

## A Compromised Church

**Key Verses:** Rev 2:13 ~ *“I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. And you hold fast to my name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.” – NKJV*

**Power Point:** We are to stand against the spirit of compromise. We are not to concede or give in to immoral ways or follow those who would pressure us to do so.

1. Rev 2:13 Jesus is aware and understands the pressures we deal with when it comes to temptation and trials.

- What do you do when people you know put pressure on you to compromise?

2. Rev 2:14 We must discern those who stand for truth and those who stand for compromise.

- Share an experience in your life where you stood for the truth and refused to yield to anything that drew you away from Christ?

3. Rev 2:16, 17 God promises fellowship & forgiveness to those who repent and do not compromise.

- How does this Scripture apply to your life?

**Application:** Jesus encourages us to stand firm in the faith and to resist those who try to influence us to compromise, give in or concede in the areas of impurity and sexual immorality. Grace when truly understood is not a license to sin but a power to overcome the struggles of sin.

## A Compromised Church Sunday January 24, 2010

**Introduction:** The purpose of the letter to the church of Pergamos was to commend the true believers for their commitment to Christ and to warn them to stand against the false teaching of those who sought to lead people away with a spirit of compromise.

All of us know what its like to stand under the pressure of a world which constantly bombards us with temptations to compromise our Christian standards and morals.

But what happens when the people who pressure you to compromise refer to themselves as Christians? Do you give in because they are supposedly educated teachers? Do you give in because they are your friends? Do you give in to be accepted into a social group? Or do you stand for truth and refuse to yield to that which would draw you away from a healthy relationship with Christ?

*We are to stand against the spirit of compromise. We are not to concede or give in to immoral ways or follow those who would pressure us to do so.*

**Rev 2:12** "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: 13 "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne *is*. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas *was* My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. 14 But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. 15 Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. 16 Repent or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. 17 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives *it*." '

**Background:** Pergamos was located approximately 55 miles north of Smyrna inland a few miles from the coast.

The town was known for three reasons.

- First, It was a center for many pagan religious cults, and emperor worship was more intense there than in any other surrounding city.
- Second, it boasted a university with a large library.
- Third, it was the leader and center of the production of parchment.

**Rev 2:12** "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, 'These things says *He who has the sharp two-edged sword:*

"It is interesting that Pergamum was a city to which Rome had given the rare power of capital punishment (*ius gladii*), which was symbolized by the sword. The Christians in Pergamum were thus reminded that though they lived under the rule of an almost unlimited *imperium*, they were citizens of another kingdom—that of him who needs no other sword than that of his mouth . . ."

(Johnson, p. 440. Cf. G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*, p. 38)

## The Commendation:

Rev 2:13 "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne *is*. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

Again, as in each of the letters, we have the statement made about the Lord knowing every detail of our lives. This repetition is not without meaning.

Here the Lord assures them He knows of their of their steadfast commitment to His name and faith even in the midst of persecution of which Antipas was a faithful martyr.

### 1. Jesus is aware and understands the pressures we deal with when it comes to temptation and trials

Satanic activity was rampant in Pergamos spreading to all parts of the world because of the extreme amount of pagan idolatry and emperor worship approved of in this city. Jesus refers to this city as the Satan's throne (*headquarters*).

Who was Antipas the faithful Martyr?

"Antipas is said to have been a dentist and a physician, but the Aesculapiades suspected that he was propagating Christianity secretly and they accused him of disloyalty to Caesar. He was condemned to death and was shut up in a brazen (or copper) bull, which was then heated until it was red-hot."

Frederick A. Tatford, *The Patmos Letters*, p. 75.

Imagine the strongholds the church had to deal with.

There are times that we may feel or think that God seems so far away but he is closer than you think and understands the pressure we deal with everyday.

Heb 4:15 (AMP) For we do not have a High Priest Who is unable to understand and sympathize and have a shared feeling with our weaknesses and infirmities and liability to the assaults of temptation, but One Who has been tempted in every respect as we are, yet without sinning.

## The Admonition:

### 2. We must discern those who stand for truth and those who stand for compromise

Rev 2:14 But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.  
15 Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

Its rather interesting that in the church of Pergamos there were those who held fast to the truth and yet in their midst there were those who taught false doctrine and led people into compromising with the world.

If the devil can't get us back to the world he'll bring the world to us. He'll work on us through some of his own agents disguised as Christians.

Just think there was a part of those who attended the church that resisted emperor-worship, to the death in the case of Antipas, yet were caught in the destructive teachings of the Nicolaitans which the church in Ephesus withstood.

These teachings Jesus said he hated.

**What was the doctrine of Balaam that the Nicolaitans also taught?** (Numbers 2, 22,23-24 tell the account of Balaam)

They taught believers that it was okay to go into idol temples partake in their sacrifice meals and practice sexual immorality.

They turned the grace of God into a license to sin.

This is the one thing that The Apostle Paul taught against:

Balaam mean "devourer" or "destroyer of the people"

Nicolaitan means, "Conqueror of the people" or Conqueror of the laity".

Rev 2:14b But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. 15 Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

### **Synopsis of the story of Balaam:**

Balaam was a prophet who was greedy and put himself above the people of Israel.

Balak was the King of the Moabites and when Israel was coming through his land he was afraid of them and wanted to hire Balaam to curse them so that they would be defeated in battle.

Balaam could not curse the people of God. Because what God has blessed no man can curse!

What Balaam did though was teach Balak what he could do to have Israel bring a curse on themselves. He told Balak to hold a feast, which was a sacrifice to the god of Moab and invite the children of Israel. The result was that the children of Israel partook of the feast and ended up fornicating with the daughters of the Moabites. (Num 25:1-18)

God judged the people that day and 24,000 were slain by a plague.

Jesus said to the church of Pergamos: there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, causing them to do two things:

1. Eat things sacrificed to idol's
2. Commit sexual immorality

There were those in the church, because of greed and a love for power and money, who turned the grace of God into a license to sin. They taught believers that it was okay to go into idol temples partake in their sacrifice meals and practice sexual immorality.

**2 Peter 2:1-4, 15-16** But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. 3 By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber...15 They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the *son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; 16 but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet.

**Jud 1:3-4** Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. 4 For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ... 10 But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves. 11 Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

They taught that because they were people of God, God was obligated to bless them regardless of their life-style.

They were compromisers! They wanted the best of both worlds! But you cannot mix oil and water. Either you're in or you're out!

## **The Call to Repent:**

16 Repent or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

Repent, change your way of thinking, turn around and go in the opposite direction. If not you will find yourself fighting against Gods word.

## **The Promise for those who overcome:**

17 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives *it*."

**Hidden Manna** – Jesus is the Bread of Life and those faithful to Him will have amazing fellowship with him.

**White Stone** - This old word for pebble was used in courts of justice, black pebbles for condemning, white pebbles for acquitting. The only other use of the word in the N.T. is in Acts 26:10, where Paul speaks of “depositing his pebble” or casting his vote. The white stone with one’s name on it was used to admit one to entertainments and also as an amulet or charm. (Roberson Word Study)

**Conclusion:** Jesus encourages true believers to stand firm in the faith and to resist those who try to influence us to compromise, give in or concede in the areas of impurity and sexual immorality. Grace when truly understood is not a license to sin but a power to overcome the struggles of sin.