

Nick Tarter / General

Revelation 2:12–17 NASB 2020

“And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:

‘I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is; and you hold firmly to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. ‘But I have a few things against you, because you have *some* there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality. So you too, have some who in the same way hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will wage war against them with the sword of My mouth. The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who overcomes, I will give *some* of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows except the one who receives *it*.’

Intro

Author

Jesus through the Apostle John

- Jesus introduces Himself here as the one who has the sharp two-edged sword.
 - There is a sharp confrontation happening here and it is significant that Jesus portrays Himself as carrying His sword.
 - The sword is a symbol of Christ’s divine judgement which is not intended to be pointed towards believers, but here He is put into a situation in which He has to approach one of His churches with sword

in hand.

Location & Setting

Pergamum

- The place where Satan dwells.
 - Pergamum was known as a center of both paganism generally and as a center of Emperor worship in the Roman era.
 - Pergamum featured temples to Zeus (the chief of the gods), Athena (the goddess of love), Dionysus (the god of wine, debauchery, and insanity), and Asclepius (the god of healing).
 - The temple of Emperor worship in Pergamum was the oldest in Asia Minor.

Big Idea:

Truth

I. The Lord recognizes the faithfulness of His saints. (13)

Revelation 2:13 NASB 2020

'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold firmly to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

1. The believers in Pergamum had experienced great persecution resulting in the martyrdom of at least one beloved brother, Antipas.
 - a. They did not deny Christ's name.
 - b. They held to the faith Christ planted within them.
2. Like the saints in Pergamum, we can take heart in knowing that Christ recognizes when we do not bow to the culture around us but rather hold firmly to our faith.

II. The Lord will not allow compromise to go unchecked. (14-16)

Revelation 2:14–16 NASB 2020

'But I have a few things against you, because you have *some* there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality. So you too, have some who in the same way hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will wage war against them with the sword of My mouth.

1. A powerful lesson for us here is that an otherwise good church quickly becomes an enemy of Christ if we allow false teaching to have a place among us.
 - a. The compromise of Balaam is an ancient and yet modern compromise.
 - i. Balaam was a prophet of God who refused to speak any words in the prophetic office except what the Lord put in his mouth. However, he had no problem counseling Balak to tempt the sons of Israel with sexual immorality and idolatry.

Numbers 31:16 NASB 2020

Behold, they caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to be unfaithful to the LORD in the matter of Peor, so that the plague took place among the congregation of the LORD!

1. Balaam was a prophet out of order with Christ. That will always be a problem.
 - i. Balaam turned out to be the sort of person who honors God with his mouth but His heart is not with the Lord. Thus He was under the curse of the Lord and died at the hands of the Israelites.

Matthew 15:4–9 NASB 2020

For God said, 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER,' and, 'THE ONE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH.' But you say, 'Whoever says to *his* father or mother, "Whatever I have that would

help you has been given *to God*," he is not to honor his father *or mother*.' And *by this* you have invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition. "You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy about you, by saying:

'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS,

BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.

'AND IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME,

TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN.' "

1.

b. The compromise of the Nicolaitans is also an ancient and dangerous compromise.

i. Many scholars believe that the Nicolaitans were a group of people who sought to syncretize Christian worship with Roman pagan religious practices.

ii. Likewise there are many today who seek to syncretize Western liberal virtues and variations of pagan/new age worship with Christianity.

1. We must not allow any of this to be in our midst. A little yeast quickly leavens a whole lump according to Paul (Gal 5:9).

2. Swift repentance is the only acceptable outcome.

a. Jesus essentially says that the compromising either repent or face Him as an enemy.

i. A compromising church which refuses to repent has the sword of Christ trained upon it.

b. I believe the Lord would want us all to look deep within to be sure that we do not have any compromising tendencies within us.

i. We hold to a Christ-centered, Spirit-lead, Biblical faith in this church because we love Jesus and because we care about offering people the real truth that leads to life rather than ear tickling

- words leading to death.
- ii. The word of the Lord feeds the faithful, but fells the faithless.

III. Overcomers in Christ will be nourished and named by the Lord. (17)

1. He offers us hidden manna.
 - a. Corresponding to the manna the Lord fed Israel in the desert, this is a nourishment from the Lord rather than from the world.
 - b. The Lord's nourishment is far better than anything the world can offer us.
2. He has promised to give us a new covenantal name much like Abraham experienced.

Gospel

Who is God? He is the Lord who carries the Sword of the Word in His mouth.

What has God done? He has prepared judgement for sinners and eternal nourishment for His saints.

Who are we? We are His people whom He has called to live in purity and truth in Him.

What will we do? We will search ourselves to be sure that we are not allowing our pure faith to be tainted by that which is not in alignment with Christ. We will repent of impurity and walk in Christ.

Challenge

Our challenge is to be so rooted in Christ that there is no room for false teaching in our midst.

To Be A Christian Catechism question 227:

Q. How should the Holy Scriptures shape your daily life?

A. I should “hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them” that by the sustaining power of God’s word, I may grow in grace and hold fast to the hope given to me in Christ.

1 John 3:23–24 NASB 2020

This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. The one who keeps His commandments remains in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He remains in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

Our challenge is to be so rooted in Christ that there is no room for false teaching in our midst.

Anything in us which is out of alignment with Christ must be swiftly thrown out of our lives and sifted from our church.