



The Church at Thyatira

AND unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; **19** I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. **20** Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. **21** And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. **22** Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. **23** And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. **24** But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. **25** But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. **26** And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: **27** And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. **28** And I will give him the morning star. **29** He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. (Rev 2:18-29)

God gives special grace to His called and chosen ministers to hear, understand, and preach His Word to His people. The prophecies of Revelation is no exception as, here again, our Lord relates His written message to His angel of Thyatira. *“And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write:”* This is the titular head of the assembly of saints there but, bear in mind, the true Shepherd of His people is the Lord Jesus Christ. The man standing in the pulpit is no less in need of a Shepherd and Bishop than the flock to which He preaches: *“For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.”* (1 Peter 2:25) That Good Shepherd and Bishop of our souls is the Lord Jesus Christ!

Thyatira was a small city in the province of Lydia in Asia Minor located between Sardis and Pergamos. It lay almost directly south of Constantinople (Istanbul). It was a

city known for its purple dyeing and worker's guilds. There is no direct record of how, or by whom, this church was founded; but we may consider the possibility of the Gospel being brought to the city by the lady, Lydia, who was the beneficiary of Paul's preaching at Philippi. *"14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. 15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us."* (Acts 16:14-15 (KJV))

Thyatira was the smallest of the Seven Churches, yet received the longer counsel from Christ. *"These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass."* This definitely is a message of grave import just as are the others to the Seven Churches, and to our churches today, since it is spoken by the *Son of God*. The use of this title here is significant for the Church at Thyatira since it stood in the representative scale of time just preceding the emergence of the errors of Roman false doctrine which would soon include the nature of the blessed Mary as the "Mother of God." Christ had no worldly mother, but was the SON of God. Mary was blessed to be the vessel through which the human body of our Lord was nourished and sheltered in the womb, but His divine nature did not, by any means, come through Mary.

With His customary graciousness, our Lord opens His commentary by remarking on the many good qualities and marks of distinction of the Church at Thyatira. *"I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first."* Five qualities are enumerated: 1) Love (charity); 2) Faith; 3) Service; 4) Patience; and 5) Increasing good works. This description is a general commendation of the Church, but is not intended as a full exoneration of the Church since the Church was not wholly pure. True, there were many faithful men and women of great faith, charity, and good works left in the Church; however, there were *flies in the ointment* of the Church at Thyatira. Her good works even exceeded those of her first. But good works, tainted by false religion, loses its worth and becomes spoiled. *" . . . the plowing of the wicked, is sin."* (Prov 21:4) Religion based on works is never a genuine religion. We are saved unto good works through the grace of our Lord, and that by way of faith. *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast."* (Eph 2:8-9)

There are two conjunctions that I dread seeing in Scripture, These are the word 'BUT' and the other is 'NOTWITHSTANDING'. There is a condemnation or a reversal of fortune that usually follows these two words in Scripture. *"Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols."* With great generosity our Lord has led with the positive and reserves the negative for that which followed. Who is *"that woman, Jezebel?"* That feminine name has been associated with lewd and adulterous behavior, as well as with idolatrous religion. The use of the name here may be metaphorically applied to a woman of wicked inclination in the Church, or perhaps even a woman with that actual name. I doubt the latter due to the odor of notoriety associated with such a name. Whoever the woman was, she was holding herself forth as a prophetess who promoted sexual impurity and

idolatrous worship. In a sense, adultery and idolatry are of the same nature. Adultery is proving unfaithful to one's marital mate; idolatry is the Church turning from her Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover she was in violation of Paul's admonition concerning women teaching in the Church, and that teaching was error!

If a secondary name for Thyatira could be applied, perhaps that name would be "THE CHURCH OF TOLERANCE"! They tolerated sin and error. So do the greater number of churches in our day. Sexual promiscuity, indecency and immodesty in apparel, dishonesty, and failure to "raise up our children in the way that they should go," to name only a few. God gave the Church a time to take action to purify its role and repent, but this was not forthcoming. Only judgment can follow such a course of deliberate tolerance of sin. *"I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works."* Your works are a reflection of your faith. But that faith is the qualifier. The description of the Lord, *"his eyes like unto a flame of fire"* reveals His eyes (judgment) as a consuming fire separating the gold from the chaff.

Under every circumstance, the Lord is able to separate the sheep from the goats. He never paints with a brush so broad as to include the righteous and faithful of His people in condemnation. *"But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father."* The Elect of God will not abandon the faith prior to passing over Jordan Waters. God will preserve them faithful until the end – secure in that *"faith once delivered to the saints."* Whomever the Lord has received of the Father, He shall keep safe in His Fold.

The benediction of the Lord to each of the Seven Churches holds forth some special and beautiful promise. See what a paragon of leadership is that of our Good Shepherd. Even with chastisement, He bestows wonderful promises of hope: *"And I will give him the morning star."* Would you like to receive such a royal and heavenly gift as the Morning Star? You may if you hold fast to your first love in Christ. He is the Bright and Morning Star (Rev 22:16) which has lighted our dark night of travel through this life of trial. His beams are first, at sundown, to guide our steps as the Evening Star; and then becomes our Morning Star who remains in our Heaven above to be with us until the first rays of the Sun grace our horizon. He is the last Star that remains to herald the Sunrise. He then becomes our Sun of the brilliant morning of resurrection – the Sun of Righteousness! (Mal 4:2)

At last comes the proverbial reminder to all of the churches (including our own): *"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."* Do you hear?

We shall study next the Church at Sardis.