

**Revelation 2: 18-23; "The Time of our Obedience", Sermon # 20 in  
the series - "The Faithful and True Witness", Delivered  
by Pastor Paul Rendall on June 18th, 2006  
in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

When the Lord Jesus Christ comes to address the church of Thyatira he reminds them of what His eyes are like and what His feet are like before he says anything in particular to them. Why is this? If you will recall, this description is found before this in verse 15 of chapter 1, in the initial vision of Christ that was given to John. And John's reaction when He saw Christ in this way is significant to our study of these verses this afternoon. He says, "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." John understood what every person needs to understand concerning Christ. And that is, that "all power in heaven and earth has been given to Christ." And "all judgment has been given to the Son that all may honor the Son as they honor the Father." He will judge the world in righteousness at the last judgment, yes; but He will also judge everything perfectly and correctly in regard to His churches now, when He walks in their midst. His eyes are "like a flame of fire," and his feet are "like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace." He has such power of discernment, such power of holiness, such power of ability to walk with His people in the midst of the fiery furnace of their temptations and difficulties that He wants this truth to be deeply impressed upon their minds and hearts and also upon those who are trying to lead them astray. When John fell on His face like a dead man, having seen this vision of the Lord Jesus, He realized that He was in the presence of overwhelming powerful holiness that would not tolerate in any person the presence of evil and sin. And John realized, even though he was the Christian man who leaned upon the Lord's breast at the last supper that His Savior and Lord would not tolerate it in him either. That is why he "fell at His feet as dead." He knew that all sin in all men in all generations is going to be judged by Christ and that all men everywhere ought to obey God and repent.

Our Lord who searches the hearts and minds, who sees everything so clearly and examines everything so closely in love to His people, looks for obedience and progress in that obedience within a specific time. He will commend and He will reward the obedience that He sees and He will chasten with sickness, tribulation, and death, those who will not repent. So the question that we are asking this afternoon is, "How does time relate to our obedience in the mind of our Lord Jesus Christ?" And I can answer that question by giving you 2 statements of truth.

**1st- Time relates to your obedience, in Christ's mind, in relation to your making progress in your sanctification that honors Him.** (Verses 18 and 19)

After describing Himself to the church of Thyatira as the Omniscient, powerful, Savior and Lord He commends the church with these words. "I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first." Now what is written here shows us some of the major elements of the Christian's sanctification; works, love, service, faith, and patience. Sanctification has two stages that relate to time in the life of the believer in Jesus Christ which we should take notice of. There is the initial sanctification which John Murray calls Definitive Sanctification. This is what takes place when we are converted to Christ. We are justified, declared righteous in the sight of our holy God. And we are sanctified initially in relation to the effectual call that God gives to us, we are called as saints. Listen to Paul in Romans 1: 7. "To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints." We who believe in Jesus are called to be holy ones of God, called as holy ones of God, based upon the way that God sees us in Christ. This is what causes Paul to say in 1 Corinthians 1: 2, "To the church of God which is at Corinth, those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." He says that they are already sanctified, set apart to the purpose of God in holiness. The same truth is given to us in 1 Corinthians 6: 11 where Paul tells us that the "thieves, the covetous, the drunkards, the revilers, and the extortioners will not inherit the kingdom of God." "And such were some of you," he says, "but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus by the Spirit of God." This initial sanctification is the basis of our progressive sanctification because in it we have died to sin's reign and to its condemnation based upon what Christ has done for us at the cross, and now that the Spirit has been given to us we can make progress in holiness in accordance with the grace purchased for us at the cross and conveyed to us by the Holy Spirit. This progressive sanctification is not a one-time act as Definitive sanctification is; it is an ongoing work that takes the rest of your life to work it out. It involves much struggle on your part, and grace upon grace on Christ's part. But the outcome is seen in the verse that we have before us now. This grace produces within the heart of the believer faith that works by means of love. It produces works that bring glory to God and help other people. It produces patience and perseverance when the believer is persecuted or when he experiences trials and difficulties and oppositions to the right thing that he is trying to do. This is what the Lord Jesus saw as he looked at the church of Thyatira.

