

The Apocalypse - Revelation 2

by Steve Gallagher

The sermon explores the messages to the seven churches in Revelation, highlighting the commendations and reproofs given to each church, and emphasizing the importance of maintaining the first love and devotion to Christ.

Duration: 45:35

Scripture: Revelation 2:2-3, Revelation 2:10, Revelation 2:14-15, Revelation 2:20-23, Revelation 3:1-2, Revelation 3:8, Revelation 3:15-16

Topics: "Apocalypse Study"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the structure of the letters to the churches in the book of Revelation. He likens them to a form letter that can be customized for each congregation. The letters follow a pattern of describing Christ, offering commendations and reproofs, and concluding with a word of promise to overcomers. The speaker emphasizes that Jesus addresses the strains of ungodliness that were already present in the early years of the churches and deals with them forcefully.

Transcript

Let's open up with a word of prayer. Lord, I do want to thank you for the way you're helping us to get the sense of this book as it's been laid out, even the introductory nature of chapter one and how it just paves the way for all the events that we're going to see unfold in the weeks ahead. And also these next two chapters, your letters, your messages, your concerns about these churches.

Lord, we pray that you'll be with us today in the study and make it real to us, Lord. Help me as I share these thoughts, Lord, to be concise, articulate, and yet to get the whole picture across. Thank you, Lord, in your name, Jesus, amen.

Okay, now before we get into the churches, let me just say a couple of things of an introductory nature to these seven churches. First of all, Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamum were the leading cities of the province of Asia, okay? And they are also, obviously, the first three churches that are mentioned here. And I want to just say something about these physical attributes of these cities real quick before we get going.

Ephesus was a total commercial city, and it would be comparable to New York. If you've ever seen that series that Rick Burns did on New York, it's an excellent series, and you really see how the city of New York was created for one purpose only, and it was created by the Dutch, actually, to make money. That's

what it was all about from the very beginning.

And the whole Wall Street area, it was the first time in the world's history that there was actually a neighborhood committed to just making money, and that's all it was about. Well, Ephesus was like that, and the whole Temple of Artemis, or Diana, depending on Greek or Roman, the whole Temple of Artemis was all about making money. So the reason why people would buy those little gods of Diana was that, you know, it was some kind of good luck charm, really.

I mean, it was their god, and it was the god of making money. So Ephesus could be compared to New York. Smyrna was a city known for its beauty.

And I told you I've been to all these cities, and it's very easy to understand why they say it's a beautiful city. Today it's the city of Izmir, and it's a huge city. I think it's the second largest in the country of Turkey.

Goes up the side of a hill, but it has this fabulous harbor. I mean, it's a huge bay that swings back around. So for ships to get in, it's got to go through this kind of like a narrow strait, and then it all opens up into this bay, and the city sits right on that bay.

You know, so it's got a wonderful harbor. It's just a very beautiful city. So maybe we would compare it to San Francisco in that sense.

Pergamum was political. Pergamum was dedicated to the emperors from early on. I mean, in the earliest days of Rome becoming a world-class empire, they had dedicated Pergamum to the Roman Empire.

And actually, the first temple dedicated to emperor worship was there in Pergamum to Augustus. So maybe Pergamum would be comparable to Washington, D.C., because it was the capital of the Asian province. Okay? Now, Thyatira and the other cities were more minor cities.

I'll just mention Thyatira. It would be comparable to maybe Gary, Indiana. But Thyatira was an industrial kind of city.

It was an area of agriculture and so on. But that's what that city was known for. Okay? So just so you have that sense of that.

And I also want to mention that the messages to these seven churches really are a message to the church at large. It wasn't just those cities, and it wasn't just for that time period. It was for all church history.

Now, there were specific messages for those actual congregations, and those messages should be taken literally. Okay? That's true. Those problems and positives and negatives were all in place there, but it's also a message to the church at large.

