

**Text: Revelation 2:18-29 (Pew Bible, pg.1217)**

**Title: “No Compromise” Pt.2**

## **INTRODUCTION**

LETTERS AND EMAILS OF HOW GOD IS WORKING IN OUR CHURCH THESE DAYS.

Open your Bibles to Revelation 2:18. These letters contain vital information for us. They are reminders to churches to take Jesus seriously. They are reminders to believers to take Jesus seriously. This is how Jesus wants His church to be strong and radically faithful to Himself. As we stand at the threshold of the next century of ministry (should Jesus tarry), there is so much for our church to DO ... 1000s to be reached and taught to become passionate followers of Christ ... worship services filled with worshippers ... sending missionaries ... transforming our community and our city ... there's so much for us to DO. But what we learn from these letters is what Jesus wants us to BE and to BECOME. That's what these days are for. Read text.

Remember there's a similar pattern in each letter. First, we look upward, then we look inward, then we look forward.

### **LOOK UPWARD (v.18)**

Notice the vision of Christ.

**Revelation 2:18 - “These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.**

Three important things about this description of Christ:

- His Name – “Son of God” – In Revelation 1 Jesus is called the Son of Man; here He reveals Himself as the Son of God in all His deity. We take Jesus seriously because He is God.
- His eyes – “like blazing fire” – Piercing perception and holiness are in those eyes that blaze like a fire.
- His feet – “like burnished bronze” – His feet were brilliantly displayed, enhancing the awesome vision of Christ as the glorious Judge ... glorious from head to toe.

And these are the “words” of this One who is so glorious. We need the attitude of the psalmist when he said...

**Psalm 119:161 - Rulers persecute me without cause, but my heart trembles at your word.**

Talk about taking God seriously! In Revelation 1, when John saw Christ revealed in this way he fell down like a dead man, overcome and overwhelmed by the glory of Christ.

**ILLUSTRATION** – If you are not overcome and overwhelmed by the glory of Christ it's because you haven't really taken the time to gaze on that glory. I remember a time when our kids were young and we took a vacation to the mountains of Colorado. As we were driving through some of the most beautiful scenery in the world our kids were asleep in the backseat. I would wake them up and say,

“Hey, wake up. You need to see this. It’s fantastic. And Nan would say, “Yeah, and you keep your eyes on the road.” Friend, if you will just take the time to gaze upon Christ in His Word, and be alert to how He reveals Himself, you, too, will be overwhelmed by the glory of Christ.

I’ll show you in a moment why this particular vision of Christ is so important for this church to see.

## **LOOK INWARD (vv.19-24)**

Now there’s a lot to unpack here. Perhaps it would be helpful for me to give you just some key words:

### **1. COMMENDATION (v.19)**

As with most of the other letters there are things in this church that *please* the Lord and things that *grieve* the Lord. Notice what pleases the Lord.

**Revelation 2:19 - I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.**

In other words, “I know your deeds, your Christ-motivated works” ... and they are manifested in five ways:

- Your love – selfless, sacrificial love
- Your faith – complete trust and reliance upon God and His Word
- Your service – the word means “ministry”
- Your perseverance – the ability to remain under a heavy load without squirming out from under it
- Your progress – now doing more than you did at first. No church should be happy with just maintaining the status quo.

Jesus sees this, and commends them ... “Well done!” But clearly Jesus is quite eager to address the church at Thyatira about what grieves Him in the church.

### **2. CONFRONTATION (v.20)**

There was this cancer of compromise growing in this body of believers. If the cancer wasn’t removed it would kill the church.

**Revelation 2:20 - 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.**

There’s some teaching going on that doesn’t square with the truth of God’s Word. So there was doctrinal compromise. And doctrinal compromise always leads to moral compromise. What you *believe* will ultimately shape how you *behave*.

