

Eyes Like Fire

Revelation 2:18-29



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FOCAL Revelation 2:18-29^{KJV} And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; (19) I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. (20) Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. (21) And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. (22) Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. (23) And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. (24) But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. (25) But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. (26) And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: (27) And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. (28) And I will give him the morning star. (29) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

As we look at this particular Church, we need to keep one thing in mind. God *always* expects His followers to have a HIGH view of God, and a LOW view of sin. It is certain that we *do not* work our way into Heaven. It is certain that **all have sinned, and have fallen short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23)**. It is certain that there is *nothing* I can do to earn or deserve my salvation, for the Scripture says our salvation comes ...

Titus 3:5-7 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; (6) Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; (7) That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

If you are saved, you are saved *by faith alone in Christ alone*. The early reformed Church, pulling away from the confusion of the Roman Church proudly and repeatedly declared *five solas*:¹

Sola Christos - "Christ Alone". There is NO salvation outside of that provided by Jesus Christ (**1 Timothy 2:5, Acts 4:12**).

Sola Fide - "Faith Alone". Faith alone in Christ alone is the instrument of our salvation. (**Romans 5:1; 9:30; 1**

Peter 1:9; Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 3:9)

Sola Scriptura - "Scripture Alone". There is only one written Word of God, and God the Holy Spirit speaks to His Church through this *completed living Book* (**Revelation 22:18-19**).

Sola Gratia - "Grace Alone". Salvation is *not* based upon merit, not based upon our good works, but it is based upon the *finished work of the Cross of Christ*. (**Titus 3:5; Romans 9:16; 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9**)

Soli Deo Gloria - "Glory to God Alone". No one but God is to receive glory for our salvation. We did nothing *good* to be saved, nor do we do anything *good* to be saved. God bestowed upon us the riches of His marvelous Grace. **We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. (2 Corinthians 4:7)**

God is to be glorified, for it is **He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. (Psalm 100:3)**

If you are a Christian, you are a Christian *because* God loved you, called you to salvation, then saved you because of the Blood of Christ. The Spirit of God entered your life, and lives within you making intercession for you. You belong to God! Those who belong to God are supposed to have a HIGH view of God, and a LOW view of sin.

The Evangelist Richard Owen Roberts stated at

¹ <http://www.datarat.net/DR/FramesLexGloss.html>

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary last fall:²

"Against Thee and Thee only have I sinned. **How could [King David] say this?** He had sinned against Bathsheba, Uriah, his family, his nation, and his own body. How could David say such a thing? **David could say this because the great evil of all sin consists in the fact that *it is against God.*** Is there *any* sin that is not linked to pride? **Anyone who allows himself to maintain a low view of God will have a high view of himself. The consequence of this is a distorted view of sin and a asinine view of salvation."**

Sin is always against God. If you are a Christian, then you belong to God. As the Scripture says:

1 Corinthians 6:20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

1 Corinthians 7:23 Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.

The Christian is **bought with a price**. We are therefore to honor God not just *externally*, but also *internally*.

² as reported in *Pulpit Helps* news magazine, February 2006, page 8, **The Great Evil of Sin** by Larry B. Elrod. All italics added by this editor.

1. What Was Not The Sin of Thyatira

FOCAL Revelation 2:18-20 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; (19) I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. (20) Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

What was the Church's problem at Thyatira? It's possible to read this text too quickly and reach the wrong conclusions. Some of the errors that are found in so called *commentaries* teach that:

a. Thyatira is representative of the Roman Catholic Church. Many of the Reformers believed this. Though I do believe the Scriptural warnings can be applied to the Roman Catholics, it would be an error to apply it to only Catholics. *Many local Churches* are guilty of the sins of Thyatira, as are many Christians. The warning needs to be applied with a *broad paint brush to every Church*, else we are in danger of missing the warning that Jesus makes. God put it in the Word for *all of us* - let's apply it that way!

b. Thyatira was a Church in sexual sin. This *may* have been the case because Jesus speaks of Jezebel, who:

