

## 5. The compromising church

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A New York family bought a ranch out West where they intended to raise cattle. Friends visited and asked if the ranch had a name. "Well," said the would-be cattleman, "I wanted to name it the Bar-J. My wife favored Suzy-Q, one son liked the Flying-W, and the other wanted the Lazy-Y. So we're calling it the Bar-J-Suzy-Q-Flying-W-Lazy-Y." "But where are all your cattle?" the friends asked. "None survived the branding."

One wise man said, "Compromise is simply changing the answer to fit the question."

Compromise is not always bad thing. We have to compromise in our relationship within the family or friends to live together or work together.

However, in the work of Christian life, there is one danger all of us, as an individual and each church, would face one way or another is opportunities to compromise. The enemy of our souls, satan would love us to compromise. Because he knows that if we compromise our Christian walk, he doesn't have to do anything. God would deal with us.

There are many more once-hot-Christians walk down the road of compromise than any other defeat in their Christian walk. The very one who would give up their lives in a heart beat for Jesus's name, would compromise their faith for "seemingly-unimportant thing." However, that is not "seemingly-unimportant thing" in satan's eyes. Once he puts that devout Christian in his hook, he starts to reel him in ever-so-gently to the last pitfall.

A Calvary Chapel pastor who was about to dedicate their new church building that would house 1000 congregation gave an alter call at one of his Sunday morning services. One heroin addict responded to God's invitation and came forward. He became a truly changed man instantly and gave up his heroin right on the spot. He handed a small bag of heroin and a hypodermic syringe to the pastor and said, "Pastor, I don't need this anymore. Jesus healed me."

After the service on the way to his office He was thinking, "I've been having a lot of backache lately. Maybe a little bit of this would ease that pain." He was a former heroin addict himself. So, behind a closed door, he shot himself a dose of heroin. That did a job. He got hooked back again. His family put him in a drug rehab. He escaped it time after time. Now, he is a homeless heroin addict and living on the street and looking for just one more hit. He has compromised. No one is immuned.

### A. THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH OF PERGAMOS FROM JESUS

*Rev. 2:12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:*

1) Called "the greatest city in Asia Minor," Pergamos had the first temple dedicated to Caesar and was a promoter of the imperial cult as well as an one hundred fifty foot high temple for Zeus. This is probably what is meant by "satan's throne" in Revelation 2:13. The city also had a temple dedicated to Aesculapius, the god of healing, whose insignia was the entwined serpent on the staff. This is still a medical symbol today.

The city was a noted center for culture and education, having one of the great libraries of the ancient world, with more than 200,000 volumes.

**2) The Greek prefix 'per' means opposition.** The suffix 'gamos', seen in words like "monogamy" or "bigamy," means "marriage." Pergamos, then, means "Objectionable Marriage" – a fitting description of the next phase of church history.

In A.D. 312, Roman Emperor Constantine became a Christian. Truly or not, I don't know. As a result of Constantine's Edict of Toleration, which forbade persecution of Christians, Christianity became the official religion of Rome. In fact, soon all Roman babies would be legally required to be baptized into the Christian faith. But this turned out to be a real bad disaster. Yes, the Christians were in power, but Constantine helped them compromise with the pagan priests and traditions that permeated Rome. So, those pagan priests became priests for Christianity to do the rituals and mixed Christianity with their pagan flavors.

"Let's find common ground. Let's meet halfway." So a marriage took place that was perhaps most clearly illustrated by the coin issued shortly thereafter. Christian symbols were stamped on one side of the coin and pagan symbols on the other. From A.D. 313 to A.D. 600, church and state worked together as a political power—and as a result the church began a downward spiral from which she has yet to recover, as we shall see. That was the "Objectable Marriage."

**3) Jesus "shows" His two-edged sword to the Christians in Pergamos.** The description of the sword in Revelation 1:18 helps us to associate it with the mouth of Jesus. Jesus will confront this church with His Word, and they will feel the sharp edges.

This sharp two-edged sword reminds us of the passage in Hebrews 4:12.

*Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

We must note a couple of things in this verse: The Word is a 'discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart'. The Word which is Jesus according to John 1:1-3, knows our motives and intension better than even ourselves.

## **B. COMMENDATION**

*Rev. 2:13 "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."*

**1) Jesus praises the Christians of Pergamos because they did not deny His faith.** One particular man among the Christians of Pergamos received a precious title - "Faithful Martyr."

Antipas is one of the great anonymous heroes of the Bible. The Word tells us nothing about him except for here. Antipas lived where Satan's throne was. Yet he stood tall against the attacks and the evil around him. He fulfilled the meaning of his name, because Antipas means "Against All."

**2) Martyr is the ancient Greek word 'martus.'** 'Martus' is a most interesting word. In classical Greek 'martus' never means a martyr in our sense of the term. It always means a 'witness.' A 'martus' was one who said: 'This is true, and I know it.'

On a side note, some theologians comment that these seven churches in Revelation are the sequence of the Christian church history. There is a great possibility and I agree with that in a lot of ways. However, I'd rather see these seven churches as the various types of individual churches we see in any ages.

### C. REBUKE

*Rev. 2:14 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.*

**1) What is the doctrine of Balaam?** Balaam was a great example of all corrupt teachers. According to Numbers 22-24 and 31, Balaam was a true prophet who prostituted his gifts in order to earn money from king Balak of Moab, who hired him to curse the people of Israel. And he was the only human who carried a conversation with his donkey.

God prevented Balaam from actually cursing Israel—in fact, God turned the curses into blessings!. But Balak still got his money's worth. How? By following Balaam's advice and making friends with Israel, and then inviting the Jews to worship and feast at the pagan altars. "If you can't beat'em, join'em!"

