

EFC

April 28, 2024

“When Jesus Wants More”

Revelation 2:18-29

Good morning, English Fellowship Church. My name is Jeremy, and I’m one of the Pastors here. Thank you, Chris, for teaching us from Leviticus 16 last week, and reminding us that God is holy, and Jesus is our only foundation to be welcomed into His presence. This morning I’m picking back up in Revelation, as we look again at Jesus’ letter to the church in Thyatira.

Pray.

When “good enough” isn’t good enough – example from my life.

Remember – Jesus had a lot of positive affirmation for the church in Thyatira, and we should be encouraged in as much as those things are true of us.

But as much as there was a lot of good, Jesus wanted more from them and for them. “Good enough” wasn’t good enough, for we are going to see that they were not wholly devoted to Him. And Jesus wants our whole devotion.

What more does Jesus want from this church? How can they be wholly His? Let’s read Revelation 2:18-29 to answer that question.

"And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: 'The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze. "'I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. 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. I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve. But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden. Only hold fast what you have until I come. The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. And I will give him the morning star. 29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'" (Revelation 2:18-29)

Jesus wants His church to be wholly devoted to Himself on every level, and this letter shows us several aspects of that.

Jesus wants His church to not tolerate what He does not tolerate. He begins His correction by saying that they tolerate someone they shouldn't. “But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel....”

“Tolerance” is a word we hear a lot. If it was simply used to mean that we should treat people with respect, that would be good. But it normally means that we must affirm every idea as valid, and we must give our approval of every choice someone makes, and dare not believe that some beliefs and actions are right, and others are wrong.

But affirming every idea or lifestyle is equally good is absurd, and we know it intuitively in many areas of life. How much cyanide should a chef tolerate in her soup? How many lovers should a wife tolerate for her husband? How many wolves should a shepherd tolerate in his flock? None, none, and none! Does that make us intolerant? No, it makes us wise and healthy.

The teaching that we should tolerate everything is dangerous, especially when it comes to spiritual things. It is deemed arrogant to say you believe something is true and other things are false. As one commentator said it, “For some people today tolerance is the only real virtue and intolerance the only vice.”

But while Jesus of course teaches us to be kind and treat everyone with dignity (including people we disagree with), He was the most intolerant person in the world when it came to the truth. “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” (John 14:6)

Jesus wants more from this church; He wants their full devotion, with no tolerance of anything less.

Jesus also wants His church to listen to Him for the truth, and not someone else.

“But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess...” (Revelation 2:20)

Jezebel – she was a wicked queen who led Israel into idolatry.

“Calls herself a prophetess” – she claims to speak on behalf of God, but her words are not from him. This is a serious and dangerous offense, which God does not take lightly. Speaking of prophets who were not led by God, God says:

“But that prophet... shall be put to death, because he has taught rebellion against the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you out of the house of slavery, to make you leave the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.” (Deuteronomy 13:5)

We have already seen this in the other letters to the churches: not all “prophecy” is from God; we need to be discerning by going back to God’s Word. What we find to be false, we must reject.

Jesus wants more from His church; He wants them to look to Him for the truth.

And we see that Jesus wants His church to live in holiness before Him in every area of life.

This false prophetess was claiming to speak for God, but her false words ended up seducing Christ's people into sin.

Seducing – used through Revelation to refer to the devil's deceptions.

This seduction led to sexual impurity, as well as idolatry.

Guilds in Thyatira – very difficult to survive without being part of one. But each had a pagan patron deity, and participation meant meals, and often sexual promiscuity, in honor of those deities. A Christian cannot honor Christ while worshiping another god; a Christian cannot worship God while living in unrepentant sexual sin. But this "Jezebel" taught that they could do both, and still be Christ-honoring people.

We also face similar pressures.

God designed humans as male and female, and gave us the beautiful gift of sexual relationship to unite a man and woman. He created marriage to be the lifelong union between one man and one woman, and it is only within marriage that we are to experience that sexual union. On an even more significant level, God's design for union in marriage on all levels – physical, emotional, mental –

The world has many different ideas about sex that are not God's design. Pornography or strip clubs, prostitution or "casual sex", sleeping with your boyfriend/girlfriend or with some stranger at a party, committing adultery – the world says there's nothing wrong with any of it, and it is just doing what is natural.

Just like the believers in Thyatira were tempted to engage in sex outside of marriage, sexual temptations abound in our world today.

But all of this is destructive to yourself and the ones you get involved with; all of it degrades God's beautiful design; all of it erodes our spiritual lives; and none of it will satisfy your soul or give you the life you are looking for. Just like the designer of my car knows how it is to be driven so it functions well, so the Designer of sex knows what is best for us, and His desire is for your good.

And just like the church in Thyatira, we also face temptations to compromise in our commitment to God when it comes to financial provision.

God has promised to meet all our needs in His time and His way. But when things get difficult and we can't see how God will provide, we can be tempted to take things into our own hands to make sure we get what we need.

- Accept a bribe at work, because you need the money for car repairs
- Give in to pressure to cover over financial dealings by your boss, because you're afraid you'll lose your job
- Cheat on your taxes because you don't think the government deserves it
- Steal from your neighbor because you are in need

But Jesus wants more from His church; He wants them to be wholly His, in every area of life.

In summary, what Jesus wants is all of us. He wants us to love Him with our whole being. "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

Might – "muchness" – your very all.

God is holy, the only God who created us, loves us, saves us by grace through faith in His Son who gave His life for us on the cross; in His majesty and beauty, He deserves that we be wholly His, with all of our love. When He asks you for more, He is inviting you into greater enjoyment of who He is, and all the good He has for you.

And so, let me ask: Is there an area of your life where Jesus is asking you to give Him more?

- a. Is there something you are tolerating that should be rejected?
- b. Are you listening to false prophets who ?
- c. Have you been seduced into sexual sin – or any other sinful behavior?
- d. Are you serving in/trusting/obeying a false god, because you don't trust the true God to take care of you?

Is Jesus asking for more of you? He wants all of you, you know; and He deserves it; and it is for your good, too. He, and He alone can satisfy your soul. God loves you, and would never ask for something from you that isn't good for you and glorifying to Him.

How will you respond to Jesus? Will you give yourself wholly to Him?

Jesus said of this woman in Thyatira: "I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality."

- a. Don't be willfully unrepentant.
- b. Christ is patient, and forgives and restores all who repent, but a day of accounting will come for those who reject.
- c. And don't think you go unnoticed – on either side. "And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works." Jesus sees all, and judges perfectly. He will punish the pridefully unrepentant, but will reward the humble who acknowledge Him as Lord and entrust themselves to Him.
- d. He who has a willing ear, let him hear and obey what the Spirit says to the churches.

I pray you will give Jesus all He desires and deserves – for His glory and for your own good; give Him your whole self and your whole life and your whole heart and your whole mind and your whole devotion. He is holy, the Son of God; we must be wholly His.