

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

“The Doctrinally Defective Church” Revelation 2:18-29

INTRODUCTION:

This past Thursday we celebrated Thanksgiving Day:

- For most of us this probably means that we have some sort of get together with friends or family.
- We probably eat gluttonous portions of a large meal consisting of turkey, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, green bean casserole, cranberry sauce, pumpkin pie and much more.
- We may say a prayer of thanks before the meal.
- And for the sports enthusiast there is always two or three football games to spend hours enjoying.

Since we have just celebrated Thanksgiving, let me ask you a question this morning, “What are you thankful for?” How would you answer this question? What are you thankful for?

- Some of us would say that we are thankful to God for our families (our mothers, fathers, husband, wife, children etc...).
- Some of us would say that we are thankful to God for what He has provided for us (houses, cars, clothes, food etc...).
- Some of us may even say that we are thankful to God for our salvation, for what Christ has done on the cross for us.

I would venture to say that fewer of us might respond by saying that we are thankful for the truth.

I am thankful to God for His truth, for the truth of His Word. And I am thankful to God that He has provided an opportunity to be part of a church that is committed to doctrinal truth.

I don't know if we realize how fortunate that we are to be part of a church that is committed to God's truth.

It is not the norm in today's world to find churches truly committed to the truth of God's Word.

In our passage today, we will be moving on in the Book of Revelation and we will be examining a message written to a church that is really typical of the world today, a church that is **not** committed to the truth of God's Word, but a doctrinally defective church.

This morning we will be examining the message written to the church in Thyatira recorded for us in Revelation 2:18-29.

Remember that the churches mentioned here in **Revelation 2-3** are literal churches that give us opportunity to understand the characteristics that Christ desires for His church.

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So we will examine 6 aspects of the message to the church in Thyatira so that we might understand the characteristics which Christ desires His church to possess.

I. First, we must understand the Commission to write to the Church in Thyatira (Revelation 2:18).

This commission is recorded for us in **Revelation 2:18**. John writes, “*And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write.*”

Remember that these messages are directed to the message giver or pastor of the church who then communicates it to the people in the church.

This commission to write to the church in the city of Thyatira might move us to ask two Questions:

1-What was the city of Thyatira like?

-Thyatira was founded by one of Alexander the Great’s successors as a military outpost. It became an important garrison city serving to protect the city of Pergamum about forty miles to its northwest.

-**Culturally**, Thyatira was predominantly Gentile in composition, primarily those of Macedonian descent. There was little to no Jewish influence in the city.

-**Economically**, Thyatira was a prosperous city. It was a major center of communication between Pergamum with Laodicea, Smyrna and the interior cities of Asia Minor.

There were numerous trade guilds in the city. There were guilds there for wool workers, linen workers, dyers, leather workers, tanners, potters, bakers, slave dealers, and bronze smiths.

In Thyatira it was said that, “if you wish to get ahead in this world, you must belong to a guild.” The foremost guild was the dying and manufacturing of woolen goods.

-**Religiously**, many in Thyatira worshiped the Greek sun god, Apollo, but more importantly each trade guild had their own patron deity.

The members of the guild were expected to attend the guild festivals and to eat the food, part of which was offered to the patron deity.

After the feast with meat sacrificed to idols ended, the activities characterized by gross sexual immorality began.

To walk out on such activity would make one an object of ridicule and persecution. Christians faced the dilemma of attending those feasts or possibly losing their livelihood.

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2-When was the church in Thyatira founded?

As is the case with the churches at Smyrna and Pergamum, the Bible does not record the founding of the church at Thyatira.

According to **Acts 16:14**, “A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God,” was converted under Paul's ministry at Philippi.

Verse 15 records that members of her household also came to saving faith in Christ and were baptized.

So it is possible that Lydia and her household participated in starting the church at Thyatira.

But, more likely, the church at Thyatira was founded as an outreach of Paul's ministry at Ephesus because Acts 19:10 says that “all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.”

