

Text Revelation 2:12-17 –

The Peril of Moral Compromise

Intro. The city of New Orleans has a levee to guard against the power of the ocean from ravaging the city

Hurricane Katrina overcame that levee and brought about one of the worst natural disasters that we have seen in our country

The church at Pergamos had a similar thing happen – They let down their guard against the moral destruction of the sinful world they existed in

Prop. The Church at Pergamum suffered the Peril of Moral Compromise

Pergamos was a sophisticated city with a large university and library of 200,000 handwritten volumes. Its notoriety as an intellectual center encouraged a thriving parchment industry. The city boasted the temple of Aesculapius where, in the courtyard, devotees sought healing through contact with hundreds of slithering snakes. Overlooking the metropolis stood one of the 7 Wonders of the World – The Temple of Zeus – With its altar towering 800 feet above the plain.

Pretty miraculous that a church could even exist in such a place

I. The Lord's Commendation

A) The Lord commends the church for holding to His Name (v. 13)

- 1) With these other religions prominent in the city – Many ways of approaching God were presented
- 2) But this church held fast to Christ as the only Savior and not works of righteousness – What His Name means
- 3) This would have been quite a battle because works is built into the heart of men since the fall
What Martin Luther went through at the Reformation
This showed that they were committed to Christ as the Only Savior – Only Way to God

B) Jesus also commends them for standing true to Him through times like these (v. 13)

- 1) They did not deny the true Faith
- 2) With temples devoted to other gods – Compromise would be easy and certainly encouraged by people
- 3) Yet they held to the True Faith – That God is the Trinity and Jesus is the very Son of God in true humanity
Jesus commends them for this

C) This becomes more emphatic when Jesus tells them where they dwell spiritually

- 1) Jesus knows also where Satan's Throne is (v. 13)
- 2) Yes, Satan has certain places over the earth that he has set up strong warring angels to control that area
Another example in Scripture of an area controlled by evil powers was Persia in the book of Daniel, because Daniel prayed and the Lord dispatched an angel to come to Daniel, but he told Daniel, "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for the first day that you set your heart on humbling yourself before God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me 21 days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me..."
- 3) In fact, Jesus calls this one over Pergamos "Satan's Throne" – The place where Satan himself rules
- 4) Satan stirred up unbelievers in this area to martyr a faithful Christian man to death – Antipas
Yes, Satan can control and influence unbelievers to do bidding – Even murder – This is identical to what He told the church at Smyrna (v. 10) – The devil will cast some of you into prison – He will stir up people to do this
Perhaps some of the martyrdom around the world we see today is the result of Satan stirring up unbelievers against God's People

D) This reveals to us that Jesus has insight into the spiritual realm – That world hidden to the natural eye

- 1) He sees and knows what Satan and the demons are doing – He sees and knows the strong-holds that they have set up

Jesus sees and knows what is going on in the spiritual world – And He can reveal this to some of His servants – It is called the spiritual gift of Discerning of Spirits from 1 Cor. 12:10

So this area was one of spiritual oppression – But Jesus sees and knows and works accordingly – The church responded appropriately

II The Lord's Complaint

A) The Lord then expresses His complaint to the church (v. 14) – 2 Things

1) The Teaching of Balaam

- a) Recall that Balaam was a prophet of Israel whom Balak of Moab hired to curse Israel 3 times
- b) He never should have gone in the first place – And God prevented him from any cursing
- c) Yet his disobedience had an effect upon the people of God

“While Israel remained at Shittim, the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab. For they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate, and bowed down to their gods.” (Num. 25:1-2) – Resulted in 24,000 dying from God's wrath

- d) Even though Balaam would not curse – It taught Israel that un-righteous alliances are OK
- e) This was especially crucial in Pergamum where all these foreign temples were

This open alliance with the Moabites led Israel to commit idolatry and immorality (v. 14) – This is what Balaam taught the people

2) The Teaching of the Nicolaitians (v. 15)

- a) It appears that the teaching of Balaam paved the way for the acceptance of the Nicolaitians
- b) This was also a problem with the church at Ephesus – Licentious sect led by Nicolas of Antioch, who advocated freedom in conduct and encouraged participation in pagan practices

The teaching of Balaam allowed interaction with surrounding paganism and culminated in the teaching of the Nicolaitians, in which promiscuity was actually incorporated into the activities of the church

Jesus says – In the Same Way (v. 15) – **Slippery Slope**

You will notice a close connection in Scripture between idolatry and Immorality

**The problem with this church was not their compromise on doctrine – but a compromise on moral purity
In spite of the church's history and even martyrdom – The Lord Judges Moral Compromise Decisively**

B) This same error is showing up in churches today

- 1) Some churches today teach that people can engage in the things of Balaam – Joint worship services with Muslims and Buddhists
- 2) Some churches teach that you can engage in the deeds of Nicolas – Fornication, Adultery, Homosexuality

III The Lord's Correction

A) Jesus hates it when this is allowed to take place with the church that bears His name

- 1) Back then in Pergamum and today as well
- 2) It is an absolute disgrace to the holiness of God to think that Jesus will allow such a thing to happen
- 3) God's church is called to walk and live in holiness before Him –

“You shall be holy, for I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:16)

Jesus tells them to Repent! (v. 16)

- 4) To repent means to change your thinking – That this is wrong in God's eyes
 - a) There are clearly things that God says are right and wrong in His Word

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you abstain from sexual immorality.” (I Thess. 4:2)

- 5) If something is wrong – Then we must turn away from doing it

That is the fruit of repentance – changing your thinking and acting upon it

B) Jesus tells the church that if they won't remove this influence – He will! (v. 16) – **I AM COMING TO YOU QUICKLY**

- 1) Loving Jesus will **GO TO WAR** with these lascivious people

- 2) To live in open sin with no repentance will lead to eternal damnation – Jesus will wage war and cut them off!
- 3) He will use the sword out of His mouth
 - a) This is the way that He addressed Himself to this doctrinally sound church in the first place (v. 12)
 - b) The sword out of Jesus mouth is the Word of God that He speaks

“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, both of joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”
(Heb. 4:12)

The Word that Jesus speaks is POWERFUL to do what God says to do – In this case judge completely

C) Notice that Jesus first ushers the call to repent BEFORE He does – So that the people can amend their ways and avoid the punishment

- 1) This is what the Lord really wants to see happen
- 2) If the church will repent – Jesus will forgive completely
- 3) When people do repent & confess their sins to God – Jesus always promises that He will forgive
- 4) Where people get deluded is that they think that God will forgive with NO repentance

D) To those who will overcome and repent – Jesus offers special blessings (v. 17)

- a) Hidden Manna – Manna was Divine Sustenance given to the children of Israel in the wilderness
So this hidden manna is God’s supernatural ability to sustain you in times of lack
- b) White Stone was given under 3 circumstances:
 - i) Given to a man after being acquitted at a trial – Justification
 - ii) Given to those returning victorious in battle – Sign of triumph over your foes
 - iii) Given to a man when he was a free man of the city – free citizenship in heaven

The new name on this stone is the special name that the Lord gives that reflects the new life or person he has become

CONCLUSION

Do we hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches – Our church?

- 1) The church must not tolerate those who lower standards of Christian living – regardless of how orthodox they are
- 2) Truth never excuses sin – The true test of doctrine is the spiritual life that it produces in our lives

THE CHURCH at Pergamos was one which held to faith in Jesus – But allowed people to live in the world and immorality – Emerging church?

The personal lives of church members DOES affect the status of the church as Jesus sees it