



WEEK 4

A LETTER TO THE
CHURCH IN THYATIRA

BE HOLY

Thyatira is the smallest of the seven cities. It was located about 40 miles southeast of Pergamum and on the same path toward the city of Sardis that we will study next week. It was a city known for its wool and textile production. Trading thrived in this area, which led to numerous robust trading guilds that carried great importance in Thyatira.

These guilds played significant roles in the economy, social life, and religious practices of Thyatira. One of the routine practices of the trading guilds was to have vast and rich feasts to honor their deities. If you were part of these trading guilds, you were expected to be a part of these feasts. If someone refused to be part of the feast, they would be removed from the guild, isolated from the community, and banned from trading.

Like with other churches, these pressures led the church in Thyatira to struggle with whether to compromise their beliefs to be part of society or to hold firm to their faith, which meant suffering the struggles of isolation and poverty, and persecution. This small church was given the longest letter from Jesus. The heart of Jesus' letter to the church in Thyatira is to encourage and remind them to be holy despite their potential exclusion from society and trade.

It seems this church was being tempted to stray from holiness by a prophetess in their midst who Jesus compares to Jezebel. They were tolerating this woman encouraging sexual impurity and idolatry. This letter includes a warning against this influence and an encouragement to those who are standing firm in their faith and continuing to pursue holiness.



WEEK 4 THYATIRA

JESUS'S WORD FOR THE CHURCH AT THYATIRA:

I see you and that you are trying to remain faithful to me. You love, serve, and work hard. You live in a world where work is valued above all else. The world's way looks attractive, and some are sneaky about leading you astray. Don't be deceived to become like the world. I offer you something infinitely more abundant than the world can ever offer.

Eugene Peterson says it this way in *This Hallelujah Banquet*:

While many believers seem to want to retreat from society, there is no way to be a Christian except in the world. But though the world is inevitable for the Christian life, it certainly is not helpful to it. Often it is seductive to Christ's purposes. And it always contrasts with them.

WEEK 4

DAY 1 - MONDAY

| *Revelation 2:18-29, Proverbs 15:3, Psalm 33:13*

REFLECTION: Read Revelation 2:18-19 again. What do you think it means to be seen by the Lord?

This letter shows us that God sees and knows all, the good and the bad, and he loves us anyway. Although this is true, it doesn't give us the freedom to just ignore the sinfulness in our hearts. When God calls us out on what he sees, he's doing it because He loves us enough to warn us when we're about to do something unwise.

How do you begin to see God differently, knowing He sees you fully and completely?

CAUTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Though Thyatira wasn't as committed or demonstrative in their worship of the Roman Emperor, the city was still distinctly pagan, particularly involved in worship of Apollo, the sun god. Apollo was the son of Zeus, the reigning king of all Greek and Roman mythological gods and goddesses. When Jesus introduced Himself as the "Son of God" in verse 18, it served as a potent reminder of His authority and the impotence of the false gods Thyatira revered. His introduction included a mention of His "eyes like a fiery flame" and "feet...like fine bronze" (Rev. 2:18). He wanted the church to be reminded that His gaze is piercing, seeing all that is taking place, and He will quickly pursue and tamp down evil.

Jesus' accompanying words of encouragement to the church at Thyatira demonstrated His love for them and their love for Him. They were faithful and true, growing in love and devotion to Jesus.

Written by Whitney Capps - *We Over Me*

WEEK 4

DAY 2 - TUESDAY

| Revelation 2:20-21, Matthew 24:11, 1 Kings 16:31, 21:23-25, 1 Corinthians 5

REFLECTION: What are some cultural things that you see churches conforming to or tolerating?

We can't tolerate the things that scripture calls sin in the name of making the gospel more appealing. Jesus says we are to be people and churches that practice grace and truth in confronting sin.

Randy Alcorn writes in his book the *Truth and Grace Paradox*:

Truth without grace breeds a self-righteous legalism that poisons the church and pushes the world away from Christ. Grace without truth breeds moral indifference and keeps people from seeing their need for Christ. Attempts to 'soften' the gospel by minimizing truth keep people from Jesus. Attempts to 'toughen' the gospel by minimizing grace keep people from Jesus. It's not enough to offer grace or truth. We must offer both.

How can we (as the church) teach or correct these messages with love instead of conforming?

WARNING TO STAND

Despite all the good Jesus saw in the church at Thyatira, there were significant problems...The center of the corruption at the church at Thyatira was a woman Jesus called Jezebel. This may not have been her literal name, but a title that clearly represented a self-styled prophetess within the church, after the pattern of Jezebel in the Old Testament (1 Kings 16-21 and 2 Kings 9:30-37)...This "Jezebel" at the church of Thyatira wasn't really a prophetess, she only claimed to be one. Yet, it seems the Christians there received her as a prophetess, and that is why Jesus gave them this warning...

