

“THE WORLDLY CHURCH”

INTRODUCTION: Our greatest danger, both as Christians and as churches, is never persecution...

1. Persecution actually *helps* the church. It causes her to grow numerically, in sanctification, and in depth of character.
2. **Jim Reapsome**, was the Executive Director of Evangelical Missions Information Center and the editor of *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* for more than 30 years.
 - a. He was the author of several books and Bible study guides.
 - b. In 1994, he wrote an article for the *ACMC Newsletter (Assoc. of Church Missions Committee)*.
The church in chains has been a powerful church, perhaps more powerful than the church without chains. Just ask the Christians in China. Churches without chains get lazy, they stare at their navels, they forget about spiritual warfare, they forget about the millions who have never heard of Jesus Christ...there's power in chains, the kind of power released by the apostle Paul's chains. 'Because of my chains,' he said, 'most of the brethren in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the Word of God more courageously and fearlessly.' What do we need more than anything else in World Missions? Spiritual power, power to witness to Jesus Christ courageously and fearlessly. Imagine the impact on the unbelieving world if all 41,000 American missionaries, 3,600 Canadian missionaries, plus another 50,000 or so workers from other countries, suddenly exploded in bold, dauntless, brave, resolute, audacious, two-fisted witnessing and soul-winning-they would act like firefighters plunging into a terrifying inferno to rescue trapped victims! Or shall we pray for chains?
 - c. The gist: Persecution (as in the Church of Smyrna) was good for the church.
 - d. **Just a note of observation:** Of the 7 churches of Revelation, only two receive no rebuke or warning from Christ – Smyrna and Philadelphia – and both of these were suffering some form of persecution.
3. Our greatest enemy is *Worldliness*: becoming like the world.
 - a. *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.* (1 John 2:15-17)
 - b. How would we define “worldliness” – a word that sounds somehow outdated?
 - c. **David F. Wells:** *God in the Wasteland*; p. 29, 30.
The fundamental problem in the evangelical world today is that God rests too inconsequentially upon the church. His truth is too distant, his grace is too ordinary, his judgment is too benign, his Gospel is too easy, and his Christ is too common. I begin with an examination of the “world” and its correlation with what we today speak of as modernity. I do so because the New Testament is clear that love of God and love of the world are in competition with each other, and

we have to understand this competition in order to pinpoint how our love for God has dimmed as our love for the world has grown.

Worldliness is that system of values and beliefs, behaviors and expectations, in any given culture that have at their center the fallen human being and that relegate to their periphery any thought about God. Worldliness is what makes sin look normal in any age and righteousness seem odd. Modernity is worldliness, and it has concealed its values so adroitly in the abundance, the comfort, and the wizardry of our age that even those who call themselves the people of God seldom recognize them for what they are.

4. In the first book of a four-book series about the church and modernity, **David F. Wells** explained how worldliness works its way into our souls and our churches.
 - a. *No Place For Truth or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (1993); pp. 89-92.
 - b. *The novelty of Our Time, I believe, lies not so much in the fact that it is modern as in three other considerations. First, modern consciousness is being shaped by a world civilization and not merely the homogeneous culture of a particular nation that is in the throes of being modernized. Second, today's mass media, which are vital conduits for the values arising from modernization, are so intrusive, so pervasive, so enveloping as to render the experience of modernity intense to a degree that is without precedent. Third, as a consequence, we are seeing on a social scale that is without precedent the mass experimentation with and adoption of the values of modernity. These three factors are experienced by all in the culture, Christian and no-Christian alike. They have generated enormous power in reshaping the inner psyche of both believers and unbelievers. And precisely because modernization has created an external world in which unbelief seems normal, it has at the same time created a world in which Christian faith is alien. It is the inability to resist this oddness that is now working its havoc on the Christian mind. In the same way, the church often seems to be blithely unaware of the peril that now surrounds it. We must ask how religion – and especially evangelical religion – is measuring up to Our Time. How has it responded to the looming vortex in the center of our society, the emptiness left behind by the disappearance of a common core of values, the disintegration of tradition and authority? And how cognizant it is of pluralization, of how the multiple choices that pluralization forces on us each day destroy our capacity for truth, not to mention the stability of our world?*
 - c. These four books, by the way, have been condensed into one volume: *The Courage to be Protestant*. (2008)
 - d. The opening paragraph to that book reads like this: “*It takes no courage to sign up as a Protestant. After all, millions have done so throughout the West. They are not in any peril. To live by the truths of historic Protestantism, however, is an entirely different matter. That takes courage in today's context.*” (p. 1).
5. For your **encouragement**, we are **not** the first age or the first church to face such challenges. This tug of war between church and world, Christ and culture, faith and secularism has *always* been present – **7 stages**:
 - a. Israel and Egypt, Canaan, Assyria, Babylon, Greece and Rome
 - b. The New Testament church and the Greco-Roman culture
 - c. Christendom and Medieval society

