

Pastor Grady Covin
The Mission
March 5, 2025

Revelation 2.8-29

So we're continuing tonight with our study of the Book of Revelation. And we're going to be looking at the rest of chapter 2 and then next week Lord willing we'll finish up chapter 3.

Now, like we learned last week these two chapters contain seven letters which were written by the Lord Jesus to seven actual churches which were active during the time in which the Apostle John lived.

And again, these were seven historical churches in the first century; but at the same time, these churches represent how churches will conduct themselves during the rest of the church age. In other words, all these different kinds of churches will exist over the course of what we call the church age, which started at Pentecost and will continue until the church is Raptured out of this world just before the Tribulation Period.

And here in chapters two and three, we're going to discover that five of these seven churches will receive both commendation and condemnation. Only two will receive commendation only. And there will be a warning given by the Lord Jesus to these five churches with mixed reviews. And the warning is very real simple. "Repent"! Repent and turn back to the Lord and to the things of God.

And like we learned last week, these letters have application for us as individuals. And the warning for us is the same. When we're convicted by the Holy Spirit, and He in His grace, points out to us some sin in our life,

then the remedy for us is the same as it was for these churches. The remedy is to be honest with God and ourselves and to confess our sin, and to turn back to God.

And so as we make our way through these seven letters, we need to be constantly examining our own lives, and be sensitive to the Holy Spirit, to see if any of the things Jesus says to these churches, might also apply to us individually.

So last week we looked at the church at Ephesus in verses 1-7 of chapter 2 and we discovered how they were a working church, and a laboring church, and how they were quick to deal with false teachers and false prophets, but we also learned that they were doing many of those things in their own power and strength, and that they were more or less just going through the motions, when it came to serving the Lord.

Their love for God had grown cold, and they had become insensitive to the Holy Spirit. And so Jesus has brought that to their attention and He is warning them to repent.

And if they don't repent, then He has promised to come to them and to remove their light altogether. And I don't think we talked about that verse last week, but what that really means for a church, or an individual is this; Without true love for Christ, your light will eventually go out. And no longer will you be a witness, or a viable testimony to others.

And so Ephesus was the loveless church or the backsliding church. It represented the apostolic church age which began at Pentecost and lasted until 100 AD.

Next, we're going to read about the persecuted church, or the suffering church. And this church represents the church age from approximately 100 AD to 314 AD. And this was the martyred church or the persecuted church.

Look at verse 8 if you would and I'm going to read this entire letter and then we'll come back and dissect it verse by verse.

8 “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write,

‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: 9 “I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

11 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.” ’

Now, another thing I didn't have time to mention last week, but I want to bring your attention tonight is how each description of Christ, at the beginning of each of these letters, goes back to the vision John saw of Jesus in chapter 1, verses 13–18.

In every letter, we're going to see how Jesus uses just the right portion of that description to address the special need of each church.

For instance in the beginning of His letter to Ephesus, because they were trying to operate outside of the genuine love of Christ, He reminds them of how He's constantly walking and moving among the church; and how He's the One, their pastors and elders should be looking to for wisdom and knowledge and guidance.

Now, like we just read, Smyrna was the persecuted church, or the suffering church and so Christ in His introduction here reminds them of

His own suffering, and death, but also He gives them a word of encouragement by reminding them about His resurrection.

Now, the name “Smyrna” in the Greek means “bitter”. And it’s a close kin to the word “myrrh.” In fact you can hear that word myrrh within it when you say the name Smyrna.

Myrrh, was a product of Arabia. And like some other spices, it came from the gum of a tree. And because it was so fragrant, it was mostly used in embalming. But it was also sometimes mingled with wine to form a drink which would be used as a pain reliever. If you’ll remember when Jesus was about to be crucified, they offered Him a drink of gall. Well, that’s just another word for myrrh. But of course He refused it because he didn’t want anything to ease or get in the way of His suffering.

