REVELATION
The Triumph of Jesus

The church in Pergamum dealt with the problem of compromise and the ensuing issue of tolerating that which the Lord never accepts.

Pergamum was an ancient city in western Asia Minor and it was famous for several reasons…

- **Its wealth grew out of its agricultural expertise, its silver mines, its stock breeding, its woolen textiles, and the making of parchment.**
- **Pergamum had been the capital and the center of power and culture for at least 400 years.**
- **It had a library that contained over 200,000 volumes which was second only to the library in Alexandria.**
- **It was a religious hot spot. Pergamum contained temples dedicated to Athena, Asklepios, Dionysus, and Zeus. In addition, they were devoted to emperor worship. This city was so wicked that the Lord Jesus called Pergamum the *"throne of Satan".***

Don't be misled. Satan is a fallen angel and he has a large number of fallen angels/demons who have joined him in his sinister plot to rebel against the one true God and to lead as many people to follow them as possible. It is important that we understand that his influence stretches all across this planet but he can only be in one place at one time. Satan's throne is not in hell. He is the prince of the power of the air and he is the god of this world. This city, which was known for its pagan religion, was the perfect place for his throne and for his base of operations.

John 12:31… **"Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out."**

John 14:30… **"I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me."**

2 Corinthians 4:4… **in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.**

Ephesians 2:1–2… **And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.**

Satan's throne is somewhere on the planet today. Maybe it is in Washington, DC. Or it could be in Hollywood, Rome, or Tehran. He has developed a world system that ensnares unbelievers and lures to move down the broad road that leads to destruction. You must also understand that he has designed the world system to become a cancer that will eat the heart of the church leaving it sickly, weak, and ineffective. It is the cancer of compromise…

- **that glories in toleration at the expense of truth**
- **that embraces the tenets of eastern mysticism**
- **that puts the bait of materialism on the hook and dangles it in front of us**
- **that embraces a form of easy believism**
- **that creates the misconception that you can be a Christian and live like you want to live.**

As a result …

- **young people who grow up in church are going off to college and are being mesmerized by the party life of the fraternities and sororities and by the secular, humanistic philosophy of their professors and they are leaving the church in droves**
- **businessmen and businesswomen are captivated by the chance to make a lot of money which requires them to sell their soul to the business**
- **men and women are sacrificing their commitment to their spouses and kids to leap into immoral relationships**

I want you to know that worldliness is the cancer of compromise in the church. No wonder John wrote these words…

1 John 2:15–17… **Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.**

What would Jesus say to the church at Pergamum about their worldliness and what would He say to us today? He laid out the steps they had to take and the steps we must take.

1. THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST

Revelation 2:12… **"And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this"**

"The One who has the sharp two-edged sword"… We know from Rev. 1:16 that this One is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ and it speaks of His *omnipotence*. Obviously, this sword pictures for us the Word of God.

Hebrews 4:12… **For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.**

In ancient times, the sword was a sign of authority. The one who carried the sword had the right of life and death. Jesus is saying here—*"I am in charge!"* He has authority over everyone and everything in heaven and on earth. This includes presidents and politicians, countries and churches, the devil and demons, believers and non-believers. Jesus is Lord!

Revelation 2:13… **'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.'**

"I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is"… This speaks of the *omniscience* of Jesus. What's neat here is that the Lord Jesus knew exactly where these believers were living and He knew what they were up against. Pagan spirituality flourished in their city, but victory over the cancer of compromise was/is available to every believer.

1 John 4:3–4… **and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. 4 You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.**

"And you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith"…It was hard to be a Christian in Pergamum. Persecution was rampant. Despite all of that persecution they hung in there and maintained their faith in Jesus Christ!

"My name" stands for His divine person—His purity, His deity, His saving work, His power, His glory, His exclusivity, His love, His honor, and His kingdom! They had complete confidence in His atoning death and His resurrection and His glorious return. They had not turned their back on the gospel even though they were situated near the throne of Satan. Oh, how glorious is His name.

<u>We are saved by believing in His name</u>. John 1:12 …But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name

<u>We are promised His presence when we gather together in His name</u>. Matthew 18:20… "For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst."

<u>We are to pray in His name</u>. John 14:13–14… "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do *it.*

<u>We will be hated because of His name</u>. Matthew 10:22… "You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved."

<u>We will be richly rewarded if we will forsake all for His name's sake</u>. Matthew 19:29… "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life."

Jesus gives us the name of one hero of the faith who lived and in Pergamum and who served the Lord faithfully despite the brutal persecution he faced.

"Even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells"…Nothing is known about Antipas other than what is revealed here. Isn't it ironic that earthly historians wrote nothing of this great man of God, but Jesus knew about him? However, according to tradition, he was roasted to death inside a brass bull during the Emperor Domitian's wave of persecution against the Christian church. His passion for Christ and His willingness to lay down his life for the Savior served as a powerful rebuke to those believers who were compromising with the world!

2. THE REPROACH OF CHRIST

Revelation 2:14… 'But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit *acts of* immorality.'

"But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold to the teaching of Balaam"…There were some there who held to false teaching. Notice the name Balaam (Numbers 22-25). Balak, the king of Moab the ancient enemy of Israel, hired Balaam to curse the Jews. God would not allow him to do it. This wicked king and this compromising prophet came up with another plan.

"Who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit acts of immorality"…What did Balaam suggest to Balak? He

could not curse them; he could only bless God's covenant people. So, he suggested that Balak could corrupt them! They used Moabite women to lure the Jewish men into idolatry and immorality (Numbers 25:1-3; 31:16). God's judgment led to the death of 24,000 Jews and many of their leaders.

