



The One Year Bible Club



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Revelation 2:18 – 3:1-6

The Corrupt Church

¹⁸ “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, ‘These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: ¹⁹ “I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last *are* more than the first. ²⁰ Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. ²¹ And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. ²² Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. ²³ I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

²⁴ “Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. ²⁵ But hold fast what you have till I come. ²⁶ And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations ²⁷ ‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be

dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels' as I also have received from My Father; ²⁸ and I will give him the morning star. ²⁹ "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

The Dead Church

3 "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. ² Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. ³ Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. ⁴ You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. ⁵ He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. ⁶ "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

OKAY, HERE'S MY TEACHING COMMENTARY

In today's reading of the One Year Bible, the Lord Jesus Christ reveals to the apostle John the spiritual condition of two more churches that he sends individual messages to.

The Church of Thyatira

First the good news, Jesus praised this church for all the good works that it was doing and even said that the last are more than the first. In other words, you guys are doing a great job in several areas and have continued to grow developing the church and outreach to your community. Then Jesus says nevertheless I have a few things against you. What were these things that Christ was wanting to confront correct? This pastor was allowing a woman named Jezebel who called herself a prophetess to teach in the church but her teaching was leading members of the church into idolatry and sexual immorality! Some Greek scholars believe that the interpretation of that woman is your woman or the wife of the senior pastor. Senior pastors need to be very careful and sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit when it comes to allowing people to preach and minister in their church because everybody that preaches, prophesies or teaches is going to be imparting something to that local church either good or bad spiritually.

So Christ was holding the senior pastor accountable for allowing or permitting this woman to minister in the church. She was influencing believers to explore and experience the depths of Satan! The Lord gave this woman a space of time to repent but she refused to repent and for this reason the Lord announced that because the senior pastor was not going to do anything about it and because the woman and those that had followed her into idolatry and sexual immorality were not going to repent that the Lord was going to allow sickness to take hold of her and her followers to bring them to repentance. He prophesied that if this did not work they would die and everyone in all the churches that heard about it would realize that this was the

judgment of God because of their sins and stubborn refusal to repent. I admit this is really heavy but we can't ignore what is written in the Word of God just because we don't like it or if it somehow does not fit into our "perfect" theology and beliefs about God.

Would God allow sickness to come into the life of a believer to bring correction?

I think it is best to allow the holy Scriptures to speak for themselves as I believe the answer is yes according to what is written concerning those that partake of the Lord's table or communion in an unworthy manner not dealing with sin in their lives. The Bible says that weakness, sickness and death would be the results:

1 Corinthians 11:29-32 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. ³⁰ **For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.** ³¹ For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. ³² But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

An aspect of Apostolic ministry

This brings me to an important point, ultimately the Lord holds one-man accountable for every local church. Today we call him the senior pastor. It's interesting that by the time these letters were sent to the seven churches enough time had past for developing the leadership structure of each local church. Jesus did not send his messages to the board or pastoral review committee but to the senior leader of each local church and he was holding each of them accountable for the spiritual condition of the church they were pastoring. They were the first to read, hear and understand the message of Christ to them and then apply it to the churches they pastored. The Bible teaches that every local church should develop the ministries of elders and deacons with one senior pastor responsible for each local church. Paul acknowledged the elders, deacons and saints when he wrote to the church at Philippi:

Philippians 1:1...To **all the saints** in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the **bishops** and **deacons**:

However, by the time that this final book of the New Testament was written we find Christ the Great Shepherd of the sheep sending individual messages to the under shepherds concerning the spiritual condition of each of the local churches they were responsible for. Additionally, I would like to point out something that is not so obvious. The Lord sent this revelation concerning seven churches through the apostle John to the senior pastors of each of these churches. What I believe is healthy and Scriptural is for senior pastors to be related and open to apostolic ministries in the sense of being spiritual fathers and mentors.

Surely all of these pastors knew the apostle John and he probably preached and ministered in all of these churches and may possibly even planted some of them because we know that John led the church at Ephesus for a season which was like a mother church to that whole

geographic area of Asia. Sometimes the Lord uses outside leaders to bring a fresh prophetic word to the senior pastor. However, nowadays there are many pastors that are so insecure that they do not allow anyone from the outside to speak into their lives a fresh prophetic word from God.

What I'm talking about has to be relationally based not someone they do not know or trust to listen to. What I am not implying is that senior pastors in local churches need to somehow be submitted to an outside apostle that would usurp authority over the senior pastor and by virtue of his apostolic office demand that the pastor and church submit to whatever they desire including tithing to some apostle! No, the apostle Paul warns about false apostles and gives us an idea of how they act when he wrote to the Corinthians about such false leaders:

2 Corinthians 11

13 For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.

20 For you put up with it if one **brings you into bondage**, if one **devours you**, if one **takes from you**, if one **exalts himself**, if one **strikes you on the face**.

Paul had a special relationship with the Corinthian church because he planted it and so was recognized as its spiritual father in that sense. Here's a few Scriptures where Paul spells out the correct attitude of true apostolic leaders:

1 Corinthians 4:14-16 I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn *you*. ¹⁵ For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet *you do not have* many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. ¹⁶ Therefore I urge you, imitate me.

2 Corinthians 1:24 Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand.

2 Corinthians 12:19 But *we do* all things, beloved, for your edification.

Ultimately, the senior pastor at Thyatira had to make a decision about what to do with the prophetic word that was sent to him from Christ through the apostle John. The Lord loves us too much not to confront us in the areas that we need to change and he is sure to give us the strength and the power to bring about correction by the grace of God in the spirit of love seeking the best in the eyes of God for the churches that we pastor, the precious people of God that we are responsible to lead in the ways of righteousness according to the Bible.

The Church of Sardis

Christ didn't have anything good to say to the pastor of this church. As a matter of fact he basically said you're a hypocrite! You have a name that you are alive but you are dead. It looks like things were going great at this church because it had plenty of programs and activities. Tragically, somehow this pastor just was not taking seriously his calling and for this reason it was showing in the quality of disciples he was making. It seems that he was relying on keeping people busy by involving them in all kinds of church activity but Jesus said I have not found your works perfect in the sight of God meaning not complete, not mature and wanting. The Lord tells the pastor to strengthen the things that remain meaning the people that are still with you that are ready to die.

How could he do this? By seeking the Lord himself and being refilled with the Holy Spirit and getting into the word of God to do it for himself with all his heart and in this way show by example his commitment to Christ from the inside out. There is nothing like a pastor that is on fire filled with the Holy Spirit boldly preaching the Word of God with a fresh prophetic anointing that speaks directly into the hearts of all that listen and brings them strength, motivation and assurance in God. This church had a mix of people as all churches do. Some were not very committed as disciples but the Lord acknowledged several people in this church that made a commitment to live in holiness because he said they have not soiled their garments and Christ promised that they would walk with him in white because they were worthy.

WHAT'S THE BOTTOM LINE?

- 1) God sees everything we do for him and is pleased for what we do that's right and will commend and reward us for our faithful devotion and service to him.
- 2) Christ holds pastors accountable for who they allow to minister in their churches.
- 3) Idolatry and sexual immorality are not to be tolerated among church members.
- 4) The Lord is merciful and patient but his correction can bring sickness and even death if people don't repent.
- 5) The Lord used the apostle John to bring his individual messages to the churches. God does use apostles and prophets to speak into the lives of his pastors and churches today if they are open to receive a fresh word from God. Remember, all prophecy must be judged in light of the written word of God.
- 6) The Lord looks at the quality of spiritual life, devotion to him and our obedience to gauge our spiritual health and not necessarily church activities and programs.

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