

Christ lists some commendable qualities of the church in Thyatira, for He saw faith, love, and perseverance there. However, He also points out the serious problem of their tolerance of someone who was influencing many in the church to commit fornication and idolatry.

¹⁸ 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;

“And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write” - This message is directed to the pastor of the church in Thyatira, a city that, like many Roman cities in that day, was steeped in idolatry.

“These things saith the Son of God” - The primary god worshiped in Thyatira was named “Tyrimnas” and was called by his worshipers a “son of the gods.” Perhaps Christ is establishing His exclusive place as the Son of God, a term synonymous with “Messiah.” Christ is asserting Himself as the actual Son of God, superior to the fictitious “son of the gods” that the city of Thyatira worshiped.

“who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire” - When John first sees Christ in chapter 1, he sees Christ’s eyes as “a flame of fire” (Rev. 1:14), speaking of His penetrating gaze that can see straight into the heart. Christ is reminding those at the church at Thyatira that He can see the secrets of their hearts and that He sees the sins that they think no one can see. He sees not only what they do but why they do it.

“and his feet are like fine brass” - John’s description of Christ in chapter 1 also included “feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace.” The Greek wording of Rev. 1:15 implies that the feet were glowing as if they had been heated in a furnace. Commentators have varying interpretations to the feet “like fine brass” but the general consensus is the idea that it speaks of Christ’s readiness to judge sin, which would be consistent with the theme of this message to Thyatira.

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.

“I know thy works” - As He does in His message to each of the other churches, Christ assures the church at Thyatira that He is aware of their works. He will not forget what we do for Him.

“and charity [agápē: selfless love]” - Christ knows the love they have for Him and for each other. This was something the Ephesian church lacked (Rev. 2:4).

“and service [diakonía: to serve or minister]” - This Greek word is derived from the word used for “deacon” meaning “servant.” Christ is assuring that He also knows the ways that they have ministered to Him and others.

“and faith” - Christ knows that they have not lost their trust in Him nor turned away from Him as their Savior. In the city where they lived it would be easy to be tempted to seek guidance from the other deities worshiped, but they held onto their faith in Christ.

“and thy patience [steadfastness; endurance]” - Even when times were bad they patiently looked to the Lord to meet their needs.

“and thy works; and the last to be more than the first” - Christ repeats the fact that He knows their works, apparently in order to recognize that the works they were currently doing were greater in quantity and/or magnitude than what they did when the church started. Their works were not dwindling or remaining constant, but increasing despite the opposition and temptations of their environment.

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.

“Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee” - Despite their faithfulness, love and works, they had some serious problems that needed correction.

“because thou sufferest [to allow; permit] that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess” - Christ uses the OT wife of King Ahab to characterize this person that was influencing the church for evil. In the OT, Jezebel was the foreign wife of Ahab, king of Israel and was a zealous worshiper of Baal. She influenced her husband to all manner of wickedness as well as influencing the nation of Israel to worship Baal. At Thyatira, this woman called herself a prophetess, no doubt to gain influence over the people as an authority figure. Christ says that the church “sufferest that woman,” meaning that they did not put a stop to what she was doing. They had failed in their duty to enforce church discipline.

“to teach and to seduce [to lead astray] my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols” - This woman, in her self-proclaimed role as “prophetess,” was leading people astray into sin through her teachings. The primary offenses resulting from her teaching were:

- **fornication** – Likely this was done during the worship feasts of pagan gods. Immoral acts were often done as an act of worship of these gods. At the very least this woman’s teaching promoted sexual gratification independent of idol worship.
- **eating things sacrificed to idols** – This was left overs from offerings made to idols. In 1 Cor. 8 Paul answers a question that the Corinthians had about eating things offered to idols. As long as it was done with the knowledge that these idols were inanimate objects and not real deities then you could eat these things without sinning. At Thyatira, however, this woman was causing people to eat these things as an act of worship rather than merely feeding their hunger.

“And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not” - The Lord is always a God of mercy and He gave this woman time to repent but she did not. We should never mistake a withholding of judgment as a license to sin but an act of mercy as God gives us a chance to avoid His hand of chastisement through repentance.

