

# The Church with Unhealed Wounds – Thyatira

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## Reading

Rev 2:18-29 *"To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. 19 I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first. 20 Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. 21 I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. 22 So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. 23 I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. 24 Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you): 25 Only hold on to what you have until I come. 26 To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations-- 27 'He will rule them with an iron sceptre; he will dash them to pieces like pottery' -- just as I have received authority from my Father. 28 I will also give him the morning star. 29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."*

## 1. Introduction – The Character of Christ

The detail that immediately stands out in the address to the church at Thyatira is how the Lord is described. The other churches find Him among their midst but not in such a dramatic way as does Thyatira.

Thyatira finds a far different Christ who is coming to deal with them. In Revelation 2:18, He is described as *"The Son of God, He who has His eyes like a flame of fire and His feet like burnished metal ..."* He is going to walk through their midst with a judgment that will

be penetrating. The Lord looks at the church in Thyatira and looks upon a harvest of wickedness that has grown from the influence of Jezebel.

- **His Eyes**

Are described as a flame of fire. He can see directly through their flaws. Hidden from men but not hidden from God. Those eyes blaze with righteousness not with madness. The wrath of God is not some personal attack against those who displease Him, but rather it is His revulsion against the sin He finds.

- **His Feet**

Are likened to fine brass. He is ready to trample the sins of the perpetrators under His feet. Biblically treading on anything has to do with victory and contempt. Victory over the defeated (Psalm 91:13) and contempt for the things trampled under the feet as worthless (Matthew 5:13).

## **2. The Church at Thyatira**

### **a. The Geographical Location**

Thyatira was a city that was established around 290 B.C. It had been a military town and housed Roman soldiers. The Romans in their ingenuity used cities around their capitols to serve as sentinel blocks. When an attack came, the enemy would have to fight through a “sentinel” city before progressing on to the main battle.

These outposts were sentinel cities; they served nothing more than as an outpost that would delay enemy soldiers while the main city was preparing to counter-attack. These sentinel cities were destined to be destroyed, to be rebuilt, to be destroyed, to be rebuilt . . . again and again.

In the ancient days, this city actually became an important commercial city because it lay along a great trade route that existed. It became the centre of the wool and dying industry. In fact, when we revert back to Acts 16, we find Thyatira’s most famous convert, Lydia, a merchant of purple.

### **b. The Character and Commendation of Thyatira**

When John proceeds to write the words of the church at Thyatira, the early words are almost glowing:

- **He finds works.** The lifestyle directed by holy principles
- **He finds charity.** The love of Christ constrained them
- **He finds service.** The active involvement of ministry to those who needed help
- **He finds faith.** The active faith that had confidence in a strong God
- **He finds patience.** The ability to calmly endure the attack over evil of which the church had no control
- **He then mentions their works again**

Thyatira overcame the common trend with most all people and churches. They were seemingly going to finish stronger than they started. So, instead of backsliding, from a surface look, this church appeared to be advancing instead of backsliding. Wouldn't we have liked to be in this church?

### **c. The Condemnation of Thyatira**

Then the eyes of the Spirit began to look very closely below the surface and the result was that not all was right with Thyatira – seriously not right.

Thyatira was tolerating the vices of Jezebel. This Jezebel of Thyatira put forward a form of religion and she pretended to be inspired by God and so began to lead the church away with false doctrine.

Thyatira literally became a hotbed of heresy because of the presence of this woman who influenced so many.

There had to be something inherent in this church that allowed the influence of Jezebel to run its course. Two things were leading them to destruction:

#### **1) An Indulgent Permissiveness**

The heresy was tolerated among those of Thyatira because of the permissiveness that they had developed. There was the prevailing sense that no one wanted to offend someone else.

What the true Church must understand about doctrinal issues is that we are not offending when we take a stance of the Word of God but rather we are actively contending for the faith. (Jude 3,4)

Jude 3,4 – *“Beloved my whole concern was to write to you on the subject of our common salvation, but I am forced to write you an appeal to defend the faith which has once for all been committed to the saints;” “For certain persons have slipped in by stealth (their doom has been predicted long ago), immoral creatures who pervert the grace of our God into immorality and disown our only Lord, Jesus Christ.”* (Moffatt's)

Consider the following as a sign of the tolerance of the 'church,' and I use that term loosely. These are some things gathered by Christian pollster George Barna.

