Crossroads International Church Dr. Rick Griffith

24 Nov 2013 Series on 7 Churches of Rev. 2–3 Message 4 of 7

NLT 40 Minutes

**Thyatira: Involved Yet Immoral**

***Revelation 2:18-29***

**Topic:** Immorality

**Subject:** How does Jesus respond to immorality among believers?

**Complement:** Service for Christ is no substitute for purity.

**Purpose:** The listeners will stop justifying impurity with service for Christ.

**Song:** “Be Thou My Vision”

# Introduction

### Interest: The *world* is getting increasingly impure.

Right & Wrong

#### The definition of marriage is up for grabs now. So-called homosexual “marriage” is only a foot in the door. Soon to follow will be legalized bigamy, polygamy, and who knows what.

#### Laws in the USA have changed so that people are financially “better off” being divorced than married.

Title

#### People rarely expect to marry a virgin.

Porn (13 slides)

#### Pornography is rampant.

### Need: The *church* is also getting increasingly impure.

Red Button

#### I have counseled many Christian men in the arena of pornography—all of them men in full-time ministry.

#### I wonder if I asked how many here have never looked at pornography how many hands would go up—and this is a church that holds high moral standards!

### Subject: How does Jesus respond to immorality among believers?

Subject

### Background: Christ’s letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor show his concern for issues within each church—as well as his authority over each one. Rome was plagued with immorality like our own day, so he was concerned with immorality in the church.

3 slides

### Preview: Christ’s letter to a church struggling amidst immoral surroundings has two positive and two negative admonitions.

4 MPs

••••

### Text: The letter is found in Revelation 2:18-29.

Subject

(The first way Jesus responds to immorality among Christians is that…)

# I. Jesus judges sin in believers (2:18).

MP

[Christ turns his piercing eyes towards sin in Christians.]

## Destination: Thyatira (2:18a).

### Thyatira was famous for its purple dyes and guilds for tanners, dyers, woolen and linen workers. These led to an extensive use of clay pots and pagan celebrations.

Pots

### Thyatira had more trade guilds than any other city. Such guilds supported the pagan gods, so Christians had trouble supporting themselves.

Ruins

### Many Christians died rather than compromise in guild festivities.

Pots

### However, others compromised, and Jesus reminded them that they will be held accountable. We see this in the…

## Description of Christ: Christ’s eyes like a fiery flame and feet like polished bronze depict his right to judge Thyatira (2:18b).

Circles

### What does this description of Christ’s eyes and feet indicate (18)?

Christ

### He is the righteous judge since he is God (“son of God”).

Subject

(The second way Jesus responds to immorality among Christians is that…)

# II. Jesus commends service for Christ (2:19).

MP

[Christ doesn’t forget what we do for him.]

## Commendation: Jesus knew that their deeds of love, faith, service, and endurance had even recently improved (2:19).

Wiped out

Circles

### Why did Jesus tell them that he knew the good things they had done (19)?

### This would help them see that he didn’t put everyone in the same category in the church since he knew some of them were faithful (cf. 2:24).

## Do you *feel* that Jesus has forgotten all that you have done for him?

• 2:19

### Today we celebrate seven years of God’s faithfulness to us as a church.

Star

### However, it’s not just God’s faithfulness that brought us to this point. Some of us have been here right from year 1:

#### Miriam was there at our first church service on 19 November 2006. She has served on the worship team, Pastoral Search Committees, led the singles ministry, and many other ways. Thank you, Miriam! Jesus knows your deeds of love, faith, service, and endurance!

Miriam

#### Lewis and Barbara have also served since 2006. Lewis has been an elder for five years (Since 16 Nov 2008) and preaches often, and gives me wisdom though hundreds of emails and meetings. Thank you, Lewis & Barbara! Jesus knows your deeds of love, faith, service, and endurance!

Lewis   
(5 slides)

#### Susan, of course, has been here the longest. She has served in music, food ministry, teaching, leading and counseling women, and the hardest job of all—keeping the pastor in line! Thank you, Susan! Jesus knows your deeds of love, faith, service, and endurance!

Susan

### Whatever you have done for Christ, he has not forgotten it. Thank you, in Christ’s name! Jesus knows your deeds of love, faith, service, and endurance!

