

## Pergamos: A Compromising Commitment

Revelation 2: 12-17

*Pergamos was a beautifully situated city with an air of royalty about it. It sat on top of a huge mountain, arising ever so steeply and majestically out of a beautiful valley. The city's citizens could see the Mediterranean Sea some fifteen miles away. To the approaching traveller the city struck him with a sense of stately awe and royal authority.*

*Pergamos was one of the cultural and religious centers of the world. It had been a capital city for some 400 years. Its library was second only to Alexandria, Egypt. But the city's most prominent feature was its acropolis, rising about a thousand feet in the midst of the city. Temple after temple had been built upon it. For example, there was a temple to Asclepius, a serpent-like god of healing. It was famous for its college of medical priests. But the most famous pagan altar was built to Zeus. It was an overpowering sight, built on a huge ledge that jutted out and towered above the city. It was the largest, most ornate, and most famous altar in the world. <sup>i</sup>*

Jesus reminds Pergamos of the truth and power of His Word, **V.12 – And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges.** Jesus had a word for them, as well as us. It is interesting that Pergamos means “*married*.” As we examine the **insights** within the text, I want to consider: **Pergamos – A Compromising Commitment.**

**I. The Position of the Church (13)** – Jesus repeats the statement, “**I know thy works.**” In fact, He makes this statement to all seven churches. He was well aware of the works of the churches. He is aware of everything about His church, including you and me. Theirs was an interesting position. Notice:

**A. Their Dwelling** – **I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is.** Pergamos existed in a hostile environment. They worshipped in a city where **Satan's seat was, where he dwelt.** Pergamos was a stronghold for Satan.

- Many today think Satan is just a figment of men's imagination, a cartoon character in a fairy tale. Listen, Satan is very real. He is working in our world today! Consider what he said to God in **Job 1:7 – From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.** He is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. The Bible refers to him as the “**god of this world**” and the “**prince of the power of the air.**” Never be deceived, Satan is at work! He wants nothing more than to destroy the lives and testimony of every Christian he can. Jesus also spoke of:

**B. Their Doctrine** – **And thou holdest fast my name.** In the midst of evil, they held fast to the name of Jesus and their faith in Him. To most in Pergamos, Jesus was just one of many gods, but the church recognized the preeminence of Jesus. They knew He had a name above every name; the name whereby men must be saved.

- (Illus. the picture of Jesus in the pulpit). Jesus is the reason we are here. It is His precious name that we've met to exalt and praise. The world needs to hear the blessed name of Jesus worshiped, preached about, and proclaimed.
- **And hast not denied my faith.** Not only His name, they held fast to their faith, the fundamental truths of doctrine. There are some truths that we cannot abandon, **1) The Virgin Birth 2) His Substitutionary Atonement 3) His Bodily Resurrection 4) His Literal Second Coming 5) The Inerrancy of Scripture.** Without these our faith is in vain! Jesus alone, is the way of salvation!

**C. Their Devotion** – **Even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.** We say that we are committed to Jesus, but are we really? Would we stand in the face of death? Does Jesus mean more to us than life itself?

- These are tough questions, but the church at Pergamos had to answer them. Many were killed because they wouldn't deny the faith. Jesus speaks of **Antipas**, His faithful martyr. History tells us that Antipas was the pastor at Pergamos. His name means "*against all.*" He stood against all that Satan brought and paid a heavy price. He refused to proclaim Caesar was god and was placed in a brass bull. A fire was built under it and Antipas was roasted alive. Church that is devotion to Christ! He had not died in vain; Jesus knew his name.

**II. The Problems within the Church** (14-16) – Pergamos heard the dreadful words, "**I have a few things against thee.**" Some were true to Christ, but not all. Notice the problems of the church.