Pagan feasts in Pergamum should have been off limits to the believers in the church (Acts 15:29). They fell into the trap of believing that as long as they held to the right doctrines it didn't matter what they allowed into their lives or into their church. The church must never tolerate false teaching or immorality! Why? Because *"a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough"* (1 Cor. 5:6).

Let me make this very clear. **The world will not love the church until the church becomes worldly.** Jesus taught this.

1 John 3:13… **Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you.**

Let me ask you a pertinent question. Do you want to please Jesus or do you want to seek the applause of the world system that is aligned against the Lord Jesus and His church?

Revelation 2:15… **'So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.'**

Who were these Nicolaitans? Louis Talbot wrote…

> **The two words *nikao*, meaning 'to conquer', and *laos*, meaning 'the people', form the root of this name. According to the Holman Bible Dictionary this was a "heretical group in the early church who taught immorality and idolatry. They are condemned in Revelation 2:6, 15 for their practices in Ephesus and Pergamon….The Nicolaitans have been linked to the type of heresy taught by Balaam (Num. 25:1-2; 2 Pet. 2:15), especially the pagan feasts and orgies that they apparently propagated to tempt the first century church.** (Holman Bible Dictionary, p. 1022)

Evidently, they taught that believers could participate in pagan feasts and their sexual practices with impunity.

Here's the point of Jesus admonishment. The Body of Christ must always be aware of the danger that lurks in the shadows. I am referring to false teaching that opens pandora's box to the world, the flesh, and the devil. We must acknowledge the danger of professing our faith in Christ while at the same time living a life of contradiction!

3. THE CORRECTION OF CHRIST

Revelation 2:16… **'Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.'**

"Repent therefore or else I am coming to you quickly"…The majority of believers in the church stayed true to Jesus Christ but they tolerated this rebellious group who was bringing shame to the name of the dear Savior. The only remedy was repentance—a change of mind that results in a change of behavior. God rewards believers who turn from a life of compromise to a life of commitment.

The church cannot tolerate false teaching or unholy living! Those who rebel must be confronted with a challenge to repent and, if they refuse, they must receive church discipline!

"And I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth"…Don't miss what Jesus said—*"I am coming to you and I will make war against them."* The church faced the judgment of the Lord Jesus. Toleration is a popular word today. However, the church must not tolerate evil. Jesus is saying, ***"You had better deal with them or I will!"*** We must accept our Lord's demand for holiness and commitment! Paul confronted the Corinthian church with this same half-hearted toleration of sin.

1 Corinthians 5:6–7… **Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump *of dough?* 7 Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.**

4. THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF CHRIST

Revelation 2:17… **'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give *some* of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'**

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches"…This stresses the vital importance of the words of Jesus Christ. We must never forget that we are to be doers of the Word and not hearers only!

"To him who overcomes"…The following promises are addressed to a specific group of believers—those who are overcomers. The word *"overcome"* comes from a Greek word that means to *"carry off the victory."*

In Colossians 1, Paul says when we're converted, we are translated out of the kingdom of the world—the kingdom of the Evil One—into the kingdom of God's beloved son. The Lord wants you to be victorious!

Colossians 1:13–14… **For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.**

1 John 5:4–5… **For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 5 Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?**

"I will give some of the hidden manna"… Jesus makes 2 promises to the overcomers. God fed the Israelites for 40 years with manna. In Exodus 16:33, God told them to keep a jar of manna inside the Ark of the Covenant. **This hidden manna represents Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life (MacArthur) and symbolizes all of the blessings that belong to those who have put their faith in Him alone**. Here is Jesus' word to us…

John 6:48–51… **"I am the bread of life. 49 "Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50 "This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 51 "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh."**

Jesus alone can satisfy the deepest longings of a believer's heart.

"And I will give him a white stone and a new name written on the stone which no knows but he who receives it"…The Romans awarded white stones to the victors in athletic contests. The athlete's name was inscribed on the white stone and it served as his admission ticket to an awards banquet. The word *"new"* here means new in sense of quality.

David Jeremiah wrote that in ancient courts, white and black stones signified the verdicts of juries. A black stone meant guilty, and a white stone meant not guilty. Overcomers are declared not guilty. The white stone and the new name picture our new life in Christ and they signify that we will be admitted to the glory of heaven's banquet.

CONCLUSION

When Paul was in Rome and in prison the first time, he wrote several books. He mentioned that one of the men helping him there was *Demas*. He sent greetings from Demas to all his friends back in what we now call Turkey. Then Paul was released from prison, and we assume Demas and the others were part of his team as they traveled.

In his second imprisonment, Paul wrote several books as well, the last of which was his letter to Timothy, one of Demas' peers. In the last chapter of 2 Timothy—the last paragraph that Paul ever wrote as far as we know—there is one tragic sentence: **"Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world."** He was taken captive, taken hostage, and lost to the cause of Christ.

The danger of compromising with the world system that Satan and his demonic hordes control is very real. We must remain vigilant at all times if we expect to have God's hand of blessing on our lives and on the ministry of this church. Don't ever forget we are in a battle!

Years ago, Dwight L. Moody, the great evangelist, said, "*We have three enemies: the world, the flesh, and the Devil. And we have three friends: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit."*

Let me ask you a question. How much of the world have you allowed in your life? Erwin Lutzer defined worldliness like this**…**

> **It is excluding God from our lives and, therefore, consciously or unconsciously accepting the values of a man-centered society. It is all about money, pleasure, and self.**

Jesus made this statement…

Matthew 16:26… **"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"**

Believers, listen to me. Everything associated with this world that you hold dear is going to vanish into thin air and it will have absolutely no eternal value. Don't get sucked in like Demas did. Give yourself fully to Christ and live for His glory. Cut the cancer of compromise out of your heart and cut it out of the Lord's church!