Subject

Excellent!

(The third way Jesus responds to immorality among Christians is that…)

# III. Jesus discerns between unfaithful and faithful believers (2:20-25).

MP

[Christ distinguishes between Christians who really serve him and self-serving ones.]

Circles

## Rebuke: The church allowed an immoral and idolatrous woman among them (2:20-21).

### The Jezebel at Thyatira looks back at the OT Jezebel [read 2:20-21].

Jezebel  
• 2:20-21

### Who was this Jezebel (20a)? Was this her real name?

Jezebel

#### Just as Jezebel brought false prophets and sexual immorality into Israel (1 Kings 16:31-33), so this anonymous woman committed idolatry and immorality in Thyatira.

Baal map

#### She probably was a wealthy woman of influence in the city and the church.

#### “What was acceptable to that local society was abhorred by Christ. Their departure from morality had gone on for some time (v. 21). The church in Thyatira may have first heard the gospel from Lydia, converted through Paul’s ministry (Acts 16:14-15). Interestingly now a woman, a self-claimed ‘prophetess,’ was influencing the church. Her name ‘Jezebel’ suggests that she was corrupting the Thyatira church much like Ahab’s wife Jezebel corrupted Israel (1 Kings 16:31-33)” (Walvoord, BKC).

BKC   
quote

#### A parallel example from church history has been the unscriptural exaltation of Mary and the view that the Lord’s Supper is another sacrifice of Christ.

### What is the association of sexual sin and idol food (20b)? Pagan religions often had feasts that got people involved in sex too. This is what Israel did at the golden calf worship on Mt. Sinai (Exod. 32).

## Warning: The adulterer and her partners would get a terrible disease (2:22-23).

Circles

### I probably don’t need to tell you about HIV and AIDS. It targets those who commit sex outside of marriage. There are 33 million people who could have been spared this life-threatening disease!

AIDS  
(2 slides)

### Isn’t suffering for sex and death to her kids a bit harsh (22-23a)?

Kids

#### God often uses suffering for sin to get our attention to repent and save us from worse problems.

#### Children too often bear the brunt of our stupidity.

## Exhortation: Faithful believers must persevere (2:24-25).

Circles

### The cure for AIDS is to persevere in your marriage relationship and learn to say “NO.”

AIDS  
cure

### Does Jesus really just expect some of us simply to remain faithful to the truth we have been taught (24-25)?

Plant

#### Yes, he expects perseverance, since growth and blessing are his responsibility.

#### Since the church was so small, Jesus did not ask them to leave it but to remain until he purged it of false teachers.

### We often think we need to do great things for Christ. Actually, it is HE who does the great things! He only asks us to remain faithful.

### Obviously, those caught up in immorality were *not* faithful!

Subject

(The fourth way Jesus responds to immorality among Christians is to help us remember that…)

# IV. Jesus rewards faithfulness (2:26-29).

Circles

MP

[Christ has future blessings for those who serve well.]

## Promise: Believers will rule in the millennium based on their faithfulness (2:26-29).

### Thyatira was known around the Roman world for its excellent pottery, but believers will judge the nations like smashing pots!

26-27

### All believers are “overcomers” as seen in the references so far to the other three churches [read slides].

5 star slides

## Are you ready to rule the world? I don’t mean this frivolously! Look at what Jesus says here!

Hands

Rule of Christ

### Psalm 2 quoted here originally referred to the Messiah ruling the world.

Our Future

### However, Jesus will extend it to us! Following his return in Revelation 19 is a 1000-year millennium that doesn’t even mention Jesus, which is assumed. It says saints rule!

## Many other texts teach *The Reign of the Servant Kings* (Joseph Dillow).

Dillow

### Revelation 20:4 promises our rule on thrones with judgment given to us.

Rev 20:4

### 1 Corinthians 6:2a says saints will judge the world.

1 Cor 6

### 2 Tim. 2:12 promises that if we endure, we will reign with him.

2 Tim 2:12

### Rev. 3:21 promises we see sit on thrones like Christ.

Rev 3:21

Subject

(So how does Jesus respond to immorality among believers? Jesus says that…)