And so when we think of myrrh, we think of the baby Jesus, who would one day grow into a young man who would suffer greatly for the sins of the world and pay the ultimate price for our salvation when He gave His life on the cross for all who would believe in Him.

And so myrrh symbolizes the fragrance which is released when someone is persecuted and suffers. And the church, well, it’s always been the purest and the most fragrant when it was going through times of suffering. And that’s the case with individuals who truly love and serve the Lord as well.

And so Christ offers no criticism of this church. The saints were faithful in spite of the suffering they were experiencing. And though they thought they were poor, Jesus said they were rich.

Now, I’m sure they didn’t feel rich at the time. They were being blasphemed and slandered by false Christians, which were just children of the devil in disguise. And though what they were doing, they were doing in

the name of religion, Satan was no doubt behind it, because Satan is behind all persecution against Christians, even when it's done in the name of religion.

And then with one breath Jesus encourages them not to be afraid, but then in the next breath, He lets them know that more persecution is on the way.

And that Satan who comes as a lion, seeking whom he may devour would be a constant thorn in their side. But not to lose heart, because that persecution would only made the church stronger.

And though the enemy may kill the body, as God's children, we have a promise, that we don't have to fear the second death, which is to die and go to hell for eternity.

Because we who are born twice will die only once. Only those who are born only once; will have to die twice.

And then beginning in verse 12, we have the church at Pergamus, which is best known as the compromising church. And this church represents the church age between 314 AD and 590 AD. And this was a time of great paganism. And in verse 12 it says

**12 “And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write,
 ‘These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:
 13 “I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s
 throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My
 faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr,
 who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.**

**14 But I have a few things against you, because you have
 there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak
 to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat**

things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.

15 Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. 16 Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

17 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.” ’

Pergamos, which is sometimes referred to as the worldly church, means “married”. And that’s fitting, because this church was married to; or wedded to; some doctrines and practices that didn’t line up with the word of God.

And that’s why Jesus when He describes Himself in verse 12 refers to Himself as the One who has the sharp two-edged sword.

And in **Hebrews 4:12** we’re told what that means.

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

That two-edged sword refers to the word of God which is what they had abandoned in favor of worldliness.

Now, to their defense in verse 13 the Lord commended them. He said, **13 “I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My**

faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

In other words, they were surrounded by worldliness. Many of the Babylonian cults in fact had headquarters there in Pergamus. On top of that many Christians were being martyred for their faith. One such martyr, Jesus even mentions by name in verse 13. His name was Antipas; and we don't know anything about him really except what we read here; that he gave his life to follow and to serve Christ. And so Jesus knew his name and called him faithful.

But even though they're surrounded by all this heathenism and worldliness, many in the church stood firm in their faith and for that Jesus commended them.

But there was a remnant that didn't stand firm, but rather gave in to the external pressures around them. And they were believing the false teachers who taught the doctrine of Balaam, which was a false teaching that dated all the way back to the Old Testament. In fact, it was this same false teaching that derailed the Israelites way back when.

And just like the Israelites, some in the church at Pergamos had been fooled into following this doctrine as well. And so they were mixing a little of the truth of God's word, with a little of this false religion, and the end result was of course a lie.

And then a second heresy that had infiltrated the church was the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. And just the same, there were people in the church who were teaching and participating in this false doctrine.

And so they too are told by the Lord Jesus to repent or else. And the else; was that He was going to come to them quickly and make war against

them with the quote “sword of my mouth”. And that’s no less the judgment of Christ upon the entire church.

Now, you might ask, if just a few are following these false doctrines, then why would God judge the entire church?

And the answer is found in Matthew chapter 18, where Jesus talks about church discipline and how as a church, we’re to protect the word of God. And when people in the church, who profess to be followers of Christ, choose to blatantly live in sin and are unrepentant, then that’s when others in the church have to confront them.

And we confront them in love with the truth of God’s word and we confront them with the intention of restoring them to fellowship and right standing with Christ.

But if they refuse to listen and they refuse the wise counsel of God’s word, then they’re to be put out of or removed from the assembly.