**A. Their Compromise** (14a) – **But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast them there that hold the doctrine of Balaam.** The faithful were doing the works of Christ, but they had allowed some among them who were not. The true church was mixing with those who taught false doctrine. We cannot compromise our stand on the Word of God and His doctrine to gain the favor and attendance of this world! Many have a "whatever it takes" mindset. We cannot lower our standards for the sake of cooperation or perceived growth.

- Unbelievers do not embrace true doctrine; it is against their nature, but it is what they need. A true Christian doesn't mind God's truth; they will embrace it, love it, and live by it. A

compromising church will soon be filled with lost people who have a false sense of security, but no genuine conversion. We cannot compromise!

**B. Their Corruption (14-15)** – But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. Corruption will soon follow compromise. It won't be long until the ways of God are abandoned for the ways of men. Jesus warns of the "doctrine of Balaam." Numbers 22-25 teaches that Balak, king of Moab, hired Balaam to curse Israel. Balaam's curse was turned into blessing. When his plan failed, Balaam suggested that Balak corrupt Israel by enticing them to engage in idolatry and immorality. Israel believed they could live as they pleased and still have favor with God.

- This doctrine is alive and well in churches today! Many want the pleasure of sin through the week and God on Sunday. We can't have it both ways. Man cannot serve two masters.
- Jesus spoke again of the Nicolaitanes. v.15 – So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. They were only deeds in Ephesus, but Pergamos had embraced their doctrine. I found the name means "to conquer the people." Evidently there was a hierarchy being set up to dictate the church's operation. This elevated men and positions to a level reserved for God.
- I have been called to pastor here, but I am not Lord here, and neither are you. Sadly, many churches are run by individuals and God is left out. It is His church and we are to exalt Him, not man!

**C. Their Confrontation (16)** – Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. Jesus gives a solemn warning to Pergamos – REPENT! If they failed, He would bring swift consequences. Left unresolved, Jesus would bring swift judgment on Pergamos for their compromise and refusal to confront error in the church.

- If Jesus is committed to fighting error and false doctrine within the church, we too must be willing to confront these issues and deal with them accordingly. This isn't popular in today's culture of political correctness, but we have an obligation to maintain doctrinal purity at all costs.

**III. The Provision for the Church (17)** – He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. The

faithful are never forgotten. Jesus promises to provide for those who overcome. Notice three promises:

**A. Hidden Manna** – We all know about the manna in the wilderness. Most in Pergamos filled themselves with worldly pleasure. The pure were not left out; Jesus would feed them with His abundance. What He offers is always superior to this world's offer. As we feast on that which the Lord provides, we find nourishment for our souls!

**B. A White Stone** – This seems of little value to us, but it was a precious gift in that day. White stones were given of judges to those who were found innocent. Soldiers received them after victory in battle. They were broken and shared by friends, to be redeemed at a time of need. They were given as tickets to special occasions. A groom would offer a white stone as a promise to take his bride. I'm glad for the "white stones" I've received!

**C. A New Name** – The white stone given to over-comers would have a new name written on it, that no one knew except the recipient. This speaks of our individual relationship with Jesus.

- Aren't you glad for a new name? I'm no longer the man I used to be. Jesus has given me a new name; I belong to Him! My name is recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life, never to be removed. Every child of God shares an intimate relationship with Christ. Our names are different, but He knows us all.

**Conclusion:** Once again I have been challenged by the text. There is a strong push in our day to abandon sound doctrine and the fundamentals of the faith, in order to join the modern movement. Some call for compromise for the sake of cooperation. I want to remain true to the ways of God!

Serving the Lord and standing for Him will likely result in increased opposition in our future, but I plan to stand for Jesus! If we compromise our stand and allow corruption within the church, we stand in danger of rebuke and judgment. He has done so much for me; the least I can do is abide faithful to Him. Has God spoken to you? Is there a need in your life? Are you committed to living for the Lord within a culture that sees no need for truth or Christ? If you are yet unsaved, I urge you to come to Christ in repentance and faith unto salvation.

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<sup>i</sup> Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary - Revelation.