

Refuse To Compromise Revelation 2:12-17

In every one of the seven letters, Jesus uses a different facet about Himself to introduce Himself to the church. Ephesus bragged that they were the first among the seven. Jesus starts with, "I'm the one who holds the seven." Smyrna bragged that they were dead and came back to life. Jesus said, "I'm the one that was dead and came back to life." Pergamum bragged that they carried the sword. Their city motto is "We carry the sword." The governor there had the right to use the sword anytime he chose. Most executions and capital punishment was carried out in Pergamum. It had been the capital of Asia for over 400 years.

Jesus shows up and says, "*These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword.*" Revelation 2:12

The people of Pergamum had a lot to be proud of. Two things stand out in the city of Pergamum.

It was a center of instruction. In the city of Pergamum was one of the largest and most famous libraries of the ancient world. It was second only to the one in Alexandria and had over 200,000 volumes.

They pioneered the use of parchment, the skins of animals, as writing material. The Greeks were great exporters of papyri, the material from which paper was made, but they got into a feud with the citizens of Pergamum and cut off all supply of paper to the city.

Pergamum had to turn to another avenue of written communication, and so they developed the use of animal skin, or sheepskin, as writing material. When you graduate from college your diploma is called a "sheep skin," that refers to the material in which the diploma is written.

It was also a center of idolatry. In the city was a temple built to the four great Greek gods. There was a temple to Zeus (security), a temple to Demeter (harvest, crops), a temple to Athena (wisdom), and a temple to Aesculapius (healing). Three different temples were dedicated to the worship of the emperor, Caesar.

The Lord Jesus called this city, the city "*where Satan's throne is.*" Revelation 2:13

There are two words translated "*dwelling*" in the New Testament. One means "*to take up a temporary dwelling*". The other one, the one used here, means "*to settle down to stay; to take up a permanent residence*".

This church was located right in the middle of hell's kitchen. It was living in the shadow of Satan himself. The smell of satanic influence was everywhere. It was as if the devil's bread was being made in every bakery, and right in the middle of this city of hell was a little colony of heaven, called the church at Pergamum.

The largest statue of Zeus there. It was roughly 4 times the size of the Lincoln memorial. It's because it was the first statue of the Roman emperor once the edict was passed that you were to worship the Roman emperor. The first city that built him a statue was Pergamum. There was also a statue of Asclepius, the god of medicine. He's holding a staff with a serpent wrapped around it. God had a bronze serpent on a pole that represented that Christ became what was killing us, and that's what it represented. The temple of Athena the goddess of wisdom was located there.

To walk away from all that was a recognition that we as believers don't get what we need from the world. There was a tension of the culture they were living in and the church of the Lord they served. Their faith and the culture were in opposition to each other.

You may be stuck in a bad situation as a follower of Jesus. You may be the only Christian where you work. You may be the only Christian in your family. You may be the only one in your neighborhood who comes to church

and who professes faith in Jesus Christ. You may be ridiculed for your faith because people view you as intolerant and ignorant because of what you believe. There early Christians were accused of being atheist because they did not worship the Greek god. He knows it when you face persecution on your job, at school, at home, or even at church. He knows the pressures society places on the dedicated child of God. He knows, He cares, He is there and He will help you. You may feel like you are living or working right in the middle of hell's headquarters, well that should not be a discouragement to you. That ought to be an encouragement to you.

Jesus says to this church, "I know where you dwell." Just as Jesus knows where this church was dwelling, Jesus knows where you dwell. Jesus knows where you work, and you are probably exactly where God wants you to be. God has put you where you are so that you might be a witness for Him.

The Bible says we are to be the light of the world. Now where is a light put to be most effective? It is put in the darkest corner. That is what God does with us. Wherever it is the darkest, the most ungodly, the most unchrist-like, where faith is totally absent, there God puts His people.

Right where Satan dwelled, God had put His church. They were a faithful church. They were a firm church. They were a following church. They were a fruitful church, but they were a church camped on the door steps of hell.

"To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. 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, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives. Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: There are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality. Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it." Revelation 2:12-17

1. Learn Conviction

"You hold fast to my name." Revelation 2:13

They would not deny His name. They refused to keep quiet about Jesus Christ.

- They knew the power of the name of Jesus.

"And whatever you ask in my name, that I will do that the father may be glorified in the son. If you ask anything in my name I will do it." John 14:13-14

- They knew the preeminence of the name of Jesus.

"Nor is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Acts 4:12

- They knew the presence of the name of Jesus.

