

To Thyatira

"And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze:

"I know your works—your love, faith, service, and patient endurance. I know that your last works are greater than the first. But I have this against you: you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice fornication and to eat food sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her fornication. Beware, I am throwing her on a bed, and those who commit adultery with her I am throwing into great distress, unless they repent of her doings; and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am the one who searches minds and hearts, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve. But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call 'the deep things of Satan,' to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden; only hold fast to what you have until I come. To everyone who conquers and continues to do my works to the end,

I will give authority over the nations; to rule them with an iron rod, as when clay pots are shattered—even as I also received authority from my Father. To the one who conquers I will also give the morning star. Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches."

Revelation 2:18-29, NRSV

Thyatira was a city known for its industry, particularly the smelting of bronze, plus leatherwork, pottery, weaving and dying. These workers were members of guilds and each worshiped their own god.

The description of Jesus Christ relates to the smelting industry, "who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze."

The Thyatirans are praised for their "love, faith, service, and patient endurance," but are condemned for falling prey to the temptations around them. They seem to have been led off track by a female prophet; "you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice fornication and to eat food sacrificed to idols."

In this context, fornication does not mean sexual immorality but the worship of false idols. This is a metaphor similar to the Old Testament use of the word "adultery" to refer to idolatry, a turning-away from the true God to false gods, an impure relationship.

Jezebel was the notorious queen of

Israel who led the nation astray (1 Kings 18-21, 2 Kings 9). The conflict had been going on for some time; "I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her fornication," and her punishment and those of her followers will be to be put in a bed of suffering: "Beware, I am throwing her on a bed, and those who commit adultery with her I am throwing into great distress, unless they repent of her doings; and I will strike her children dead."

Not all in Thyratira are lost. Those who repent will share the authority of the Messiah, a role denied to James and John in the gospels.

Repentance is not easy, for it means a total shift in one's life. George Fox knew this: "Turn, turn all that are not hardened and past feeling, and hear the voice, that the way of peace and repentance, and the way of life and salvation ye may know, and live in...for in the truth is the holy unity and the pure dominion." (Epistle 212, 1661)

John Wilhelm Rowntree (1904) experienced the power of Christ in enabling a person to repent:

"No legal bargain, but a spiritual con-

flict, an inward change, the rejection of the living death of sin, the choice of a new birth, of the purified self, the conversion from a low and earthly to a high and spiritual standard of life and conduct—here you have the practical conditions of salvation, and in the active, free and holy love of God, ever seeking entrance, ever powerful if we but yield the gateway of our hearts, is the substance of the gospel."

Does your Meeting/church have a process for repentance, forgiveness and restoration?

What canst thou say?



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