It is interesting that the Christian church ceased to exist in Thyatira near the end of the second century.

II. Second, we must understand the Correspondent of the letter to the Church in Thyatira (Revelation 2:18).

The correspondent of this letter is identified in **Revelation 2:18** which goes on to read, “*The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this...*”

There are three aspects of the correspondent highlighted in this verse.

First, the identity of the correspondent is disclosed.

The Correspondent is identified in verse 18 as The Son of God.

The title Son of God is referring to Jesus and emphasizing His deity.

The title, Son of God could be an allusion to Psalm 2:7, especially since verses 26-27 is a reference to Psalm 2:8-9.

This title was claimed by Christ (Matthew 11:27, Luke 10:22), ascribed to Him by Peter (Matthew 16:16), and formed the ground for the indictment brought against Him before the Sanhedrin (Matthew 26:63, John 19:7).

In the Jewish mind the title, Son of God was a claim to deity. To call oneself the Son of God was the same as identifying oneself as God very God. The deity of Christ is being emphasized here, stressing the truth that He is of one essence with the Father.

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Second, the eyes of the correspondent are described.

John went on to describe the eyes of Christ in verse 18. He says, “*who has eyes like a flame of fire.*”

The Old Testament source of this expression is found in Daniel 10:6. In this passage the messenger clothed in linen had eyes as lamps of fire (LXX) or as torches of fire (Hebrew text).

This description of Christ is repeated in Revelation 1:14 in the Vision of Christ and in Revelation 19:12 in reference to His second coming in glory.

Eyes often represent knowledge. God's eyes, represent His omniscience (the attribute of knowing all things).

-2 Chronicles 16:9 says of the Lord, “*For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth...*”

-Proverbs 15:3 says, “*The eyes of the LORD are in every place, Watching the evil and the good.*”

-Jeremiah 16:17 says, “*For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity concealed from My eyes.*”

-Jesus stated in **Matthew 10:26**, “*there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.*”

-Hebrews 4:13 says, “*And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.*”

Why the Old and New Testament Lesson on the eyes of the Lord? It is necessary to recognize that when the eyes of the Lord are mentioned in Scripture, there is an emphasis on the omniscience of God.

The fact that Christ's eyes are spoken of, as a flame of fire is to emphasize His searching righteousness and divine judgment upon all that is impure.

Christ's searching, revealing, infallible gaze penetrates to the very depths of His church, revealing to Him with piercing clarity the reality of everything there is to know.

The omniscient Lord of the church will not fail to recognize and deal with sin in His church. This was the picture that Christ gave to the doctrinally defective church in Thyatira.

But this is also a picture of Christ that we need to understand.

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Christ is omniscient; He knows all. Nothing is hidden from His eyes. He knows all that you have done whether in public or in private. He even knows what you are thinking right now.

Are you living each moment of your life pleasing to the Lord? Are you living in light of Christ's omniscience? Certainly, when we consider that He is watching us, we might choose to live for Him rather than living for self as we all often do.

Third, the feet of the correspondent are described.

John continues in verse 18 to say, *“and His feet are like burnished bronze.”*

The description of Christ's feet as burnished bronze was used in the vision of Christ in Revelation 1:15, but is not found elsewhere in Scripture.

A similar concept is given in Daniel 10:6 however the wording is different, where it is stated as, "gleaming brass" (cf. Ezek. 1:7).

The description here likely refers to the process of refinement or smelting in which the metal is purified and made to shine. It pictures the point in that process where the metal is still at a glow. While there does exist some emphasis upon purity here the greater emphasis is on the red-hot glow conveying the idea of judgment.

See, kings in ancient times sat on elevated thrones, so those being judged would always be beneath the king's feet. The feet of a king thus came to symbolize his authority.

The red-hot glowing feet of the Lord Jesus Christ picture Him moving through the church to exercise His chastening authority. With uncorrupted purity Christ is strong enough to conquer sin in the church and pure enough to judge it.

