

STUDY GUIDE

REVELATION 2:18-29



MAY 30, 2021

LETTERS FROM JESUS - THYATIRA

THE PROGRESS IN LOVE

1. The Progress in Love

“I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.”

– *Revelation 2:19*

“Thyatira had learned the oft-forgotten lesson that the Christian life is a life of growth, of progress, of development. Ephesus was backsliding; Thyatira was moving forward. The church of Ephesus had abandoned the love it had at first; the church of Thyatira was exceeding the works it did at first. Which of these two churches do we resemble more?”

– *John Stott*

“We thank God...because your faith is growing more and more, and the love you have for one another is increasing.”

– *2 Thessalonians 1:3*

Ask yourself: Is that how my friends, family, co-workers and classmates, would describe me compared to this time last year?

Like, “You’ve changed! You are more kind! more generous...more willing to serve.”





The book of Hebrews reminds us that our gathering, our meeting, our connecting is, at least in large part, to “spur one another on toward love and good deeds” (Heb 10:24).

1. How am I participating in this work of ‘spurring one another on to love and good deeds’? How might I take new steps in this way, or renew some old ones?
2. How might I need to reprioritize my schedule to help cultivate community that deepens the ‘love and good deeds’ that are to be typical of those who are growing in maturity in Christ?

THE PROBLEM OF COMPARTMENTALIZATION

2. The Problem of Compartmentalization

The Trade Guilds were a key part of economic life in Thyatira. Not being a part of one, and the practices that went with it, would spell financial hardship and social isolation.

Trade Guilds would include ceremonies that celebrated – worshipped – idols, false gods. They would often descend into drunkenness and sexual immorality.

“Joining in such celebrations would compromise a disciple’s allegiance to Jesus as God. And clearly, joining in the drunkenness and exploitation of the human body would be contrary to the Will of God”

– Darrell Johnson

“Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.”

– Revelation 2:20





‘Jezebel’ in Thyatira is not likely the actual name of this woman, but, like many of the references in Revelation, is picking up on the ‘way of life’ that Jezebel embodied in the Old Testament. So this is a real person who, like Jezebel in the Old Testament, is leading God’s people astray.

The Jezebel of Thyatira is deceiving God’s people to do two things: commit sexual immorality and participate in idol worship. Her approach is to argue that we can compartmentalize your sacred and secular worlds – to live like Jesus doesn’t have a claim on every, single, area of your life.

Jezebel’s argument is summarized by Daniel Akin: “If you’re going to survive in a dog-eat-dog world you will have to make some allowances. On occasion you will have to compromise your convictions. It won’t hurt anything. Jesus understands. He never expected that following Him could be bad for business. And remember, you are free in Christ!”

– Daniel Akin

OFTEN FALSE TEACHING IS HARD TO DISCERN BECAUSE IT MIXES TRUE THINGS WITH UNTRUE THINGS.

It sneaks in the untruth by adding just enough truth to be confusing.

But it is never “both/and” with our loyalty to Jesus. You cannot be both loyal to Yahweh, the one true God, and Baal, a false God – which is what Jezebel in the Old Testament was teaching. And you cannot be loyal to Jesus and enter into the worship of false gods, and all the immoral practices that entails.





And the key issue that Jesus names is that this good church – growing in grace and love – they are ‘tolerating’ a person, giving her a mic, letting this teaching go unchecked, when she is leading people away from single-hearted love for Jesus. This is a failure of leadership to stand up and say: “No” to her and her teaching.

THE PORTRAIT OF JESUS

How do we resist compromise? The pressure to compartmentalize in our lives? How do we stay faithful in the marketplace? We look at the portrait of Jesus that He gives us here:

The features:

- a. **The Son of God.** Jesus is the rightful ruler over all rulers – over the Emperor, over the Apollos, over the trade guilds, corporations, governments and courts. When we look at this picture, Jesus as “the Son of God”, we know we finally answer to no one else but the true “Son of God.”
- b. **“Eyes are like blazing fire.”** Nothing is hidden from Jesus’ vision. This is a feature of His omniscience – His “all-knowing-ness”. As God, He knows everything. As a surgeon takes an X-Ray before they operate, so too, Jesus points to the real issue in order to carefully address it for our good, and His glory.





c. **“Feet like burnished bronze.”** Jesus has the power to enact all that He promises. These feet are strong and steady. They are ready to crush evil under them, and to run after us when we have tried to run from Him. For those who chose loyalty to Him we both tremble at the reality of His awesome might, in presence of the Almighty, *AND* we rest like a baby in the arms of her dad, because the Almighty has taken us in His arms, and holds us against the heartbeat of His chest love.

d. **The Merciful One.** “I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling” (2:21). Jesus is patient – waiting for her to repent. *He waits for us too.* But He also honours our freedom to not choose Him.

This picture tells us that there is time to repent; to change our minds and our ways. To be welcomed by the incredible mercy of Jesus.

And maybe this is the time to ask yourself:

- Where do I stand?
- Am I playing games with compromise?
- Have I chosen the way of compartmentalization?

For at the end of the day, the question is not whether I showed up on Sunday, and sang the songs, listened to the message, but if I have opened myself to Jesus’ loving leadership from Monday through Saturday.

“I will repay each of you according to your deeds.” This isn’t *‘salvation by works’*; **how we live reveals where our true loyalty lays.**

“Our true allegiance is revealed in how we treat members of our families, how we treat our employees and fellow workers, how we spend our time, how we spend our money. Our cheque books [or Visa statements] are the clearest revelation of the God we serve”

- Darrell Johnson

THE PROMISE OF JESUS

Here “the victorious” means those who ‘keep His word and ways’ – the one who “does My will to the end.”

a. **Rule with Jesus.** This is a quote from Psalm 2 – a Messianic Psalm. Jesus invites His people to rule with Him.

b. **“The morning star.”** Jesus refers to Himself as the “Morning Star” in Rev 22.

Bob Goudzwaard notes: “The morning star pulls the morning in behind it, just as certainly as Jesus pulls the kingdom in behind Him.”
The victorious get Jesus and His kingdom!

PRAYER FOCUS

Take time to pray for your Life Group. Pray for our church community; that we would have the wisdom, focus and courage to stay true to Jesus in the midst of significant pressure to compromise.

*“how we live reveals
where our true
loyalty lays.”*

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways are the spaces you inhabit (work, school, neighbors etc.) or those you know tempting you, toward 'compartmentalization' of your faith in Jesus with those areas of so-called "real life" (business, recreation, romantic/sex life)?

2. Read Revelation 2:18-29. Note the things Jesus praises the church for in v.19. Which of these, most described you this past week?

2b. Which least described you?

2c. Where might God be calling you to grow? What is one or two practical ways that you can "grow" in this area? (See 2 Thess 1:3).

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

3. In Hebrews 10:24 we are instructed to spur each other on to love and good deeds. Are there ways that you can take steps to encourage a friend in Christ? To have a good conversation, or set an example for someone in your life?

4. Who or what played a similar role to the “Jezebel” in Thyatira – that encouraged you toward compartmentalizing your faith life from your so-called “real life”?

4b. Who or what lead you toward elevating something other than God to ‘god-like’ status, or toward sexual immorality? (Names aren’t necessary). How did Jesus help free you from that influence?

5. Pay attention to the ways Jesus is described in this text. How might looking closely and regularly at this ‘portrait’ of Jesus help protect you from giving in to compromise or compartmentalization? How has that been a part of your past experience?

6. Note the promises of Jesus for those who are ‘victorious’, who do the will of Jesus. How do these encourage you to remain loyal to Jesus too?
