

No Compromise

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[0 : 00] Well, please turn with me to Revelation chapter 2. Revelation 2, we're going to read from verse 18 to 29.

This Lord's Day and next Lord's Day, we're going to focus morning and evening on the remaining four letters to the churches, the seven churches in Asia Minor.

And so this morning we're going to look at the church in Thyatira and this evening the church in Sardis and the next Lord's Day morning, God willing, the church in Philadelphia and then the evening, the church in Laodicea.

But let's read from verse 18. And to the church, 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.

[1 : 12] 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 into 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 according to your works.

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 earth and pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father.

[2 : 29] I will give him the morning star, he who is an ear to hear, like to hear what the Spirit says to the churches. May God bless that reading from his holy word.

As we see very much the theme of this letter, the main theme of this letter, no compromise, no compromise with the world. And we'll explore that theme more closely.

As we see, as we saw last, the evening in the letter to the church in Pergamon, the same three headings, the word of commendation, the angel of the church to Thyatira, the Lord Jesus, through his Spirit, giving words of commendation, applause, praise if you like.

But then words of condemnation, condemning the practices, the sinful practices that were being tolerated in that church. But then, finally, in the passage, words of consolation, consoling those who had not followed the sinful teaching of this individual who's referred to here as Jezebel.

No compromise. Well, those of you, those of us, of a certain age, I'm sure many of you were involved to some extent anyway.

[3 : 58] So I was in the 1970s in the Christian music scene. And the popular American and British artists that we listened to, that we followed, and we followed avidly.

And one of these artists was the late Keith Green. Keith Green, some of you, I'm sure may even have his album, No Compromise. And that album struck home to many.

He wrote very hard-hitting lyrics and very much capturing the mood of the time, particularly amongst young Christians. Young Christians who wanted to, you know, express our faith through very much popular music, musical genre.

And Keith Green's album contained one song, one song that really captured that theme of no compromise in the Christian faith. Words such as, to obey is better than sacrifice. I want more than Sundays and Wednesday nights because if you can't come to me every day, then don't bother coming at all. And it was that emphasis on rejecting, you know, the compromise of one's faith.

[5 : 02] Compromising your faith for a life of self-satisfied ease. That was very much running through these words. Compromise. You know, finding a middle ground.

Finding a middle ground that's, you know, supposed to hurt nobody and please everybody. You know, you can speak of compromising in our behaviour. Going so far with the world in all its pursuits and all its interests and all its pleasures and then somehow wanting to push back at the last moment.

But we can compromise in the church. We can compromise in the name of progress and tolerance when it's so easy to tolerate teaching that denies so much of the foundational truths of Scripture. And we can be, I'm so easily like the world and our attitudes, our values, and we might even say become so indistinguishable from the world. Even doing the minimal, the minimal in terms of service, thinking that we can please God when the mass majority of our time we're seeking to please self.

You know, thinking we can just rest in the laurels of our professed faith and minimal service for the Lord and not seeking that cost of discipleship, not seeking that suffering for the Lord.

[6 : 25] But God's word has warnings against compromise and the warnings are seen here in this letter to the church of Thyatira because this church it was seen was compromising again and again, compromising even within the church itself.

And so we're going to look at this fourth of the seven letters to the church in Asia Minor. See what Jesus is saying to the church then as he's saying to the church now because we have to say and say it categorically that compromise in many ways is one of the greatest threats to the spiritual well-being and the influence of the church today.

So, what about this place Thyatira? You can find it in the map it's about 35 miles inland it's an inland city 35 miles from the west coast of modern-day Turkey but it was very much a city that was famed for its crafts.

It was very much a craft-orientated place. So many crafts were produced in Thyatira. You know, there were metal works, there were pottery works, there were tanners.

in fact, you read in Acts 16 of Lydia. Lydia was from Thyatira. I remember she was the trader in purple cloth.

[7 : 50] And where there were many crafts, there were many trade guilds. Whether in first century Europe or 21st century, there were many guilds. These are organisations of craftsmen that look after their interests.

But part of the ethos of these craft guilds was to have a patron, a patron god. And each month the guild held a feast, particularly a feast in the temple, temple dedicated to their god.

But it wasn't just a feast. Because after the feast were all kinds of immoral behaviours going on after the feast. And for Christians who were involved in the trades in Thyatira, there had to be that witness to be separate, separate from the world.

They just couldn't participate in that behaviour. So the church in Thyatira exists in a very difficult situation. And its attitude, its attitude to all the moral practices going on there would test their true commitment to the Saviour.

