

"A Compromising Faith..."



Revelation 2:12-17

"A Compromising Faith..."

by **Pastor Tim Dodson**
of **Believers City Church**
in **Menomonie, Wisconsin**
on **September 27, 2026**

Revelation 2:12-17 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].'"

"Indeed the safest road to Hell is the gradual one--the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts...Your affectionate uncle, Screwtape."

— C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*

"Oh, this was the great ploy of Satan in that kingdom of his: to display such blatant evil one could almost believe one's own secret sin didn't matter."

— Corrie Ten Boom, *The Hiding Place: The Triumphant True Story of Corrie Ten Boom*

The letter to Pergamos is a very different letter than our last ...the letter to Smyrna. This church was effectively born after the persecution ended. This church existed in a time of what was relative peace and prosperity for the church, much like the day in which we live. When Constantine came to power in 313AD, the official church became Christianity...or a loose interpretation of such anyway. Every idolatrous priest no doubt quickly converted to "Christianity" so as not to be killed. How things had changed! Instead of being killed as a Christian...as nearly 6 million had done over the previous 200 years, now the "Christians" were doing the killing, so it was 'convert or die!' But of course...as we have learned in our day, one cannot legislate faith and religion.

The result of all of this was therefore not a bigger, stronger church, but an aberrance. A perversion. A monster... made from parts of various religions, sewed together in zombie fashion. A varying conglomeration of pagan aspects and practices, mixed with an external façade of orthodox Christianity. The persecution and difficulty that had kept Smyrna church strong for so long was now gone. Something worse had risen in its place.

A 'Compromised Church' had found root. Being unable to destroy the church from the outside, Satan joined the church to corrupt it from the inside.

Many folks promote an idea that the only way we can be loving and find peace is for all the various churches out there to come together over what they can believe together. This, of course, is the work of the antichrist. It is the deterioration of the truth and the setting aside of what God has declared. Through compromise, Satan gains a foothold. The pews are filled, but few are actually saved. *"Let's just all get along...why stand on our differences? Maybe then we can live in peace."* Scripture is clear: we are not called to mingle with the world or apostate churches in order to artificially create harmony and fellowship. We are to "come up from amongst them, and to be separate for the glory of God." Plenty of Pergamus churches exist today. Their pews are filled, but one would be hard-pressed to find more than a handful that are authentically reborn and live lives surrendered to Christ.

Pergamos was a center of science and refinement, yet it was also a center of idol worship. In addition to being the oldest city in Asia, Pergamos led the known world in education and medicine, and boasted of a 200,000 volume library. Their idolatrous worship was directed toward many things, from the normal statue/idol motif, to more "modern" versions...the worship of nature, science, and medicine. And most of all, it was effectively all aimed toward the worship of themselves...it was "self-worship" in its fullest. Sound familiar?

Pergamos was renowned for both its intellect and its idolatry. Certainly, the worship of false gods is not limited to the uneducated and backward members of society. In truth, it permeates every level of our world. No wonder that Jesus called Pergamos "Satan's throne"...or "where Satan's seat is." Indeed, this picture does not stray far from our world today. America, and the "West" in general, openly worship man, money, success, and material goods. Such is more than just "accepted." It is held as the very fiber of democracy and the core of who we are as a nation. So much so, it is rarely if ever, even considered for what it is in truth: an aberrant aspect running contrary to the very foundations of Christianity. We have reinvented "Christianity" to fit our new paradigm... It's a "new model." Never mind that it runs directly contrary to historical and Christ-centered faith according to Scripture.

How often do the words "I can't...I have to work" come off our lips, and we are effectively teaching that priority to our children? I'm not trying to be an idealist here...nor am I unrealistic. I think to have that rare occasion when there is a scheduling conflict is one thing. But do we really approach our vocations with a paramount attitude toward the flexibility of time and hours? Do we literally *choose* our work in light of our ability to continue to live for and serve our king? Why not?

