

SPACE TO REPENT

TEXT: REVELATION 2:18-29

INTRODUCTION:

1. In Revelation chapters 2 and 3 there are seven letters to seven churches in Asia Minor.
2. The fourth letter is addressed to the church in Thyatira (2:18).
3. It is not my intention to do a detailed exposition on this letter. Instead I would like for us to focus on verse 21 -- "And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not."
4. The "her" refers to a woman named Jezebel, "which calleth herself a prophetess" (2:20). "Sufferest" (2:20) means they were allowing her to teach and to seduce God's servants to commit fornication.
5. The church in Thyatira was very tolerant, like many mixed-up churches today. Some churches approve of homosexuality. Most churches today do not discipline their members when they fall into sexual immorality. Others allow pornography. They know members indulge in it but they look the other way.
6. You can be certain God doesn't look the other way (2:18)!
7. Apparently this Jezebel was very much like the infamous Queen Jezebel, the wicked wife of King Ahab. Queen Jezebel vigorously promoted Baal worship in Israel. If it had not been for the prophet Elijah she may have succeeded in replacing worship of the true God of the Bible with Baal worship.
8. By all accounts, Jezebel (2:20) is the most wicked woman in the Bible. We are told in I Kings 18 that Jezebel slew the prophets of the LORD. She was an idolater and a cold-blooded murderer.
9. Jezebel had innocent Naboth stoned to death. She tried to kill the prophet Elijah.
10. First Kings 21:25 says, "But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up."
11. Her namesake, this Jezebel in the church at Thyatira, was teaching the congregation to indulge in heathen worship, which involved idolatry and sexual immorality (Rev. 2:20, 21).
12. Referring to the immorality in the church at Thyatira, H.A. Ironside said, "We are confronted with conditions so grave, and wickedness so shocking, that we might naturally hesitate to recognize it as a church of God at all. Yet the Lord addresses it as such. It bore His name. It

- professed to represent Him in the world. Yet it condoned iniquitous practices that were below the level of ordinary decency."
13. Jezebel's false doctrine and immoral worship is referred to in 2:24 as "the depths (deep things) of Satan."
 14. First Corinthians 2:10 refers to "the deep things of God." God has His deep things and so does Satan. One preacher said, "The depths of Satan are terrible, but we must avoid even the shallows of Satan."
 15. God gave Jezebel space to repent (2:21). And He gave those in the church in Thyatira who were mixed up with Jezebel space to repent (2:22). And He is giving people today space to repent.

I. A DEFINITION OF SPACE (2:21).

1. The word "space" is used in different ways. For example, we often hear about space travel, and space technology, and outer space, etc.
2. "Space" ordinarily refers to a continuous area or expanse that is free, available, or unoccupied.
3. However, in olden days, space often referred to time. For example, the *Webster's 1828 Dictionary* says this: "Quantity of time; also, the interval between two points of time...God may defer his judgment for a time, and give a people a longer space for repentance."
4. It is important to note that Mr. Webster often quoted Scripture along with his definitions, and here he referred to Revelation 2:21.
5. The Greek word translated "space" in Revelation 2:21 is *chronos*. It is where we get our English word *chronology*, the science that deals with the measuring of time.
6. The Greek word *chronos* simply means, "time" and that is how it is usually translated in our King James Bible. For example, Matthew 2:7 says, "Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time (*chronos*) the star appeared."
7. We all have time and it is important that we spend it wisely. Ephesians 5:16 says, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."
8. The Greek lexicon says this means, "to make wise and sacred use of every opportunity for doing good."
9. Psalm 90:12 says, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."
10. So "space" means time. God had given Jezebel and the others in Thyatira "space (time) to repent" (2:21, 22).

