**Vs. 18** introduces us to the fourth church, that of Thyatira. The name is significant in that during this period of church history, from 500 A.D. to 1000 A.D we have the true church being persecuted like never before. The name "Thyatira" means "Odor of Affliction". This era comprises what is sometimes referred to as the “Early Dark Ages”. Some revisionist historians are trying to shed the reference to “Dark Ages” in favour of a softer “Medieval Times” or “Middle Ages”. It doesn’t sound so harsh!Before we look at this time period represented by the Thyatira church, let us get a feel for the city itself. Thyatira was located southeast of Pergamos, about halfway between that city and Sardis. It was a smaller city than the previous three and was industrial in nature and was known as a center of trade and commerce. The water of Thyatira was unique in the sense that it was particularly adapted to dyeing, so that in no other place could the ***scarlet*** cloth, out of which fezes (*flat-topped conical red hat; formerly the Turkish national headdress*) were made, be so perfectly and permanently dyed. Why are we having a lesson in fashion? In **Acts 16:12-15** a woman from Thyatira named Lydia is mentioned. She was said to be a seller of purple. Note that in **Matthew 27:28-31** we are told that Jesus' persecutors put a scarlet robe on Him when they mocked Him. **Mark 15:17-20** recounts this same story but in this telling, the robe is described as being purple. Is there a contradiction? Is one in error? Not at all! If you have ever gone to a store and purchased paint after having examined a colour chart you will no doubt agree that often the paint looks somewhat different under different lighting. Such is the case with scarlet and purple. Under certain lighting a garment might accurately be described as scarlet or purple. Aside from that, simply ask some of the men in our church the colour of our hymn books. Some will say red. The more "*colour enhanced*" will say, bergundy! It's a matter of perspective. The Gospel writers were not in collusion when they wrote. They wrote at different times and wrote independently. In Acts, whether because of the lighting at the time, or because of Luke's perspective on colour, he described Lydia as a seller of purple rather than scarlet! No contradiction is present in spite of the critics! Incidentally, **Acts 16:40** tells us that Lydia gave lodging to Paul and Silas after they were released from prison.

Thyatira was known as a center for trade- guilds. Wool-workers, makers of outer garments, dyers, linen-workers, tanners, bronze workers, and potters were just some of the trades plied. Each of these trades had a guardian or patron god. They served as protectors to the guild members. ( *Does this have a familiar ring to it as in "patron saints" of the Roman Catholic Church? Here is a short list. Macarius of Unzha: craftsmen, merchants, travelers; Madeline Sophie Barat: school girls; Magnus of Avignon: fish dealers, fishmongers; Malo: pig-keepers; and Margaret of Antioch: nurses. Are Catholics not encouraged to pray to these saints? Are they not seen as guardians or protectors?)* Therefore, if you wanted the favour of your particular god you had to be a guild member in good standing. That meant that you had to attend all the feasts and festivals pertaining to your guild and god. You were to eat the foods offered to your particular god as they appeared on your table and be thankful as if your god had provided them. Each guild member was to be loyal and faithful to their guild and attending "deity". When the lust for food was satisfied the attendees would then descend into all kinds of lewd and licentious practices. This gross immorality was seen as part of the worship. To walk out on the proceedings was to invite ridicule, persecution and risk the possibility of losing your place in the guild. You might say this is all interesting from a historical perspective but what does it have to do with Bible study? Well, picture yourself, a Christian, in Thyatira. You weren't born a Christian. You were well established in one of the trades having been trained from a child. You were following in the long held tradition of your family. Your great grandfather had been a tanner, your grandfather, your father, and now you. In fact, your son was well on his way to learning the trade, longing for the day when he would be accepted by the guild. Then, in the midst of all this, the gospel of Jesus Christ, penetrates your heart with conviction. You see the need to repent and renounce the gods and practices of paganism. You will have to go against tradition and family. You will be shunned by your neighbours. Your wife and children will be bullied. You may have to move to avoid vandalism and violence. You will lose the only vocation you know. If you do ply your trade you will do so as a "scab". Who will hire you? And at what wages? Will you be able to provide for your family? Is this why we see Lydia, a woman of Thyatira, living in Philippi? Was she forced to leave her native city, her family, her "friends"?

What about today? Are you in a trade, a profession, where you must compromise in order to be accepted? Do you have to involve yourself in practices that run contrary to sound doctrine. Do you have to sign declarations and protocols that clearly run afoul of God's word in order to keep your job? If placed between a rock and a hard place, what will you choose? The Bible says we cannot serve God and mammon. (**Matt. 6:24**) You will come to hate one and love the other! The Christians of Thyatira had some difficult choices. They are no less difficult today, but perhaps a little more subtle. Now we have a little glimpse of the city, next week the church.