The truth is, most church-going folk serve God only as it is convenient, and it does not in any way get in the way of vocation and the pursuit of material gain. There are a great many Christians who believe that Christianity must not interfere with the world, while at the same time they allow the world to dictate to Christianity all that it wants to. From fashion, to our vacations, to our possessions, to our child-rearing...it seems that many of us feel somehow obligated to march to their drummer.

John receives his dictation from the one who has "the sharp two-edged sword." This is none other than whom the writer of Hebrews describes as the "Word." (Heb 4:12) Jesus Christ Himself.

13 “I know your works and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. You hold firmly to my name, and didn’t deny my faith in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

“I know your works...” Again, we are reminded that Jesus sees and knows everything. This is no ducking Him or His judgment of us.

The description of Pergamos as “Satan’s seat,” is a way of saying that Satan had a strong foothold in Pergamos. Even so, there was a remnant in that church who had “held fast to His name” and had not “denied the faith.” That’s always been the case. A “few” will “find the narrow way,” which means most will not. Like now, there were many adherents to the “state religion,” but few who were really walking with God and surrendered to the furtherance of His kingdom.

This remnant held fast, despite major persecution which resulted in at least one notable martyrdom, an individual by the name of Antipas. We know nothing more of this person, yet such a declaration speaks volumes about Antipas's character and commitment. No finer epitaph could be given to any servant of God.

14 But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to throw a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.

The downfall of this church was its compromise with the world. It had become prideful in its skills...its prosperity, its knowledge and intelligence. It was now attempting to exist with one foot in the world and one foot in God.

John, through the Spirit’s anointing, is likening the sin of Pergamos to that of Old Testament Balaam. This story is told well by Pastor Jack Abeelen:

As seen in Numbers 22-25, Balaam was a Gentile prophet who didn’t know or love God, but was hired by the Moabite king Balak to curse the Jews as they were entering into the Promised Land. Seeing more than two million Jews come out of Egypt and feeling threatened by their power, Balak offered Balaam a huge sum of money to come and curse God’s people. As Balaam began to pray about this, God spoke to him, saying, “Don’t go. You’ll be in big trouble if you do.”

“I can’t go,” Balaam said to Balak. But when Balak sent word that he would increase the fee, Balaam prayed again.

“Alright,” God said to Balaam. “Go if you want, but be careful what you say.” Even though God had initially told him clearly not to go, Balaam went anyway because his heart was to make money. On the way, the donkey carrying Balaam saw an angel of the Lord holding a flaming sword. With a cliff on one side and a wall on the other, the donkey dug in his heels, in the process slamming Balaam’s foot into the wall. Balaam was so upset that he started beating the donkey.

The donkey turned around and rebuked Balaam, saying, "What have I ever done to you? I've been a good donkey since the day I was born." God opened Balaam's eyes to see the angel of the Lord. Yet Balaam still didn't go home. His eye was on the loot rather than on the Lord.

When Balaam finally arrived, Balak took him up on a mountain to give him a panoramic view of the Jews camped in the valley. Yet as Balaam opened his mouth to seek to curse them, blessings instead for them poured forth. "I hired you to curse them, not bless them," Balak cried.

"I can only say what God is saying to me," Balaam answered. Three different times he tried to curse them. Three different times, only blessing came forth. Finally, Balak asked for his check back so they could hire someone else.

With his eye on the money, Balaam said, "I don't know anything about how to curse the Jews, but I can tell you how to get their God mad. This Hebrew God is such a stickler for faithfulness that if these folks ever start worshipping another god, He'll turn on them. You won't have to do a thing. I advise you to put your daughters in mini-skirts and have them wink at the Hebrew boys. Then invite the boys over for dinner and get them drunk and show them how to worship your gods. And God will be so upset with them that you won't have to curse them at all. He'll do it for you."

Balak listened and took notes with great interest. He did what Balaam said, and it worked. The Jewish men began to eat the meat offered to idols. Fornication and compromise followed to such a degree that by the time you get to Numbers 25, God put nearly 24,000 people in the Jewish nation to death for their sin.

In using Balaam's story as an example, Jesus says to the church in Pergamos, "You're the kind of Church that says there's nothing wrong with compromising with the pagans of Rome." As a result, many of the pagan practices we find in churches today made their way into the church under Constantine's rule.

