

Living as an Overcomer – Tony Evans

Viewing Sin God's Way - Chapter 5

1. Read Revelation 2:18-29. Evans points out that the church of Thyatira is the small church but it gets the longest letter from Jesus. According to Guzik's Blue Letter Commentary, Barclay said that "The elder Pliny dismissed Thyatira with the almost contemptuous phrase 'Thyatira and other unimportant cities.'" Pliny was a Roman author.
2. Jesus doesn't mess around when He identifies Himself to this church. He called Himself "*the Son of God*". To further identify Himself, He describes Himself as the one, "*whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze*" which is how He described Himself in Revelation 1:14-15. I can picture his eyes of blazing fire seeing into my soul.
3. In verse 19, He says, "*I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.*" Just like all of the churches, Jesus is watching over them. On the plus side, He does see growth in this church. They are doing more than before.
4. In the Book of Acts, Thyatira was only mentioned as the place that someone had come from. Read Acts 16:14-15. It still doesn't say anything about where Lydia's home was located at that time but she was counted as part of the church at Philippi. She probably came to Philippi often to sell her purple dye and textiles.
5. Lydia was important because not only was she baptized but she influenced her whole household and they too were baptized. Paul was welcomed at her house. Even after Paul and Silas were released from jail in Acts 16:30, Paul stayed in Lydia's home.
6. Tony Evans starts this chapter in his book speaking about zero tolerance in capitalism in the U.S. His example is the car manufacturers. In order for the U.S. car manufacturers to compete with the foreign companies, then they have to get their quality up. They adopted a zero tolerance rule for defects. Owens Corning has had numerous programs to get the quality up or the defects down.

It is interesting that the reason Japanese manufacturing became such high quality was because of an American, W. Edwards Deming. He taught the Japanese about quality. The companies in America didn't listen to him. His most famous quote is "Quality is everyone's responsibility." Today Ford says quality is job one.

7. When you think about it, zero tolerance can be applied to every aspect of our daily lives. We have a God that wants us to strive for zero defects in how we live our lives. Jesus was the only one to accomplish zero defects or sins as a human.
 8. Since Jesus is our goal, then when it comes to sin, our goal should be zero tolerance. As humans, we typically say, “I am a sinner, that is the way that I am.” or “What do you expect, I am only human.” We try to rationalize our sin.
 9. Romans 5:20 says, “*But where sin increased, grace increased all the more*” 1 John 1:9 says, “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*” Man distorts these verses to justify his sin. They say, “If I sin more, then God will forgive me more.” Or they say, “I confessed my sin, my slate is clean and I can now sin more.” God still maintains His zero tolerance rule.
 10. As for our mindset toward sin, we should have the same mindset as God. We should have zero tolerance. We make excuses just like Adam and Eve did in the Garden. Years ago I heard a modification of an old adage, “To err is human but to find someone to blame it on is more human.”
 11. It started in the Garden, (Genesis 3:12), Adam said, “*The woman you put here with me— she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.*” We do the same today. If we say, “God, you made me this way.” In both cases, we are putting the blame on God.
- “Far too many of us live as victims today rather than as victors. And one of the main reasons is that we tolerate too much that doesn’t reflect the values of the kingdom of God either in ourselves or in others.” (Evans)
12. In our minds we set boundaries that we are not willing to cross. But when it comes down to it we may be pressed into cross these boundaries. Consider Jesus’ letter to the church at Pergamum, they were a compromising church. God does not compromise and neither should we. We need to tolerate what only God will tolerate.
 13. Jesus identifies Himself as the “*Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze.*” By saying that He is the Son of God, He is pointing to His deity. By His very nature, He is God and He is pointing to His power and authority given by God, the Father (Matthew 28:18).
 14. His “*eyes like a flame of fire*” tells us that He can see in to our very core. He can see what is in our hearts and minds. Have you ever had someone that could look at you and you

were sure they knew what you had done. My mom was that way. She would say, “I know that you are guilty.” She just didn’t know of what. Jesus will know.

“*His feet like fine brass*: Jesus chose this description of Himself from Revelation 1:15 to emphasize His *purity* because brass is pure and highly refined in the fire. It also emphasized His *steadfastness*, because brass was the strongest known metal in the ancient world, and feet like fine brass would be strong and unmovable.” (Guzik)

“This city was located 35 miles southwest of Pergamum. It was known for the protection, promotion, and benefits offered to people who shared a similar occupation or enterprise through what were called guilds. They were similar to a steelworker’s union or a teacher’s union today.” (Evans)