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them." Matthew 18:20

- They knew the purpose of the name of Jesus.

“And she will bring forth a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”
Matthew 1:21

They would not deny His wonderful name, they loved His name. They sang about that name. They lived their very lives in the name of Jesus.

If this church had simply kept quiet about Jesus, they would have stayed out of trouble. They could have talked about their God all they wanted to. Nobody was concerned about their particular God, because everybody had a god. It did not matter whether his name was Zeus or Aesculapius, or Apollo. In fact, everybody was expected to have some god, but it was when they steadfastly confessed that Jesus Christ was God, and that He alone was God, they got into serious trouble.

This church stood by the name of Jesus and kept talking and preaching and sharing the name of Jesus because they were so in love with Jesus that Jesus was the natural topic of conversation.

“You did not deny my faith.” Revelation 2:13

They did not compromise on the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

They believed in the virgin birth of Jesus and in the deity of Jesus. They believed in the substitutionary death of Jesus and in the literal physical resurrection of Jesus. They believed in an actual, visible physical second coming of Jesus. They believed in a literal heaven and a literal hell. They believed that the Bible was totally the Word of God.

Jesus commended one of the saints named Antipas, who was his *“faithful witness.”* Revelation 2:13

Antipas means “against everything.” The word “anti” means “against.” The word “pas” means “all or everything.” So Antipas was a man who was willing to stand against everyone and everything if they stood against Jesus. He was faithful unto death.

Jesus calls this man “my faithful witness.” Jesus gives him the name he is called twice in Revelation. That is one of the highest compliments paid to anyone in the Word of God because that is the same phrase used to describe Jesus in Revelation 1:5.

Someone once said to John Knox, “If you take a stand for Jesus Christ, all the world will be against you.” and John Knox replied, “Then I will just have to be against all the world.”

2. Leave Convenience

This was a church that had begun to compromise. There were liberal termites that were beginning to eat away at the foundation of this church. Specifically, Jesus had two things against them.

They held to the doctrine of Balaam, and they held to the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. Revelation 2:14-15

The church was not practicing these liberal doctrines. They were tolerating those who did hold to these liberal doctrines. They had begun to compromise their beliefs for the sake of peace in the church.

- Don't Compromise Your Integrity For Convenience.

“There are some among you 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.” Revelation 2:14

To understand this doctrine, you have to understand the story. Balaam was a Gentile prophet who knew God and walked with God. Balak was the king of Moab, and he wanted Balaam to use his prophetic influence with God to curse the nation of Israel. Balaam ran a warehouse of religious favors for money.

He tried to bribe Balaam, God's prophet, to curse God's people, the nation of Israel. Balaam tried to do that three times, but God would not allow him to do it. God said, "The only thing you can do is bless Israel, and not curse Israel."

Balaam wanted the money that Balak had offered him. He came up with an ingenious plan, he went to Balak and said, "If I cannot curse Israel, then maybe I can corrupt Israel, and if I can corrupt them, then God will have to curse them." His plan was to seduce the Israelites to commit fornication and adultery with the Moabite women. He began to prophesy and tell them it was alright for them to cohabit with these Moabites, and so Balaam succeeded in getting the Israelites to worship the foreign Moabite gods and to cohabit with the foreign Moabite women. When he did that, God, true to His word and true to His name, cursed Israel and slew 24,000 Israelites.

The doctrine of Balaam is the mixture of the church with the world. The doctrine of Balaam is, "Do as the Roman's do." It's okay because everyone is doing it. They wanted to best of both worlds. They wanted to be like the world but they also wanted to be like Jesus. You can't have both. Balaam led them to intermarry with the Moabites whom God had forbidden them to marry because of their idol worship. Balaam was doing what was convenient and now they were being tempted to do what was convenient. Pergamum is where we get the root of our word for polygamy and bigamy.

Satan is always trying to get the church involved in two areas. He is trying to get the church involved in the worship of the world, and he is trying to get the church involved in the wickedness of the world.

The church at Pergamum was being taught that it was alright to worship pagan gods and to engage in sexual immorality. It was alright to go to the temple and worship Zeus and then have relations with the temple prostitutes.

There were business people who would participate in these idolatry and immorality festivals, or feasts, so that they could have good business relationships in the community.

Some believe, in order to do business, you have to make some compromises. You don't. God can bless your business, but you have to give Him a chance.

We have been called to be different. We have been called to be separate. We have been called to be holy. We have been called to be righteous. We have been called to be clean in a world that is dirty, light in a world that is dark, wise in a world that is deceived, and holy in a world that is depraved.