Let's look at a few verses that will confirm this. 1st Thessalonians 1: 2 says, "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in all our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father." This is progressive sanctification. It is your faith at work, your laboring to love,

and striving to show others the love of Jesus Christ. And it is being patient and continuing to hope when you don't see things turning out the way that you would want them to right away. True Christianity is not a formula that you follow to get things to work out in the way that you want them to work out. It is submitting to God in His Word and in His providential ordering of things and continuing to show forth faith, love, and patience, even when they don't. This is pleasing to God. Then look over at James chapter 2 with me. In verse 14 it says, "What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?" "Can that faith save him?" "If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?" "Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." You can see here that true saving faith brings forth good works that are a practical help to believers in need of immediate assistance. It doesn't look the other way and it doesn't cross to the other side of the road when it sees the need.

James gives another example of works when he mentions Abraham in verse 21 and 22. "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?" "Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?" Faith is growing and becoming stronger when it translates into works of obedience to God's commands. And similarly James says in chapter 1, verse 3, in relation to going through various trials that we are to "let patience have her perfect work so that we will be complete and perfect and lacking nothing." These are the graces and their outworking in our lives that the Lord is pleased to behold. Faith and Love and Patience bear fruit and produce good works. This is what the Lord Jesus saw in the church at Thyatira. And now let us ask ourselves whether it is in us in the church of Tama? Over time, the Lord is evaluating us and will commend us and reward us if these things are ours and increasing. You can see this in Jesus' saying to them, "And as for your works, the last are more than the first." This shows progress and increase in faith in them. It shows development in true Christian character. Is this happening in us? The Apostle Peter states this same truth in his 2nd Epistle, verses 5-9. He says, "But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love." "For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

**Now 2ndly- Time relates to your obedience, in Christ's mind, in relation to progress in your repentance.** (Verses 20-23)

This is the kind of progress which will forsake the false doctrines and the sinful practices which dishonor His Holy Name. Even with this fine commendation the Lord Jesus gives to them there are still a few things that He

says that He has against them. He says that they are tolerating "that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce Christ's servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols." This is the same toleration of sin that was taking place in the church of Pergamos which we studied last week, except that in this church the teaching of error is coming from the lips of a woman who was seeking to introduce moral compromise into the church. She is described as "teaching and seducing Christ's servants to commit sexual immorality." It is described in verse 21 as "her sexual immorality." And Christ says that, "He gave her time to repent of it," and in her case she did not repent. It is apparent from what the Lord Jesus says that he is going to do to this woman that he considers compromise with sexual immorality on the part of His people to be a very serious hindrance to their sanctification and a shameful dishonor to His Name. He says that he "will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless she repents of her deeds." You find the same kind of language being used by Paul in 1st Thessalonians 4: 3-8 where he says, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified." "For God has not called us to uncleanness, but in holiness." "Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God who has also given us His Holy Spirit." You see what a great part of our being holy consists of. It consists of our having a good heart with a good treasure in it of good and pure thoughts and loving actions proceeding from that heart. If we compromise with sexual sin in our thoughts, or in the things we participate in with our eyes or with our bodies; how can we ever expect that the Lord will bless us? No, we can only expect that the Lord will be the avenger of all such things in our falling under his displeasure and His chastising hand.

Is it not interesting, though, that the Lord who is patient, did bear with this woman for a time? He gave her time to repent. He does not say how long. But evidently some in the church there, had confronted this woman about this abominable teaching she had been giving out and about the sinful example that she had been to other believers, and yet she did not repent. The Lord is patient, "longsuffering toward us," says Peter in 2 Peter 3: 9, "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." And in Luke chapter 13 when Jesus is speaking about repentance he tells a parable. "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none." "Then he said to the keeper of the vineyard, 'Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none.' "Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?" "But he answered and said to him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until

I dig around it and fertilize it." "And if it bears fruit, well." "But if not, after that you can cut it down." The Lord Jesus is the one who digs around the tree and fertilizes it. And this may take the form of bringing a chastising sickness or tribulation to a person when they will not repent in after many reproofs. Proverbs 29: 1 says, "He (or in this case she) who is often rebuked, and hardens her neck, will suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy." The Lord says that he will "kill her children with death" if that is what it takes to stop the spread of this evil in the church, if those following this woman and her teaching will not repent.

You see that the passing of time, in regard to sin tolerated, does make a tremendous difference to the One who searches the minds and hearts and gives to each one according to his work. I would ask each one of us here today to pray and ask God in the words of Psalm 139: 23, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." The time that you spend in prayer seeking the repentance from all and every sin that you need to repent of, will never be a vain exercise. The Lord will reward it greatly as we shall see when we speak of these things in the next sermon in this series.