This terrifying description of the Lord Jesus Christ must have created shock and fear when this letter was read to the congregation at Thyatira.

It came as a sobering realization to them, as it should to all sinning Christians, that Christ will judge continual, unrepented sin.

Let us remember this picture of Christ to the church in Thyatira and be moved to put off sin and put on Christ.

III. Third we must understand the Commendation given to the Church in Thyatira (Revelation 2:19).

John goes on to say in **Revelation 2:19**, *“I know your deeds, and your love, and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first.”*

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The commendation to the Church in Thyatira was an encouraging one. Christ commends the church for their deeds (works). In so doing He highlights four specific areas of good works, which the church in Thyatira possessed.

Not only does He highlight these areas to further describe the deeds, which they possessed but He emphasizes that their deeds are growing. He says that their deeds of late are greater than at first.

They have grown in good works in particular the four areas:

First, they were commended for their Love.

The Greek term for love here is AGAPE. AGAPE is a sacrificial and unconditional love. It is God's kind of love.

AGAPE is used in John 17:26 to describe an attitude of God toward His Son.

AGAPE is used in John 3:16 to describe an attitude of God toward the human race.

AGAPE is used in John 14:21 to describe an attitude of God toward those who believe in Jesus Christ.

AGAPE is also used in John 13:34 to convey God's will to His children concerning their attitude toward one another, and in several passages to convey God's will to His children concerning their attitude toward all men (1 Thessalonians 3:12, 1 Corinthians 16:14, 2 Peter 1:7).

This type of love is best described in the familiar passage of love; **1 Corinthians 13:4-7**.
What a commendation! From Christ's own lips! I know your love! Christ was commending the believers at Thyatira because they were showing this unconditional, sacrificial love for God, for one another, and for others outside the household of faith.

Would Christ commend Valley Bible Church for its love? Would Christ commend you for your love? Do you demonstrate a love for God and a love for others? Or would He condemn you for your love of self?

Second, they were commended for their Faith.

The word "faith" speaks primarily of a firm persuasion or a conviction based upon hearing.

It is used in the N.T. of belief in or trusting in God or Christ.

It is described in **Hebrews 11:1** this way, "*Now faith is the assurance of [things] hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*"

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Here in Revelation 2:19, Christ is commending the believers in the church at Thyatira for their unwavering devotion in following Christ. The true believers in Thyatira had a firm conviction based in Christ.

AS Christians we say that our faith is in Christ. But, our faith is often shaken by our circumstances or trials.

Our faith may be shaken when we lose our job, have ill health, or just a series of unfortunate circumstances.

We are shaken because our faith is in ourselves, in our plans or in our circumstances rather than in God. Our faith and hope should be built on nothing less than Jesus Christ.

So in whatever we may face, we can trust God and know that He will strengthen us, and pull us through for His glory.

Where is your faith this morning? Is it in yourself, your circumstances or in God?

Third, they were commended for their Service.

The term for service here in verse 19 can be translated *service* or *ministry* and it speaks of a voluntary service. It pictures the idea of caring for one's livelihood.

This term is used in the N.T. : 1) to speak of serving at a table (Mark 1:31; John 2:5,9; 12:2; Acts 6:2), 2) to help by providing care (Mt.25:44, Mk. 1:13, Luke 8:3, Philemon 13), 3) to minister or serve in a general sense (Romans 12:7, Hebrews 6:10 1 Peter 4:10-11, and likely here in Rev. 2:19).

One of the out workings of faith and love was a dedication to serving. The true believers in Thyatira were committed to ministry.

Are you committed to ministry? Are you committed to serving in the context of the church? I am so grateful for all of those who serve in our church.

There are many people serving in our nursery, children's ministries, and Sunday school programs, but many others throughout the week work behind the scene, to help minister to the needs of those at Valley Bible Church.