Now let's talk about this woman who was causing the problems. She is called in v.20, "that woman Jezebel." I'm convinced she was a real person, though her name may or may not have been Jezebel. If her name really was Jezebel it fit her perfectly, because of what that name was associated with in the OT.

We're introduced to Jezebel in I Kings. She was a pagan woman married to the king of Israel, King Ahab. Jezebel brought her paganism and idolatry into the life of Israel. She influenced King Ahab to lead Israel to compromise their identity as the holy people of God, and instead to follow the false god Baal.

Well this woman Jezebel in the church in Thyatira had anointed herself and appointed herself as a prophetess. She had some kind of standing, at least in the minds of some of the church members as a church leader. But she wasn't a true prophet sent from God.

**Revelation 2:20b - By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.**

Let me say just a word about the sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. Both of these behaviors were prevalent in just about any city in the ancient Roman world.

There was one thing that was rather remarkable in this otherwise unremarkable city of Thyatira. The city had an extensive network of trade guilds. Think of them like trade unions, but not exactly the same. Trade guilds were organized around the various professions in the city: a masonry guild, a silversmith guild, a roofing guild or a dye making guild.

But the gatherings of these trade guilds created a dilemma for committed Christ-followers. Historians tell us that the guild meetings would begin with the raising of a glass of wine as a toast, if you will, to the patron god or goddess of that particular guild, say the god Apollo. Then they would begin the preparation of a meal. They would slaughter an animal, and offer some of the meat as an offering to the god or goddess. The rest of the meat would be cooked and served at the trade guild dinner. So for a follower of Jesus, this was not just eating meat, it was participating in the worship of a pagan god. Well historians tell us that the meetings would degenerate quickly into sexual activity that I would not even begin to describe for you. A man or a woman would go to the trade guild for a business meeting and end the evening sleeping with a temple prostitute.

Now in the church in Thyatira there were people who were not the least bit bothered about the moral compromise that was going on in their lives. And it wasn't just Jezebel. She had her followers.

**Revelation 2:20b - By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.**

But the Bible is very clear about this matter. I Corinthians 5:18 says to "flee sexual immorality" in whatever form it takes ... pornography, premarital sex, extra-marital sex. Run from it!

**1 Thessalonians 4:3 - It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality;**

But what about this eating of meat sacrificed to idols? Remember the meat consumed by those at the dinner was from an animal that had just been sacrificed to a pagan god or goddess.

**ILLUSTRATION** – It was not like they didn't know this had happened. Nan and I went to a lovely banquet last week and a delicious plate of food was set down before me. Now it never occurred to me to think, "I wonder who prepared this food. Was the chef a member of a satanic cult, and thus am I, by eating this food, supporting his evil lifestyle?" No, the Bible teaches us not to obsess over this kind of thing. There's no way you can know.

But that was not what was going on in these trade guild banquets. It was not just eating meat that had been sacrificed to a god. What was going on was from the minute you walked into the meeting to the time you left you were immersed in an immoral, idolatrous event. For a Christ-follower to participate in an event like that was nothing short of compromise.

Now we learn later that not everybody in the church in Thyatira had caved in to the pressure of compromise. No doubt there was a believer who woke up one day to what was happening ... the lifting of the glass of wine in thanks to the god, the offering of an animal sacrifice in worship to the god, the engaging in sexual relations with a temple prostitute to please the god. And he must have asked himself, "What in the world am I doing here? I can't drink what these people drink; I can't eat what these people eat; I can't do with my body what these people do with their bodies. This is all wrong."

And then there was Jezebel standing at the door as they walked out saying, "Ah, come on. There's no harm in this. You're free to drink, eat and do what you want to do."

Now I know that even the mention of this kind of lifestyle may make some of you very sad because there was a time when you were involved in that kind of party lifestyle.

And you're thinking, "Oh my! I can't believe what I used to do to my body and with my body. I can't believe I used to live that way. I'm so ashamed."