Let me read what the expositor says here about this. These seven churches represent the church of Christ in every country of the world down to the very end of time. The universal church spreads itself out beneath his gaze, and before he instructs, he blesses it.

In their condition, they represented the church in her divine origin and human frailty. In her graces and defects, in her zeal and lukewarmness, in her joys and sorrows, in the guardianship of her Lord, and in her final victory after many struggles. Not to Christians in these cities alone is the apocalypse spoken, but to all Christians in all their circumstances.

They are the things which are, and they are types of the things which shall come to pass hereafter. Okay? So, I just like the way that he expressed that. And also, one more thing I'll mention about, you know, both these chapters.

Think of this as a form letter. Let's say, for the sake of argument, let's say we had seven chapters of Pure Life Ministries in different cities around the country. And so, you're the president, so you write a letter that you are going to send to each of these chapters of Pure Life, but each of them are dealing with different kinds of circumstances and struggles, and some are doing better than others.

So you almost have like a form letter, and you just plop their name in, and plop in some other particulars, because each of these letters have the same layout. If you want to get it down to its barest form, and actually you could expand it beyond this, but you start off with the description of Christ, and most all of this has been already expressed in chapter one. And then either a word of commendation, and a word of reproof, or just one or the other, you know, but most of them had both.

And then a concluding word of promise, particularly to overcomers. So it is very much a form letter that is specialized for each of the congregations. For the sake of time, though, I'm only going to deal with the commendations and reproofs.

I'm just going to have to skip over the different descriptions of Christ, mostly because we've already talked about them, but it would have been nice to have the time to apply them to each of these churches, because there's a reason why they're used for each of these churches, and I'll just have to let that go. In the next class, I will talk about the overcomers, and we'll get into that next time. So let's look at the city, the church in Ephesus.

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write, the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, the one who walks among the seven golden lampstands. All right, and as I said, Ephesus was known for its commercial qualities. Paul had established a church there way back in the middle of the century, some 40 years before this, so this church has had all these years to go through different maturing stages and so on.

So let's continue here. I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men. And you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false.

And you have perseverance and have endured for my namesake and have not grown weary. Okay, so there's just a rush of commendations here, and Robert Thomas brought out a point that there's three couplets here in these two verses. I know your deeds, your toil, and perseverance is the first one, so let's look at that.

Deeds is a word that can describe a number of things. The way you live your life, the way you behave in life, or actual work, you know, and especially work for the Lord. So deeds can mean all those kinds of things.

In this case, it's almost certainly the way you work for the Lord. The word toil is different. It's almost like an extreme example of it.

It means working to the point of exhaustion. So Jesus is commending them because they are doing a certain kind of work, and they're doing it with such diligence that it's exhausting them. And their perseverance, they're sticking at it, they're not giving up.

And so what was it they were doing? They were working tirelessly to stop these false teachers from making inroads into their congregation. And Jesus is very happy and appreciative to them for that. Means a lot to him.

The second phrase we'll look at is this one, which Robert Thomas calls couplet. I'm realizing now it's not the right term. But anyway, these three things, you cannot tolerate evil men, number one.

You put to the test who call themselves apostles, number two. And they are not, and you found them to be false. Okay, so let me just make a mention of a couple of things here.

This word tolerate is *bastazo*, and it's the word that we would use to describe burying someone. You know, in other words, like Galatians 6.2, I used to preach all the time to pastor groups this message about ministering to sex addicts. And I would say you need to be able to bear them.

You know, and it means to carry a person spiritually and emotionally. But what Jesus is saying is he's commending them because they won't bear with these men. You know, you're not putting up with them.

He's actually commending them for their impatience with them in a certain way, I guess you could say. And you put them to the test, and in 1 John 4, we see this commended before this. It's very interesting what John said.

This was probably only a couple of years before he received this revelation that he wrote this. Beloved, do not believe every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they're from God because many false prophets have gone out into the world. In verse 3, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God.

This is the spirit of the Antichrist. It's interesting. You know, so once again, now it's Jesus saying, yes, test them.

