

## **Revelation 2:12-17 –The Lure of Compromise**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: If you try to catch fish you don't attack and scream at them, would you? You won't catch them that way. What you need is a good lure! It is more effective to trick the fish! And if you want to catch a certain type of fish, you have to have the right lure, as different fish like different kinds of lure. A small-mouth bass wouldn't try to swallow a large lure.

Well the Devil is like a fisherman! He knows how to trick Christians. **He knows he isn't so successful when he attacks from the front**, directly telling you to break God's law, so he often uses a sly method of getting to the hearts of Christians – with the right lure. After all, his name means “deceiving one.” This was what he did in Pergamos. Hear about this today.

Our headings are:

The **Commendations**

The **Concerns**

The **Challenges**

The **Comforts**

Our goals are: That you **learn to lean on Christ and guard yourself against the servants of the subtle sneaky snake, so you can fulfill your Christian duties to Christ and your neighbor.**

### **The Commendations**

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

**1. Pergamum was a city of Asia Minor, North East of Smyrna, and was famous for having a number of false cults and gods.**

**Among the false gods were Zeus, Dionysos, and Asklepios** – the serpent god.

**Asklepios -the serpent god was designated as savior of the people and was the most famous of all.**

Pergamum was an extremely loyal city to Rome and they built many magnificent temples to the Caesars.

**2. Christ announced himself to the church at Pergamum as the one who has the sharp two-edged sword.**

The emperor claimed to be the sole arbiter on all matters of life, living, and death, but Christ disagreed... saying that **his Word – which is his sword – is powerful – more powerful than anything Rome had to offer.**

**Christ's sword did not come from his side, but from his mouth.** His sword was his Word. **Christ's sword was not made from steel, but with words filled with his all-powerful Holy Spirit.**

**Even the power of Rome was dictated by God.**

**Romans 13:1-2** - Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. **For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.** 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

Further, Jesus directly **confronted the world with his next statement:**

**Matthew 28:18** And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

**Remember in Psalm 2 Christ's rule clearly applies to all nations.**

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.

**3. Concerning their commendations, Christ says he knew the Pergamites' good works.**

Their good works were particularly remarkable because of where they lived: **They lived where Satan's throne was – Asklepios – serpent god.** The place was so wicked they worshipped Satan. This was not some abstract or figurative place. It was real!

**4. The Pergamite Christians were remarkable; they did not deny Christ when pressed to do so by Asklepios' people.**

When confronted from the front, they held their ground! Some Pergamites were even martyred – men like Antipas. Antipas means “against all.” One report said he was burnt to death **in** a bronze bull. And he died where Satan dwells. This church refused to say, “Kurios kaisar” (Caesar is Lord) and continued to say, “Kurios Yaysoun,” (Jesus is Lord) so they suffered.

**5. Lessons:**

**a. You need to fear God's Word and his command more than you fear the government or the government's sword.**

**b. You are able to live in the midst of a hellish place and not compromise with sin.** Remember this university students!

## The Concerns

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.

### 1. Christ was concerned with one part of the Pergamites' church, however, because some of them fell for the doctrines of false teachers...

These false teachers were Nicolaitans (Balaamites). Nicolaitans and Balaam mean the same thing: eater, conqueror or destroyer.

### 2. What was the doctrine of Balaam for which the Pergamites had fallen?

Balaam was hired by Balak, king of Moab, to curse Israel. When God did not allow Balaam to curse his people, he tried to lure the people into sin. The Israelites were lured to sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication.

Numbers 25:1-3 Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. **2 They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods**, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. **3** So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel.

Balak, according to Jewish history, sent 24,000 women on the Sabbath into Israel's camp, so God destroyed 24,000 Jews in one day by plague. Numbers 25:9.

Numbers 31:16 "Look, **these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD** in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation...

### 3. The Nicolaitans (Balaamites) took it one step further: They rejected all law, claiming that since Christ kept all the law for the Pergamites and took their punishment for breaking the law, the Pergamites, therefore didn't have to keep God's law anymore and could indulge in any type of sin.

This was the double lure—a lure of freedom from law—to freedom to commit idolatry and adultery.

Of course Apostle Paul warned against this:

Romans 6:1-2 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? **2** Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

The Nicolaitans were similar to the serpent (Satan) in the Garden of Eden, who tempted Eve, saying in effect: "The fruit is not bad" and "you have freedom to eat it." The Nicolaitans corrupted both faith and practice among the Pergamites.

