

Reference: REV 2:18-29

Church: GRACE

Date: 8/19/01

The Toleration of Jezebel

Purpose: To warn the church against playing with the fire of immorality and to encourage the elders in the church to maintain their vigilance over the church for its purity.

1. Introduction

Well over a year ago began to look at these letters
 Saw that they were written by Christ to the elders of the churches
 Saw they apply to fellowships in every age
 Not phases in church life or specific only to these churches
 Hear what the Spirit says to the churches
 Christ intimately involved with & concerned for His bride
 “I know”, “I know”
 Therefore concerned over us at Grace
 What have we seen so far?
 Ephesus doing many things, sound but forsaken first love
 Repent and do the things you did at first
 Smyrna suffering and about to suffer more – comfort
 Gracious purpose, glorious reward
 Pergamum – compromised faith in midst of spiritual darkness
 Repent or Christ will come to cleanse His church
 Now Thyatira.
 Town of trade, where Lydia came from.
 Was it through her that this fellowship had its beginnings?

2. Admirable Acts

Deeds, Love – unlike Ephesus, Faith, Service
 Perseverance
 Growth in doing good – unlike Ephesus, Sardis

3. Atrocious Accommodations

Tolerating “that woman” Jezebel
 Probably not her real name

Shared character traits with Jezebel
 Promoted Baal worship and immorality among Gods people
 This Jezebel taught believers to eat food sacrificed to idols
 To engage in immoral acts
 Trade guilds prominent in those days
 Thyatira a city of trade – many such guilds
 Had to belong to one to get on in a profession
 Each one had a god
 There were regular festivals in honor of the gods
 Food served had been sacrificed to them
 Was seen as a gift from them
 Meals followed by revelry
 Choice for believers – be ostracized from society
 Could mean losing job or being unable to trade
 Or engage in these carnal and idolatrous feasts
 Dilemma Jezebel was able to overcome
 Seems Jezebel was teaching that this was OK for believers to do.
 Remember the Nicolaitans in Pergamum (2:14)
 Seems Jezebel was a member of their group
 Difference: Pergamum threatened by some holding these views
 Thyatira was allowing a woman in the church to teach these things
 Note the phrase “the deep things of Satan” (2:24)
 Some think it is sarcasm –
 group was saying “deep things of God” which Paul uses
 But the teachings were not of God at all
 This certainly fits the sense of the passage
 Another possible teaching was this:
 “Only the body is involved – the soul remains pure”
 “Go ahead and indulge the flesh – you cannot lose your salvation”
 Later became the teaching of a heretical group in the early church
 True? Can we fill our lives with fleshly pursuits & still be saved?

Ephesians 5:5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Revelation 21:7-8 He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. 8 But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

Could turn to many other place in Scripture
 In any case, where do these evil desires arise? In the heart!
 It is what comes out of the heart that defiles a man!
 How can anyone say that the soul remains pure
 The Holy Spirit lives in someone, salvation guaranteed
 To a person who deliberately embarks on a course of immorality?
 Others (I agree) think that the group thought as follows:
 To really know enemy, you have to experience his “deep things”
 Become a stronger believer by understanding him better
 By experiencing these “deep things of Satan”
 Much stronger than someone who keeps away from them
 Able to overcome him more easily in this way
 “Counsel more effectively if you have experienced it yourself”
 You’ll be unharmed – just seeking intelligence about the enemy
 Again, how can anyone square this up with Scripture?

Romans 3:8 And why not say (as we are slanderously reported and as some claim that we say), “Let us do evil that good may come”? Their condemnation is just.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. 7 For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. 8 So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.

Jude 17-23 But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ,¹⁸ that they were saying to you, “In the last time there shall be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts.”¹⁹ These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit.²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith; praying in the Holy Spirit;²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.²² And have mercy on some, who are doubting;²³ save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, **hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.**

Either way, two things are clear
 First – this was a teaching of convenience
 Believers could lessen their persecution and get along in the world
 Second – they were playing with fire
 These things cannot be done and have no effect on the believer
 They get a grip on the heart they seduce the flesh

Our deceitful hearts embrace them gladly
 If we are believers, we grieve away God’s Spirit and grow weaker
 Cannot remain in this condition for long and be a Christian
 We cannot embrace sin, nurture it and refuse to repent
 Whilst maintaining a credible profession to be Christ’s

4. Assured Accounting

Here is the Son of God (Psalm 2)
 Eyes like fire (all seeing, penetrating), feet like bronze (holiness)
 Shall He not see what is going on?
 Will He allow it to continue in the church indefinitely? No!
 He will come to judge
 Graciously had given Jezebel time to repent
 But judgment is coming
 She and believers who have followed her –
 Great tribulation (bed of *sickness* is added)
 The bed of adultery will be turned to one of tribulation
 Her children will be killed with death (2nd death)
 These are the unbelievers who follow in her footsteps
 He searches “kidneys” and hearts. The inmost things
 He rewards according to the deeds done

5. Advantages of Abstinence

No further burden placed on those who are pure
 They are to remain so in this difficult situation
 But they will share in the authority of Christ
 Now the “gentiles” rule over them
 But soon they will rule the nations
 They will judge them
 Dashing them to pieces like pottery
 Christ Himself will be theirs – the Morning Star.

6. Truth Applied

Several applications are obvious here:

6.1. The danger of lax church government

Where was the discipline in this church?
 Not only entertaining heresy in the church
 Permitting this woman to teach it
 To encourage members to gross immorality
 To compromise, to idolatry
 Why didn't they stop her?
 Why didn't they discipline her?

We live in days when many churches do not discipline
 Wrong view of tolerance and meekness
 Not easy to confront these things, but we must!
 Elders— take courage! Do not hesitate to deal with sin in the church
 Keep up your guard against heresy
 Don't be seduced by new teachings and mixtures of Christianity
 with the world
 Things that appeal to the flesh and lead to the world
 This is what happened at Thyatira!
 It is your responsibility under God to keep the church pure.

Members – thank God you are in a church where there is discipline
 Remember your vows to submit to the government of the church
 Seems to be readily broken when we don't like what's happening!
 Spirit of independence and individuality in USA
 Completely counter to this requirement of submission
 Renew your vows today and pray for the elders in their duties

6.2. The danger of playing with fire

We are in a godless society
 Every day we are bombarded with enticements to indulge the flesh
 Lustful images, all that is wicked are held up as good and harmless
 We are ridiculed if we do not go along
 Sometimes it may cost us our jobs

Is any of this true of you?
 Playing with fire? Tempted to?

Convinced that it will do you no harm?
 Do not think that you can have it both ways
 You cannot serve the Lord and indulge the flesh
 You cannot defile the body and keep the soul pure
 You will not grow stronger to fight Satan
 By getting into bed with him
 That is a deception
 What you will get is tribulation if you are Christ's
 He will discipline you
 You have embarked on an anti-Christian pathway
 And if you are not His, you will perish
 Do not think that because it hasn't happened yet it won't
 The Lord is patient and is giving you time to repent – use it!

Repent of your sin if you have already succumbed
 Come back to Christ – He will cleanse and heal you
 Renew your warfare with the world, the flesh and the Devil
 Look at the rewards for obedience
 If you have never come to Him, come now
 Don't persist in a path that leads to the second death!

6.3. The reward of obedience

For those who have kept your garments white
 Continue in the path
 Don't be seduced by the world
 Think on how the tables will be turned one day
 You will sit with Christ and judge the nations!
 You will judge even the angels!
 And Christ Himself, your beautiful Savior
 Will be your husband through all eternity

May the Lord help us all to hear what the Spirit says to the
 churches and to obey. Amen