15. In verses 20-23, they are tolerating a woman in the church named Jezebel. There is no connection to the one in 1 Kings 16 who was married to King Ahab. She appears to be no less evil.
16. After converting to Christianity, this church would have worked to escape the old ways, “*sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols*” and she was unwilling to repent. Paul ran into this problem a lot in his travels. It happened so much that the Christian Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15:29) wrote a letter that said, “*You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things.*” Salvation comes from Jesus but God still has a zero tolerance for sin.
17. As I sit here preparing this S.S. lesson, I am reminded of God not wanting the Hebrew nation to even think about going back to Egypt. In Numbers 14:3, they said, “*Wouldn’t it be better for us to go back to Egypt?*” This is what Jezebel was doing into the church at Thyatira. “*Wouldn’t it be better if we went back to the old ways, when sexual immorality and worshipping idols was ok?*”
18. When we become Christians, God wants us to stay faithful to Him and turn away from our previous sinful lives, never to return. That is what repentance is. In the church of Thyatira, Jezebel was a self-proclaimed prophet who was working for Satan, trying to lead them back to their old sinful ways.
19. Jesus lets them know that if they want to be called the children of Jezebel, then things will not go well for them. Jesus’ response to their sinful nature should not be surprising to us. In verse 23, Jesus says, “*I will strike her children dead.*” Romans 6:23 tells us that “*the wages of sin is death.*”

20. Jesus used numerous metaphors based on reaping and sowing. Paul said to the church at Galatia, *“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.”* (Galatians 6:7). He lets them know here in Revelation that He will make an example of those that follow Jezebel and tells them that they will reap what they sow.

“When you’re sick, you don’t simply tolerate your symptoms; you look for a solution. A cure. If your sickness becomes severe or even life-threatening, you head to the ER. Had I just resigned myself to tolerate the pneumonia I developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, I probably wouldn’t be writing this book right now.” (Evans) Jesus is that cure and we have to put our faith in Him, completely relying on Him.

21. In verses 24 and 25, we see the benefit of being an overcomer. Jesus defines the overcomer as one who does *“not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan’s so-called deep secrets, ‘I will not impose any other burden on you, 25 except to hold on to what you have until I come.’”*
22. Becoming an overcomer is all about staying true to Jesus. There will be Jezebels in our lives and as a mature Christian we are not to be drawn away from Jesus by every Jezebel we encounter in our life. I have known men that wear a bracelet that is inscribed “WWJD”. It is a constant reminder to check everything that they do with “What would Jesus do?” Another way to check to make sure that you are on the right path is to ask yourself, “What does the Bible say about what I am doing?”
23. Just like what was going on in the church in Thyatira, today we are being called on by the world to be more tolerant. Sin is slipping into our churches in the name of diversity or acceptance. The world appears to be changing but God is immutable or unchanging. He is the same today as He was on the day of creation. We have to stay true to God and His Word.

“At one time in our American culture, biblical values were at least supported or tolerated. But today many biblical values are dishonored. Not only are they rejected, but their rejection is flaunted all over our entertainment and in our culture itself. The opposition to Christ and His kingdom values has become a very public dismissal in a whole number of areas. In many ways, then, we are similar to the church in Thyatira. We have believers who are persevering and show love and faithfulness, but very few stand up to the open and outright spiritual rebellion taking place throughout our land, society, schools, churches, communities, and entertainment industries. There must be a standard that those of us in the kingdom of God hold to and uphold. If we drift out of alignment under Christ, the culture will have no bearing at all. We are the standard bearers for marriage, culture, relationships, integrity, grace, and more. Without this, we are no better than the church in Thyatira.” (Evans)

24. In verse 26, the NIV translates overcomer to be *“the one who is victorious and does my will to the end”*. To the overcomer, Jesus will *give authority over the nations.*” If we stay faithful to Him, then we will rule and reign with Him on high.
- a. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:3 that we will even judge angels.
 - b. Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:12 *“if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us.”*
 - c. The writer of Hebrews said in Hebrews 2:8 that God put EVERYTHING under our feet and He did not leave anything out.
25. In verse 28, Jesus will give the overcomer the “morning star”. What is the morning star? We have to read ahead to see. Revelation 22:16 tells us that *“I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.”* His gift is Himself.
26. On earth it is key for us to focus on Jesus. Remember that verse 26 says, His gifts are for *“the one who is victorious and does my will to the end”*. Not everyone will be an overcomer. It is not a competition, as many as overcome will be victorious but you have to do His will. Paul encouraged the members of the church at Philippi with these words: *”But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 3:13-14) The prize is Jesus. There is a Southern Gospel song entitled, “Look for Me at Jesus Feet”. I don’t know what special access we will have in Heaven but I can think of no more wonderful place to spend eternity than at the feet of the morning star, my awesome Savior.
27. Throughout Paul’s letters, he encouraged the Christians to persevere. In the 70’s it was “Keep on Keeping on!” Don’t let the world and what is going on get you down. Keep your eyes on the prize, the bright morning star, Jesus.
28. It is all about what Jesus said in John 16:33, *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”* If we fill our hearts and minds with Jesus, we will have less time for the world. We have to remind ourselves of “WWJD” in all situations.

“He who has an ear”: “This is a letter that applies to everyone. It applies to those who are like Jezebel, who lead others into sin. It applies to those who follow the teaching of a Jezebel, and follow others into sin. It applies to those who permit a Jezebel to work her wickedness. Finally, it applies to the faithful who must hold fast.” (Guzik)