And we always need help! There are many of you who probably aren't serving and may be interested in serving here at our church. Sometimes it is just as easy as filling out one of our comment cards and letting us know that you are interested in helping out.

Fourth, they were commended for their Perseverance.

The term for perseverance here, pictures endurance with things or circumstances or trials.

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It is a brave patience with which the Christian contends against the various hindrances, persecutions, and temptations that befall him in his conflict with the inward and outward world. It denotes patience in trying circumstances.

The believers in the church at Thyatira did indeed face trying circumstances. In fact their very livelihood was often at stake for being a Christian.

If you worked within a trade guild you were expected to participate in the various festivities for that guild's patron deity. Failure to do so might bring unemployment, criticism, or even physical trials or abuse.

Despite their difficult circumstances, the believers in Thyatira maintained a faithful endurance relying upon the Lord.

How about you? I know that there are many of you facing trying times or difficult circumstances. Persevering in the faith is more than just getting through it.

It is getting through it with a focus on bringing glory to God. It is relying upon God's strength to get you through. It is considering it all joy regardless of what you are facing.

Would Christ commend you for your perseverance?

Christ commended the true believers in Thyatira for their love, faith, service and perseverance.

It is interesting that love and faith emphasize the inward attitudes of the heart, while service and perseverance emphasize the outward expression of those inward attitudes. The believers in Thyatira were demonstrating their love and faith through their service and perseverance.

After giving a glowing and accurate review of the church's good works, the penetrating gaze of the Lord discerned serious error.

IV. Fourth we must understand the Condemnation given to the Church in Thyatira (Revelation 2:20-23).

Jesus goes on to say, *“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. ‘I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. ‘Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. ‘And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.”* (Revelation 2:20-23)

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At the writing of this letter, there were certainly some problems in the church at Thyatira. [There were present problems in the church at Thyatira (Revelation 2:20).]

The present problems in the church at Thyatira were two-fold, however this two-fold problem developed into a more wide-spread difficulty, which engulfed many within the church including some of the true believers.

1) The first aspect of the present problems in Thyatira was compromise.

The church at Thyatira had compromised the truth and had tolerated false teaching within the church from a woman referred to as Jezebel.

The compromise mentioned here is a bit more serious than that mentioned in the previous message to Pergamum.

In Pergamum, there were some who merely held to false teaching, while here in Thyatira they actually tolerated the false teaching in their midst.

The Greek verb for *tolerate* is in the present tense, which emphasizes a continuous action in Greek.

The church in Thyatira did not allow this false teaching just once or on an occasional basis, but they were continually allowing the presence of false teaching within their midst.

They failed to appropriately deal with the false teacher and furthermore failed to appropriately deal with the widespread problem of sin that developed from the existence of this false teaching.

I am so thankful that we operate in the midst of a church full of people who are not afraid to call your attention to anything that might possibly sound like false teaching.

2) The second aspect of the present problems in Thyatira was counterfeit teaching.

They had allowed false teaching to infiltrate the church and they did nothing about it.

There are three questions that we must ask in relation to this counterfeit teaching:

-First, What was the identity of the false teacher?

The false teacher in Thyatira is called the woman Jezebel. Jezebel is a unique name to the Bible. Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal, King of Sidon, and the wife of Ahab, King of Israel according to 1 Kings 16:31.

She practiced witchcraft (2 Kings 9:22), worshipped Baal and Asherah (1 Kings 16:32-33), supported hundreds of false prophets (1 Kings 18:19), and tried to eliminate the true prophets of God (1 Kings 18:4).

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The Old Testament Jezebel proved conclusively that she was a ruthless liar and a cold-blooded murderer.

The mention of Jezebel here represents a person at Thyatira in whose doings was a great resemblance to the Jezebel of the Old Testament.

Like the infamous wife of King Ahab, she was Satan's agent to corrupt God's people.

