

Tolerating the Intolerable

Revelation 2:20-23

Thought for the Day: The Lord is not pleased when we tolerate sin (i.e., false teachings, sexual immorality, and idolatry), either in our church, or in our own lives. The remedy for sin is repentance; and if we do not repent, we can expect severe discipline from the Lord, even to the point of death.

Appearances can be deceiving! The reality can be very different from the image. On the surface, the church in Thyatira had several commendable characteristics. But just below the surface, spiritual corruption was eating away at the heart and soul of the church. Jesus was preparing to take severe disciplinary action against those who refused to repent of their sins.

III. The Condemnation (2:20-23)

20 But I have this against you...

- No amount of love and sacrificial service (vs. 19) can make up for or cover over the toleration of evil, either in a church or in our personal lives.
- The Lord takes note of and commends us for those things that are pleasing to Him, but He does not ignore or condone those things that are contrary to His character and Word.
- “Just because I am being blessed and am active in the ministry of my church, motivated properly and committed to the message of God’s Word in my life, does not mean that everything is okay—that God is pleased with everything I say and do.”
(Hocking, *World Leader*, p. 71)

...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 pastor and people were permitting a woman, who claimed to be a prophetess of God, to teach and encourage sexual immorality and idolatry.
- In addition, she and her followers were involved in some kind of occult practices—“the deep things of Satan.” (Vs. 24)
- It is most likely that “Jezebel” is a symbolic name signifying that she behaved like Jezebel in the O.T. who enticed Israel to worship the false god, Baal.
- Jezebel was considered to be the most evil woman who ever lived. (1 K 19; 2 K 9)
- It may be that this Jezebel in Thyatira was encouraging the believers in the church to compromise their faith by participating in the worship of the gods and goddesses of the guilds so that they wouldn’t lose their jobs or social status.
 - “It was no doubt in connection with the trade guilds in Thyatira that this teaching and deception found fertile soil. Christians were being persuaded that it was acceptable to be involved in these sinful practices because it was a part of their job. It was a relief to these believers to think that the Spirit of God might be approving of these things because a prophetess was proclaiming its acceptability.”
 - “Today we have many leaders who claim to be prophets or prophetesses of

God. They say God talks to them and gives them special messages in addition to what is already found in the Bible. The danger of this should be obvious no matter how sincere the individual may be. A given teaching is right or wrong based upon the authority of the Bible, not the personality or claims of a given leader." (2 Timothy 4:1-4) (*Hocking, World Leader, pp. 71-72*)

21 I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality.

- God's patience and mercy have a limit, and when that limit is reached, His judgment falls! (2 Peter 3:9; Romans 2:3-5; Revelation 9:20-21)
- God "gives us time to get right with Him, but we should never assume that He will not judge us. If we do not judge ourselves, we will be judged by God (1 Corinthians 11:31-32)." (*Hocking, World Leader, p. 72*)

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 as your works deserve.

- God's declared intention to judge and punish those who were displeasing Him in the church in Thyatira.
- God's declared intention to evaluate and deal with each of us according to our works.

...I will throw her onto a sickbed...

- Jezebel's bed of immorality was going to become a bed of physical sickness—perhaps sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).
- Our sins can become the instrument that God uses to bring His judgment upon us.

...I will throw those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation...

- Whether actual adultery or spiritual adultery, those who were committing sin with Jezebel were going to experience great distress unless they repented.

...I will strike her children dead...

- Unrepentant sin can ultimately lead to untimely death.

And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve.

- "The simple point here is that we cannot escape the judgment of God. We cannot tolerate what went on in Thyatira and expect to avoid the coming judgment of God. God knows what we are doing—nothing is hid from His knowledge and presence (Hebrews 4:13)—and we are accountable to Him... This truth is presented in the Bible over and over again (Romans 14:10, 12; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 2 Corinthians 5:10). There is no escape."
- "To the believer in Jesus Christ, the judgment of Christ is for reward, not to determine eternal life and personal salvation. To the unbeliever, the judgment of Christ results in eternal punishment. All of us will give account." (*Hocking, World Leader, p. 73*)