



November 2

Conquer Series: The Contaminated Church

- Nov 2 Thyatira: The Contaminated Church Sermon Notes

Revelation 2:18–29 (ESV) 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.

19 “ ‘I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. 20 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. 21 I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. 22 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, 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. 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. 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.’

This past Friday on Halloween, some school kids dressed up in their costumes were lined up for lunch. And at the serving table was a bowl full of apples with a note from the lunch

lady. It said, *“Take only one, God is watching.”* At the other end of the table was a large pile of halloween candy. Reese’s, Snickers, Peanut M&M’s. By the pile there was also a note, clearly written by one of the students. It read, *“Take all you want, God is watching the apples.”*

Jesus’ beloved disciple John is exiled on the Island of Patmos and Jesus appears to him and gives him a revelation. It just means uncovering. The revelation is of Jesus.

- Jesus give John a job. *“Write down everything you see and send it to seven churches: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.”*
- Today we come to the letter to Thyatira. The fitting word for this church is corrupted.
- Jesus points to the works of three different people here.

Your works:

- There’s a lot that Jesus commends.
 - He points to their love. There’s nothing greater than love.
 - He mentions their faith. Faith in Jesus gives us the fuel for love.
 - Then their service. Service is what happens naturally when we truly do love someone.
 - And finally, their patient endurance. It’s just one Greek word here and it means the ability to keep going in hard circumstances. It’s powering through. It’s steadfastness.
 - Just like service comes from love, patient endurance comes from faith. Our faith in Jesus is what fuels the ability to keep going no matter what.
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- The line to circle in your Bible is, *Your later works exceed the first.*
 - It means that they understood their faith was not a one time event, but an every day journey.
 - For the people in Thyatira, their growth was up and to the right.
 - The believer’s spiritual secret in Thyatira was always taking the next step with Jesus.
 - As a result, as the journey went on, they got stronger.
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- Of all the seven cities Jesus sends letters to, Thyatira is the smallest city. Probably also the least significant city of the seven.
 - Of the church one scholar wrote this: *“The Roman Empire thought that this church was too small, too insignificant, to persecute.”*
 - Satan loves to do to us is make us feel that way: small. *What could God see in me?*
 - Jesus comes in with *eyes like a flame of fire*. Eyes like flames do not look at the same things that the world does, and they do not look at those things in the same way the world does.
 - 1 Samuel 16:7 (ESV) *7...the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”*

- These eyes of Jesus, see everything. Nothing escapes his notice, not even little you in a little small town. And he sees the things that other people don't see.
- All he's looking for, in you, is faithfulness. He's not after greatness, just goodness. Not flash, but faith.
- The insignificant Thyatira believers probably never thought their church would be talked about 2000 years later. But here they are. Commended and rewarded.

Your works: They may look small, but they're not.

Her works:

- Ok, who's the her and what are her works?
 - Thyatira was a working town. It was known for manufacturing. This is a blue collar, night shift town.
 - Because of this, there are organizations that represented the worker. We would call them unions. They called them guilds. There were more trade guilds in Thyatira than in any other asian city.
 - To make a living in this working city, you had to first belong to a guild.
 - Membership in a guild also involved attendance at guild banquets. Guild banquets were held in pagan temples. Sacrifices to the pagan god were part of the deal. Meat sacrificed to pagan gods would be the main course of the evening.
 - You can see the dilemma for someone following Jesus. To refuse to attend the guild banquet and eat the meat that had been sacrificed to an idol would mean financial ruin.
 - On the other hand, to attend these feasts to keep your job meant to be a part of everything that went on. All the ancillary practices in the pagan temples, drunkenness and sexual immorality, would come with the territory.
 - What is the Christian to do?
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- A woman Jesus calls *Jezebel* apparently had a solution. She calls herself a prophetess, which means she claimed to speak for God himself.
 - She reasoned that an idol was of no consequence. That's true...Paul says as much in 1 Cor. 8:4.
 - But she made a terrible leap that since an idol is of no consequence, then it won't hurt if we participate in a little worship of that idol to keep our jobs. And if we're they're already, when in Rome, right? Our freedom in Christ can be expressed in some sexual license. No problem.
 - Jezebel advised Christians to go ahead and partake in the guild banquets and eat such meals.
 - You should understand that this person had no desire to destroy the church. She wanted to bring in new ways to help preserve people's faith.
 - But in trying to keep a hold of faith, they become tolerant of evil, and end up letting go of it.
 - Her works may look smart, but they're not.

What we get here is Justice Jesus.

- *I will throw her on the sickbed. Those who follow along I'll throw into tribulation. Her children I will strike dead.*
 - We hold our hands over our eyes at Justice Jesus. Why so harsh here?
 - Short answer: Contamination has to be taken seriously.
 - If it's not, serious consequences result. Spiritual contamination that this Jezebel is sprinkling in to the faith, turns faith into something else altogether. It leads people away from God. It leads to tribulation, sickness, and spiritual death.
 - Few things anger God more than someone who leads people away from him, into death.
 - There's no such thing as a little sin. Just a little sin in a life, and that life is a sinful life. Just a little sin in me, and I'm a sinner.
 - **Her works may look smart, but they're not.**
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- I hope you noticed as we were reading, that Jesus was merciful here. Vs 21: I gave her time to repent.
 - How did she respond to this mercy? She refused.
 - Jesus is just giving Jezebel what she wants. He's turning her over to her idolatry and immorality. He's bringing her the natural consequences of her choice: sickness, tribulation, and ultimately death.
 - It didn't have to be that way. Jesus didn't want it to be that way.

My works:

- Vs 24: There are people in Thyatira who do not hold to Jezebel's teaching.
 - To them, Jesus says...I have no other burden for you. Just keep doing what you're doing. Only hold fast to what you have until I come.
 - What is that?
 - Verse 26. *To the one who conquers. To the one who holds on and keeps...*
 - We expect Jesus to say hold on to and keep **your works**.
 - Prove yourself to be loving, faithful, serving, enduring. We expect Jesus to say, Just do it.
 - But no, it's not about our works at all. Whose works? Jesus says, **My works**.
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- He's pointing to the cross.
 - *God made him who knew no sin to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* (2 Cor 5:21) That's his work. That's what we have to hold on to.
 - The invitation of Jesus here, is have you claimed my work as your own? Have you traded your sin for my righteousness?
 - Have you trusted in **My works** - **They may look simple, but they're not. They're life.**
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- To those that do, the reward here is authority.
 - To the overlooked and forgotten, *"You will rule with me."*
 - And: I will give you the morning star. Revelation 22:16: Jesus is the bright morning star. 2 Peter 1:19: Jesus is called the morning star.

- To people who thought God had no reason to notice them, he gives himself.
- It's the ultimate reward for the Christian.
- And on that day...
 - ...love and faith, service and patience will have their fulfillment.
 - ...idolatry and immorality will be clearly seen as the snares and traps they really are.
 -Jesus the risen Messiah and Lord will establish his glorious, righteous, just, reign over the whole world.
- His eyes of fire will see everything. They'll see you. And love you.

If you have ears today, use them. And hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

"There is no saint without a past, no sinner without a future." —Augustine