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More Tolerant Than God

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Series: What's Wrong With the Church?
Revelation 2:18-29

BIG IDEA – THE CHURCH WAS DOING GOOD THINGS AND GROWING...BUT IT WAS TOLERATING SEXUAL SIN AND BAD LEADERSHIP?

I think it's pretty obvious that we are a growing church. You can look around here and see that, but I want you to also know we're not just a growing church; we are a going church. Why do we go? Whether it's the carpool line or the Congo, why do we go? It's simple. We go because Jesus Christ first came for us. The motivation for our going is the gospel. We put this in our mission statement. "We make and mobilize disciples in an environment of prayer and worship."

Why would we show you a video about short-term mission trips? It's because, genuinely, we desire for each of you in the next few years to go on a short-term mission trip. I know it's difficult. I know you have to figure out who's going to watch the kids and you have to figure out your PTO and you have to get on a plane and all that kind of stuff, but here's what happens.

Whenever you go on a mission trip (many of you have been able to experience this), you get to taste mission and adventure and the Christian life somewhere else. Here's what happens on every mission trip. I told you a couple of weeks ago some of the stages. Let me tell you the last stage of every mission trip. You heard it in the video.

You're on the mission trip, and you have *this* thought. It's usually as you're getting ready to head home. You think, "What if I did at home what I've been doing here?" That's it. You're like, "Wait a second. I'm praying for people. I'm looking at people as lost and needing the gospel. I'm talking about Jesus all the time. I'm reading my Bible.

I'm living in community. What if I did at home what I've been doing here?" Well, I hope you'll consider a short-term mission trip.

When we think about missions, one of the things that fuels missions is prayer. That's why over the 21 days... We gave you that 21-day prayer guide. Hopefully you are walking through that, praying for our local, national, and global partners. We want to do something unique. We want to make and mobilize disciples...in an environment of prayer and worship.

So, we're going to be having three prayer and worship nights this year. The first one is February 26. Here's what I want you to do. I want you to change the night your Community Group meets, and I want you to come on Monday night instead that week. If you're super spiritual, you can meet twice that week and also go to Community Group. But I want you to move your group to Monday night. We want to fill this room with passionate worship.

Here's what we're going to do. We're calling it *Kingdom over Culture*. This is interesting. At the beginning of the year we do something called an *all-staff*. It's kind of like a monthly worship service for our staff. During the all-staff, I talked to our staff about the 10 stories from last year that are changing our world and that have theological and biblical implications.

When I did that, we had a couple of the staff go, "What if you just did that at the prayer night?" So, I'm going to be talking about the most significant things that have happened in the last 12 months in the world and how we are going to respond. Someone said every Christian should have a Bible under their right arm and a newspaper under their left arm.

So, we're going to do that together. We are only doing this three times. I hope you'll make it a priority. I hope you'll come with your Community Group. I think it's going to be a significant night. We need to win the battle in the unseen realm before we win it here in the seen realm. Let's pray.

Lord, I thank you so much for this opportunity to gather together this morning. We thank you for special opportunities throughout the year for white-hot, passionate worship, to seek your face, to hear what's going on in the culture, and then to pray that kingdom prayer: "Your kingdom come and your will be done." I pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

There are certain days you never forget. Right? There are good days or there are bad days. Good days. Like, hopefully you're like, "I'll never forget when we had our kid" or "I'll never forget when we got married" or "I'll never forget when I graduated" or

whatever it is. Then there are really bad days and sad days, and I don't really want to talk about those, and you don't either, but we don't forget those either...the bad days, the sad days, the diagnosis, the death, the phone call in the middle of the night.

There are certain days we can't forget, we always remember. I want to tell you about one of those for me. It was maybe the strangest day in my life. It was about 15 years ago. I was working for a college ministry at the time, and we were down at the beach. There were about 20 staff down there. They said, "Everybody, we've got an announcement we need to make." That's not good.

So, we get in this room, and they said, "Hey..." I'm not going to use his real name, but they said, "Hey, Mark is missing." I thought, "Mark?" Mark was in college ministry. They said, "It's really strange, because Mark went missing..." He was living in D.C. at the time. They said, "Mark went missing right after he had a breakfast with a college student." They said, "We waited 48 hours because we wanted to talk to the authorities, but Mark is gone." I thought, "What's going on?"