I want to remind you that in Christ there is amazingly grace and forgiveness. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth about some of the same issues Jesus writes to the church in Thyatira. In I Corinthians 6 Paul talks about the sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, prostitutes and homosexual offenders. And Paul says this in...

**1 Corinthians 6:11 - And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.**

I'm speaking to people today who have sinned big time. Some of you have been involved in sexual immorality of some kind. Maybe you lived with someone without being married. You had sex outside of marriage. Maybe it was a homosexual relationship or with someone of the opposite sex. Maybe you had an affair. And you've repented of that sin and received God's grace, mercy and forgiveness. But because of what you have done there are times when you are still overwhelmed with guilt; you feel like a second class citizen in God's Kingdom. Remember:

**1 Corinthians 6:11 - And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.**

So Jesus *desires* a pure and holy church, and Jesus *disciplines* for a pure and holy church.

### **3. CORRECTION (vv.21-23)**

The indication here is that the Lord Jesus had already confronted Jezebel and the other offenders about it.

**Revelation 2:21- I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling.**

Somehow Jesus had confronted her. How? He probably did so through the teaching of Scripture by the spiritual leaders in the church, and perhaps through loving confrontation with her. But she was unwilling to let go of what was clearly immoral, unbiblical behavior.

Church, we need to be accountable to each other for the conduct of our lives.

Like I said last week, in the mind of Jesus there's really on one acceptable option ... repent. Admit it and quit it. Change your way of thinking about these matters, and go in a different direction.

Jesus says, "Now since you will not repent of your sinful lifestyle, here's what's ahead for you."

**Revelation 2:22 - 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.**

We're talking here about God's discipline of his people. Remember, these are His people, His servants, who are engaged in these immoral and idolatrous activities.

God loves you as you are; but He loves you too much to leave you as you are. If you are a child of God and you choose to live in compromise, you can fully expect that Christ, out of love for you, is going to come to you in some kind of discipline.

**Hebrews 12:10 - Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.**

Note: Parents discipline their children in different ways, depending on the temperament of the child. And discipline varies from one family to the other. And the same thing is true with the way God disciplines His children.

In this case, Jesus will deal very severely with this woman and those who are engaged in this immoral and idolatrous activity. Apparently Jesus was warning Jezebel that she would be stricken with illness, and her followers would suffer intensely. Sometimes God's discipline is

not that severe. Sometimes it's more severe. In Acts 5 we read about a husband and wife who died for lying to the church. Whoa!

Why is the Lord Jesus so upset? He is jealous for His own glory and for the hearts of His children. We are His Bride and Jesus doesn't want us chasing after other lovers in this world.

And as I said last week, it may not matter to you that your life is not all that different from your non-believing friends. It may not matter to you that you don't take God's Word and God's will seriously. It may not matter to you that no one knows you're a follower of Jesus by your walk or your talk. It may not matter to you ... but it matters to Jesus.

**Revelation 2:23b - 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.**

God's takes His glory and our holiness seriously.

Now Jesus turns to the rest of the church:

#### **4. COACHING (vv.24-25)**

**Revelation 2:24 - 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):**

**Revelation 2:25 - Only hold on to what you have until I come.**

Don't let the world, or your compromised Christian friends wear you down.

#### **LOOK FORWARD (vv.26-29)**

Now notice what we have to look forward to:

**Revelation 2:26 - To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations—**

**Revelation 2:27 - 'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery'— just as I have received authority from my Father.**

Now what that tells us that there will be a day when we will reign with Christ. When Jesus returns for His church and establishes His Kingdom on this earth, we, the Church, will reign with Christ. That is our *identity* and that is our *destiny*.

**Revelation 2:28 - I will also give him the morning star.**

The morning star is Jesus. You get Jesus ... full-on, unadulterated, undiluted, undiminished, face-to-face Jesus. The morning star appears in the darkest part of the night. Church, lift up your eyes. Our destiny is to behold Him and to glorify Him forever.

**Revelation 2:29 - He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**