

Text: Rev. 2:18-29

Title: "The Son of Man's Local Church in Thyatira"

Time: 4/2/2017 am & 4/9/2017 am

Place: NBBC

Intro – We have come this morning to the fourth of the seven churches that receive a letter from the Lord Jesus, "The Son of Man's local church in Thyatira."

"During the Roman era, (1st c. AD), Thyatira was famous for its dyeing facilities and was a center of the purple cloth trade. Among the ancient ruins of the city, inscriptions have been found relating to the guild of dyers in the city. Indeed, more guilds are known in Thyatira than any other contemporary city in the Roman province of Asia (inscriptions mention the following: wool-workers, linen-workers, makers of outer garments, dyers, leather-workers, tanners, potters, bakers, slave-dealers, and bronze-smiths)" [Wikipedia article].

In the midst of this place where the economy was booming and hard-working business owners and tradesmen worked long hours, the Son of Man had a local church.

One of the interesting things to notice about the seven letters is that in two of the letters, Jesus provides only encouragement and no correction (Smyrna and Philadelphia). In two of the letters, Jesus provides only correction and no encouragement about what they are doing right (Sardis and Laodicea). And in the other three churches, Jesus provides both encouragement and correction, and Thyatira is one of those, along with Ephesus and Pergamum.

It seems that local churches can exhibit differing levels of spiritual need. As we study these letters, it should be our

goal to be more like a Smyrna/Philadelphia local church, and less like a Sardis/Laodicea local church. May the Lord help us this morning to that end.

The outline for the Son of Man's letter to the local church of Thyatira is fourfold – His glory, His encouragement, His correction, and His reward.

#### I. The Son of Man's glory in the church (v. 18).

Ill: Potters and bronze-smiths are two of the trades that existed in Thyatira. They would have undoubtedly had a special appreciation for this description of the glory of the Son of Man. Like the fire of the potter's kiln or the hot coals of the smith's fire, the Son of Man's eyes burn brightly in the local church and His feet glow like fine brass. Here He is also called the Son of God in reference to Psalm 2.

Appl: We have seen these eyes and these feet before (1:13).

##### 1. His eyes (v. 14b). They are described as a flame of fire.

They are holy eyes, and they weigh all that they see as righteous or as unrighteous (Prov. 15:3, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.").

And they are omniscient and caring eyes, which watch over His people to meet their every need (1 Pet. 3:12, "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.").

You may remember the author of Hebrews admonishing us as the people of God, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and

opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13). His eyes are penetrating. He can see our heart. He knows our thoughts and secrets.

2. His feet. Translators struggle with this description of Jesus' feet, because no one knows what the word translated *brass* refers to exactly. It is actually a compound word that is made up of two smaller words – *brass* + *frankincense*. There is no metal alloy made with frankincense, and so that is why there has been some confusion.

I think the answer may be that the feet are brass, but they have frankincense on them because of where Christ as our High Priest has walked. Frankincense was a key ingredient in a perfume that God designed to be put on the floor of the Most Holy Place before the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat (Exod. 30:34-38).

The two brass pieces of furniture were the altar of sacrifice and the laver, those pieces that came into contact with and dealt with the sin of the people. Jesus walked to Calvary, where he came into contact with our sin, bearing it in His own body on the tree and suffering the penalty it deserved.

Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would take the blood into the Most Holy Place and make atonement for the sins of the people. While doing so, they would step on frankincense. I think the feet that John describes here symbolize our Savior's shedding His blood for our sins and presenting that blood as our atonement on the mercy seat of heaven's most holy place.

This is the glory of the Son of Man in the local church this morning. We are seen by His flaming eyes, and we take hold of His priestly feet in worship. To do less is to miss

why we are here. Can you see the glory of the Son of Man in church this morning as we worship Him together? If not, we should stop right now and ask the Lord to open our eyes to His glory before we are done here this morning. Additionally, when we miss church we do not see much of that glory either.

II. The Son of Man's encouragement for the church (v. 19).

III: That last phrase, "thy last works to be more than the first" (note the need for a KJV punctuation adjustment), can be either a positive thing, as it is here, or a negative thing. This time of year, after a long winter of snow-bound physical inactivity, I step on the scale in our room and I find that it tells me, "the last is more than the first." That is not a good thing. I am hoping that I can make that true in the other direction some in the weeks ahead.

Appl: When it comes to our Christian growth in Christlikeness, we should want our last to be always more than our first. We should desire as we worship Him together today to be more like Him that we were last week. If that is not our desire, it will not be our experience. In fact, the opposite will be true. We will go in the wrong direction if we let nature take its course.