It's a long story, but I'll tell you what happened. Basically, we finally... You have to do a lot of stuff with the police and everything. You have to get the phone records. We got them. You have to get the credit card statements. We got them. His mom couldn't get out of bed. This became a nationwide story. She was supposed to be on *Good Morning America*. That's how big the story got. Strange.

Anyway, we get his phone numbers, and one of the numbers is from Asheville that we don't recognize. We call that phone number, and a strange man answers and is really quick with us and hangs up the phone. We end up sending a team, which finds out where that number is, down to Asheville. What they saw... They both had to go to counseling.

Mark had been living in hidden sexual sin. We don't even know for how long, but instead of getting help, he hid. He had that moment where I guess he decided, "I'm just going to go off the map, act like I'm dead, and start a new life in Asheville." That was 15 years ago. I wish that story had a happy ending. It doesn't.

I tell you that, because if you'll turn to Revelation 2:18, we're going to meet a church stuck in sexual sin. If you don't get ahold of sexual sin... And we're all sexually broken. We all have sexually disordered desires. We're all sexual sinners. If you don't get ahold of sexual sin, it will get ahold of you. If you do not deny it, it will... And you know this. You have stories about this. It will destroy your life.

Today we are introduced to the church at Thyatira. We're trying to name these churches. Last week was the *worldly church*. This week is the *progressive church*.

You'll see this in a few minutes when we get to the text. This is the church that is more tolerant than God. That's probably not a good thing.

How do you know this church today? How would you see this church today? Because these are churches. This is the church that has the rainbow flag hanging outside of their building. Have you seen these churches? This is the church back then, the church at Thyatira... Everybody pulled up to the church on their camel, and on the back of their camel was a "Coexist" bumper sticker. That was this church.

00 BACKGROUND: THE CITY & CHURCH IN THYATIRA

I want to read you this. Turn with me to verse 18. I want us to be introduced to this church. Here it is. *"And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: 'The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.'"* We have to talk about the church at Thyatira, the city of Thyatira, and of course Jesus.

Here's what's interesting. Let's start with the city. This city is the smallest, least significant city of all seven cities that Jesus writes letters to. It's interesting, though. He writes the longest letter to the smallest, least significant city, because often Jesus values things we don't value, and Jesus cares about every city no matter how small or insignificant it is.

This is an interesting city. It was wealthy. Probably what's most interesting is it was a military city, but it had big guilds. You go, "What are guilds?" They were basically labor unions. You know how you have your HR department with all this... You know how they are. Back then, their HR departments were their guilds.

Basically, they were like big HR departments. They were like fraternities. They were like large social networks. If you were in, they took care of you. If you were not in, they didn't take care of you. So there was a huge pressure to conform, to believe what everybody else believed, and not to stick your head out.

01 BIG VISION OF JESUS FOR A GROWING CHURCH

Jesus writes to this small church in Thyatira (we'll get more to the church in a second), and he reveals two things about himself. First, he talks about his eyes. Why eyes? Well, obviously, eyes are how you see. Maybe this is the word. Jesus talks to us about his *perspective*.

See, Thyatira was all into multiple perspectives. "Everybody has a perspective." And everybody *does* have a perspective. This is what's so hard in marriage. The husband has a perspective and the wife has a perspective. This is what's hard in families. The parents have a perspective and the kids have a perspective. CNN has a perspective and Fox has a perspective. The Republicans have a perspective and the Democrats have a perspective.

Jesus says, "Okay. I have *the* perspective. I see the parts in light of the whole." So, that's kind of interesting. He says, "I see things rightly." Then he talks about his feet. Why does he mention his feet as burnished bronze? Here's why. Our feet are the most creaturely part of us. I don't care how many pedicures you get or how you paint your nails. They're still feet.

Back then, before we had nice tennis shoes, before we had clean streets, your feet were always the dirtiest part of you. They're the part of you that touches the earth. This is why the apostle Paul in Romans 10, when he's talking about missionaries... What does he say at the very end? "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news."