- d. The Reformation and the Renaissance
 - e. Puritanism and the Enlightenment
 - f. Fundamentalism and Modernity
 - g. Evangelicalism and Postmodernity
6. The seven churches of Revelation faced off against a Godless culture, a Christless worldview and a religion without the Holy Spirit.

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life. I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him. (1 John 2:15-27)

Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error. (1 John 4:4-6)

For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:4-5)

We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. (1 John 5:19-21)

7. One of the seven churches of Revelation was losing its battle against the spirit of the age – the spirit of Rome – and it had become worldly. That was the Church at **Pergamum**.

And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: ‘The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword. “I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. So also you have some who hold the teaching of the

Nicolaitans. Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.’ (Revelation 2:12-17)

- a. Affirmation, correction, motivation
- b. Paul talks about these three needs of the church, and instructs Timothy to focus his preaching on them...

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. (2 Tim. 4:1-4)

- c. These are the three messages Jesus gives to the seven churches.
- d. **Eugene Peterson:** *Reverse Thunder: The Revelation of John and the Praying Imagination*; p. 53.

This outline is a summary of the spiritual direction that takes place in the church. The church is the place where we come to find out what we are doing that is right; it is a place of affirmation. The church is the place where we come to find out what we are doing that is wrong; it is a place for correction. The church is the place where we come to hear the promises; it is a place of motivation. No Christian community can do without any part of this message. We need affirmation, we need correction, we need motivation.

- e. These seven brief letters to these seven ancient churches of Asia Minor set forth God’s curriculum in training His Church to overcome and evangelize the world.
- f. **Eugene Peterson:** *Reverse Thunder*; p. 53.

This three-part spiritual direction trains God’s people to live a life of confident faith in Christ in a hostile environment. The process of affirmation, correction, and promise is the complex process whereby the community passes on its passion and its excellence. The training takes place in seven areas: we are trained to love (Ephesus), to suffer (Smyrna), to tell the truth (Pergamum), to be holy (Thyatira), to be authentic (Sardis), to be in mission (Philadelphia), and to worship, using things to praise God, receiving gifts to serve God (Laodicea). The church is the community of people who explicitly and consciously submit themselves to the direction and training of our Lord the Spirit, so that excellence is pursued in these seven areas.

8. We have already examined two of these seven churches

- a. *Ephesus*: the loveless church: “...you have abandoned the love you had at first.” (2:4)
- b. *Smyrna*: the persecuted church: “Be faithful unto death.” (2:10)
- c. Now we come to the third church: **Pergamum**
- d. The *worldly* church that compromised the truth