Make sure that what they're bringing you is actually from me. And so they're calling themselves apostles. In other words, they've appointed themselves this designation.

Basically what these guys were, there was this Nicolaitan cult, and we'll talk a little bit about that here throughout this talk today. But this Nicolaitan cult, I know it began as a following to Nicholas. Do you remember Nicholas was one of the seven deacons mentioned in Acts? And apparently the man backslid at some point.

This is according to early church fathers, that he backslid and went into heresy. And these are his followers. So they became known as the Nicolaitans.

But now they're like sending out these itinerant missionaries. They were going around to these different churches, people's homes, you know, coming into people and saying, you know, I'm an apostle. And let me share with you some higher knowledge that maybe you don't know about.

And was gaining followers for themselves in these different cities. And the Ephesians found out about this and they were not going to put up with it. You know, they were on it right away.

And there must have been some kind of confrontation because it says you found them to be false. I mean, they had already exposed them for what they were. Praise the Lord.

And the third phrase, triplet, will say you have perseverance and you have endured for my namesake and you have not grown weary. So you know, it's kind of the same basic thinking that these Ephesian Christians and the leaders of that church were really fighting to maintain the purity of the church. Now, I'm going to skip ahead to verse six and we'll go ahead and get this commendation out of the way as well.

Yet this you do have that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. Yes, God does hate some things, doesn't he? He hates falsehood. He hates sin and what it does to people.

He hates idolatry. He hates pride. It seems as though the Nicolaitans were what you call antinomian.

In other words, anti-law. Nomos was law, anti-law. And so antinomian means it's kind of a free for all.

It's real license, taking license. And it seems almost certain that the Nicolaitans here, and we'll read about Jezebel here in a minute, that they were taking license with Paul's teachings on grace. So Paul was fighting against Judaistic legalism.

And because he was fighting against that thing, that religious spirit thing, he was constantly emphasizing grace, you know, trying to come against that. But these people got a hold of his emphasis on grace and took it beyond, way beyond, where Paul intended it to go. You know, because grace, as Paul said, should lead you to obedience to the Lord and away from worldliness and so on.

But they skipped that part of it. But anyway, it's a licentiousness that they were commending. They were saying basically that you're free to do whatever you want to do.

One of the commentators said it this way, the conduct is immaterial if the faith be right. So in other words, their whole thing was that as long as you believe in the Lord, that's the important thing. You know, and what you actually do doesn't matter because it's what's in your heart.

That's what's important. That's what God's looking at. So that's kind of what they were teaching, but Jesus hated it.

And so this is no mere disapproval. It means what it says, hatred. They hated it and Jesus hated it, both of them.

But there was a problem in this church. And now remember, this was John's church. This is where John lived before he was sent off to Patmos.

So he knew these people especially well, and no doubt that the Lord had given him a great deal of discernment and he saw these things, but whether he saw them or not, and of course he did, but whether he actually saw them or not, this is Jesus speaking a word to these people in this church and there's something wrong there. I have this against you, that you've left your first love. Now I want to talk about this thing of first love for a minute.

Let me talk about it from the standpoint of a young couple who comes together and fall in love, okay? That's the picture. When a young couple comes together, it begins with a flourish of excitement. You're so excited.

All you can think about is that other person. And it's just, they're constantly on your mind and if you're a guy, your hope is that you will be able to propose to her and that she'll accept. And when she does accept, you're just thrilled, you can hardly sleep, and finally the marriage happens and it just begins in such a

fervency of affection.

That's the way it begins. That's typical. Well then, also typical is you begin to settle into the routine of marriage, don't you? And the excitement kind of dies down.

But over time, the shared experience that you guys have together, out of that comes trust and commitment and a deeper level of affection. If the love is maturing the way it should mature, it eventually becomes such a force in your life that you would literally lay down your own life before you would allow anything to happen to your beloved. Now that's the way a marriage should unfold.