And in the same way, though on the surface Jesus may appear to be confrontational, He’s confronting their sin with the intention of restoring them. And that’s always the goal when we confront Christians who are living in sin.

And then in verse 18 we have the church at Thyatira, the corrupt church, which represents the church age which existed between 590 AD and 1000 AD. And this is what we sometimes refer to as the Dark Ages.

18 “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write,

‘These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: 19 “I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.

20 Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 21 And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. 22 Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. 23 I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

24 “Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. 25 But hold fast what you have till I come. 26 And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—

27 ‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’—

as I also have received 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.” ’

And so this is the church at Thyatira, which is also called the unrepentant church.

And Jesus, with His eyes of fire, and feet of brass, sees all things and He knows all things. And this again is a picture of Christ whose feet like

burnished bronze represent the judgment of Christ and the wrath of God as He tramples out impurity.

And in this scene He's confronting the wicked in this church who again refuse to repent.

1 Peter 4:17 says, For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

It doesn't matter if it's inside the church or without, Christ will eventually judge all unrepentant sin, whether it be in the life of a believer or an unbeliever.

The church at Thyatira was more than likely begun as a result of a woman who had been saved under Paul's ministry at Philippi. Her name was Lydia and she was a seller of purple fabrics and a worshipper of God and after she was saved, she and her family were more than likely responsible for starting this church.

Now, Jesus said, this church had works, and they had service, and they had patience, and that just recently they had been even more active than ever before! But all that was overshadowed, because of a select few in the church who were living in sin.

And so the problem Jesus had with them wasn't caused by persecution from outside the church. It was caused by perverse people from within the church. And also because the church leaders had not confronted and dealt with the sin of those people.

And because it was having a negative impact on the entire church, that's why it's so critical that we deal immediately with sin in the church when we first become aware of it; before it contaminates and spreads to the entire church.

Jesus is very serious about sin; especially when it involves the entire church. That's why not long after the church began, He gave us an example of just how serious He really is about it.

Remember in the book of Acts, when Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead, because they lied about a gift they had given to the church? Well, that's how serious the Lord Jesus is about sin in the church.

Well, here in this particular church He points out that there were some who were following in the footsteps of a woman who resembled another wicked woman in the Old Testament. Her name was Jezebel, and she was the wicked wife of King Ahab; and she was a heathen. She had grown up in a heathen family and she was also the daughter of a priest of Baal; and she was promoting the worship of Baal there in Israel.

She was also guilty of whoredom and witchcraft, as well as idolatry, and murder, and deceit, and priestcraft. And some in the church at Thyatira, we're evidently following a woman who followed her example!

And so this false prophetess in the church at Thyatira, whoever she was; was using this false teaching to seduce and to deceive many of God's people. And she was doing it in the name of religion.

And worse than that, she had refused to repent. Even though God had given her the opportunity, she would not turn from her sin. And though it's never too late for a church or an individual to repent and return to the Lord as long as they have breath, we have to seize the opportunity when it's afforded to us.

And if we've never truly been saved in the first place, then we can't just come to the Lord anytime we want to. We can only come when we're drawn by the power of the Holy Spirit.

But if we're a Christian living in sin, then we can come to Christ for forgiveness at any time. In fact, we should everyday, examine ourselves and pray to God to show us any sin in our lives and immediately we need to bring that sin before God and confess it and repent from it and ask forgiveness for it.

Now, again, not everyone in this church followed that false teaching. There were some who had remained faithful and in the last part of verse 25, Jesus promises not to judge those who had remained faithful.

He says, **"I will put on you no other burden."**

And then in verse 25, He says, **But hold fast what you do have until I come.**

And of course that universal promise goes for all genuine believers.

And then in closing in verse **26 He says, he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations.**

He who overcomes is he who has been truly born again; he who is a genuine Christian.

It's he who will reign with Christ during the millennium and become a ruler in the kingdom to watch over and protect God's people and promote holiness and righteousness in the kingdom.

And I don't know about you but I want to be an overcomer. Amen!