# Conclusion

### Service is no substitute for spotlessness (MI).

MI

#### Activities can’t replace adoration.

#### Good works can’t replace godliness.

#### Perseverance can’t replace purity.

### Jesus judges, commends, discerns between and rewards believers.

MPs

### How can you better guard your sexual purity?

Porn-Again

#### Porn-Again Christians need special vigilance.

Strict

##### Reduce temptation: Only use strict filtering on Google image searches.

##### Accountability: Email someone every evening to tell him or her you have been clean that day.

Accountability

##### Covenant Eyes software sends a list of sites visited to an accountability partner.

Cov Eyes

#### Singles might need to change roommates to live with someone who holds God’s standards.

Black

#### Married couples need to guard your sexual relationship so that sex is never a reward, or a punishment, or a right.

### Prayer

# Preliminary Questions

Circles

**Verses Questions**

# Context: What did the author record just prior to this passage?

### Christ judging the churches that are depicted as lampstands (Rev. 1) is followed by three letters, the third of which addressed compromise in Pergamum.

### This is the middle letter of Christ’s letters to the seven churches of Asia.

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

### We are tempted in two key areas: idolatry (pride that seeks to place ourselves above God) and immorality (misusing our sex drives outside of marriage).

### Churches are not inoculated from the diseases of pride and immorality.

# Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?

### Thyatira was famous for its purple dyes and guilds for tanners, dyers, woolen and linen workers. These led to an extensive use of clay pots and pagan celebrations.

### Many Christians died rather than compromise in guild festivities.

# Questions

### What is the background to Thyatira? See above.

### What does this description of Christ’s eyes and feet indicate (18)? He is the righteous judge since he is God (“son of God”).

### Why did Jesus tell them that he knew the good things they had done (19)? This would help them see that he didn’t put everyone in the same category in the church since he knew some of them were faithful (cf. 2:24).

### Who was this Jezebel (20a)? Was this her real name?

#### Just as Jezebel brought false prophets and sexual immorality into Israel (1 Kings 16:31-33), so this anonymous woman committed idolatry and immorality in Thyatira.

#### She probably was a wealthy woman of influence in the city and the church.

#### “What was acceptable to that local society was abhorred by Christ. Their departure from morality had gone on for some time (v. 21). The church in Thyatira may have first heard the gospel from Lydia, converted through Paul’s ministry (Acts 16:14-15). Interestingly now a woman, a self-claimed “prophetess,” was influencing the church. Her name “Jezebel” suggests that she was corrupting the Thyatira church much like Ahab’s wife Jezebel corrupted Israel (1 Kings 16:31-33)” BKC).

#### A parallel example from church history has been the unscriptural exaltation of Mary and the view that the Lord’s supper is another sacrifice of Christ.

### What is the association of sexual sin and idol food (20b)? Pagan religions often had feasts that got people involved in sex too. This is what Israel did at the golden calf worship on Mt. Sinai (Exod. 32).

### Isn’t suffering for sex and death to her kids a bit harsh (22-23a)?

#### God often uses suffering for sin to get our attention to repent and save us from worse problems.

#### Children too often bear the brunt of our stupidity.

### Does Jesus really just expect some of us simply to remain faithful to the truth we have been taught (24-25)?

#### Yes, he expects perseverance, since growth and blessing are his responsibility.

#### Since the church was so small, Jesus did not ask them to leave it but to remain until he purged it of false teachers.

### Will all believers become conquerors to rule with Christ (26-27)? The rule of Christians over the world in the millennium is taught in many other passages too (1 Cor. 6:2-3; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 3:21; 20:4, 6).

### What is the “morning star” promised to overcomers (28)?

#### “2:28. In addition, the faithful will receive the morning star, which appears just before the dawn. The Scriptures do not explain this expression, but it may refer to participation in the Rapture of the church before the dark hours preceding the dawn of the millennial kingdom” (BKC).