Why doesn't he say, "How beautiful are the faces" or "How beautiful is the voice"? Why the feet? Because one way you honor something is by calling something *beautiful* that isn't normally beautiful. Why the feet? Jesus is saying, "Every part of me is pure." Jesus never had a wrong motive, never had a wrong action, never had a wrong attitude, never has a wrong intention.

02 COMMEND: LOVING & GROWING

Now, he writes to this church, and I want you to quickly see the commendation. We'll spend most time on the correction, but let me show you the commendation. Turn with me to verse 19. He says, "***I know your works...***" That's what Jesus always says to each church. "I know your works." Here they are. They're doing some good things. "***...your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first.***"

He basically says, "You're a loving, serving, growing church." Interestingly enough... Maybe we shouldn't be surprised. They're going to be progressive. Everybody who's progressive... It starts out just with loving. Right? It sneaks in because it looks loving. This is a warm, inviting, highly relational church, but they're loving without the biblical limits.

Love is not affirmation. A lot of people think love is "You make me feel good." That's not love. In fact, sometimes the most loving thing may be to make you *not* feel good right now so you can feel good later. Love is a commitment to another person's highest good. Interestingly enough, though, this is the only church so far (and this is the fourth church we're looking at) that Jesus calls *loving*.

Secondly, he says, "You're serving." Maybe we would say, "You're busy." It's interesting, because they're busy, but they're missing big problems. How many of you sometimes like to be busy so you can ignore the bigger problems in your life? Do you ever see that? It's like, "Dad is always working, and Dad is always traveling." It's like, "Yeah, because Dad doesn't want to deal with everything at home." Or "Mom has 14 side hustles." Why? Ignoring the responsibilities at home.

They're busy. They're serving. They're growing. "Your latter works are greater than the first." We need to know this because we are a growing church. Not all growth is good, obviously. Sometimes the things that grow the fastest are the most unhealthy...aka, weeds, cancer, bacteria. Not all growth is good.

Here's what happens in a growing church. In a growing church, it's easy to overlook sin, obviously. It's like, "Well, who are all of these people? Where are they coming from? Everybody can kind of be anonymous here. We're catching up with staff and leadership and shepherding."

03 CONFRONTS: YOU ARE TOO TOLERANT

He says, "Okay. You're a loving church, you're a growing church, and you're a busy church." Get ready. I haven't talked about this in a long time. This is very interesting. Look at what he says. Verse 20: ***"But I have this against you, that you tolerate..."*** "Hold on, Jesus. Aren't we supposed to be tolerant?" Yes and no. We'll talk about that.

"...that you tolerate that woman Jezebel..." We'll talk about her today too. Some of you are like, "I've met her." ***"...who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols."*** Okay. What is *tolerance*? Well, there's good tolerance, which is the old definition of *tolerance*.

What has happened today is we're using the same vocabulary, but we have a different dictionary. Words don't mean what they used to mean. Basically, every civil society needs to have some level of tolerance so we can all get along. Here's what

tolerance used to mean. We'll call this the *old definition of tolerance*. It doesn't mean this anymore, but I'll give you the old definition.

The old definition of *tolerance* is "I will put up with you. I will endure you even though I disagree with you." The old tolerance assumed truth. It's like, "All right. I don't even think that's true, and I don't even know if that's helpful, and I don't think it's good, but I'll endure it." Voltaire (I think he was an atheist) essentially said, "I don't believe what you're saying, and I disagree with it, but I will fight to the death your ability to say it." That's the old tolerance.

Then there is the new tolerance. Here's the new tolerance. This is what you've experienced. It's "I affirm you." A lot of times, that's not even enough now. It's not just "I affirm"; it's "I approve." It's not just "I affirm" and "I approve," because that won't be enough anymore; it's "I celebrate." That's what this means nowadays. That's what *tolerance* means today.

I love what G.K. Chesterton said about that. He was a famous Catholic thinker. G.K. Chesterton said that type of tolerance is the virtue of a man with no conviction. I want to talk about tolerance, because there *is* a certain type of tolerance Christians are supposed to have.