I. THE CHURCH OF PERGAMUM (Revelation 2:12)

1. “*And to the Church of Pergamum write...*” (2:12)
2. Pergamum was located 55 miles north of Smyrna, 15 miles inland from the Aegean Sea, lying in the Caicus River Valley (also known as *Pergamos*).
3. It had once been the Roman capital of Asia Minor, but Caesar **Augustus** had moved the financial and administrative functions of Asia Minor to Ephesus.
 - a. Captured by **Alexander the Great** in the 4th century BC and left it the regional capital
 - b. From 231-133 BC, it had been the capital of the *Attalid* Kingdom.
 - c. In 133 BC, the dying Attalid King, willed it to the Roman Empire.
 - d. Pergamum remained the *political* capital of Asia Minor until 130 AD.
 - e. So, when John wrote this letter to the Church in Pergamum, their city had been a capital for over 300 years.
4. Pergamum was *historically* the greatest city in Asia:
 - a. **Pliny**, the Roman writer called Pergamum: “*by far the most famous of Asia*”
 - b. **William Barkley**: “*Pergamos had all the atmosphere of an ancient capital city and all the pride of centuries of greatness behind her*” (p. 47).
5. Pergamum’s fame lay in three directions.
 - a. First: *Pergamum was the home of one of the great and famous libraries of antiquity.*
 - i. Over 200,000 hand-copied *parchments* (*vellum*)
 - ii. *Papyrus* (made from reeds or bulrushes) were being replaced by *parchments* (made from animal skins; leather)
 - iii. Parchments were originally called, in Greek, *he pergamene charta* (the Pergamum sheet)
 - iv. Shortened to “*parchment*”
 - v. In the reign of king **Eumenes II** (197-156 BC), the **Ptolemies** (Kings of Egypt) refused to export parchment to Pergamum because they did not want a rival library to surpass their royal library in *Alexandria*.
 - vi. In 48 BC, **Julius Caesar** accidentally burned down the Library of Alexandria, making the library of Pergamum the greatest in the Ancient Greco-Roman world.
 - vii. Pergamum, therefore, was a center of learning and scholarship.
 - b. Second: *Pergamum was a center for Greek Religion*
 - i. Especially the Greek god *Asklepios*, known as “*Asklepios the Savior*”: the god of medicine and healing
 - ii. Symbol: the snake (hence the medical symbol today, a snake wrapped around a winged pole)

- iii. Sick people spent the night in the Temple to Asklepios in hopes of healing when tamed snakes would crawl over them.
 - iv. The touch of the snake was the touch of the god – hence, Jesus says: “*Where Satan’s throne is...where Satan dwells*” (Satan, the serpent of old)
 - v. Also home to the altar to Zeus and Athene – the two greatest Greek gods and goddesses
 - vi. Most famous: *Pergamum Altar*, now housed in the Berlin Pergamum Museum (altar to Zeus)
 - Also the home of the *Ishtar Gate (Blue Gate) of Babylon*
 - *Ancient Babylon...Ancient Rome...* in one museum
 - I have had the privilege to visit these sites in Berlin
 - Pergamum Altar: the civic altar of the city
 - c. Third: *Pergamum was a center of Caesar worship*
 - i. Caesar worship was more intense in Pergamum than in any other city in Asia Minor.
 - ii. In 29 BC – Temple to **Caesar Octavius Augustus** – the first Caesar temple built outside of Rome!
 - iii. Also a temple to the goddess of Rome (*Roma*)
6. Here were the *three strands* of a godless, Christless and man-centered society: education, medicine, political power
- a. All three held in sacred value
 - b. Personified as gods and goddesses to be worshiped
 - c. Three core values which formed the cult of paganism in Pergamum
 - d. **666** – the number of man!
- This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666. (Revelation 13:18)*
7. Into this home and temple-center of Satan, the Holy Spirit planted a local Christian church. A church under much pressure to *conform* to the culture.

II. THE CHRIST OF PERGAMUM (Revelation 2:12)

- 1. “...*the words of Him who has the sharp two-edged sword.*” (2:12)
- 2. Again, a picture of Christ drawn from chapter one’s vision, but also seen in other places in Revelation.
 - a. *In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. (Revelation 1:16)*

- b. *From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.* (Revelation 19:15, 21)
 - c. *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* (Hebrews 4:12)
3. Jesus Christ who speaks the **Word of God** to His Church because He **is** the Word made flesh.
- a. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.* (John 1:1, 14)
 - b. Notice this: in each of the seven letters, the message is called “*the words of...*”
 - c. What the churches need is the Word of the Lord.
4. The world says, “*Don't be judgmental. Be tolerant.*”
5. Jesus says, “*Speak the Word that will judge human hearts.*”
- For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* (Hebrews 4:12)
6. “*Two-edged*” sword. The Roman *gladius* –
- a. Short, two-edged fighting sword
 - b. For in-close, hand-to-hand combat
 - c. Sharp on both edges: cuts going in and coming out; in the upstroke or downstroke, from left or from right.
 - d. The sword that can divide
7. The truth of God’s Word *divides* mankind –
- a. *Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.* (Matthew 10:34-39)
 - b. The elect from the reprobate
 - c. Jesus is **not** interested in “getting along with” or “being nice to” everyone.
8. **That is this American generation’s biggest failure:** *The desire to get along with people at the expense of saving truth!*