What about the Saviour? Well, 12 in verse 18 that he's got eyes like a flame of fire whose feet are like burnished bronze. You see, the connection of this is a letter to a church that's existing in a town that's so involved in trade and industry.

[9 : 17] Well, the connection's there. Jesus is saying of himself that, you know, his words are like these fierce boundaries. They go straight to the marrow.

They're words that are strong. They're words that are testing. Just as in the metal works, the metal being tested by the fire. So the word of Jesus testing your heart. The word of God, the word of the Saviour, revealing even the very impurities in our lives.

Words that come from the Lord who probes your heart, who tests your heart by his word of truth. Just as the word of Jesus was testing and probing the believers there in Thyatira.

So what were these words that Jesus was giving by his spirit? Well, as we read there in verse 19, I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance and that your latter works exceed the first.

Here are these words of commendation. And as you see in the passage, Jesus is commenting before he's condemning.

[10:27] Okay, so he's praising the works, the deeds of what's happening there in Thyatira and he's giving praise to the church in these four areas of their good works.

He's speaking of their love and their faith and their service and their patient endurance as another translation would have that their perseverance. And as he says, there as he said before, I know Jesus as I know you.

I know what you're like. I know that you're living in a way that shows your love for God and giving of yourself. You've kept your first love. The church in Ephesus hadn't you read in verse four?

You've abandoned the love you had at first. But through John here, John the author of Revelation, Jesus is commending this church for their love.

John, remember, is the apostle of love. You know, so much. Many of his letters emphasize love. I know John's writing of that love that really was there within the church in Thyatira.

[11:37] and then the church obviously had faith, strong faith in that pagan city. And it was a church that was characterized by service.

Obviously, people there involved in acts of kindness, looking to the needs of others, carrying out acts of mercy. And it was showing perseverance, patient endurance, and all the real problems there in that city.

The church was bearing up. It was a testimony to its faith and hope in the Lord Jesus. And as we read there at the end of verse 19, your latter works exceed the first.

It's the sense of making good progress in their love and faith and service and endurance. Let's just bring this even to ourselves.

Because, you know, as far as the church of today is concerned, surely love and faith and service, patient endurance, perseverance, should characterize a church.

[12:45] We're looking at a healthy church. Well, surely these are aspects of a healthy church. The love that you show one to another as you show that love to your Lord and Savior.

Your faith, your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Your service in his name, serving one another, loving one another and persevering, yes, in the midst of so much that we see around, persevering in faith and love and service.

And not just showing these graces but making progress in them. Doing more than you did even when you first know the Lord Jesus as your Savior.

And of course, how do you measure progress? Remember that? That's a question I was once asked as a teacher. How do you measure progress? In a pupil, well, there are many answers to that, but how do you measure progress in relation to a church or to a believer?

How do you measure progress in relation to the Word of God? Because the Word of God, God's Word, the Bible, speaks of progress in terms of maturity, maturing as a Christian, maturing in your love, maturing in your faith and your service and your perseverance.

[13:59] And so ask yourself in relation to God's Word, are you dying each day to sin? Are you growing in love one for another as you grow in love to your Lord and Savior?

Are you bearing one another's burdens? Are you praying one for another? Are you reading God's Word the more and with more depth and understanding? Are you actively seeking God's will?

Yes, for the congregation. Yes, for yourself as a Christian. Yes, for loved ones who don't know the Lord Jesus. Are you relying more and more on the grace and mercy of God?

And, you know, test your heart. Allow God's Word to probe your heart. Allow the Word of the Lord Jesus to be that probing, testing, refining Word so that you, by God's grace, mature in your love, in your service, in your perseverance, in your faith.

But what about these words of condemnation that we read there in verse 20 to 23? In many ways, difficult words, but this is God's Word. And so, we have to see with care and caution, but at the same time with understanding what's being said here.

[15:22] Because what we're seeing here, there was something and someone so corrupt, so damaging within that church, that the Lord Jesus highlights this real danger.

somebody who was spreading such decay and danger, even threatening the very life of the church there in Thyatira. What was happening? Well, that church was tolerating somebody, tolerating an individual who was causing so much, so much devastation.

You read there in verse 20, where we read that you tolerate that woman, Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. This church there in Thyatira who was allowing this person to, as it were, to have her way, we're tolerating an evil.

They shouldn't even have allowed this person to have her say. So there was compromise going on. There was compromise allowing this person to, as it were, to be an influence in the church.

This individual whose attitude, whose behaviour was, well, was actually compared to another Jezebel. The Jezebel you read of in 1 Kings. Remember this pagan queen who married King Ahab of Israel and Queen Jezebel who so influenced Ahab and influenced the people to follow the false gods of the area, these Canaanite gods.