FOCAL Revelation 2:19-20 ... calleth herself a prophetess, **to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication**, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

If we teach that Thyatira was guilty of *only sexual sin* then again we will miss the point that our Lord is making here. Though the word **fornication**³ is used in the text, God often used words like **adultery** and **fornication** to describe any act of sin that His Chosen People were committing. One verse that comes to mind is this:

James 4:1-4 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? (2) Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. (3) Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. (4) **Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?** whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

The Church, and in particular *the Christian* is in an *intimate relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ*. When we walk away from God and begin to give our *hearts* back to the world, then God calls us

3 Aorist Active Infinitive of G4203, πορνεύω, porneuō, *porn-yoo'-o*, From G4204; to *act* the *harlot*, that is, (literally) *indulge unlawful lust* (of either sex), or (figuratively) *practise idolatry*: - commit (fornication), (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries)

adulterers and adulteresses. In such an application we are not talking about *sexual sin*, but are talking about the heart that no longer serves God exclusively. God uses this illustration for **Jerusalem** in the Old Testament book of:

Ezekiel 16:8-30 Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine. (20) **Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter,** (21) **That thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them? (22) And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms** thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, and wast polluted in thy blood....

God called Jerusalem a *prostitute guilty of fornication* not because the city was in sexual sin, but because she ceased to follow God with her heart and instead began to worship *idols*. The Christians of Thyatira may have been in sexual sin, but their main sin was *a sin of the heart*.

2. Thyatira's Sin Was A Sin Of The Heart

FOCAL Revelation 2:18-20 ... These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; (19) I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. (20) Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee ...

What was Thyatira's sin? If we read our text carefully we can see that their sin was a *sin of the heart*. Just like Jerusalem of old, Thyatira had forgotten that they were saved by the gracious mercy of God. They owed *everything* to God the Son, and nothing to themselves. You see this at the very beginning of the address:

FOCAL Revelation 2:18 ... These things saith the Son of God ...

This is the *only place in the Book of Revelation* where Jesus Christ uses this title for Himself. He is the **Son of God**. The early Church understood that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. If Jesus Christ is not the Son of God, then we *are not saved*. God came and died for us! God gave His life for us. That title **Son of God** does not mean that Jesus Christ is a mere created being. That title means that Jesus is **very God of very God, the Son of God and God the Son**. Even Satan knows the importance of this title, for when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness the *very first temptation* was:

Matthew 4:3 ... **If thou be the Son of God**, command that these stones be made bread.

When **Legion**, that crowd of demons who afflicted that poor man of Gergesenes saw Jesus, they said to Him:

Matthew 8:29 ... **What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?** art thou come hither to torment us before the time?

When our Lord Jesus Christ *calmed the storms and stilled the waves* the disciples ...

Matthew 14:33 ... **worshiped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.**

When that dog of a High Priest Caiaphas struck Jesus, he asked Him:

Matthew 26:63-64 ... I adjure thee by the living God, that **thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. (64) Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said:** nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

When Jesus said that He was **the Son of God** to the Church at Thyatira He was saying **I Am God**. As Eternal God He not only sees what we do *on the outside*, but He sees the *internal motives of the heart*. Jesus is...

FOCAL Revelation 2:18 ... These things saith **the**

Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass...

Let's look at the eyes first, eyes **like unto a flame of fire**. The first time the Scripture talks about **eyes like flames of fire** is in the Book of Daniel. As Daniel prayed a Messenger came to Him to tell him of things that were coming. We read:

Daniel 10:6 His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.

The commentary **Revelation, Four Views** states⁴:

"[The eyes of fire and feet like fine brass] **suggest impending judgment. His piercing vision sees all and can therefore not fail to judge rightly, whereas His feet, with which He will tread upon the wicked in the winepress of God's wrath (14:19; Isaiah 63:1-4) are of irresistible strength, like brass. Jesus will judge the wicked in the Church with a judgment none can thwart or resist.**"

The Church at Thyatira was a working Church, but their

outward works did not match the *inward heart*. Jesus Christ watches what His Church does, and wants His Church to do all to His Glory. Jesus wants us to work, and commends us on our work. But our works must *never* be mechanical for the works sake.