First of all, we believe in the marketplace of ideas. You'll have to hear me carefully. I'm talking in very nuanced terms today. We believe in the marketplace of ideas. It's a commitment that the truth will set people free. Anywhere you find the ideas of religious liberty and freedom of speech, which we take for granted, they always come out of some type of Judeo-Christian culture.

Christians do not believe in relativism. *Relativism* says, "All ideas and perspectives and ideologies and views are equal." We don't believe in relativism at all, but Christians understand that in a diverse world there will be pluralism. We want everybody to be able to say what they believe, and we believe ultimately the truth is going to win, but we don't believe in the "I affirm, I approve, and I celebrate you."

Let me show you this in the text. I want you to see this in the text, not just from me. Go back to verse 20. ***"But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols."***

There are two things Christians cannot tolerate (we're being narrow here as we talk about this) in the church. He's talking particularly about Christians and what we shouldn't tolerate in the church with other people who say they're Christians. You need to tolerate your neighbor in ways you might not tolerate your Christian brother

and what they're doing, because they don't know the Lord. In fact, you're called to more than tolerate your neighbor; you're called to love your neighbor.

There are two things we can't tolerate. You see them in the text: bad teaching and sinful behavior. It's called *heretical teaching*. That's a big, scary theological word basically meaning we can't put up with teaching that contradicts the main teachings of the Bible. I don't have time to give you all of the main teachings of the Bible, but here are a few of them.

The total truthfulness of Scripture (that's what everything we believe is based on); that every person is made in the image of God (that's a foundational, fundamental belief); that every person is sinful by nature and choice; that Jesus Christ lived a sinless life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose from the dead; that there's a need for conscious, saving faith and repentance in Jesus Christ; that there are only two destinations when we die, heaven and hell.

Those are some of the basic things. If somebody is teaching something that contradicts *that*, it cannot be tolerated in the church. We expect that to be taught on someone's podcast somewhere else, but that can't be taught in the church.

The second thing is open, unrepentant sin, which is what Jezebel is engaging in. Today, I think we're confused on the difference between *diversity* and *depravity*. *Diversity* is another one of those buzzwords. It's a big buzzword. We, as Christians, can celebrate all amoral diversity.

We want our church to have all types of amoral diversity, age and stage diversity, socioeconomic diversity, but we get confused with diversity and depravity. *Depravity* is when somebody is living in open sin or folly or rebellion against what God has said.

Here's the thing. Maybe I'll say it another way that'll be helpful. The number-one value in our society today is the new tolerance. "I affirm you. I approve you. I celebrate you." Have you noticed that the most mature person in our culture today can act like nothing is wrong? "That's not goofy or gross."

The number-one value in our society is the new tolerance. The number-one value in the Bible is truth. What tolerance tells everybody is "You're okay. I'm okay. Just tell us who you are. Tell us how you feel. Do whatever feels good." That's the new tolerance. The main value in the Bible is repentance. "You're not okay. I'm not okay."

Think about it this way: God is not tolerant, but he is patient. Some people take God's patience with sin as God's tolerance *of* sin. Those are different. Nobody can look at the cross of Jesus Christ and say God tolerates sin. You could say God dealt with sin.

You could say God punishes sin. Nobody can look at the lake of fire and say, "You know what? I think God is tolerant of sin."

04 THE JEZEBEL SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH

So, the first thing he says is, "Guys, of course there's a certain type of tolerance that is necessary to live in a civil society, but we cannot tolerate certain things in the church." Then it gets even more interesting. I want to show you this. Turn with me to verse 20. We'll read it one more time. I want you to meet this lady.

"But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality.

Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, and I will strike her children dead." That's her spiritual children, her followers. *"And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works."*

I need to talk about something I have never talked about in the seven and a half years I've been teaching here just because it hasn't come up yet. It's a very important topic. It's obviously a very important topic for a growing church, because this is a growing church that has this problem. It's the Jezebel spirit. That might make some of you feel uncomfortable. It's a pattern of acting. It's a type of person.