Because of the strong trade guilds in Thyatira, the sexual immorality and the eating of things sacrificed to idols was probably connected with the mandatory social occasions of the guilds. Perhaps a Christian was invited to the monthly meeting of the goldsmith's guild, and the meeting was held at the temple of Apollo. "Jezebel" would allow or encourage the man to go - perhaps even using a "prophetic" word - and when the man went, he fell into immorality and idolatry...Christians were expected to stand in the face of this kind of pressure.

Written by David Guzik - *Enduring Word Revelation 2*

WEEK 4

DAY 3 - WEDNESDAY

| *Revelation 2:22-23, 1 Samuel 16:7, Jeremiah 17:10, Proverbs 20:27*

REFLECTION: Take a moment and write out a prayer to God, thanking Him for knowing your heart. Next, write how you want to turn your heart to Him, and finally, end this written prayer by asking Him to help guard your heart against giving into the culture around you.

UNDIVIDED HEARTS

To understand what Jesus means in this letter, we need to look back at the story of Jezebel in I Kings. Jezebel was sneaky in her deception. Her heart was not pure. She wasn't trying to dismiss the things of God altogether. She just wanted them to worship God alongside a false god, knowing that it would eventually lead them down a destructive path. Jesus doesn't want a divided heart; He wants our whole heart. We think we can cling to worldly things and worship them alongside God, but it just doesn't work that way. We think we can worship God and still do whatever we want. That's the spirit of Jezebel. That's the spirit that infiltrated the church at Thyatira. We want Jesus to be a part of our lives, but we don't want to give him all of our life. We want Jesus, but we don't want Him all up in our business. We want Him to bless our lives, but we don't want Him to mess with our lives. But that's not the way of Jesus. He wanted the church at Thyatira to give him their whole devotion, and He wants the same from us. He refuses to share us, His Bride, with any other lovers.

WEEK 4

DAY 4 - THURSDAY

| *Revelation 2:24-27, Hebrews 10:23, 2 Timothy 2:8-10*

REFLECTION: We all make small compromises that we know are not honoring to God. Take some time to reflect on some compromises that you have made over the years. Ask God to show you where you need to hold more tightly to your convictions.

What steps can you take to hold more tightly to the things that honor God?

HOLD TIGHT

One of my favorite things in high school was to go tubing at the lake. When tubing behind a boat, you hold on to an inflatable raft while laying flat or kneeling. As the boat begins to pull the raft, the key to success is to hold on. No matter what. Whatever direction the boat turns and whips you around, you hold on. Usually, the ride would begin soft and gentle, but eventually, the driver would speed up, swerve around, and sometimes even do a donut. The longer you held on, the harder it was to keep going, but the longer the ride, the more fun it was.

The Christian life is a lot like holding onto a tube in the middle of a vast body of water. At first, it feels fun and easy, but as life goes on, we begin to feel the pressures from the world around us to let go, compromise, and sink into the norms of the world around us. Jesus' message to the church in Thyatira is a reminder that holiness is the ride they have been called to and hold on because the world is trying to get them to let go of that. Jesus is calling them and us to be holy by not compromising our beliefs and walking with Christ in order to conform to the comfort of this world. It can be a rough ride, but Jesus promises that it is worth it, so we keep holding on. He will honor and reward those who hold on.

WEEK 4

DAY 5 - FRIDAY

| *Revelation 2:26-29, Matthew 28:16-18, 2 John 1:9*

REFLECTION: What is an area of your life that you find challenging to give God authority over? Why?

How might trusting and following Him faithfully in that area lead you to a better life and relationship with Him?

FAITHFUL TO THE END

Even when there is the immoral and idolatrous influence of a Jezebel, Christians can overcome and keep Jesus' works until the end. We must not become overly discouraged at immorality and idolatry around us, even among Christians. God's work will still go on through His overcomers. Jesus promised that His people will reign with Him. Here, there is a special promise to those who overcome the threat of immorality and idolatry. To them, Jesus offered a share in His own kingdom...Jesus includes this here to give hope to the faithful Christians of Thyatira, who felt overwhelmed by the immorality and idolatry all around them. Jesus reminds them, "You're on My winning team." Jesus offered them a reward greater than the kingdom. He offered them the reward of Himself, because He is the Morning Star (Revelation 22:16).

This is a letter that applies to everyone. It applies to those who are like Jezebel, who lead others into sin. It applies to those who follow the teaching of a Jezebel, and follow others into sin. It applies to those who permit a Jezebel to work her wickedness. Finally, it applies to the faithful who must hold fast.

Written by David Guzik - *Enduring Word Revelation 2*

WEEK 4

DAY 6 - SATURDAY REFLECTION DAY

Revelation 2:18-29

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR WEEK 4:

- Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- What do you think God is saying to you in this letter? What do you think God is saying to the church?
- How can you begin to strive towards God's holiness amid temptation to compromise and conform?

DAY 7 - SUNDAY REST DAY

Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's reading that you missed. Use the extra space on this page to journal, write down questions, thoughts, or ideas.