### 4. Lessons:

**a. The greatest danger the church faces is internal corruption, especially with those who talk religious talk!**

**b. There is a notable weakness in those who say Jesus fulfilled the law for them and use it as an excuse to live wickedly.**

Think, for example, how few Christians honor the Sabbath today!

## The Challenges

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

### 1. Christ commanded his church in Pergamum to repent.

**But what does repent really mean?** Does repent mean to be sorry? No, it means much more. Repentance demands you turn away from sin and live differently, so the Pergamites had to excommunicate those deceivers of Christ's people.

**Pergamum had the 2 marks of the church**, but with 1 was missing, trouble was on the horizon. They had to act!

### 2. If the Pergamite church did not repent, they could count on the Lord fighting against them, just as the Lord fought Balaam with his sword – his Word and his Authority.

Numbers 22:31 - Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the Angel of the LORD standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand; and he bowed his head and fell flat on his face.

Numbers 31:8 They killed the kings of Midian with the rest of those who were killed—Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. Balaam the son of Beor they also killed with the sword.

### 3. Lessons:

**a. The church that fails to discipline its delinquent members will soon be destroyed itself.**

**b. It is true the Lord came against Balaam with a sword and was about to "part his hair," but now the Lord said he would come with the sword of his mouth – a sword that would hurt more than the physical sword.** God keeps his Word!

## The Comforts

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."

**1. If the Pergamites persisted in faithful preaching, proper sacraments, and decisive discipline, God promised them 3 things.**

**2. What are these promises God wanted them to listen carefully to?**

**a. They were promised the hidden manna.** This is sometimes called angel's food. Psalm 78:25. A pot of manna was hidden away in the Ark of the Covenant and only seen in the Holiest Place of the temple, but it would be given to those who did not fall for the lure set before them by the Nicolaitans. In other words, **the Pergamites were short of food, but they would be filled with real food forever.**

**b. They were promised a white stone.** A white stone was a ticket or invitation to a feast or a symbol of acquittal from a crime. So it was a picture of being freed from sin and sin's curse. White reflected purity – undefiled. The Lord would confirm the faithful ones were clean on Judgment Day.

**c. They were promised a new name – to go with their new heart, new record, and new life.** A new name identifies your new character in Christ, having been adopted by him. And this would be an exclusive name – a name that no one else could have.

## **Conclusion:**

Most of the Pergamites stood up to the pressures as they were being lured into sexual immorality and threatened into idolatry – particularly Asklepios' satanic worship. God praised those who held their ground and did not compromise. Further, Christ would fill the mouths of those who held their ground with good things. He would remove their sins and give them full acquittal (white stone), and he would identify them as his children, giving them a new name. On the other hand, those that didn't hold their ground were threatened by the Lord with punishment. Words would come out of the mouth of Christ and wound and destroy them.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ:

**a. You also face great pressure to indulge in sexual immorality.** And your children face an ever-increasing pressure to commit adultery– even from a young age. Their peers laugh at them if they don't commit sexual sins. They are flooded with it at school, on TV, and on the internet. Marriage and faithfulness are looked upon as old-fashioned because people have been lured into compromise, thinking that living that is okay. Most children are now born outside of marriage in Canada. But you don't have to live like the world.

**b. You face pressure to make idols out of "stuff."** This is one of the greatest evils of our rich Western society. You have to have the newest everything...the newest phone...the fastest car...the best vacations...the most expensive clothes and accessories...the biggest house...But all of those things will fall apart, get old, or be burnt up! Instead, remember that white stone! You are cleared of you sins! "*You ask me why I am happy, well let me tell you why. It's because my sins are gone.*" Live like your sins are gone!

**c. You face the pressure to accept satanic religions.** You feel out of place as the job may pressure you to accept everyone's belief as equally valid, but they are not! Don't buy their lies! Hold your ground. If you hold your ground, you have all the promises of Christ: eternal heavenly food, a clean record that can never be tarnished, and a new name, showing you belong to him.

Finally, the one who is not a Christian still has an old name: Son of the Serpent Satan. But you can change your identity, have heavenly food, and have a clean record if you submit to Jesus Christ. I pray you will consider that name change today!