



Sermon Series: The Last VII Letters

Message Title: THYATIRA - Persecution is coming!

Key Scripture: **REVELATION 2:20-21**

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.

Have you noticed, Today's society increasingly demands, we not only TOLERATE, but also **fully accept & approve of**, values, beliefs, & lifestyles that are an affront to God? Those faithful enough to hold to a biblical worldview are **vilified** for their unwillingness to **acquiesce**. Charles Stanley profoundly said, "A culture that tolerates evil calls disagreement 'phobia.' Right now, taking a stand for Christ, is considered **"hate!"** Holding Christian convictions, is **defamed** as **bigoted fanaticism**. Foundational biblical doctrines are **denounced** as both **antiquated & discriminatory**. Tragically this position is held not only by the secular world but also by many doctrinally WEAK churches. Which churches am I speaking of? Those who elevate political ideology over **Gospel Truth**, sexual diversity & inclusivity over **holiness & moral purity**, those who seek 1st societal acceptance instead of **Christ's approval**, those who will pervert the Word to support their choices rather than humbly submitting their lives to **God's Word**.

READ: Revelation 2:18-23

Jesus again opens His letter by identifying Himself, this time as, "the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze." Jesus declares He is divine & holy, the Son of God. Jesus' statement proclaims His holiness, purifying power, & righteous judgment.

He reminds the church there is nothing hidden from Him, He is a consuming fire (**Hebrews 12:29**). This fire of God cleanses believers, burning away our sin & refining our faith, much like a silversmith uses fire to purify precious metals.

This contextualized illustration was powerful for this audience whose city was renown for it's trade guilds. The guilds required those in them to engage in idol worship & to participate in the sexually immoral celebrations of worship to them. Anyone who refused was seen as a threat to the entire guild by incurring the wrath of the gods.

Rebellion would not be tolerated, resulting in expulsion, persecution, & possible execution. Choosing to honor God had real time consequences in addition to eternal ones.

Jesus also wrote, His "feet are like burnished bronze." Christ had overcome the fiery trials of suffering, sin, & death. His character's been proved perfect & righteous, His authority is unshakeable & His kingdom can not be toppled. He's the righteous judge who will execute justice.

Thyatira exhibited a steadfast, loyal love that was both a **response to** & a **reflection of** the Jesus' love! They were commend by Jesus for their love, faith, service, patient endurance, & that their latter works exceed their first. This supernatural fortitude could only have come from constant communion with Jesus & complete dependance on the Holy Spirit.

BUT Thyatira was rebuked for **tolerating evil within!** Jezebel, who called herself a **prophetess** & was **teaching & seducing Jesus' servants** to practice sexual immorality & to eat food sacrificed to idols.

This is a wicked woman, BUT, still Jesus is patient & **calls her to repent**, to **turn back to Him**, to **confess**, in response Jesus would be faithful & just to forgive & purify her of her unrighteousness (**1 John 1:9**), BUT **SHE REFUSES!** Jezebel insist **she's right**, she can **mix-n -match** & it's all good! But not it's not **just her**, she entices the whole church too! She taught they could serve God on their own terms. It was possible to serve the gods of the trade guilds, engage in idol worship, & sexual immorality while enjoying the benefits God's grace. They could serve BOTH masters!

Jesus' response? **REPENTANCE** was possible, the **sickbed** was GRACE, **tribulation** was GRACE (**vs.22-23**)all are an attempt to turn hearts BACK to GOD! If **repentance** is refused, **forgiveness** is impossible because **forgiveness** is God's **merciful response** to repentance. If **repentance** is refused, then all that is left is the **wages of sin**. But Jesus also reminded the church there are **rewards for holding fast to Him** (**vs.24-29**)!

—THOUGHT PROVOKING QUESTIONS?—

1. What do you think about these statements? "The closer you get to God, the more peculiar you'll seem to people. Satan's strategy is simple: make sin look normal & righteousness look weird." & "The cross is not a symbol of tolerance but a declaration of war against sin." Do you agree/disagree?
2. Why is elevating ideology, tolerance, inclusivity, societal acceptance our opinions, preferences, & desires over **God's Word** dangerous? Why do you think some people/churches do this? Why do some churches identify politically, racially, or ideologically, instead of identify as Christ's church? Is it possible to adopt worldly ideology & still be His church?
3. We often ponder God's judgment but why not His patience? Why would God give Jezebel (us) time to repent? (Rev. 2:21) What does this reveal about His love & character? Why are false prophets & sexual immorality dangerous to the church? How do we know truth/lie & right/wrong?
4. Jesus encourages those who have't bought in to the false teaching to hold fast to Him until He comes. How do we practically do this everyday? What are the benefits/rewards for doing so?