Crossroads International Church (Letters from Christ Series) Dr. Ron Sheveland

17 November 2013 Message 3 of 7

NIV 40 Minutes

**A Letter to a Compromising Church**

Title

***Revelation 2:12-17 (Pergamum)***

**Topic:** Compromise

**Subject:** The way Satan attacks when persecution will not defeat us

**Complement:** is through internal compromise

**Purpose:** The listeners will discern areas of personal compromise and repent.

# Introduction

### The story of the Iliad tells of the assault of Troy by an army of 100,000 Greeks. For more than nine years they besieged the city unsuccessfully. The Trojan defense was just too formidable. But then the crafty Odysseus stepped forth with a new stratagem. One hundred of their best warriors were hidden in a huge wooden horse and given to Troy as a peace offering. It was this act that inspired the saying "beware of Greeks bearing gifts." When the Trojans fell asleep that night, the Greek warriors emerged from their hiding place and signaled ships to bring in thousands of soldiers. By morning only a mass of ruins remained of Troy. What the Greeks could not accomplish with an outside attack, they accomplished from the inside.

### Satan used a similar tactic against the church in Pergamum. When these believers withstood persecution from those outside the church, he attacked them from within.

### Read Revelation 2:12-17.

12-17

12 "To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. 13 I know where you live-- where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city-- where Satan lives.

14 Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality.   
15 Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.   
16 Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you 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. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.

# 1. Christ Sends a Message to the Church in Pergamum (2:12)

12

## Jesus tells John to send this letter "To the angel (or messenger) of the church of Pergamum."

## During the past two weeks we have seen some very important cities. While splendid in their own ways, they didn't compare to the power and greatness of Pergamum. It was the civil, cultural, and religious leader of the province of Asia.

## Politically, it was the official capital of the province. As such, it was the seat of the Roman imperial authority.

## Culturally, the city was an exhibition of beautiful sculpture, paintings, and architecture. It contained a hospital and the most famous medical school in the world. It also had one of the most acclaimed libraries of that day, boasting of more than 200,000 volumes -- each of which had been copied by hand. Today a college diploma is commonly called a "sheep skin." This goes back to Pergamum where they discovered a process of turning animal skin into parchment and then writing on it.

## Religiously, the city had a temple for each of whom they considered to be the four greatest gods: Zeus, Dionysius, Athena, and Asklepios. This last god was the god of healing, or the "savior god." Pergamum, like Smyrna, also worshipped the Roman empire and its emperor. In 29 B.C. Pergamum became the first provincial city to build a temple in honor of a living emperor -- Augustus. It wasn't until three years later that Smyrna received this privilege.

## You would think that a city with so many gods would be tolerant of other religions. Not so. They hated and persecuted Christians. And in verse thirteen, Jesus Christ commends them for not buckling under this pressure.

# 2. Christ Commends the Church for Withstanding Persecution (2:13)

13

13 I know where you live-- where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city-- where Satan lives.

## Jesus says, “I know where you live.” It is important to remember that God is never ignorant of our plight; He is always concerned about the situation that we are in. And with all the false religions in Pergamum, the Lord described it as the place “where Satan has his throne.” Outside of Christianity, the one truly being worshipped in every other religion is the devil himself. And where false faiths are prevalent, Satan’s activity is obvious. I have heard missionaries tell how they felt his evil presence in territories of deep paganism.

## Satan had inspired the citizens of Pergamum to persecute the believers. One of their members was named Antipas – which means “against all.” When this faithful witness stood against all those who harassed him, they killed him. The rest of the Christians also stood firm. They showed their allegiance to Christ by remaining true to Christ’s name and not renouncing their faith in Him. And for this reason, the Savior was proud of them.

## But while they withstood the forces outside of their number, the deceiver slipped a Trojan horse into their midst…

14-15

# 3. Christ Condemns the Church for Tolerating Deception (2:14-15)

14 Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. 15 Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

14

## Some of their members held to the doctrine of Balaam (2:14)

### The story of Balaam is described in Numbers 22-25 and 31. Balak, the king of the Moabites was afraid of the approaching Israelites so he looked in the Yellow Pages for a “prophet for hire.” Balaam accepted money to put a curse on Israel but every time he opened his mouth to utter a curse, blessings came out instead. It was obvious that God was with the Israelites. So Balaam changed his tactics. He persuaded the king to send women to seduce the men of Israel and to involve them in sexual immorality and their religious feasts. They strategy worked. Many compromised their morality and their faith. Some intermarriage occurred and loyalty to God was lost. Because of their compromise, God sent a plague through the camp (Num. 31:15-16).

### Some in Pergamum were also encouraging a doctrine of compromise. Their ancestors are also active in the American church. “Let’s not be legalistic,” they say – never bothering to study what legalism truly is in the Bible, “we are free in Christ.” And then they use this freedom to walk in the darkness instead of the light.

15

## Some of their members held to the doctrine of the Nicolaitans (2:15)

15 Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

### The church of Ephesus hated and rejected this doctrine and Jesus commended them for their discernment. But the believers of Pergamum had embraced it. The doctrine of Balaam was involved moral compromise; the doctrine of the Nicolaitans was theological compromise. It was only a minority in the church that was engaged in this sloppiness of truth and holiness – but the rest of the church was compromising by fellowshiping with them without correcting them. They were allowing spiritual pollution instead of insisting on purity of life and doctrine.