Notice the areas of Christlikeness the Lord Jesus found to be progressing and growing in this church (v. 19):

- (1) thy works (ministry is hard work);
- (2) charity or love (there is no place that gives more opportunity for the exercise of selfless Christian love than the local church);
- (3) service (commentators believe that this refers especially to their financial stewardship of their ministry [see Rom. 15:25, 31; 1 Cor. 16:15; 2 Cor. 8:4, 9:1; Heb. 6:10]);

- (4) faith (we need faith in God's promises to know that our local church ministry will be worth it all someday);  
(5) and patience (a word that means *to remain under* a burden without quitting).

These are all aspects of what Christ was like – He worked, He loved, He gave, He trusted, and He endured. God has designed that it be in the crucible of local church ministry that we grow in our Christlikeness in all these areas as well. Can it be said of us this morning as members of this church, “thy last works are more than the first”? If not, we need to change directions and begin growing in Christ once again.

### III. The Son of Man's correction of the church (vv. 20-25).

Ill: There was an aspect to Thyatira's identity as a center of booming trade guilds that was especially challenging for a member of the Son of Man's local church. One commentator described that challenge this way: “From time to time the members of a guild partook together of a common meal which had a sacrificial character and moreover too often ended in revelry and licentiousness” [Swete]. We know this today as the company picnic or the company Christmas party. My work at CCC involved times when my Christian convictions were challenged in this way.

So in the midst of this pressure to be like the world because it will help your career, you have a false teacher come along who says that it is actually ok to participate in all those worldly things if they are going to advance your career. She is a woman false teacher, which actually makes the situation worse, not better, as we understand the teaching of the apostle Paul on that score.

I want us to notice four particulars about how the Lord Jesus seeks to correct His church that had fallen for this kind of compromise with the world.

(1) Jesus passionately hates the false teacher's influence (v. 20). He calls the false teacher *Jezebel*, and he calls those who followed her *adulterers*. I think if we were to search the Bible from cover to cover, we could not find a more despicable name for a woman false teacher than *Jezebel*. Everyone else called her *Prophetess*. Jesus is not being unkind. He is being truthful. He calls her *Jezebel* because she is just like Jezebel, and we need to be willing to do the same in our day and age when souls are being misled by false teachers. Ahab was a dupe when it came to the influence of the idolatrous Jezebel. We need to do our best to not be like Ahab and to resist that influence.

(2) Jesus patiently judges the false teacher (vv. 21-23a). It is amazing that the Lord Jesus gives a woman like this time to repent. It struck me that the only reason this option was even open to this Jezebel was that Jesus died for her sins too (see 2 Pet. 2:1, "even denying the Lord that bought them"). But when the judgment fell, it would be severe. The bed of v. 22 is a sick-bed. Her followers would experience great tribulation and suffering. Her children would "be killed with death." That is a Hebrew way of giving emphasis to a statement. False teachers often seem like a great idea for a while, but the problem is always what comes after them – great tribulation and a generation that is spiritually dead.

(3) Jesus prominently displays his expectations through his dealing with the false teacher (vv. 23b). Jesus searches (with His flaming eyes, v. 18) our reins and our hearts, and He matches our deeds to the outcomes they deserve (v. 23). The reins are the kidneys, and they refer in the Bible to the

emotions that are connected to our will as distinguishable from the emotions that are connected to our body. They are our emotional affections, not our emotional appetites. Our hearts are our thoughts. We must guard our affections and our thoughts against compromise with the world's culture, even when false teachers tell us it is ok. Our battle with the world is especially a battle for our mind (Rom. 12:2).

(4) Jesus protectively encourages those who had taken a stand (vv. 24-25). He says, "Hold fast till I come." If your heart needs to be encouraged someday in the work of the Lord in a world of false teachers, go to the Scrapbook on our website's About page and listen to Jeff and Anna play "Hold the Fort, for I am Coming!" That will get you through the day. We may be a remnant, but we do not need to be more than that. All we need is to hold fast till Jesus comes and earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints against the lies of false teachers like this Jezebel.

IV. The Son of Man's reward for the church (vv. 26-29).

Appl: There is so much to say about this reward and so little time to say it. Let me begin by saying that it is based on the truth of Psalm 2:8-9, the reward of the God's Son. Remember that the glory of Christ in the local church is that He is the Son of God (v. 18). Psalm 2 tells us of that glory. The rebellious nations and cultures of the world would be conquered, and He would reign over them. And here He promises that reward to people with ears who do two things: (1) overcome – saving faith; and (2) keep – serving faithfulness. Will that be us?

Conclusion: And then He says that He will give as a reward the morning star. This is the gift of Himself (Rev. 22:16). He is the dawning of a new day. Whose reward would you ra-

ther have than His? Whom would you rather have than Him?

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*