When **Saul** the first King of Israel fell into idolatry and began to worship other gods, the Lord told the Prophet Samuel that Saul's time was ended. The Lord sent Samuel to Jesse the Bethlehemite (**1 Samuel 16:1**). This was the line where the next King of Israel was to come from. When Samuel saw *Eliab* he thought "Surely this will be the next King of Israel. Even his name, "**Eliab**", means "**God is my Father**". Such a handsome and strong man - this is what God will want for King! Yet the Lord rebuked Samuel and said:

1 Samuel 16:7 ... Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

Was Eliab a *good* man? In the eyes of the world, yes, he was. But God **refused him**, for God looked with **eyes like unto a flame of fire** and saw that Eliab's heart was small. The man had a mighty frame like Saul did, but inside his heart was not set on God.

God calls people to Himself to serve Him **from the inside out**. The next time we see Eliab, we see him

cowering with all of Israel behind a hill, quivering with fear before that great fool **Goliath**. All of the mighty sons that Jesse had were mighty on the outside, but inside their hearts were not focused in love on God. As Goliath screamed out, they all cringed, all but one - the one that God would have to be King. When none others would fight Goliath it was a little shepherd boy called **David** who said:

1 Samuel 17:37 ... The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. ..

His heart was fixed on God. He loved Jesus Christ, and based on the love did the outward works. This same David would later say:

Psalms 27:1... The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Listen Beloved, God wants your works, but you must *always remember* that He looks at your heart *before* He looks at your works. When a Church does the works of God, this is commendable. Jesus commended Thyatira for her works. We read:

FOCAL Revelation 2:19-20 ... I know thy works⁵,

5 G2041, ἔργον, ergon, er'-gon, From ἔργω ergō (a primary but obsolete

and charity, and service⁶, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works⁵; and the last to be more than the first. (20) Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee ...

Was Thyatira a working Church? Absolutely! Jesus even mentioned that this Church was *hard working*, for if you'll look at this list He uses the word **works** twice, and the word **service (or ministry)** once. This was a *working Church* - but the works were not done out of love for Jesus, but mechanically, ritualistically.

When the Christian starts to do the work but forgets *Who the work is for* - our Lord and Savior Jesus - then there is no reward for such a thing. The **God Who is Love (1 John 4:8)** lives inside of His people. He does not want the *mere motion of service*, but wants us to serve Him out of a heart of love. Many of the Christians at Thyatira had begun to fix their hearts on the things of the world, and not on loving Jesus.

My frequent prayer is that God *increase our love for Jesus* - that we grow in love for Him. If we serve from a heart of love we will never fall into that place where Thyatira went. We must always remember like the Psalmist that:

word; to *work*); *toil* (as an effort or occupation); by implication an *act*: - deed, doing, labour, work., (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries)

6 G1248, διακονία, diakonia, dee-ak-on-ee'-ah, From G1249; *attendance* (as a servant, etc.); figuratively (eleemosynary) *aid*, (official) *service* (especially of the Christian teacher, or technically of the *diaconate*): - (ad-) minister (-ing, -tration, -try), office, relief, service (-ing). (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries)

Psalms 40:2-6 [Jesus] brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. (3) And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD. (4) Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies. (5) Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to usward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered. (6) Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.

Oh my Beloved, we were all lost and undone, but Jesus came and paid the penalty for us. The King has a crippled child, but He took our place and was crippled for us. The King, dressed in righteousness, put on Himself rags so that I could be clothed in fine linen and royal robes. King Jesus was nailed to a Tree on a Hill long ago. Those nails which imprisoned Him freed me from the prison of eternal damnation! We serve Him because we love Him. We honor Him because He is worthy of all honor.

3. The Warnings To Thyatira Remind Us That A Church Can Only Be Destroyed From The Inside Out

FOCAL Revelation 2:20, 22-24 ... **thou sufferest that woman Jezebel**, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. ... (22) Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. (23) And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. (24) But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.