For example, no commentator I read actually thinks this lady is named Jezebel. Why? Because of the stigma of that name. Nobody would ever name their daughter Jezebel. Has anyone been named Adolf since World War II? "Eh, let's go with a different name, honey. That name has a little bit of baggage with it." Yeah, it does.

Jezebel was the worst queen, maybe the worst woman, in the Old Testament. Imagine this. She married King Ahab, the seventh king of Israel. God comes to King Ahab at one point and says, "The worst thing you ever did was marry that woman." That's what he said.

I want to talk about the Jezebel spirit. It attacks all churches, but it can certainly attack growing churches. The Jezebel spirit or pattern of being or way of acting or

type of person, whatever phrase you want to use, could be a man or a woman. It's usually a woman, because there is a sexual seduction component to it.

There are some... We'll see. They don't like authority. Occasionally you'll have a man who has the Jezebel spirit, but normally he doesn't stay around much. I have met so many of these men in my days. I know what they're doing. They're staying at home doing home church. Have you met this guy? His wife and kids are dying. They're like, "Can we please go to church?"

"No! Everybody is wrong! I can't get along with anybody. Open up your Bible. We're going to be talking about the Canaanites and circumcision again."

"Oh, Dad."

The Jezebel spirit often happens with women. Honestly, sometimes women see it better than the men do. Our sisters in Christ are warning us. "That is not a good woman."

"She seems really friendly."

"She's not."

I want to talk about what happens. We've had several situations like this in our church in the last seven and a half years. The first thing about a Jezebel spirit is it's a self-appointed leadership spirit. Did you see that? She comes, and she calls herself *prophetess*. She shows up, and she's like, "I'm here, guys. My title is *prophetess*, and I'll be doing all the teaching." It's like, "Who appointed you?" "Me." "Oh, that's very interesting."

Be very, very careful (this can happen with men or women) with somebody who is way too excited to get into leadership. Every door of leadership here is super small. Every time you get through it there's a smaller door on the other side, and there are more people you have to get through and more assessments you have to do and more time you have to spend.

Be very concerned about somebody who's overly concerned about title and position. The Jezebel spirit creates factions. It creates divisions. This is true, but this will be offensive. Some of this is offensive. Okay? The rest of this is really offensive. The Jezebel spirit preys upon weak men. Yes. They love weak, passive, soft men. In fact, there's nothing they hate more than a strong, confident, masculine male. They can't stand it.

In fact, sometimes a Jezebel (this happens, and both are miserable, by the way) marries a weak man so she can control him. I've been confronted by a Jezebel after service before. This has happened. I mean, I can still see it. I'm going to counseling for it. No. This literally happened. This woman is confronting me, a Jezebel spirit, right after a service. I look at her husband, and her husband is looking at the ground. He's like, "I just want to go home. I'm embarrassed." It was like, "Oh man. I'm sorry you have to go home."

The second part of it, though, is interesting. She likes to question authority. He or she has a questioning spirit, but there's a sexual component to this. I need to talk about this for a little bit. Let me show you this. I keep reading the same verse, but it's all in there. ***"But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality..."***

I think this is the first time in the seven letters that we're explicitly talking about sex. I've told you before I only talk about sex as often as it comes up, which is a little bit more often than I wish it did, so, sorry. Here it is. Sex is interesting, because I think it is our sexual sin... I already said earlier we're all sexually broken and all have sexually disordered desires and are all sexual sinners.

I think it is often our sexual sin where our brokenness is most clearly felt by a lot of us and where maybe our rebellion against God is also most clearly seen. This is why most people... Not every person, but most people's greatest regrets are normally sexual in nature. Sex is so deep. Usually men... This is not every man, but men who have absent fathers usually have deep sexual issues. What's up with that? I don't know the answer to that.

The interesting thing about sex is sex is a big deal in the Bible and, sadly, sexual sin is a big problem in the church. There are certain things that are big problems but don't seem, if we went to the Bible, like that big of a deal. Sexual sin ends up being a big deal and a big problem.