So it begins with a flurry, it kind of dies off, but slowly but surely builds back up into something that's much more solid and deeply rooted. My love for Kathy far excels the early days. Now, you know, never mind my sin and all that, I was still very excited about meeting her and having her be my girlfriend and so on, but you could never compare those early days with all of its excitement to what we have together today.

But also, how many times have we seen, meaning us in the counseling field, couples that didn't go this way? Maybe they began with the excitement, but because of one person or the other or both people, it never grew like it should have. That love didn't mature. And instead of the give and take, it was just take, take on one or both parties' sides.

So, you know, sometimes we see that happening, and that's what happened here, apparently. That it began with a flurry of excitement when the Apostle Paul was there, or maybe he's talking about the individuals who are there alive right now, I tend to think it's more like that than the whole church. But whatever, when they first came to the Lord, there was that excitement, but it didn't continue.

What happened was, and some Christians are like this, their whole focus becomes on fighting the negative, and they lose sight of the Lord who they're supposedly fighting on behalf of. So instead of having a solid connection with God, their whole idea of Christianity became fighting against these evil intrusions, you know, of falsehood into the church. Well, we do need to do that, and Jesus is commending them for doing that, but you've got to maintain that love with the Lord, and that love has got to mature and grow over time.

I want to read what the pulpit commentator said about this lost love. It was that blessed early condition of peace and joy Godward, which the beginning of the religious life so often witnesses. Yeah, there is that excitement.

All things were new, Christ was new, the word a new light, worship a new gift, the world a new realm of beauty, shining in the brightness of its author. Even the man himself was new to himself. Then how tender, how teachable, in his conscience, how true, in his works, how dutiful.

It was the divine childhood, as it were, of his faith, and the beauty of childhood was in it. This was his first love. Blessed, blessed time, the primeval paradise of the soul, the golden age.

Yes, amen to all of that, but what Jesus is saying here, I believe, and you know, I'm pushing my luck here a little bit. I think what he's saying is you have not allowed that love to develop and grow and deepen over the years, and I think that's the bigger issue. All right, so one of these guys said doctrinal purity and loyalty can never be a substitute for love, and that is very true.

And also, let me add one more, pulpit commentator said, it is possible to hate what Christ hates without loving what he loves. All right, so let's move on to the church at Smyrna, and to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, the first and the last who was dead and has come to life says this, I know, not your deeds, I know your tribulation and your poverty, but you are rich, and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. I want to read that first part of that verse in a few translations.

Knox says, I know how sorely tried thou art, how stricken with poverty. The New English Bible says it this way, I know how hard pressed you are. The Weymouth says, I know your pressing trouble and poverty, and the net Bible says, I know the distress you are suffering.

All of that, just combine it all, that is what Jesus is seeing. He's seeing the struggles, the pressure, that's what tribulation means, slips us, it's pressure, either pressure through physical pain or emotional abuse or spiritual abuse, whatever, it's some kind of pressure that they were facing, Jesus sees that, He's aware of it. The poverty could have been from a couple of different things.

One possibility is that there had been almost like pogroms against the Christians in those early days, in other words, maybe anti-Christian mobs would just come in and just plunder the homes of the Christians. That is a possibility, and something like that is mentioned in the book of Hebrews, but it also could be a loss of their jobs because they were not involved in the idolatry of their area, you know, so that could have been the poverty they were facing. But either way, it had something to do with the persecution that they were under.

But Jesus said, you are rich, He's reminding them, when He looks at them, He knows the reality of their eternal situation, and what He understands, what they can't see other than by eyes of faith, maybe, but what He sees clearly is the spiritual riches that they are accumulating in the eternal realm. Pope commentator said this, He then knew of treasure store of good, which they did not, of recompense of rewards so vast that their present poverty should be all forgotten. And He knew that all the accusations of their enemies were not true, as perhaps sometimes in their more misgiving moods, they had half feared some of them might be, and were in consequence staggered beneath them.

