

Revelation 2:21-28
 Church in Thyatira
 Holding Fast (part 3 in the study of Thyatira)

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[g] 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[i] 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.””

This morning we will, Lord willing; finish our study of the church that is in Thyatira

- And even though we have been slower through this particular church – this being our third teaching on Thyatira
 - It has been worth the pace – in my estimation
 - This letter, being the longest of the 7, has been necessary to explore
 - Because of the depths of the inherent issues
 - These “depths” are what Jesus refers to in verse 24 as “the depths of Satan”
- Thyatira was a church, as we have been studying, that had been spiritually accosted by the teachings of a woman
 - A woman who embodied the spirit of Jezebel
 - who claimed to be the mouthpiece of God – A self-proclaimed and self-appointed ‘prophetess’

- And she had successfully seduced some of the people in this church with the teachings
 - that sexual immorality and eating things offered to idols was in line with their Christianity
 - That they could have it all and do it all, and still be in line with pleasing Jesus
- And her teachings were drawing many people unto herself
 - Tragically causing many of God's people to stumble and sin
 - But, of course, her teachings were antithetical to God's revealed word
 - Her teachings were against God's already revealed word

One of the issues in the church - in my estimation –

- Is that no one had the spiritual guts to stand up to her and rebuke her with the word of God as they ought.
 - And when I read this letter, I get the impression that this had been going on for quite some time
 - Sunday after Sunday; week after week; year after year - this woman and her evil teachings
 - Had simply been left to continue uncontended;
 - She had been left to seduce without opposition
 - And in the end, she became more and more successful in drawing disciples unto herself
- And I think this may be one of the reasons Jesus selected this little church to be numbered with the seven
 - Because of the example set for other churches.
- Even today there are churches who start off strong and healthy.
 - Churches that are strong in their faith and works for Jesus
 - But then one person – usually a gregarious person – captures of the ear of the church and then grabs hold of the heart of the church
 - And brings her to a place Jesus has not intended
 - Bringing in the teachings of the world and even bringing in the teachings of Satan
- I'm convinced that there were some in this church that knew what was going on and knew the truth
 - And even though they were hanging on to their faith – they still did nothing about the false teacher in the pulpit

You know, the church is commanded in many places to contend for our faith.

- And this a command for all Christians – not just leadership within a church
 - We see many examples of God’s people contending for the faith throughout scripture
 - In Acts 6, we see the one of the first deacons contending for his faith
 - “**8** And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. **9** Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. **10** And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke”
 - When the great Apostle Paul first became a Christian, we see him contending for the faith against his own countryman
 - “**20** Immediately he preached the Christ[c] in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. **21** Then all who heard were amazed, and said, “Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?”
 - **22** But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this *Jesus* is the Christ.” Acts 9
 - Acts 18:28 describes Paul “**28** for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.”
 - Later in his ministry, Paul instructs pastor Timothy “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” (1 Tim 6:12)

I think the most straight forward command is probably found in Jude 1:3 (**TURN THERE**)

- “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”
 - We are to contend earnestly!
 - The Greek word here comes from the world of sports. (<epagōnizomai>)

- It's a strong form of the word that means ***to agonize***.
 - We are to agonize strongly for the faith that was delivered to us.
- Interestingly, this Greek word is classified in what is called the present infinitive
 - Not that we need to necessarily remember that, but what it indicates is that that Christian struggle to contend is continuous.
 - There's no letting down of the guard; there's no giving up or giving in
 - While we are here on this earth – we contend!
- Notice, real briefly, that we contend **for the faith** – not for our opinions nor our traditions
 - We need to be careful in what we contend for.
 - Churches split over the oddest things (lamp illustration)
 - It's the faith that is worth contending for

You know, by nature, I'm a pretty competitive person and I like to watch good competitions.

- I especially like to watch physical competitions like football or boxing or MMA – don't judge 😊
 - But what I've really come to understand, is that what happens on the field
 - Or what happens in the ring – or wherever the competition is held
 - Is the culmination of many months and years of preparation and training
- As much as my mind may think I could
 - I know that there is no way I could jump into the ring with a professional fighter and expect to come away with my hand raised
 - Well, they may raise it to see if I have any life left in my body, but not for victory
 - This type of contending takes time. It takes development. Strengthening. Training muscle memory
- Contending for the faith is not much different.
 - There will be diligent work involved. There will be hours to study and hours of experiential application and understanding involved
 - And usually in this type of training there is pain involved
 - as God is breaking things down and rebuilding so that HE can use us in the fight

2 Tim 2:15 tell us to “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

- And this was an issue in Thyatira. They lacked diligence. They didn’t seem to rightly estimate the value of contending for the faith
 - And so Jesus steps into the situation to put things right
 - And He does so by calling attention to the source – Jezebel
- But Jesus was patient. He gave her time to repent and gave those that followed her teaching time to repent
 - But they didn’t.
 - **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”

Jesus gave this woman time to repent – but His longsuffering over her sin has come to an end.