Therefore the Lord branded her with the symbolic name Jezebel, who, like the infamous wife of Ahab, claimed to be a prophetess and sought to mislead the people.

-Second, What were the ingredients of the false teaching?

Like her Old Testament counterpart, the woman in Thyatira who falsely called herself a prophetess succeeded in leading Christ's bond-servants astray so that they committed acts of immorality and idolatry.

Likely, the false teaching of this woman was similar to the philosophical dualism of the day.

This typical false teaching that faced the early church taught that the spirit is good, and all flesh is evil. Since God is only interested in the spirit, it doesn't matter what one does with one's body.

Thus according to Jezebel, it did not matter if Christians committed acts of immorality or ate things sacrificed to idols.

She may also have taken a twisted antinomian view of God's grace, arguing that it did not matter if Christians sinned, since God would graciously forgive them.

But, God calls Christians to a higher standard. We are to be holy just as He is holy!

-Third, What was the impact of the false teaching?

The tragic result of allowing this woman to teach her false doctrine was that many in the church had been led astray. These members of the Thyatiran church were being led into committing acts of sexual immorality and idolatry.

The members of the church were likely led into participating in the immorality and idolatry associated with the particular worship festivities of their trade guilds.

Those being led astray consisted of a large group. Some were likely just professing believers who had never had a true relationship with Christ.

But, notice the words of Christ in verse 20, “*leads My bond-servants astray...*”

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Some of those led astray were true believers in Christ. True believers are capable of sin, including that of sexual immorality and idolatry.

However there is a serious penalty for those who lead other Christians into sin. It is such a serious action to cause another believer to stumble or sin that the Lord said in Matthew 18:6-7 that being drowned would be a better option.

This obviously had not been Christ's first dealing with this false prophetess.

There were past proceedings in the church at Thyatira (Revelation 2:21).

Christ had previously counseled this false prophetess to repent. The Greek term for *time* here refers to a definite period of time or event in the past.

We are not told how He communicated this message in the past, but simply that she has been given time to repent of her immorality.

Unfortunately, as the Lord mentions in verse 21, she did not want to repent.

As a result, Christ moves on in Revelation 2:22-23 to highlight the future punishment for the Church at Thyatira.

This future punishment is broken down into three categories or shall I say three groups of recipients.

1) There will be a future punishment for Jezebel.

Because Jezebel refused to repent, Christ declared, 'I will throw her on a bed of sickness.

If you notice the words *of sickness* are italicized in the NASB emphasizing that they were not part of the original Greek text.

Other translations may say *sickbed* or *bed of suffering*. In light of Jezebel's refusal to repent, it is more likely that the bed refers to death and hell, the ultimate resting place for those who refuse to repent.

2) There will also be a future punishment for those deceived by Jezebel.

Divine judgment was about to fall not only on Jezebel, but also on those who commit adultery with her according to verse 22. The reference of those who commit adultery with her is an identification of those who have been deceived by her false teaching.

The Lord threatens to cast them into great tribulation. This is not the eschatological tribulation described in Revelation 4-19. It is more likely a great distress or trouble.

Since these were the sinning Christians who had believed her lies, the Lord does not threaten to

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send them to hell as He did the false prophetess. He simply promises to bring them severe chastening unless they repent of her deeds.

3) There will also be a future punishment for the children of Jezebel.

This is likely a reference to the spiritual children of Jezebel, not her biological children. The church at Thyatira had been around for about 40 years, which is plenty of time for a second generation of false teachers to arise.

These false teachers would not be true believers deceived by the false prophetess, but professing believers who like Jezebel adopted this false doctrine and taught it in the church.

What was their future punishment? Christ declares, "I will kill her children with pestilence." Literally this reads, "I will kill them with death!"

This is just an emphatic way of emphasizing death. The spiritual descendants of Jezebel will face the same judgment as Jezebel.

This statement refers to death and hell, the ultimate resting place for those who refuse to repent. The severe judgment promised to the false prophetess and her followers again reveals Christ's passion for a doctrinally and behaviorally pure church.