But now He came and declared them to be not true, but blasphemies. They need not trouble themselves, therefore, no more about them. And you know what that's like, if you're a sincere believer, and you're accused of something, the first thing we do is examine ourselves, and a lot of times, we're too quick to believe the negative report about ourselves even, you know, and that's basically what He's saying.

It calls them a synagogue, but it's a synagogue of Satan. In other words, they were at one with the purposes of Satan, these Jewish people who were against the Christians. You got to remember this first century, there was a lot of hatred from the Jewish people against the church.

The Jewish people had a good connection with the Roman government. They had a deal with them, you know, and now this Jewish sect, which is how the Romans viewed the Christians in the earlier days, was causing problems, and they were an embarrassment to the Jews. So the Jews were just, not only hated them because they were like a heresy to them, not only that, but on top of that, they were causing them problems with the Roman authorities.

So that just added fuel to the fire, as far as the Jews are concerned. But the Lord looked at these Jews, and He knew how insincere they were, and it's really close to what He said to the Jews when He was

alive. You know, they said to Him, for instance, in John 8, Abraham is our father.

And Jesus' response to them was, you are of your father the devil. You know, so we see that same thought was in Jesus' mind way back when. Okay, verse 10, do not fear what you're about to suffer.

Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison so that you will be tested and you will have tribulation for 10 days. Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life. I should mention that they didn't do jail terms like we do in America.

They didn't have like, you know, you are sentenced to 15 years, no probation or no parole or whatever. Or you are sentenced to 30 years. It didn't work that way in the Roman Empire.

Sometimes they would sentence people to, you know, some mines somewhere to hard labor the rest of their lives or to the galleys of ships and that sort of thing. But that was different. They didn't have prisons.

What they did have was little jail situations where they would hold someone until they came to trial. So whatever this was, apparently it was going to be intense, but it was going to be of a short definite duration and that's all that 10 days means. You shouldn't take it literally, 10 days, but it was going to be of a definite duration.

Let me read what Robert Thomas says. Apparently this church, already involved in tribulation, was expecting worse things still to come and thus was facing the future with trepidation. The devil was about to, quote, keep on casting, he's taking the verb form there, keep on casting some of these Christians into prison.

One after another, certain members of the Christian community could expect to be seized by the Roman authorities in Smyrna as a result of accusation brought by the Jewish community. Satan hoped to bring them to renounce their faith in Christ by promoting conditions of physical suffering. So they were under a lot of pressure from the community, but they had hope.

You know, they had hope in who Christ is. He's the first, he's the last, he's over all time. You know, he will be there when the Romans are come and gone.

You know, they have hope in his name, but they also have hope in the fact that no temptation has overtaken you, but such as is common to man. First Corinthians 10, 13, and God is faithful. He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you're able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

And there's that word again. Okay, let's move on to Pergamum. As we said, Pergamum was the capital of the region, is a little further north than Smyrna.

By the way, all these cities were a loop that the actual mail carriers would take. So now we've gone from Ephesus on the coast to Smyrna on the coast. Now we're going northeast, a little bit inland to Pergamum.

It says here, verse 12, and the angel, to the angel of the church in Pergamum, right? The one who has the sharp two-edged sword says this, I know where you dwell, okay? I know your deeds. I know your tribulation. I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is.

And you hold fast my name and did not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas, my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you where Satan dwells. Okay, reiterated. What does this mean, Satan's

throne? Well, it's what I already talked about.

It's the whole stronghold there of emperor worship, which was a very powerful thing in those days. I mean, it was such a tremendous pressure on everyone to participate in emperor worship. And I've shared with you Domitian, he was insane, demanding everyone call him God and so on.

So it was a very powerful thing in those days, and that's what they faced there in Pergamum. And it says here that you hold fast to my name, and the Greek verb for hold fast means to grasp forcibly. In other words, they were really holding on to the name of Christ, staying faithful to it.