[16:59] And this person here in Thyatira all these centuries after, well, had such an evil influence on the church there in Thyatira. It's not likely that that was a real name, but she was so like the original Jezebel that that's what she's called.

Because calling this person Jezebel would bring home to the people in Thyatira how damaging this individual was. And, you know, in the context of the time, the context of Thyatira, you can work out what was happening.

As we mentioned right at the start, Christians in Thyatira had difficult decisions to make. These tradesmen who needed to look after their family and they certainly weren't going to want to go to the feasts of the guilds and go to what was happening after these feasts.

I mean, these feasts would involve offering meat to idols and then they'd be expected to join in the debauchery afterwards. And it seems this person, Jezebel, had an answer, compromise, compromise, go to the feast, just get involved in everything, indulge in everything.

After all, you're a Christian. After all, God's not going to punish you. After all, you're saved. Why not just get to know a wee bit about Satan's secrets in order to, you know, know more about them to tell others against them?

[18:37] You know, that kind of reproach is utterly wrong, utterly false because it's compromise of the worst kind. It's something I'm sure many of you know and experience so plausible and yet so destructive because, you know, sparks become fire and fire burns and fire destroys.

Our minds can be so polluted by sin and the more that, you know, you compromise with the world, the more you can become so at home with sin and the more you can become like that prodigal son just lost in a far country.

You know, it's so easy to get squeezed into the mould of the world. You know, maybe cautiously at first. The more you're absorbed into company, particular company or particular situations that involves compromise, the more you become exactly like the world that you once professed to shun. You know, the old saying, you know, the camel that gets his nose into the tent and then little by little the rest of the camel follows and then that camel finds itself in the master's tent and he can't get out. You know, initially the long nose had peaked in and then his body wriggled in before that animal knows it. His whole body is in the tent and he can't free himself from it.

[20:09] Well, you know what that metaphor is showing, don't you? That so-called little sin. You know, you're just a little curious, a little peak to see what's so enticing so many.

But the more you look into it, the more you get involved. And the more you get involved, the more your whole life becomes so absorbed in a particular sin. And before you know it, you're so gripped in that particular sin.

It's got such a hold in you. And the evil that you didn't want to do, that you do. You're so caught up in it. And your only remedy, your only remedy and your only hope is to cry out with the Apostle Paul, what a wretched man I am.

Who will rescue me from this body of death? And the answer, thanks be to God through Jesus Christ, our Lord. God, may that be your watch for you.

No compromise. No compromise for yourself. No compromise for the sake of the church. No compromise for the sake of the gospel. No compromise for the sake of the good news of the Lord Jesus.

[21:23] Take seriously sin because, well, God takes sin seriously. we saw that in these, in some ways, difficult verses, 21 to 23.

As we read there, God had given this woman, this Jezebel, time to repent. Jezebel in the Old Testament, excuse me, had been given time to change her heart.

But the Jezebel of Thyatira didn't repent. And there was condemnation. and yes, the language certainly does read verse 22 and 23 in a very difficult way.

But we have to realise God is serious about sin. And, you know, even this word here, adultery. You know, in the Old Testament, God called His people adulterous when His people worshipped other gods, when they ran after other gods, when they were unfaithful to the one true God.

And, you know, the church of the Lord Jesus, the church is the bride of Christ. But when the bride seeks satisfaction in anything other than the Saviour, the church itself is adulterous.

[22 : 37] And so the message here is there, it's before us. Be in your guard, watch, watch.

Because, you know, it can happen so quickly.

even individuals bringing about chaos and havoc and destruction and leading others astray. I mean, the people there in Thyatira who followed Jezebel, they were called our children.

And, again, the language, the difficult language, I know, but, you know, God condemns the followers, the children of Jezebel, even with the word dead.

and they'll strike her children dead. In other words, eternal punishment. And then, we read what, I think anyway, is some of the saddest words in the whole of the Bible.

I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent. Or, as another translation puts it like this, I gave her time to repent, but she's unwilling, unwilling, and as soon as she hears these words, but she refused, but she was unwilling, your mind goes to what Jesus uttered when he looked upon Jerusalem.

[23 : 56] The city that refused to acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Savior. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who killed the prophets and stoned those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you are not.

willing. Sad, horrendously sad, catastrophic words, not willing. You know, preferring the short-term pleasures that give no true satisfaction.

And that compromise, or even worse, that rejection altogether, it's a rejection of the Lord Jesus that will bring about eternal destruction.

And there's anyone even here this morning or watching online and that's you refusing to come to the Lord Jesus, not willing, refusing in heart, refusing to come to the Savior.