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.

“Behold, I will cast her into a bed and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation [affliction; distress]” - This woman apparently had spent much time in a bed committing adultery (or at least advocating doing so) and so Christ declares that He will cast her into a bed. However, it will not be a bed of pleasure that Christ will cast her, but one of great tribulation. Those who have committed adultery with her will join her in this bed of tribulation and will not escape.

“except they repent of their deeds” - The only way to avoid God’s chastisement is through genuine, sincere repentance. Sadly we are often too stubborn and self-willed to repent of our sins and so God has to chastise us.

“And I will kill her children with death” - This is a Hebrew expression meaning that Christ will destroy them. It is unclear whether or not the “children” are the literal children of this woman Jezebel or are the followers of her teachings, but Christ’s threat to destroy them is an indication of how seriously He views the sin of those who would be an evil influence on His people.

“and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth [examine; investigate] the reins [loins] and hearts” - In ancient times the loins were considered to be the seat of your innermost thoughts and feelings while the heart was considered to be the center of your physical and spiritual being. Christ is saying that He is the One Who can see everything in our heart and innermost being – our thoughts, intentions and desires. Nothing is hidden from Him, the One with the eyes as a flame of fire. When the churches hear of Christ’s judgment on this woman Jezebel and all those partaking in her sins, they will understand that He sees the sinfulness of the human heart and that we cannot hide our sin from Him.

“and I will give unto every one of you according to your works” - Many at this church were faithful but many also were following the teachings of this woman. Christ will reward each in the church at Thyatira (and us) according to their works, whether good or bad.

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.

“But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine” - Christ is now speaking to those who were not following the teachings of this woman “Jezebel” and not taking part in her sins.

“and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak” - At this time Gnostic ideas and teachings were starting to take hold. The Gnostics believed that they were enlightened because they had superior knowledge of what they called “the depths of God.” Christ is describing this teaching (which may have been an influence on, if not the basis of, the woman Jezebel’s teachings) as “the depths of Satan.” Christ is speaking to those who were not following this teaching but have remained faithful to the gospel.

“I will put upon you none other burden” - They were doing well in resisting the temptations of this woman Jezebel and so Christ is not requiring anything more of those who were remaining faithful to Him and not engaging in the sins of v. 20-21.

“But that which ye have already hold fast till I come” - They were to continue being faithful in what they were already doing (v. 9).

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.

“And he that overcometh [to gain victory], and keepeth my works unto the end” - John himself defines an “overcomer” in **1 John 5:4-5** ⁴ *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* ⁵ *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”* Anyone with faith in Christ is an overcomer through the victory He won on the cross.

Thus far in the messages to the churches, Christ’s final promise to the overcomer has been based on faith and not performance. It may be that this particular promise is reserved for those who remain faithful in working for Christ until “the end” (of their lives).

“to him will I give power [authority] over the nations” - This is a repeat of the various promises in scripture of how the followers of Christ will be given the privilege of ruling and reigning with Him. **1 Cor. 6:2** *“Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?”* Remember the “kings and priests” of Rev. 1:6.

“And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers” - This statement is drawn from (if not a direct quote of) **Psalms 2:9**: *“Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”* The passage from Psalm 2 speaks of God the Father giving His Son power and authority over the nations of the world. The phrases “rule them with a rod of iron” and of a vessel being “broken to shivers” speaks of Christ’s absolute authority over the nations.

“even as I received of my Father” - Christ received His authority over the nations from His Father and He will delegate that authority to us. Everything we receive from God comes through Jesus Christ.

“And I will give him the morning star” - From Babylonian to Roman times the morning star was regarded as a symbol of sovereignty, and by Roman times, victory as well. Christ is reinforcing the promise of giving them authority over the nations.

²⁹ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Again Christ repeats the call to those who are born-again and thus can hear/understand the Spirit of God. He calls on them to listen and heed what the Spirit is saying to these churches because of the importance of the messages. We in the church age need to take to heart not only the promises they contain but also the warnings to repent and/or purge the sin and false teachings that can creep into the church.