And that same attitude would later be manifested by you and me when we won't take the mark of the beast, right? We are going to hold fast to the name of Christ, and we are going to endure the pressures that we will face before it's over with. Now Antipas, nothing's really known of him other than that tradition said that he was burned to death for refusing to renounce Christ and to engage in emperor worship. But whoever he was, he's alive in heaven today, praise the Lord.

One day you'll meet him. You've got to put him on your list of people you want to meet when you get up there. Okay, verses 14 and 15, but I have a few things against you.

Because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit acts of immorality. So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. All right, now there's two different lines of thought on these groups.

Robert Thomas believes that these Balaam followers was one group, and the Nicolaitans were another group. You know, pretty similar, but definitely distinct two different groups. Grant Osborne believes that, he's referring to the same group of people, and if I could reword it this way, he was saying, you have people there holding to the teaching of the Nicolaitans, kind of like the way that Balaam taught Balak to put stumbling blocks before the people.

Using it as a comparison, almost, to Jewish history. And, you know, either one could be right, but I tend to think he's got it there. I think that's probably what it was.

Anyway, look at what they're teaching here. It's still, it's along the same lines of this antinomianism we've already talked about. They're teaching people to eat things offered to idols, and to commit acts of immorality.

Anyway, he was describing meat that had been sacrificed to idols, and you could get that meat in two locations. You could get it at the market, so you go to the market, you know, to us it would be down to the store, and you have this section, the meat section, and most of the meat that you found in those days, that's where it came from. Because it was the cheapest, easiest place to get meat, was it had to be sacrificed anyway, and so they would sacrifice it to the idols, then they would sell it to the meat dispenser, the store, or whatever.

You know, so it was the best place to get meat, and you could probably get other meat, but it was probably more expensive, more difficult to come by, so, you know, it was a big struggle in the early church. Can we go and buy this meat? And Paul said, listen, take it easy, calm yourself, don't worry about it. But, this is the interesting part, the letter from the council in Jerusalem, do you remember that in Acts 15? When they sent this letter out to the Gentile churches, they said, okay, listen, you don't have to be circumcised and do

all this stuff that Judaizers are saying, but here's the four things I want you to do, and two of them are listed right here.

Don't eat meat offered to idols, and don't commit immorality. Both things were very strong in the Gentile population in the Roman Empire in those days, so, you know, you had that letter go out, but Paul's kind of going up behind it, you know, and saying, listen, I know that the council said that, but just don't make a big deal about it. It's nothing to get yourself wrapped around an axle over.

It's not a big deal if you go and buy meat at the market, you know, and it's been, who cares if they did something like that, it doesn't mean anything to us. And Paul was right about that, so that was one thing, but there was another way you got this meat, and this is probably what Jesus is referring to here, is that they would have these big feasts that were tied into pagan worship in those days, and especially tied into emperor worship, but also different cities had different deities they were worshipping. There was a huge altar to Zeus in Pergamum that I saw, you know, so there were different kinds of things being worshiped, but they would have these pagan feasts, and they would have, people would go in and participate in that, and there was a lot of pressure on everyone to be involved in all of this.

So Jesus is saying that these people are teaching that it's okay to go to these feasts, and these feasts tended to also be very much tied in with the prostitution going on in all these temples, you know, so they would go there, they would eat, and then they would hook up with a prostitute there, and it was all considered worship, if you can imagine that. You know, it's all flesh, and it's all worship, this pagan style of worship. So, you know, what Jesus is saying is, you cannot tolerate these teachers in your midst that are telling my people that they can do these things.

By the way, you know, when Paul talked about eating meat offered to idols in 1 Corinthians 10, he also said, but don't partake of the table of demons. You know, so just so you know, he wasn't, he wasn't an antinomian himself. All right, let's move on to Thyatira, the last one, and to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, the son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet are like burnished bronze, says this, I know your deeds and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first.

