He broke it, and said, 'This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'"***

Before we drink from the cup, consider these words from 1 Corinthians 11:25-26: ***"In the same way also He took the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."***

New Member

10:45 – Alex Wueste (Pastor Chris to introduce)

Pray for Lance Heuer's Trip