- Refuse To Compromise Your Purity For Convenience.

"They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness." 2 Peter 2:15

It was money that turned his head and his heart.

"Woe to them, for they've gone in the way of Cain, and have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and then perished in the rebellion of Korah." Jude 11

Balaam was all about greed and profit.

“Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, which is Moab.” Numbers 25:1-2

“Nevertheless the Lord your God would not listen to Balaam, but the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the Lord your God loves you.” Deuteronomy 23:5

They held to *“the doctrine of the Nicolaitans.”* Revelation 2:15

The word Nicolaitan means “to conquer or dominate the people.” The word “Nike” is the word for “victory or domination,” and the word “Laos” is the word for “people.” We get the word “laity” from the word “Laos,” so it means “to have victory over” or “to dominate the people.”

There were people in the church who were teaching that the clergy is totally separate from the laity and must be elevated above the laity, so they were trying to set up an ecclesiastical hierarchy.

So you would have to confess your sins to a priest, not to God, and you could not interpret the Bible for yourself. A priest had to do that, and the church, and therefore, the priest would be the final authority over you, not the Word of God.

Jesus had something to say to these people. Jesus said *“Do not call anyone on earth your father; for one is your father, he who is in heaven.”* Matthew 23:9

The solution for convenience and compromise is repentance.

Jesus said the church had only one alternative: either repentance or retribution. *“Repent or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with sword of my mouth.”* Revelation 2:16

If the church won't deal with liberalism, Jesus will. He will gather the wheat and burn the tares.

Jesus is going to fight against these liberal professors with the “sword of my mouth.” We all know that sword is the Word of God. The only thing that can fight against liberalism is the Word of God.

Jesus said *“He who rejects me and does not receive my words, has that which judges him - the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.”* John 12:48

You can't serve God and sneak into the foreign temples and worship false gods too. You can't live in both worlds. The only way the church can have a voice in the world is if we are different. We can't be like the world and win the world.

Philippians 2:15 says that we are to strive to be, *“so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which we shine like stars in the universe as we hold out the word of life...”* Philippians 2:15

3. Live With Commitment

“To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna to eat.” Revelation 2:17

To overcome meant you rise above. You rise above temptation. You rise above convenience. You rise about compromise. You rise above criticism. You overcome. You emerge victorious.

- We will eat God's food.

Manna was the bread that had been baked in heaven's oven. Moses had taken some of this manna and put it into a golden pot. He then took this pot and put it into the ark of the covenant. He then took the ark of the covenant and put it into the holy of holies where no man could eat of that manna because it was hidden.

Jesus says there will come a day when all of us can eat of the hidden manna of God. We can eat God's food. We will be able to enjoy forever all of the blessings God has in store for us. You know the Word of God says, "*Eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, what God has prepared for those who love Him.*" 1 Corinthians 2:9

What a precious feasting we are going to have at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb when we eat that hidden manna, the bread of life from the table of God.

- We Will Enjoy God's Fellowship.

"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." Revelation 2:17

This white stone was a stone that was used by very close friends to enter into a covenant relationship, an event or a private party. Your name written on a white stone meant you had lifetime rights to the event, party or relationship. It was like an all-access pass. It his way of saying how much he loves you. The emperors would often engrave names on the white stone and send as invitations to their elaborate feasts.

A New Designation – Jesus promised His overcomers that their white stone would contain "*a new name which no man knows except him who receives it.*" This is a promise of intimacy. It was customary in that day for guests at a dinner to have a white stone placed at their seat. When they were seated, they could look at the stone and underneath would be a private message from the host. It was a way for the host to share an intimate thought with each guest.

What Jesus is saying is that everything that God has, we have. Some day we are going to have everything that is coming to us, we are going to be able to enjoy God's fellowship forever. We are loved by God. We are cared for by God. We have a name that has been given to us that is so special and so precious that only we will know it because only we will receive it.

Our relationship to Jesus Christ is so precious that it is almost impossible to describe it to those who do not know the Lord. David said in the 23rd Psalm. David said, "*You [God] prepare a table before me.*" That is God's food. Then he said one day we are going to dwell in the house of the Lord forever, that is God's fellowship.

God's food and God's fellowship are reserved only for God's family.

Are you a part of that family? Would you like to be a part of that family? Would you like to eat God's food? Would you like to enter God's fellowship? Would you like to enjoy God's friendship? Well, you can if you will hold fast to the name and the faith of Jesus Christ.