When evil comes into a Church, it does not come into the Church because *Satan forced it there*. Satan cannot force *anything* into the Church. I talked about that this morning - Satan is a mere created being. He is no more powerful against God than we are. Jesus has promised His Church:

Matthew 16:18 ... I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Jesus Christ is the Builder of this Church. He oversees every bit of it, and watches for impurity in it's members.

Jesus Christ has **eyes like unto a flame of fire**, and He constantly monitors the members of this Body and every local Church. He said to the Church at Thyatira:

FOCAL Revelation 2:20 ... **thou sufferest that woman Jezebel**, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel. Or, as the New International Version puts it:

Revelation 2:20^{NIV} **You tolerate that woman Jezebel**, who calls herself a prophetess. **By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.**

I don't know who this **Jezebel** is. Some commentators say that she is merely symbolic of another Jezebel who stood against Elijah the Prophet, and introduced idolatry - particularly Baal worship - into Israel⁷. Other

NIV New International Version

7 (Easton's Bible Dictionary) Chaste, the daughter of Ethbaal, the king of the Zidonians, and the wife of Ahab, the king of Israel (1Kings 16:31). This was the "first time that a king of Israel had allied himself by marriage with a heathen princess; and the alliance was in this case of a peculiarly disastrous kind. Jezebel has stamped her name on history as the representative of all that is designing, crafty, malicious, revengeful, and cruel. She is the first great instigator of persecution against the saints of God. Guided by no principle, restrained by no fear of either God or man, passionate in her attachment to her heathen worship, she spared no pains to maintain idolatry around her in all its splendour. Four hundred and fifty prophets ministered under her care to Baal, besides four hundred prophets of the groves [R.V., 'prophets of the Asherah'], which ate at her table (1Kings 18:19). The idolatry, too, was

commentators say that Jezebel was the *wife of the Pastor of Thyatira* who, because of her position, weaseled her way into the Church as a teacher. Who Jezebel is really doesn't matter. What does matter is the Church **tolerated her false teaching.**

The Church that Jesus Christ died for can only be destroyed from the inside out. The Church belongs to Jesus, and each Christian in the Church belongs to Jesus. Jesus Christ calls on His Church to serve Him and Him alone out of a heart of love. Everything we do should be because we love Jesus and want to express that love. Everything we say should be said because we love Jesus, and want to speak of that love.

I have said this before, and say this again: We must work, but our work must not be divorced from a heart that loves God and cherishes His Word. Faith and Work cannot be divorced from one another. The Church that has doctrine without love is the Church that becomes overly formal, ritualistic, perhaps even Catholic. The Church that has love without doctrine is the Church that falls into hedonism, experientialism, perhaps even Charismania. Scripture must be our guide, but we must always remember that the Holy Scripture is called

of the most debased and sensual kind." Her conduct was in many respects very disastrous to the kingdom both of Israel and Judah (1 Kings 21:1-29). At length she came to an untimely end. As Jehu rode into the gates of Jezreel, she looked out at the window of the palace, and said, "Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?" He looked up and called to her chamberlains, who instantly threw her from the window, so that she was dashed in pieces on the street, and his horses trod her under their feet. She was immediately consumed by the dogs of the street (2 Kings 9:7-37), according to the word of Elijah the Tishbite (1Kings 21:19).

Ephesians 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

Spirit and Word must be together in all that we do, and all that we do must glorify God and our Savior Jesus Christ. The Church that Christ died for *cannot* be destroyed by Satan. However, we can allow Satan to enter into our midst, and once in our midst we invite the judgment of God.

As the Apostle said,

Hebrews 6:9 But, Beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

Focus your hearts on Jesus Christ. Do not allow the devil a toe hold in your lives, but surrender fully to Him. Turn off that television, and open the Word of God. Pray, and seek Christ's face! I am **confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6)**. Do all to His glory, for He alone is worthy!

May God touch your hearts with these words.