Well, listen to the words of the passage here where the passage calls you to repent, to come to the Savior. Because, as the passage tells us here, it's Jesus who searches hearts and minds.

[25 : 15] He knows your heart, he knows my heart. He knows what you're thinking even now, he knows what I'm thinking even now. He knows what you think about him. None of us can hide anything from our Savior.

And that's the case. And you know that Jesus knows you. Repent and believe. Turn to the Savior and flee from the wrath to come.

But then finally, finally, in the passage we see words of consolation. Yes, the church there in Thyatira was tolerating this evil individual.

But, as we're right there, most of the church hadn't. They hadn't followed the ways of this Jezebel. And so, God gives consolation to those who hadn't given in to the temptation to follow the immoral ways that Jezebel was encouraging.

In fact, he tells them in verse 24, he consoles them. But to the rest of you who don't 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.

[26 : 28] In other words, I'm not going to impose any other burden on you. You've abstained from compromise. I've commended you for that. I'm not going to say anything more.

Because Jesus had noticed their faithfulness. They'd avoided all their moral practices. God wasn't going to burden them with anything greater than they could bear.

But the faithful and fire-tire, they were still to persevere. They were still to endure with patience because they would know that their true hope, their true expectation, if you like, would be fully realized when Jesus returns in all his glory.

and that fullness of victory over Satan and all who are his. And that's the ultimate consolation that Jesus gives here. As we read there in verse 26 to 28, what Paul mentioned, I think we referred to not so long ago, when Paul told the Corinthians, 2 Corinthians 4, he told them of our light and

momentary troubles of achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

So the faithful in the church in Thyatira, they were to look beyond their reflections. They were to look even away from the authorities on earth and look to the one authority in heaven, in heaven and earth.

[28 : 00] They were to look to God. They were to look to the one whose authority outweighs every human authority. God's because our Savior promises something amazing.

Amazing as we read there in verse 26, the one who conquers and keeps my work until the end to him, I will give authority over the nations.

These are quite incredible words. Jesus received authority from his Father. And the Christian, the believer, the one who's in Christ, you will share in that authority, that dominion.

That's what Paul told the Corinthians, the church in Corinth, 1 Corinthians 6 too. Don't you know that the saints will judge the world? Don't you know that you'll judge angels?

And that emphasis on the believer, even sharing in that authority to judge, to judge every anti-Christian system, every anti-Christian power and individual, be given that share in the authority of Christ, when the Lord Jesus returns.

[29 : 21] And those authorities, whether in the first century or the 21st century world, all who hurt the cause of Christ, these lesser authorities are going to be judged by a higher authority and all who are in Christ will share in that judgment.

And that's what Jesus confirms here in verse 27, because these words there are actually echoing Psalm 2. It speaks of Christ's eternal authority and punishment on all who despise our Lord and Savior.

And you know the language that's used here, ruling with a rod of iron, as when earth and pots are broken. This, remember, is the place of craft work, where there were rods of iron and earth and were pottery, this picture of destruction, this power and destruction.

And the people there in Thyatira and the church there would recognise that these words tell of Christ's power. And the final word of consolation, Jesus speaks about giving the church himself, verse 28, and I'll give him, that's the one who overcomes, I'll give him the morning star.

This is a reference to a new day, a new life found in Jesus, life that's going to be enjoyed in all its fullness when Jesus returns.

[30 : 56] and in that new day, which will be an eternal day, that will be a day when there will be no more pain and no more tears, no more sin and no more compromise.

But in that day, that eternal day, you'll know the fullness of joy in the presence of the Lord Jesus. but even on this side of eternity, you've got a responsibility to shine for the Savior, to shine, to witness for him without compromise.

Yes, seek to follow the Lord Jesus with all your heart, a whole hearted love, a whole hearted service, a whole hearted faith, a whole hearted perseverance.

no compromise, but give yourself fully to the work of the Lord. Yes, give thanks even for these words of condemnation to shake ourselves up to show us that there is that way of no compromise to challenge you to live for Christ in this broken world.

Amen. And let us pray. Lord, our God, our Savior, give us, we pray your strength, your enabling, so as not to be compromisers, but to be wholehearted in our service for you.

[32 : 33] Forgive us, Lord, for the many, many times when we have compromised our faith and practice. But Lord, show us the Lord Jesus. Show us him who expressed no compromise in his life, who showed forth that wholehearted devotion to you.

Help us to be like Christ and to give of ourselves fully and holy in your service. Continue with us now, Lord, we pray. We pray these things in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Amen. Amen.