- And in ironies of all ironies, this sexually immoral woman, who no doubt had used her own bed to commit such sin
 - This bed will become a sickbed to her
 - As William Newell once put it “Her bed of whoredom will be changed into a bed of anguish”
- And those that follow her will be cast into great tribulation and look what happens with the offspring
 - “I will kill her children with death”
 - These are not likely her physical babies; but those of the next generation that followed her teaching
 - And now propagating the same doctrine.
- Think a false teacher begetting false teachers
 - These would be her ‘children’
 - And Jesus said He would kill them. He would kill them with death
- You know, everyone dies; but not everyone dies with death
 - ““All men die, but all are not killed with death ... Oh, it is a woeful thing to be killed with death.” (Trapp)
 - This is a reference to the second death of an unbeliever
 - The death that results in separation from God for all eternity
 - How grave and serious is this judgment

But why? Why is this so severe? What is God's purpose in this type of very public judgment?

- **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. "
 - Wow!
 - Jesus' reasoning behind such was obviously to judge the unrepentant sin
- But the judgment of God often serves two purposes:
 - to chasten or eliminate the one being judged;
 - and to serve as warning to others who might otherwise follow a similar path.
- For example, Deut. 13:11 tells us that the one who led the children of Israel to worship other gods was to be stoned so
 - "all Israel shall hear and fear, and not again do such wickedness as this among you"
 - We also see a great illustration of this in Acts 5 with Ananias and Sapphira when their duplicity was found out
 - **5** "Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. **6** And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried *him* out, and buried *him*."
 - **7** Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. **8** And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" She said, "Yes, for so much." **9** Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband *are* at the door, and they will carry you out." **10** Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying *her* out, buried *her* by her husband. **11** So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things."
- Death is a great deterrent is it not?
 - And the death of this Jezebelian woman and her followers
 - Served as judgment and as a deterrent for all the other churches

Verse 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.”

- Take a moment to think about what’s happening here in this church.
 - There’s this lady, who’s ways and teachings are akin to that of the most notorious woman of the old testament – Jezebel
 - And she’s teaching things that are against God. Evil things. Perverse things.
- And in a very real sense, there is a deep division in the church
 - There are those that follow her and promote her teachings
 - And then there are those who don’t
 - They may not be boldly speaking out and confronting as they should;
 - but they are also not being seduced by her trickery
 - Could you imagine being in this church?
- And Jesus knows what’s going on. He sees all things and knows all things.
 - And so He speaks to this group of believers in this church that are not joining the ranks of Satan’s teachings
 - And He says “I will put no other burden on you”

Hey! What’s pending the other group; what’s is coming upon these evil people – It’s not coming your way

- Don’t fear! I will lay no other burden upon you.
 - The burden of having to deal with these people was enough.
 - Not succumbing to the seduction; not surrendering to the false teaching
 - All the difficulties and trials of having to deal with this – it’s enough.
 - You’ve been burdened enough....BUT
 - Verse 25 “hold fast what you have till I come”

I have been meditating on these two words all week. Hold fast

- We all need to meditate on these words - they are SO POWERFUL!
 - Hold fast what you have!
- This is the theme of the Christian walk
 - This is theme throughout Scripture for those who seek after God

- 46 times we see this word being used
 - With many admonishing the Christian to hold fast
- Heb. 3:6 “But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.”
 - Heb. 3:14 “For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;”
 - Heb. 4:14 “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession.”
 - Heb. 10:23 “Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful.”
- I Thes. 5:21 “Test all things; hold fast to that which is good”
 - 2 Tim 1:13 “Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.”
 - Rev. 3:11 “Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.”

Dear Christian – we are to hold fast to Jesus and His teachings in this fallen world.

- We are to hold fast to our High Priest
 - Hold fast to our confidence in Him
 - Hold fast to our confession
 - Hold fast to hope without wavering
 - Hold fast to what it good
 - Hold fast to the pattern of the sound words of Christ
 - Hold fast to our faith, our love
 - We hold fast!!
- This world has many false teachers
 - And they all desire to wrestle truth and your faith from you – hold fast
 - Why should we hold fast?
 - I Cor 10: **12** Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. **13** No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.