#### However, if it is the Rapture, it would be a star prior to darkness, not light.

**Chart of the Letters to the Seven Churches**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Christ | Commendation | Rebuke | Exhortation | Warning | Promise |
| **Ephesus** (2:1-7)  *Busy Yet Backsliding* | He holds the seven stars in His right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. | I know your works and steadfast to endure for my name and not tolerate evil; you test self-named apostles; persist steadfastly and do not grow weary. | You have departed from your first love. | Remember the high state from which you have fallen and repent! Do the deeds you did at first. | If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. | To the one who conquers, I will permit him to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God. |
| **Smyrna** (2:8-11)  *Suffering Yet Steadfast* | He is the first and the last, the one who was dead, but came to life. | I know your distress and poverty (but you are rich) and the slander against you by self-called Jews that really are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. | (Absent) | Do not fear what you are about to suffer. | The devil will throw some of you into prison as a test and you will suffer for ten days. | Remain faithful unto death for the crown that is life itself. The one who conquers will not be harmed by the second death. |
| **Pergamum** (2:12-17)  *Continuing Yet Compromising* | He has the sharp double-edged sword. | You live where Satan’s throne is. Yet you cling to my name and have not denied me, even when Antipas was killed in your city. | Some follow Balaam’s idolatry and the Nicolaitan immorality. | Repent! | If you do not repent, I will make war against those people with the sword of my mouth. | You will get some hidden manna, and a white stone with a new name that no one else knows. |
| **Thyatira** (2:18-29)  *Involved Yet Immoral* | He has eyes like a fiery flame and feet like polished bronze. | I know your deeds: your love, faith, service, and steadfast endurance and that your recent deeds are greater. | You tolerate Jezebel’s false prophecies, food sacrificed to idols and sexual immorality. | Her adulterers will have terrible suffering and a deadly disease so all churches will know His omniscience and right to judge. | Those avoiding “satanic secrets” must hold what you have until I come. | The conqueror who continues in my deeds will get authority over the nations and the morning star. |
| **Sardis** (3:1-6)  *Distinguished Yet Dead* | He holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. | I know your deeds. | You have a reputation that you are alive, but in reality you are dead. | Wake up and strengthen your incomplete deeds, obey and repent. | If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief against you. | You will dress in white with eternal security declared before my Father and His angels. |
| **Philadelphia** (3:7-13)  *Mistreated Yet Missions-Minded* | He is the Holy One, the True One, who holds the key of David, who opens doors no one can shut, and shuts doors no one can open. | I know your deeds. Look! I have given you an open door that no one can shut. You have little strength, but have obeyed my word and kept my name. | (Absent) | Hold on to what you have so that no one can take away your crown. | (Absent) | Jews from Satan’s synagogue will confess that I have loved you. I will keep you out of the Tribulation. I am coming soon… You will be praised in the new Jerusalem. |
| **Laodicea** (3:14-22)  *Luxurious Yet Lukewarm* | He is the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the originator of God’s creation. | (Absent) | I know your lukewarm deeds and will vomit out of my mouth you who say, “I am rich and need nothing,” but really are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. | Buy gold, white clothing and eye salve from me! All those I love, I rebuke and discipline so repent! Listen! I seek fellowship. | (Absent) | The one who conquers will sit with me on my throne, just as I too conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. |

# Tentative Subject/Complement Statements

Service is no substitute for immorality.

# Possible Illustrations

### Pastor Dick married those who previously lived together only after an 8-month separation and purity.

### Pastor Neal was quietly ushered out of one church due to adultery only to commit the same at the second church, followed by a third adulterous relationship at the third church!

# Possible Applications

### Porn-Again Christians

#### Only use strict filtering on Google image searches.

#### Email me every evening to tell me you have been clean that day.

### What gets you up in the morning?

**Thyatira: Involved Yet Immoral**

***Revelation 2:18-29***

**Exegetical Outline (Steps 2-3)**

## (2:18-29) Christ tells John to write the believers in Thyatira to commend the properly motivated, persevering service of some and to exhort the others to repent of immorality (Involved Yet Immoral Church: Middle Ages)

# *Exegetical Idea*: The way Christ responded to immorality within the church of Thyatira was to commend the faithful and exhort repentance of the adulterers.

# I. Destination: Thyatira (2:18a).

# II. Description of Christ: Christ’s eyes like a fiery flame and feet like polished bronze depict his right to judge Thyatira (2:18b).

# III. Commendation: Jesus knew that their deeds of love, faith, service, and endurance had even recently improved (2:19).

# IV. Rebuke: The church allowed an immoral and idolatrous woman among them (2:20-21).

You tolerate Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and who deceives my servants to commit sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols and will not repent of her sexual immorality.