III. THE COMMENDATION OF PERGAMUM (2:13)

1. *I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. (Revelation 2:13)*
2. Jesus commends the Pergamum saints for two things: In the face of persecution, threats and harassment, they...
 - a. Did not deny *Jesus' name* (the Savior and Lord)
 - b. Did not deny *The Faith* (the Apostolic kerugma)
3. Even when *Antipas*: a member of the Church in Pergamum who was martyred.
4. Legend: *roasted to death in a brazen bull during the reign of Domitian* (the time of the Revelation)
5. Even in the face of death, they would not deny Christ or their apostolic faith...

Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. (Jude 3-5)
6. But they did **compromise** in order to escape pressure...

IV. THE CONDEMNATION OF PERGAMUM (Revelation 2:14-15)

1. *But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. (Revelation 2:14-15)*
2. Jesus faults these Pergamum believers for three things: *mixed worship, sexual immorality, the Nicolaitan heresy.*
 - a. *"Hold to the teaching of Balaam..."*
 - i. The story of Numbers 22-24. God refused to allow Balaam to curse Israel.
 - ii. So Balaam found another way to ruin Israel: He convinced Balak to allow Israelite men to marry the Moabite women.
 - iii. Result? Sexual immorality and idolatry.
 - iv. A ruin far worse than any curse
 - b. Gist: The pastors of Pergamum allowed some public participation in pagan festivals and Caesar worship just to keep the neighbors happy.

- c. They also allowed sexual immorality to go both unaddressed and undisciplined.
- d. *“hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans”*
 - i. The same sort of carnal teaching
 - ii. The essence: compromise and carnality

3. **G. K. Beale:** *Revelation: NIGNTC; pp. 248-249.*

The Christians in Pergamum staunchly withstood external pressures to compromise from pagan governmental and religious authorities but had permitted an apparently subtle form of compromise to develop internally. The false teachers were arguing that believers could have closer relationships with pagan culture, institutions, and religion than John thought proper. Like Balaam, this was a group of false prophets who were encouraging participation in idol feasts by teaching that such permission was permissible for Christians. We may speculate, as have others, that this course of action was rationalized by thinking that it was only an empty gesture that fulfilled patriotic or social obligations and was legitimate as long as Christians did not really believe in the deities being worshiped. Of course, their teaching would ultimately dilute the exclusive claims of the church’s Christian witness to the world, which was still the church’s strength. Perhaps part of the motivation for the teachers’ attitude was the threat of economic deprivation, which may have facilitated the comparison with Balaam, since the original narrative and subsequent reflections on it associate his deceptive motives with financial gain.

4. We face the same pressure today – the push to tolerate, accommodate, and promote pagan ideas:
- a. Godless psychology with Biblical Theology
 - b. Pop culture and entertainment with Scriptural Worship
 - c. Crass business methods with Gospel ministry
 - d. Charlotte’s Core Values with New Testament Principles
 - e. Human learning and science over Revelation
 - f. Health and happiness instead of holiness
 - g. Popularity and power in place of service to Christ
5. ...and the endless push to water down the Bible’s teachings on sexual morality: *fornication, pornography, homosexuality and lesbianism, sexting, unbiblical divorce, abortion, adultery and immoral entertainment.*

6. **Robert Mounce:** *Revelation: NICNT; p. 98.*

Thus Balaam became a prototype of all corrupt teachers who betrayed believers into fatal compromise with worldly ideologies. At Pergamum, where Satan sat enthroned, some within the church had decided that accommodation was the wisest policy.

7. **Bottom line:** I can’t. I won’t. There is no way I can marry Christ to the spirit of our age and tell you it’s OK to use your body, a temple of the Spirit, for immoral pleasures.