- We must hold on for dear life like a guy hanging over a precipice full of fire.
 - Hold on because Jesus and His word are the only sure thing in this world

What has really come to my attention as of late is that, for some reason, we think we can't stand. We think we can't hold fast

- And so we look for an unbiblical escape. We would rather look for a way out, then a way through
 - We'd rather abuse the grace of God; than to obey His commands
 - So we look for an escape from our problems
 - But the reality is that it's not an escape at all – it's a snare.
 - The Lord gives us the escape;
 - the Devil and the world lays a snare to bring us into further sin
- Think of the woman who is unhappy in the home. Whose husband is inattentive; doesn't love the way he should. Doesn't lead the home they way he should
 - She looks to escape by means of divorce – it's too hard
 - yet this is not a way of real escape, but rather another snare of the enemy to draw this woman into more sin
 - as God has not given allowance for divorce but in certain circumstances
 - And even then, it is not preferable
- But God has given this woman a way of escape from thinking divorce is the way
 - He has given Himself. He has offered Himself as the escape
 - Do we recognize this? Is this our first run-to
 - Or do we look to the world's answers?
- Jesus is the way of escape. We are to run to Him; cry out to Him; plead with Him
 - And accept His answer and His timing
 - He will build your trust and faith in Him
 - He will strengthen and enable

What of the man who sins are the lust of the eyes, the lust of flesh and the pride of life

- Who thinks he cannot hold fast to Jesus in his sin because it's just too difficult

- And so he looks for a way out; he looks to make excuses
 - But what Jesus is really asking for in the midst of the hardship is for this man to cry out to the God who can save
- Maybe the escape is extra busyness. Extra time at work. Extra projects around the home
 - Anything to preoccupy the mind and the heart so that he will not seek after Jesus
- Whatever the case may be, the remedy is still the same – hold fast!
 - And we are to hold fast to Jesus –not to man.

And notice something else here in verse 25, we are to hold fast...how long? Until He comes!

- Look at that verse again: ““But hold fast what you have till I come”
 - This gives us two focal points:
 - First, that we need to have endurance in the race.
 - But also that there is an end to holding on.
- It’s that wonderful news!! There will be an end to these troubles.
 - I think here in the text Jesus is specifically referring to His coming to the church in Thyatira – when He comes to deal with their specific sin
 - But there is also in a generic sense the Lord is speaking to His church
 - That there is always going to be sin around but we are to be faithful and hold on until He comes.
- Psalm 119:30 “I have chosen the way of truth; Your judgments I have laid *before me*. **31** I cling to Your testimonies; O Lord, do not put me to shame! **32** I will run the course of Your commandments, For You shall enlarge my heart. **33** Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes, And I shall keep it *to the end*. **34** Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law; Indeed, I shall observe it with *my* whole heart. **35** Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, for I delight in it.”

Jesus closes in His letter to the Thyatirans with a word of promise

- **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.”
 - Two promises are given to those who overcome – To have power over the nations and to be granted this “morning star”

Verses 26 is the promise you those who will overcome.

- Verse 27 is a quote from Psalm 2 to give authority to His promise
 - Psalm 2 is where God the Father promises His Son that He will one day rule over the nations of the earth.
 - Of course Jesus was rejected His first time here and so this is a reference to the Second coming of Christ
 - And it's in that day that He will rule them with a rod of iron and they will be dashed to pieces like a potter's vessel
- And it's at that time that Jesus is promising Christians that they will reign with Him over the earth
 - This was eluded to by Paul in his second letter to Timothy 2:: **11** *This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. 12* If we endure, We shall also reign with Him."
- Our reign with Christ will take place during the millennium –
 - During the time when Satan will be bound for 1000 years
 - 20: **4** And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years"
- There's also a sense in which we will all reign with Jesus after the Millennium and after the demise of Satan
 - At the end of Revelation we see this
 - **22:3** "And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. **4** They shall see His face, and His name *shall be* on their foreheads. **5** There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever."

This promise is given to those that overcome

- This power over the nations
 - And this power can only be given to the overcomer by the One who has such power
 - This authority is not innately the overcomer's, but is *granted* to him by virtue of his *identity with Christ*,

- Because it is Christ who is destined to “rule all nations with a rod of iron” (Rev. 12:5; 19:15).
 - The overcomer will “reign with Him a thousand years” (Rev. 20:6)

The last promise given is that of the “morning star”.

- The purpose of the Morning Star is to serve as an indicator that dawn is approaching
 - Those who see the morning star are encouraged by the fact that the long night is almost over
 - and soon the sun will shine in its brilliance dispelling all traces of darkness.
- This world in which we live in is darkness
 - But be of good cheer, because you have been granted the Morning Star
 - Luke 21: **25** “And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; **26** men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. **27** Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. **28** Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.”

When we see the morning star, the darkness is soon over

- Revelation 22:**16** “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.”
 - Jesus is the Bright and Morning Star
 - Those that over come are granted Jesus!

So hold fast to your faith – for your redemption draws close!