### News illustrations….

#### “But this is the 21st century,” some protest, “things have changed.” Not God’s Word or standards. They are eternally relevant.

#### Truth never needs to be updated. “What’s the good news today?” a man asked his friend, a music teacher. Before he answered, the old musician picked up a tuning fork and struck it with its hammer. As the note sounded through the living room, he replied, "That is an A. It is an A today; it was an A five thousand years ago, and it will be an A ten thousand years from now. The soprano upstairs sings off-key, the tenor across the hall flats on his high notes, and the piano downstairs is out of tune, but,” striking the note again, “this is an A and that the good news today.”

#### We must look to the Bible to find lasting truths and principles. And then in loyalty to our Lord we must cling to them without compromise.

#### A Russian parable tells the story of a hunter who was about to shoot a large bear when suddenly the animal said, “Wait, don’t fire! Isn’t it better to talk than shoot? Tell me what you want and maybe we can negotiate.” Lowering his gun, the hunter replied, “What I want is a fur coat.” “That’s understandable,” said the bear, “all I want is a good meal. Perhaps we can negotiate a compromise.” And so they went into serious negotiations. And they were successful – the bear had a full stomach and the hunter got a fur coat. But the bear walked away alone. Those who try to compromise with beasts will pay a heavy price.

# 4. Christ Provides the Church a Path of Correction (2:16-17)

16-17

16 Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you 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. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.

## Repent…

16

### The "double-edged sword" is the Word of God. The picture of Christ with a sword flashing from His mouth is not too peculiar when one knows that the short Roman sword was tongue-like in shape.

### The Word of God is called a sword seven times in the New Testament.

#### In Ephesians 6:17, Paul calls the Bible the "sword of the Spirit."

#### Hebrews 4:12 says that the Word is "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.."

#### The Bible has many sword-like qualities. It pricks the conscience, pierces our defenses, severs truth from error, and prods us on to a better way. Christ’s waving Word is also a word of judgment. Those who follow it experience salvation. Those who reject it experience execution.

## Receive…

17

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. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.

Listen up, God says, because everything that the Spirit says to the churches is for your benefit. God, in His gracious generosity, gives overcomers two gifts: the bread of life and eternal life.

### The Bread of Life (hidden manna) – As Israel was fed by manna, we can have our soul’s hunger satisfied by Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life.

17a

#### John 6:30-35— So they asked him, “What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

John 6

#### Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

#### Sir,” they said, “from now on give us this bread.” “Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”

17b

### The Eternal Life (a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it)

#### The white stone probably referred to the white acquittal stones that judges or jurors through at trials to signify the innocence of someone on trial.

#### The name of Jesus is written (Rev. 3:12) on the stone to demonstrate that is Christ’s righteousness that is earning our pardon.

# Preliminary Questions

**Verses Questions**

# Context: What did the author record just prior to this passage?

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

# Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?

# Questions

# Tentative Subject/Complement Statements

Text

# Possible Illustrations

### Text

# Possible Applications

### Text

**Continuing Yet Compromising**

***Revelation 2:12-17***

**Exegetical Outline (Steps 2-3)**

# *Exegetical Idea*:

# I.

# II.

# III.

**Purpose or Desired Listener Response (Step 4)**

The listeners will

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

# Introduction

### Interest:

### Need:

### Subject:

### Background:

### Preview:

### Text:

(Transition into MPI here.)

# I.

[Restate MP here.]

(Transition into MPII here.)

# II.

[Restate MP here.]

(Transition into MPIII here.)

# III.

[Restate MP here.]

(Transition into the MI here.)

# Conclusion

### (MI/CPS).

### Main Points

### Exhortation/Application

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**Ron Sheveland**

17 November 2013

Message 3 of 7

**“Dear Pergamum”**

**A Letter to a Compromising Church**

***Revelation 2:12-17***

# Introduction

**I. Christ Sends a Message to the Church in Pergamum (2:12).**

**II. Christ Commends the Church for Withstanding Persecution (2:13).**

**III. Christ Condemns the Church for Tolerating Deception (2:14-15).**

## Some of their members held to the doctrine of Balaam (2:14).

## Other members held to the doctrine of the Nicolaitans (2:15).

****IV. Christ Provides the Church a Path of Correction (2:16-17)*.***

## Repent…

## Receive…

### The Bread of Life

### The Eternal Life

# Conclusion

**Thought Questions**

1. What do you consider to be the most evil or sinful place on earth? Why?

Porn usage is highest in North Korea (China is second) but 80% comes from the USA.

2. For what did Jesus praise the people of the church at Pergamum? (2:13)

Loyalty even though Satan had a throne there and even when Antipas was martyred by being put into a pen with an angry bull who gored him to death

3. What were the believers at Pergamum doing wrong? (2:14-15)

They held to Balaam’s doctrine that enticed Israel to sexual immorality in their celebrations.  
Today believers misuse Christ’s name in false prophecies and allow premarital sex

4. What command did Christ give to this church in light of its dangerous direction? (2:16)

Repent (2:16) of allowing church members to be immoral or follow false teaching (14-15)

5. In what ways could it be said that Satan lives in Singapore?

Injustice to the poor enables society to prosper—Christian landlord doubles rent of tenants

Singapore follows the father of lies as a basis of society (materialism/greed for happiness)

6. How can we resist the influence of the world around us?

Stay in the Word daily and stay accountable

7. In what way can you include repentance in your daily devotions this week?

Confess sin before reading the Word