8. I cannot escape the cut of the two-edged sword or close my ears to the voice of Jesus...

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are

God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3:1-8)

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything. "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food"—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:9-20)

9. Going "the way of Balaam" will simply cost us our souls!

But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion. These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever. It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him." These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage. But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions." It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching

them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.
(Jude 10-23)

V. THE EXORTATION TO PERGAMUM (Revelation 2:16)

1. *Therefore repent.* (Revelation 2:16)
2. The instruction is curt, blunt, and tactless: “*Therefore, repent.*”
3. Stop it! No more participation in pagan ceremonies, no more incense burned to Caesar, no more confession that “*Caesar is Lord*” at the altar of Pergamum, no more sex outside a monogamous marriage, no more Nicolaitans teaching in the church.
4. Be holy. Be different. Be courageous.
5. Do what the apostles taught you to do...

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God. (1 Peter 1:13-23)

VI. THE WARNING TO PERGAMUM (2:16)

1. *If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.* (Revelation 2:16)
2. Jesus threatens to come against them “*soon*” and “*war against them with the sword of my mouth.*”
3. Gist: Do not fear the Pergamums putting you to death, by the sword, as they did our beloved brother, Antipas. Rather, fear Jesus Christ who has the power to judge and destroy...in Hell!
 - a. *From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.* (Revelation 19:15-16)
 - b. *And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.* (Matthew 10: 28, 34)

- c. *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Cor. 6:9-10)*

4. Jesus will have what He wants – a holy people for God – or He will destroy them in Hell.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you. (Titus 2:11-15)

VII. THE PROMISE TO PERGAMUM (Rev. 2:17)

1. *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.’ (Revelation 2:17)*

2. Jesus promises His faithful, Biblical and holy followers two mysterious gifts:

- a. *Hidden Manna:* No food sacrificed to idols but the “bread of angels” – manna.
- b. **Jewish Tradition:** In 586 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar was about to destroy the temple, Jeremiah took the bowl of manna from the Holy of Holies, hid it in the hills of Judea, from which the Messiah will feed His people, when He comes into His Kingdom.
- c. *A white stone:* The *tessera* was a white stone that served as a token or ticket into the Royal Governor’s banquet – an ancient dinner invitation from the Emperor

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

“Hallelujah!

*For the Lord our God
the Almighty reigns.*

*Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glory,*

for the marriage of the Lamb has come,

and his Bride has made herself ready;

it was granted her to clothe herself

with fine linen, bright and pure”—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

(Revelation 19:6-9)

- a. *“With a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.”* – an intimate new name given by Jesus to those who do not compromise truth or pollute their souls with immorality.

3. They shall enter the joyful presence of the marriage feast of the Lamb!

And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. (Revelation 19:9)

CONCLUSION: Here is a call to be faithful to two callings...

1. The calling to *Truth* and the calling to *Holiness*
2. This is a call to fight against *worldliness* and to pursue godliness.

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (2 Peter 3:18)

3. And, as we do, Jesus Christ will reveal more of Himself to us – via the manner of the Word and the joy of His presence in our life.
4. **John Stott:** *What Christ Thinks of the Church; p. 57.*

What then is the promise of the manna and the name of the stone? It is the pledge of a fuller revelation to those who hold fast the revelation already granted. The hidden manna is Christ. The new name is Christ. We shall feast on the manna and comprehend the name. This is the beatific vision. It will be to receive such a manifestation of Christ as shall completely satisfy both heart and mind. Those who hold fast Christ's name shall receive a deeper revelation of it, a new name. Those who do not deny Christ's faith will be satisfied by the hidden manna. Those who know in part shall know also as they are known. Those who see Christ now in a mirror dimly shall see him face to face.

5. This is the calling to Pergamum and to us: to press on to know the Lord more fully...in truth and in holiness, without worldly compromise:

...that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:10-14)

6. **I can think of nothing worse than this:** To have spent my life in the church, ignorant of God's Word, compromised by worldliness, polluted in soul by my sexual fetishes. Then to die; wake up from death's sleep to face Christ, and realize that I am looking into the flaming, holy eyes of a *complete stranger!*
7. And then have Him ask, "Where are your white stone and your new name?", only to find my hands are empty!