

# Bible Studies for Life: June 27

*Strong in Purity • Revelation 2:18-29*

*By Clay Anthony*



Anthony

Imagine a church that to itself seems insignificantly small in all measurable ways. Even the town in which it is located is unremarkable and known only for a few blue-collar industries that keep the town afloat economically. Nobody vacations there and people leave the area as soon as possible for more exciting parts of the world.

We would characterize such a congregation as rural and struggling. This is the setting of Thyatira. To be a part of this city was to be employed in bronze, leather, or linen works. We are told that Paul's first convert was a woman named Lydia, herself a worker in purple dye who was from this city (Acts 16:14).

The Bible is clear that a strong work ethic is expected for a God follower to maintain. There is certainly nothing wrong with working. The problem facing these believers was how their worlds of commerce and faith mixed in unhealthy ways.

There is a reason we name our daughters Rachel or Elizabeth, but never Jezebel. Beginning in 1 Kings 16, we can read how this queen of Israel acted in notoriously sinful

ways. Here Jesus calls out a particular woman in the Thyatira community for acting in just as sinful manners.

In this community, workers were required to become members of guilds within their trades in order to maintain employment. This is close to our understanding of unionized workers today; for these workers, guild membership was required.

These guilds were tied to false deities of the Roman world. The goddess of fertility, the god of rain, and the god of animal products were among the many false gods to which these businesses were dedicated. Feasts that would often include worship of such deities were attended by the area's workers and would devolve into sexually perverted celebrations that were no place for Christ followers to be found.

The aforementioned Jezebel-type woman could be found inside the church, teaching that for the Christian there was no harm in attending such meetings. Such a teaching goes against the Christian witness (Matt. 5:16), but also against the clear prohibition of such in Scripture to have no other god beside/before the only real and true God. (Ex. 20:3)

That commandment means that we are to have no dealing with anything that would take our attentions and affections away from the truth. Thyatira believers were in a real struggle between being found faithful to Christ, or losing their livelihood over falsehoods. Their issue was not lack of love, as we saw in Ephesus, but a lack of truth. They were being taught lies and this needed correcting.

**Love increases as service increases (vv. 18-19).** One of the false gods given homage in Thyatira was Apollos, "god of the Sun." Here we read a most effective play on words in that Jesus is in fact the "Son of God." He, along with His eyes of flame and self-made bronze feet, have words to heed.

Jesus recognizes growth when He sees it and points out that

service being rendered now is greater than what these people did at the first. The word, "service," here is where we get our word, "deacon." These people were recognized in that their deacon skills were growing. No person can work to earn the grace of God, but more grace is seen in more growth.

The more these people worked to serve Christ, the less they would be found unfaithful to Him.

**Immorality must disappear from the church (vv. 20-23).** Note that this message is not given to pagans in the surrounding community. Jesus is speaking directly to people within the congregation. They have tolerated softness toward sin through this unnamed woman and Jesus is calling them back. The Bible is full of prophetesses (Luke 2:36); this woman gave herself the title, and that was wrong.

There is a warning that destruction is ahead not only for her but for all who follow her teachings. Sin must be confronted in a sinful world. When it rears its head within our churches, it is intolerable.

**Hold fast to the truth (vv. 24-29).** Thyatira received the longest message of this series. The Gospel is ultra-important. There is no need to test how far the depths of Satan can go (v.24). We know from the promise of Jesus that no matter how far our sins take us, His grace matchlessly goes further. His grace is greater.

*Anthony is Associational Missions Director for the Collaborative Missionary Network. He may be contacted at [claynell@aol.com](mailto:claynell@aol.com).*