- Based on people's reactions to a series of moral issues, many Western Christians are comfortable legalising activities that they feel are immoral - such as abortion, homosexuality and pornography
- Religious teaching or values minimally affect people's moral choices
- A plurality of adults support the legalisation of same-gender sexual relations, and even one-third of born again Christians support this aspect of homosexual rights

- There is a growing tendency to believe that all good people, whether or not they consider Jesus Christ to be their Saviour, will live in heaven after they die on earth
- Three in ten adults (31%) see hell as, “*an actual location;*” four in ten adults (37%), say, “*hell is not a place, but it represents a state of mind.*” Two in ten adults describe hell as “*merely a symbolic term, not a physical place*”

Our tolerant age calls anyone who takes a stance on anything, intolerant or worse. The spirit of the age has begun to creep into the Church. To denounce a belief as heresy is to be branded “narrow.” There is no room in a church for bigotry, but to accept **anything** in the name of ‘Christianity’ is foreign to Scripture. In fact, the harshest words from Scripture come to those who have departed from the revealed truth of the Word and Spirit.

We can never depart from some things:

- The New Birth experience demanded by Jesus
- The Necessity of Water and Spirit Baptism
- The View of God: Father, Son & Holy Spirit ... one God in three persons, the blessed Trinity
- The Principle of Biblical Separation ... hell is real and fed by the broad road, not the narrow one

Our prime concern must be, “*What kind of church are we leaving to our children?*” That is the ultimate question.

## 2) An Influential Personality

This Jezebel was so influential that she had her followers believing that she spoke with a prophetic voice and had some revelation way beyond the parameters of Scripture.

Why this woman was never thrown out of the church remains a mystery. Perhaps it was wealth and riches or perhaps profile and rank among the Thyatiran society. For whatever reason she was allowed to stay.

She represented the influences of the world, yet knew enough of the church to fit in both places.

### d. The Correction of Thyatira

However, all was not at loss. There were the penetrating eyes of the Lord that looked beyond all the outward pretence of success and saw beneath a wound that would not heal, a sickness born of deliberate and continuous sin.

## 1) A Wound That Would Not Heal

The health of a church or individual is measured by the ability to heal over wounds and isolate infections. A well-rooted Christian need not fear the ability of attack and can be certain of the ability of recovery if spiritual injury should come.

However, there were those in Thyatira who could not resist the sway of this wicked influence and found themselves perishing spiritually, having a wound that would not heal because of persistent sinning.

Yet, God is a merciful giver and gave the church a space to repent:

*Rev 2:21-23 “I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. 22 So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. 23 I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.”*

How long will a person wait? The time for repentance was spurned because of darkened minds and insensible hearts. How long will you wait to right yourself with God?

### e. The Challenge to Thyatira

As with all of the churches, there was a group who were **marked by destiny**. They were the overcomers. They were the persistent, they were the devoted, and they were the committed who realised that even if life dealt them a terrible blow that there was a better life beyond this one.

*Rev 2:24-28 “Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you): 25 Only hold on to what you have until I come. 26 To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations-- 27 'He will rule them with an iron sceptre; he will dash them to pieces like pottery' -- just as I have received authority from my Father. 28 I will also give him the morning star.”*

## 3. Conclusion

### a. Hold Fast

Hold fast to what you have no matter how small it may seem to be, because it is very valuable. Hold fast that which you have because there is enough power in the Spirit within you to do a great work.

### b. Jesus Grants Power and Dominion over the Rest of the World

*Power over the nations*, which may refer to:

- The time when the empire of his day became Christian, being under the government of the Christian emperor, as in Constantine's time
- The world to come, when believers sit down with Christ on his throne of judgment, and join with him in trying, and condemning, and consigning over to punishment the enemies of Christ and the church
- Maybe it refers to the millennial reign of Christ of this very earth. Whatever form it takes, *“The upright shall have dominion in the morning.”*

### **c. Knowledge and Wisdom, Necessary for This Power and Dominion**

*“I will give him the morning-star.”* Christ is the morning-star. He brings light into our souls, the light of grace and glory and he will give His people that perfection of light and wisdom which is essential for the state of majesty and dominion that they shall have in the morning of the resurrection.

This epistle ends with the usual demand of attention: *He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.* In the previous letters, this demand for attention comes before the concluding promise; but in this letter and all those following it comes after. This tells us that we should all concentrate on the promises as well as the instructions / guides that Jesus gives to the churches.

Some would say that the church is in trouble today. Too worldly, too liberal, too conservative, too hard, too soft, too this, and too that. When God chose to call us and fill us, He also called us into a fight. Paul is constantly affirming to Timothy to endure, fight, keep the faith, lay hold on things, and struggle until the very end.

The local church of today will similarly overcome doctrinal calamity, personal agendas, incompetence, lukewarmness, nepotism, anarchy, corruption of character, hunger for power, in-fighting, petty politics, and anything else you can think of to add to this short list.

The reason that I know this is because of what is commonly being reported among us. The Church of God alone (7.2 million members) is growing at a rate of 14 churches a week and 12,600 converts a week. Other Bible-centred and Holy Spirit-believing churches are seeing similar global growth.