

THE UNACCEPTABLE FACE OF COMPROMISE

In **Revelation** chapters 2 and 3 God has messages for seven Churches in Asia Minor. There were many more churches, but God picked out these seven as examples of what the New Testament Church was like. But God's message is actually to us: "Where do we stand? To which of these seven churches can we compare ourselves? **Read Revelation 2:12-17**....

Pergamos was one of the oldest cities in the region. It had served as the capital of the Roman province of Asia Minor for over twenty five years and was the official seat of the Roman government. It was also an important religious centre for a number of pagan cults. Pergamos was the first city in Asia to build a temple to Caesar and it became the capital of the cult of Caesar worship. Of the city, an ancient writer once said; "it was given to idolatry more than all Asia." And this may have been referring to the 200 foot-high alter to Zeus in the city centre.

The book of Acts makes no mention of the founding of this church. According to **Acts 16:7-8**, Paul passed through the region of Mysia, where Pergamos was located, on his second missionary journey, but there is no record that Paul either preached the gospel or founded a church there during that time. Most likely, Paul founded this church during his ministry at Ephesus (**Acts 19:10**) when the gospel was preached throughout Asia. Doctrinally, this was a compromising church.

Many writers have noted that Pergamos comes from the Greek word 'gamos' which means marriage. This letter pictures a church married to the world rather than to Christ. The church of Pergamos was the worldly church. Worldliness is any preoccupation with the physical system of life that places anything on earth before the things of the kingdom of God. The church at Pergamum was surrounded by a pagan culture, just as we are surrounded by an increasingly godless culture. As we study this letter, we ought to be attentive to what God wants to teach us through His Word.

The Pergamos church was committing spiritual adultery. **James 4:4**, "***You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.***" Observe how Christ commended their works, and again we see a church doing much for the Lord. So it's clear that most churches, if not all, are doing some good works for the Lord. Note also, Jesus knew where they lived. I find this an interesting statement. He knows that they live in a hostile and difficult place. They, as well as we, needed to realise that God was clearly aware of where they were placed. They were in a culture where Satan's throne is evident. This is a strong statement. Yet they were still witnessing - they held fast to Christ's name. And what's more, they remained faithful to the central truths of the Christian faith. Even when they saw Antipas martyred, they remained faithful. Tradition says that Antipas was roasted to death inside a brass bull.

Though bold and steadfast in the faith in a sinful, idolatrous, perverted city where Satan had a seat, *a throne*, the church was not free from the corrupting influence of **compromise**. Christ, the Head of the Church, said, ***"I have a few things against you"***. No matter how we praise ourselves and what others think of us, Christ's evaluation of the church is the only thing that matters. This compromising Church tolerated the disciples of Balaam, who held the doctrine of Balaam, casting stumbling-blocks before church members - leading them to idolatry, fornication and immorality. The church also had among the membership and leadership those who held the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, a doctrine of perverted grace, which Christ Himself hates. Note, compromise makes a church (or a christian) soft and tolerant of heresies.

"Repent; or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth" (Revelation 2:16). Balaam temporarily escaped the sword (*Numbers 22:22-35*) but was eventually slain with the sword (*Numbers 31:8,16*). So shall it be with all unrepentant backsliders and false teachers of perverted grace, who teach and influence church members to be at liberty to yield to the flesh and sin.

The **love of Christ** called the compromising believers to repentance. God, who is rich in mercy and love, not wishing that anyone should perish, called compromisers and backsliders to repentance. God's love does not excuse or tolerate sin.

But rather, it commands us to repent, change our mind, turn from sin, abandon the doctrine and lifestyle, and restore those we have misled and deceived back to the truth. So that we can be forgiven - so we can live a righteous life again.

"To him that overcomes" - to him who gains the victory or who remains a conqueror. This refers to the believer who maintains victory of a moral character, who triumphs over his own easily-besetting sins, who has victory over the world and its temptations, who triumphs over prevailing evil and error around him, who remains free from the corrupting influence of compromise.

King Solomon, who succeeded his father King David, is known to Bible History as one of the wisest men that has ever lived - and, paradoxically, also as one of the greatest fools. Although Solomon directly knew God, actually had God speak to him, and was greatly blessed by God, in his later years he **compromised** the Truth with pagan trash. He may well have been talking about himself in **Ecclesiastes 4:13** with ***"Better is a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king, who will no longer take advice."*** Solomon's example is a lesson for all that compromise with what God says is right and acceptable. This attitude can carry a very high price.

Ironically, Solomon's success, or his not keeping it in perspective (in relation to the God who gave it all to him), led to his failure. And it was actually more of a slide than a fall - he

came to trust in his wealth and political power more than in God, Who made it all possible. His great wealth and diplomatic influence allowed him to collect a harem of 1,000 women from all sorts of nations that the Lord had told the Israelites not to get involved with - his many "wives" led him into worshipping their idols.

Solomon may not have outright rejected the True God, as he did continue to worship Him, but he **compromised** the Truth by tolerating all sorts of paganism at the same time. His weak and foolish judgment resulted in very dire consequences for the kingdom of Israel - which have affected the world right to the present day. Compromise can have generational effect! This is why we must be overcomers.

The overcomers will be given “the hidden manna”, “angels’ food” (**Psalm 78:25**), “the corn of heaven” (**Psalm 78:24**). Christ’s promise here has reference to the overcomers being admitted into the immediate presence of God, and they will be nourished for ever with the food of heaven. But remember, before you can partake of this food you must partake of the Bread of Life - Jesus Christ.

Finally, “*And I will give him a white stone.*” This is a precious gift, the victor’s reward. And the white stone also represents acquittal from all wrong-doings! Therefore, whoever remains free from the corrupting influence of compromise will receive exceptional and eternal blessings. Make sure you are one such person.