There are nine vice lists in the New Testament. A vice list is every time Paul or somebody kind of riffs, like, "And here are all of the bad things. Don't do these bad things." Well, of all of the nine vice lists... There are always different vices. It's not an exhaustive or extensive list. In every single vice list in the New Testament sexual sin is mentioned, in almost every vice list it's first, and in many of the vice lists it's mentioned with several different words and categories to describe it.

So, he says this woman is seducing. It's interesting. We don't know exactly the teaching she's saying, but it's probably some version of overemphasizing... You go,

"How do you do this?" You overemphasize the grace of God by saying, "As long as you believe, you can do whatever you want with your body." It's some version of that.

05 GOD GIVES PEOPLE TIME TO REPENT

I want you to see how God deals with this. Here's what he says. Verse 21: ***"I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality."*** Warning. We're going to get serious for a few minutes here. There's an expiration date on repentance. There's a sunset on repentance in your life. I don't know when that is. In God's sovereignty and providence, it's different in different people's lives.

There's an hourglass. When God says, "I want you to repent of that," he turns over the hourglass. I don't know how much sand is in it for you, but I wonder if... It doesn't have to be sexual sin. It could be any sin in your life. Is there something in your life right now that you just know you need to repent of? Now is the time. I know you haven't gotten caught yet, but you probably almost got caught. I know it hasn't gone public yet.

I had a mentor. I think this is a helpful illustration. He said sometimes God gives us closets. There are some things in the closet that shouldn't be here, and most people aren't going to see your closet. God gives people closets, and he says, "It's time to clean out that closet." I think right now God is saying to you through this text it is time to clean out whatever closet that's coming to your mind right now. Maybe nobody knows about it but you.

God is gracious, but I want to show you what happens if you don't repent. Verse 22: ***"Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent..."*** If they repent, this doesn't have to happen. ***"...of her works, and I will strike her [spiritual] children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works."***

I want to talk about something else interesting. Notice here he says she is going to get sick because of her sin. Sometimes...not always, maybe not even often, but you at least have to have the category for this...there are physical consequences to sinful spiritual choices.

I was with a group of pastors a couple of years ago. Imagine this. We're all in this room together. One of the pastors says, "I'm having some health issues." We'd been

praying for each other about a couple of different things, so we're praying for this guy and a couple of his health issues.

Eyes are closed. Heads are bowed. We're praying pretty intensely for this guy. The guy sitting next to me hits me, and it's the leader of the group. He looks at me and whispers in the middle of prayer, "Ask him if he has anything to confess." I thought, "Why don't *you* ask him that? I don't want to ask him that." I don't want to ask that. I don't want to be asked that. I asked him, and he did.

Sometimes... Not all the time. We have to have a category. You have to have multiple categories. You have to have a category for your anxiety and depression. Maybe there's nothing, but is there something you'd like to confess? You're having a lot of health issues? Okay. Go see a doctor, but I want to ask you...*Is there anything you want to confess?* You're bitter and angry. Okay. Is there anything you want to confess?

It's like, "Oh no." It's scary to ask that question. It's even scarier to be asked that question. Do you see what he says? He says, "If she doesn't repent, I'm going to judge her so that..." If you go back to the text, you'll see this. It says, "...so that all the churches know." Here's another kind of scary teaching but good for us to know: God sometimes judges one person as an example to everybody else.

Sometimes... This is a terrible thing, but this is just how it is. Some people's lives only serve as an example of what not to do. You already know that's true. Some of you can look back on your family history, and you're like, "My grandfather was that." This is why usually, as a general rule, the youngest kid in the family is the best behaved. Why? Because he saw the poor decisions and consequences of his older brothers and sisters.

Remember when I told you about Mark, my friend who went missing? We were all young. I was in my 20s. When we found out where he was and what he had been doing, we got a phone call with our senior pastor. He was back in Charlotte. We were at the beach, like I told you. I remember we all gathered around and called him on speakerphone. He was 67 years old. He had seen a lot of ministry.

I remember he was trying to comfort us about everything that happened with Mark. He said, "Guys, I want to tell you something about Mark. Mark's life serves as a warning to all of us. This is where sin leads." I don't think there were any of us who didn't go home that night and say, "Is there anything in my life that if left unchecked and unrepented of could lead to some type of path like that?"