Now, Robert Thomas points out that probably what's being expressed here are two couplets, I'll say that this time. In other words, service comes out of love, and perseverance comes out of faith. So you have love and service tied together, love being the animating principle, and service being the following action, and faith being the animating principle, and perseverance in the face of difficulties and pressures and all of the temptations and so on coming out of that.

So love and service is basically the one side of Christianity, the wonderful, wonderful love of God that should be an envelope over all churches and all bodies of Christians. And I'll mention also that agape, the word agape is only used twice in the book of Revelation, both in this chapter, that the Ephesians had lost it, but the Thyatirans were growing in it. So there's a definite contrast there between these two churches.

And you will prove your faith, basically, by your faithful endurance. And that theme is throughout the book of Revelation, that this constant message that's coming forth that you are going to have to prove your faith to me, no matter what you have to face in the days ahead, no matter how white hot the persecution may be, you're going to have to stick it out and remain faithful to me. Okay, verse 20, but I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads my bond servants astray, so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

Oh, Jezebel, who is this woman that Jesus names after Ahab's licentious wife? It could be that she was influential because she was a wealthy person. Maybe she gave to the church a lot, I don't know. I've seen that so many times down through the years, where someone who has money and they're giving a lot to the church, and so the pastor feels beholden to them, and yet the person is in a bad spirit and the pastor is tolerating what they're doing in the church.

Why? Because they're such big givers. And it's hard for pastors, you know, it's a difficult thing to deal with. It's a real temptation.

So it could have been something like that. Or maybe she just had one of those brazen, pushy personalities, you know, that just kind of forced herself on people. I don't know.

I don't know what exactly her deal was, but I know what she was teaching, and it was the same as what we've been hearing. This whole Nicolaitan antinomianism that you don't have to be all bound up in all this, you know, she would have called legalism. There's a lot of latitude.

Let me back up here for one minute with Thyatira. The thing with Thyatira was that there were trade unions there, and they were very strong. One of the trades that were strong in the city of Thyatira was what we saw with Lydia, who came from Thyatira and had moved to Philippi to sell dye, you know.

And so that was one of the trade guilds. Here's the bottom line. If you were a worker in this city, you had to belong to one of these guilds.

And part of these trade guilds was they wanted the favor of the Roman authorities. So what did they become involved with? Emperor worship. And so part of their regular, maybe once a month feasts or whatever, part of all that would be to worship, they have these worship feasts or these idolatrous feasts there in Thyatira.

And so if you're a Christian, you're expected to participate in these feasts. And if you don't participate, there's going to be growing pressure until maybe they just fire you and tell you, you can't operate in our area, you know. So there was that kind of pressure there.

And what this woman, Jezebel, was probably telling them was, listen, don't get all worked up about this. It's okay for you to go to these things. The Lord knows that you're walking with Him, you love Him, and you just have to do this to keep your job.

You know, God's not unreasonable. And He's full of grace, and it's okay if you, you know, go to these things. He understands.

I mean, doesn't that sound like the kind of stuff that we hear today? The same kind of thing. It's okay to compromise. It's okay to work deals out and to find middle ground.

You know, we've got to, you know, deal with people and where they're at and all this kind of stuff. We see the same things from these churches operating in our church culture today. People who are holding on to a religious form, but have long since departed from any love for the Lord they ever had, or if they ever really had love for the Lord.

So we see that stuff going on in the church, that more on the religious side. But on the other side would be the antinomians, you know, the charismatics or whoever, who are teaching all this licentiousness and you

can do this and you can do that and God's grace covers us all and, you know, and all this kind of stuff. You see the errors that were already being introduced into the early church in these early years, and we see them amongst us to this day.

So I think I'll just keep it at that. I'm going to have to bring it to a close. But basically Jesus is addressing these strains that were already beginning in those early years of ungodliness and He wanted to deal with them right then and right there and He dealt very forcefully with them.

Okay, so that's it for this week. Next time we'll get into chapter 3 and look at these last three churches. God bless you all.

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