The Jewish men fell right into the trap and many of them became "good neighbors." They ate meat from idolatrous altars and committed fornication as part of heathen religious rituals. Twenty-four thousand people died because of this disobedient act of compromise. **NUMBERS 25:1-13**

If the church in Pergamos has those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, it shows they were involved in both idolatry and immorality.

**2) Sexual immorality marked the whole culture of the ancient Roman Empire.** Open homosexual lifestyle was encouraged and accepted. As a matter of fact, Emperor Nero himself was a gay and married to a man. To keep purity away from sexual immorality in that culture, Christians really had to swim against the current.

We find the exact same trend in our culture. Just about everything in the entertainment industry embraces sexual immorality and homosexuality. The more revealing, the more suggestive are the better to the general public and TV critics in their thoughts.

One thing I must tell you is that Greece and Rome were both culturally flourishing open homosexuality lifestyle before they were destroyed. Guess where America is heading to.

*Rev. 2:15 Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.*

**3) These infiltrators are called "Nicolaitans,"** whom we met already at Ephesus in Rev. 2:6. The name means "to rule the people." What they taught is called "the doctrine of Balaam." The Hebrew name Balaam also means "lord of the people" and is probably running the same course with Nicolaitans. Sadly, this group of professed believers "lorded it over" the people and led them astray. According to ancient commentators, the Nicolaitans also approved of immorality.

## D. CORRECTION

*Rev. 2:16 Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.*

**1) A difficult environment never justifies compromise.** It is easy for a church in such difficulty to justify this compromise in the name of "we need all the help we can get." But no church needs that kind of help. The help we need is from the Lord through the Word of God.

Remember, when President Bush got into the office, he made a fund available to faith based organizations nationwide. Someone suggested that we should try it for our church building. It sounded good. But I don't want any penny from the government. I hope that the President Bush gets reelected in this November. If he doesn't, and we took that government money, they would come and tell us how we should run our church. This church doesn't belong to some liberal, left-wing commie pinko president or any of his government officials. This Calvary Chapel of Sahuarita belongs to Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

**2) Without a doubt, one of the devil's most effective tactics is that of compromise.** It is a subtle but deadly trap, and I believe it is successful more today than ever before.

The devil is sly. He knows that as you mature as a Christian, he needs to be much more subtle and more persuasive.

He doesn't whisper in your ear, "Hey you, happy Christian! Yeah, you with the beautiful family! Why don't you commit adultery? Have a few moments of guilty pleasure and then lose the respect of your spouse and your children. And oh yeah, you might get AIDS or sexually transmitted diseases. Then you will die. What do you say?"

No, the devil tries to take us down a little at a time. And He uses his secret weapon called compromise. He will whisper in your ear, "It's OK. Play around a little bit with that marijuana. Just flirt a little with that person you are not married to. Take a look at porno web site. Go ahead. You can handle it. You can stay in control."

Just a little compromise here and there, and suddenly you find yourself asking, "How did I here?" That's how compromise works. Erosion happens slowly before you realize.

Israel people in the OT had never deserted their Jehovah God. They simply add other idols, pagan gods in their worship with Jehovah one true God. Our God will not put up with that. The Word says that He is a jealous God and a consuming fire.

*De 4:24 For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.*

**3) Let's get down to some practical areas of compromises we tend to make:**

- **Drinking** - You might say, "I just drink a glass of wine or a can of beer once in a while. If that is the case, I am sure that it is not a big problem for you to quit drinking altogether. Why? Because, the non-believers would not listen to your testimony about Jesus seriously because of your drinking.
- **Smoking** - It is about same with the drinking issue. It is not good for you anyway.

- **Watching 'R' rated movies** - While you watch 'R' rated movies that filled with vulgar and profanity, nude scenes and sexual scenes, have you ever consider what if Jesus might call us home as the Rapture at that moment? How would you explain to Jesus what you've been watching?
- **Having sex with someone other than your own spouse?** - If you are doing that you are committing adultery. It is a sin. Stop it. If you are having sex with someone before marriage? That is fornication. That is a sin. Stop it. Have you ever thought about what kind of testimony you are giving to other people who know what is going on? What kind of impact are you bringing on to your family and to your kids? If you are doing any of these, you are compromising your testimony of Jesus to them.

**4) When Jesus comes against the Christians of Pergamos,** He will confront them with His Word. Judgment will begin at the house of God.

### **E. PROMISE**

*Rev. 2:17 "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."*

The one who overcomes the doctrines of Balaam and compromising lifestyle will receive hidden manna. This is God's perfect provision, the true bread from heaven.

In the ancient world, the use of a white stone had many associations. A white stone could be a ticket to a banquet, a sign of friendship, or as a sign of acquittal in a court of law.

What is the meaning of this new, secret name promised to him who overcomes? Is it God's name, or is it the believer's name? This is probably the believer's new name, and the name itself is probably more important than the stone itself. One idea behind this new, secret name is that it shows what an intimate relationship we have with God. When a couple is close, they often have "pet names" for each other. This is the same idea.

### **F. APPLICATIONS**

**1) We must know that if we are not closer to God than yesterday, we can consider that we have backslidden.**

We must keep moving forward spiritually. The minute we stop moving forward to God means that we are moving backward, and we will begin to backslide. That is the opposite of spiritual progression.

**2) Don't be concern about what people might think about us, but what God would think about us.**

The danger of false teaching and immoral conduct still faces the church today. Under the name of different culture and time, tolerance to each other's lifestyle, and politically correct, even the churches embrace compromises with the world.

*1John 2:15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*