Here's what he says. Verse 24: *"But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call..."* This is interesting. Satan is mentioned in almost every letter to the churches. *"...the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden."*

What are the deep things of Satan? Last week we talked about the idea... We're learning new things about Satan, which is helpful, because we need to know our enemy. Last week we learned that Satan has a headquarters, a base of operations. This week we learn about the deep things of Satan. What does that mean?

Well, when something is deep... This probably doesn't happen, but while I'm teaching, if you ever think, "That's deep," here's what you mean by that. *Deep* means "That affects a lot of things." If you hear something really deep, you'll immediately be like, "That will affect my money. That will affect my marriage. That affects me at work. That affects my health. That was deep. It touches on multiple dimensions and domains of my life."

So, what are the deep things of Satan? It's what everything is connected to that Satan teaches. What is the foundation of Satan's teaching? I want to just tell you what it is, because it was what was taught by Jezebel and we're told this is the deep things of Satan. Here's what it is: that you can be safe in your sin. Even the cross of Jesus Christ does not make sin safe; it makes sin forgivable.

See, the great lie of Satan is you can have salvation and also still have all your sin, that you can have both and the best of both worlds, and every false teaching tells you some version of "Don't worry about it." That's what the Serpent said in the garden. "Don't worry about it. You will surely not die. There are no consequences for what you're doing."

06 THE PICTURE & PROMISES OF CHRIST

Jesus ends with a powerful picture of himself. Let me show you this. Verse 25: *"Only hold fast what you have until I come. The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself 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."*

When we read that last section, it makes modern Americans very uncomfortable. Did you hear what he said? "Ruling with a rod of iron." Why would that make us

uncomfortable? Well, here's what it is. It's a word of triumph to the church, but it's a word of triumph to a church that currently feels very trampled. The reason we're so uncomfortable with the language of triumph in Christ is because we don't feel very trampled right here.

The reason we struggle with this language of "You will one day be vindicated, and you'll rule and reign with Christ" is because we don't actually feel very opposed here. See, Jesus ends with this powerful statement. He talks about ruling and reigning, and then he says, "You'll get the morning star." That's very interesting, because in other places in the Bible Jesus himself is called the *Morning Star*.

Here's what Jesus is saying. What do you get if you repent? It's like, "Why would I repent? Why would I stop doing fun things?" That's what *repentance* sounds like to some people. Jesus is saying, "Because if you repent, you get more of me." ***"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."***

It's interesting, because Jesus says, "I'm the Morning Star," which means the greatest gift of the gospel is Jesus himself. Think about it. Why do you want to go to heaven? Everybody wants to go to heaven, but why does a Christian want to go to heaven? Because Jesus is there. Why do you want a new body? Everybody wants a new body, especially as it gets older. No, no, no. You want a new body so all of your faculties can fully worship and enjoy Jesus.

Why do you want your sins forgiven? Everyone wants their sins forgiven. No, no. You want your sins forgiven, if you're a Christian, because then they're not in the way of your relationship with Jesus anymore. Why do you want to be righteous? So you can stand before God. Why do you want to live forever? Because it's going to take that long to enjoy Jesus.

Jesus ends speaking to a church with all of these struggles and all of these temptations, and he says, "In the end I promise you'll get me if you repent." You may not get tenure. You may not get a promotion. You may not get a raise. You may not get the health you want. You may not get the marriage you want. You may not get the family you want, and all of your dreams will not come true in this life, but you'll get Christ.

So, as we close together, I want you to sing that. We're going to sing "All Sufficient Merit." We've sung it together before. I want you to understand that whenever you repent, whenever you clean out the closet, what you get is more of Christ. Let's pray.

Lord, I want to just take a moment. I want to give us a moment to ask the question...*What have we tolerated?* What have we allowed in our lives that has no

place in a Christian's life? Lord, for some people it's wrong believing, and I pray right now that they would stop listening to themselves and start preaching the gospel to themselves. For others it's something, and they know exactly the closet they need to clean. I pray that even as they sing this next song they'll say, "I want to repent because I want more of Christ." We ask this all in Jesus' name, amen.