It was Balaam who attempted to do what many of us attempt to do today. And that was to compromise the absolute commitment to the Lordship of Jehovah God, and to convince others to do the same. The church at Pergamos, like many today, desired to make religion a part of their lives, without giving themselves over to it completely. They wanted to *add* some Jesus to their lives in the world...to sterilize their possessions and participation in the world. They wanted nothing to do with total surrender...to "dying to this world" in exchange for living for the glory of God and kingdom. The compromise method was quite successful for Balaam, to the tune of 24,000 lives that were taken by God because of their apostasy. The doctrine of Balaam is alive and well in our day, as we too want to hold to the idea that there really is no problem with a little compromise with the world and its values. The story will end the same way that Balaam's did.

Pergamos wanted the peace and comfort of a spiritual presence in their lives, while still enjoying the pleasures of sin and the flesh. This church exists widely even today, from the "name-it-and-claim-it" prosperity doctrine churches, to the compromising "feel-good, user friendly" fellowships throughout the world. Paul the Apostle warned another church...the church in Corinth, to not be "unequally yoked with unbelievers." They were to "walk in holiness and have nothing to do with the darkness." He said "light can have no communion with darkness." Of course, to do that, one must recognize darkness and call it out. Compromise may bring everyone

else in, but it chases God out. I can't "get along" with those who stand in direct opposition of scriptural direction. I can't "get along" with those who cut aspects of scripture out of the Bible and out of Christianity that do not fit the cultural model. Love at the expense of the truth is not love at all. What are you willing to sacrifice for "peace?" The desire to make everyone happy, is simply inconsistent with the Biblical mandate to separate ourselves from the world and worldliness.

If your beliefs are "comfortable" but not biblical, I would suggest you have a good look around. Because you are in eternal danger. God never promised comfort. Christianity is not comfortable...not in the worldly definition of such anyway.

15 So also you likewise have some who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

Again, we see the "doctrine of the Nicolaitans." Likely those who had lifted themselves up as prophets and messengers of God (and those who still do), but were only in it for themselves, and were not sent by God. Of such is the recipient of the "hatred" of Christ Himself. God has appointed no man between you and Him. He died so that you and I can go directly to Him without a human mediator. At the moment of His death, the curtain between the Holy Place and the *Most* Holy Place- that place that only the high priest could go to step between God and man- tore from top to bottom. The door was open, and the offer was given to come directly to Him.

Anyone or anything that attempts to stand between us and God, He "hates." There are plenty of people and religions that will in some way or another tell you that you need to go through them to get to God. Don't let anyone ever do that to you. For it was that access that Jesus died. No one gets to stand in the way of you getting to God. The righteous biblical leadership presented in scripture...the leadership in **this** church...they all are given with one job in mind: *to point you to Jesus*.

16 Repent therefore, or else I am coming to you quickly and I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth.

The answer, as always, is to "turn away, turn back...*repent*." Our Lord, even in the Book of Revelation, always offers an escape, a way out of the judgment and sentence of death that accompanies a life of sin. Our Lord will use His sword...the Word of God, which will not come back to Him empty.

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

Again, He directs His words toward those who would hear. Those who are truly listening. Not just listening, but actually *hearing*. The pews of America's churches are full of those who are listening, but few will hear.

For those who do hear, they receive the "hidden manna." This is a reference to the food supplied to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and the fact that the manna was "hidden" by being placed within the Ark of the Covenant. Yet the picture goes much further, as we read in John's gospel, chapter six, where that manna is presented as a picture of Christ Himself. We will receive Christ Himself as that which sustains us...

The “white stone” had many possible scenarios. Pastor David Guzik writes “A white stone could be a ticket to a banquet, a sign of friendship, evidence of having been counted, or as a sign of acquittal in a court of law. Jesus may have any one of these meanings in mind, but at the very least we know that it has the assurance of blessing.”

Christ has been given as the “reward” to those who overcome. His reference could be in the eternal scope, but likely is speaking of the daily “food” that is given to both keep us and grow us. By overcoming, we receive the prize of abundant and joyous life on this planet.