# V. Warning: The adulterer and her partners would get a terrible disease (2:22-23).

I am bringing her violent illness, and adulterers with her into terrible suffering, unless they repent; and I will strike her followers with a deadly disease, and then all the churches will know that I am the one who searches minds and hearts. I will repay each one of you what your deeds deserve.

# VI. Exhortation: Faithful believers should persevere (2:24-25).

“To all who have not learned the so-called “deep secrets of Satan,” I do not burden you further; however, hold what you have until I come.”

# VII. Promise: Believers will rule in the millennium based on their faithfulness (2:26-29).

To all who are victorious, who obey me to the very end,

To them I will give authority over all the nations.

27They will rule the nations with an iron rod and smash them like clay pots (2:26-27).

“The conqueror who continues in my deeds will get authority over the nations and the morning star.”

**Purpose or Desired Listener Response (Step 4)**

The listeners will stop justifying impurity with service for Christ.

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

# Introduction

### Interest: The *world* is getting increasingly impure.

### Need: The *church* is also getting increasingly impure.

### Subject: How does Jesus respond to immorality among believers?

### Background: Christ’s letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor show his concern for issues within each church—as well as his authority over each one. Rome was plagued with immorality like our own day, so he was concerned with immorality in the church.

### Preview: Christ’s letter to a church struggling amidst immoral surroundings has two positive and two negative admonitions.

### Text: The letter is found in Revelation 2:18-29.

# I. Jesus judges sin in believers (2:18).

## Destination: Thyatira (2:18a).

## Description of Christ: Christ’s eyes like a fiery flame and feet like polished bronze depict his right to judge Thyatira (2:18b).

# II. Jesus commends service for Christ (2:19).

## Commendation: Jesus knew that their deeds of love, faith, service, and endurance had even recently improved (2:19).

## Do you *feel* that Jesus has forgotten all that you have done for him?

# III. Jesus discerns between unfaithful and faithful believers (2:20-25).

## Rebuke: The church allowed an immoral and idolatrous woman among them (2:20-21).

## Warning: The adulterer and her partners would get a terrible disease (2:22-23).

## Exhortation: Faithful believers should persevere (2:24-25).

# IV. Jesus rewards faithfulness (2:26-29).

## Promise: Believers will rule in the millennium based on their faithfulness (2:26-29).

## Many other texts teach *The Reign of the Servant Kings* (Joseph Dillow).

# Conclusion

### Service is no substitute for spotlessness (MI).

### How can you better guard your sexual purity?

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**Rick Griffith**

24 November 2013

Message 4 of 7

**Thyatira: Involved Yet Immoral**

***Revelation 2:18-29***

# Introduction

### The *world* is getting increasingly impure.

### The *church* is also getting increasingly impure.

### How does Jesus respond to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ among believers?

# I. Jesus \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ sin in believers (2:18).

## Destination: Thyatira (2:18a).

## Description of Christ: Christ’s eyes like a fiery flame and feet like polished bronze depict his right to judge Thyatira (2:18b).

# II. Jesus \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ service for Christ (2:19).

## Commendation: Jesus knew that their deeds of love, faith, service, and endurance had even recently improved (2:19).

## Do you *feel* that Jesus has forgotten all that you have done for him?

# III. Jesus \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ between unfaithful and faithful believers (2:20-25).

## Rebuke: The church allowed an immoral and idolatrous woman among them (2:20-21).

## Warning: The adulterer and her partners would get a terrible disease (2:22-23).

## Exhortation: Faithful believers should persevere (2:24-25).

# IV. Jesus \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ faithfulness (2:26-29).

## Promise: Believers will rule in the millennium based on their faithfulness (2:26-29).

## Many other texts teach *The Reign of the Servant Kings* (Joseph Dillow).

# Conclusion

### Service is no \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for spotlessness (Main Idea).

### How can you better guard your sexual purity?

**Thought Questions**

1. Read the passage aloud. What is the most surprising thing you read? Why?
2. Which Christian have you personally known who has fallen to sexual temptation? What did you learn from this experience?

Text

Text

Text

Text

1. Do you have your computer settings on “strict filtering”? To whom are you accountable in the sexual arena?

Text

Text