The result of this divine judgment would be the glory of the Lord. Christ would receive glory when He judged Jezebel and her followers.

When the judgment takes place all the churches would know that He is the One who searches the minds and hearts. They would know that Jesus indeed was God very God and would not tolerate evil in His church.

Christ concludes with a word of comfort for the true believers in Thyatira saying, "*I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.*"

Those who were true believers in Thyatira would be comforted knowing that their deeds revealed their faith in Christ and demonstrated their true character.

V. Fifth, we must understand the Counsel given to the church in Thyatira (Revelation 2:24-25).

Jesus goes on to say in verses 24-25, "*But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them—I place no other burden on you. Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come.*"

Christ had previously given counsel to the false teachers to repent and they chose not to. Now He offers a counsel of comfort and encouragement given to the true believers in the church.

He specifically addresses, "*the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching.*" Christ

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further defined the rest, these true believers as those who have not known the deep things of Satan.

Christ is giving counsel to the true believers in Thyatira. How does He counsel them?

Christ's counsel, His prescription for correction was a command. It was a command to hold fast until He returns.

The Geek word for “hold fast” is a strong word, which emphasizes the urgency of the situation. The present tense emphasizes that this is to be a continuous action.

Christ did not desire that they become overconfident or think that they had an easy road ahead. This was an urgent command that they hold fast to the truth until His coming in judgment.

This counsel applies to us as well. There is much false teaching in many churches today. And we are to urgently hold fast to the truth of God's Word until He comes.

I hope you are holding fast to the truth and not being driven and tossed by every wind of doctrine.

Christ as usual closes His letters with a challenge.

VI. Sixth, we must understand the Challenge given to the Overcomers in Thyatira (Revelation 2:26-29).

He says in verses 26-29, “He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received authority from My Father; and I will give him the morning star. ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’”

Remember the overcomers are the true believers in Christ and the challenge in each of these letters is a promise given to true believers by their Lord. Remember also that in each of these messages the promise given by Christ to His own has to do with some aspect of their eternal reward.

In the challenge here to the overcomers in Thyatira, Christ offers a two-fold promise:

First, this challenge involved a promise of Christ's Power.

This first promise of power is that the overcomers would be in authority over the nations.

Believers will be given authority to rule over the nations in the Millennium Kingdom later mentioned in Revelation 20.

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Believers will be sharing the privilege granted to Christ (Psalm 2:7-9) by God the Father (vs. 27).

This promise is taken from Psalm 2:7-9, where the Father gives authority over the nations to Christ. Christ will in turn delegate that authority to the overcomers (true believers) during the millennial kingdom.

This thought is not new one in Scripture (cf. Luke 22:29-30, 1 Corinthians 6:2, Rev. 5:10 & 20:4-6). Believers in Christ will have the immense privilege of reigning with Christ.

Second, this challenge involved a promise of Christ's presence.

A second reward promised is the *morning star* (2:28). This phrase is found only in one other place in the New Testament: Revelation 22:16, which says, “*I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, **the bright morning star**.*”

Jesus is the morning star. He promises to give Himself to His faithful followers. He is promising His presence!

What a blessing that awaits believers in glory! We will be given Christ's power to rule over the nations along with His presence to enjoy, worship and honor in the process.

As a final note, Christ closes in His usual fashion with a reminder that all churches can learn from the lessons in this letter (2:29).

What can we learn from this letter to the church in Thyatira? I hope that we are:

- 1) Moved to demonstrate the deeds of love, faith, service and perseverance in our lives.
- 2) Moved to hold fast the truth seeking to avoid false teaching.
- 3) Moved to look forward to our great future with Christ a time when we will enjoy His power and presence.
- 4) **Moved to be thankful to God that Valley Bible Church is a doctrinally sound church focusing on the truth of God's Word rather than tolerating false teaching in our midst.**