II. A LIMITATION TO GOD'S PATIENCE

1. We are familiar with the expression, "Space is limited!" This certainly can be applied to Revelation 2:21.
2. The Bible refers to God's forbearance, and all throughout Scripture we read that God is patient and longsuffering and gracious and merciful, but there is a limitation to God's patience (cf. Numbers 14:18).
3. Genesis 6:3 says, "My spirit shall not always strive with man."
4. There are many examples in Scripture when God's patience was exhausted -- the flood in Noah's day, at the tower of Babel, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, God's judgment upon the Egyptians, the Assyrian captivity of Israel, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity to mention a few.
5. There are also many examples when impenitent men have exhausted God's patience. Pharaoh is a notable example.
6. There is a limitation to God's patience. "Space" in Revelation 2:21 refers to a definite period of time. Man's days are few and are determined by God (cf. Job 14:1, 5).
7. David said, "There is but a step between me and death" (I Sam. 20:3).
8. The wise woman of Tekoah said to King David, "For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again" (II Sam. 14:14).
9. Hebrews 4:7 says, "Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."
10. "Limiteth" means, "to mark out the boundary or the limit." God has marked out the boundary for your days here on earth, and God has said, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further."
11. Job acknowledged this and said, "Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass."
12. From the city of Ephesus, the apostle Paul sent a message to the church at Corinth -- "But this I say, brethren, the time is short" (I Cor. 7:29). Indeed it is!
13. Lost sinners do not consider that "the time is short." They are not prepared to meet God. For the unsaved, God is patiently giving them "space to repent," but soon God's patience will be exhausted (cf. II Peter 3:9, 10).
14. Second Chronicles 36:16 says, "But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the

- wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy."
15. "Till there was no remedy" -- God's patience was exhausted!
 16. It is like a sick man going to the doctor and the doctor says, "There is no remedy." But this is much worse. Impenitent sinners will have to eternity in hell.
 17. Jonathan Edwards said, "Malefactors have often found means to escape the hand of civil justice. But none ever escaped out of the prison of hell, which is God's prison. It is a strong prison: it is beyond any finite power, or the united strength of all wicked men and devils, to unlock, or break open the door of that prison. Christ hath the key of hell; 'He shuts and no man opens.'"

III. A RESPONSIBILITY TO REPENT

1. I have been focusing on the phrase, "space to repent," but let us also consider these words: "and she repented not" (Rev. 2:21).
2. How sad that sinners cling so tenaciously to their sin. I heard about one man who repented and got right with God. One of his worldly companions met him on the street and said, "I hear you have given up all your pleasures." The new believer said, "No, I have given up all of my foolishness!"
3. Most modern-day preachers avoid the word "repent" but preachers in the Bible didn't.
4. Ezekiel 14:6 says, "Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations."
5. Ezekiel 14:6 is addressed to "the house of Israel," but what about all the "abominations" here in America today!?
6. Zechariah 1:3 says, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts." "Turn ye" means "repent."
7. John the Baptist, the apostle Peter, the apostle Paul, and all of the other preachers in the Bible preached repentance.
8. The Lord Jesus said, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3, 5).
9. The words "repent" and "repented" are found eight times in the seven letters to the seven churches (2:5, 16, 21, 22; 3:3, 19).
10. The Lord warned them what would happen if they refused to repent -- certain judgment (Rev. 2:16, 22). William Newell said, "Her bed of whoredom will be changed into a bed of anguish" (2:22).

11. These churches were judged by God and eventually they were closed down. Today that part of the world (Turkey) is controlled by Muslims.
12. The great theme of the book of Revelation is that during the coming tribulation, God is going to judge this wicked world but men will refuse to repent (Rev. 9:20, 21; 16:8-21).
13. Jezebel and the others in Thyatira were given space to repent, but they would not repent. There is a sharp contrast here between the bed of fornication and the bed of affliction where they will be severely judged by God (2:20-22).
14. Many a sinner is lying on a sick bed, his body destroyed by AIDS or some other STD. By the way, the Center for Disease Control says AIDS is on the increase. I will not go into detail, but some statistics are very disturbing.
15. Black Americans continue to experience the most severe burden of HIV, compared with other races and ethnicities. Blacks represent approximately 12% of the U.S. population, but accounted for an estimated 44% of new HIV infections in 2010. They also accounted for 44% of people living with HIV infection in 2009
16. Hispanics are also disproportionately affected by HIV. Hispanics represent 16% of the population but accounted for 21% of new HIV infections in 2010. Hispanics accounted for 19% of people living with HIV infection in 2009.
17. Revelation 2:23 says God even killed her children, so that and all the churches would know the fear of God. Worldly, selfish parents do not realize they are often dragging their children down to hell with them!

CONCLUSION:

D. L. Moody said, "When a man is not deeply convicted of sin, it is a pretty sure sign that he has not truly repented. Experience has taught me that men who have very slight conviction of sin, sooner or later lapse back into their old life. For the last few years I have been a good deal more anxious for a deep and true work in professing converts than I have for great numbers. If a man professes to be converted without realizing the heinousness of his sins, he is likely to be one of those stony ground hearers who don't amount to anything. The first breath of opposition, the first wave of persecution or ridicule, will suck them back into the world again. I believe we are making a woeful mistake in taking so many people into the Church who have never been truly convicted of sin."

