

THE REVELATION OF JOHN

STUDY NUMBER FOUR

Letter to the Church at Pergamos - Rev. 2:12-17

TEXT:

v.12 "And to the messenger of the church in Pergamos write: 'The One who is having the sharp two-edged sword is saying these things:

v.13 I am knowing where you are dwelling, where Satan's throne is; yet you are holding fast 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 is dwelling.

v.14 But I am having a few things against you, because you are having there some who are holding 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 acts of immorality.

v.15 Thus you also are having some who in the same way are holding the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

v.16 Therefore have a change of mind; but if you do not, I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.

v.17 He who is having ears, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches: To him who is gaining the victory, I will give to him the manna which has been hidden, and I will give to him a white stone, and a new name has been written on the stone which no one is knowing except the person who is receiving it.'

INTRODUCTION:

1. Last week, we encountered the SUFFERING CHURCH in the LETTER TO SMYRNA;
2. and two weeks ago, THE EPHESIAN CHURCH, the church that had LEFT ITS FIRST LOVE.
3. We now give our attention to the THIRD LETTER which is to the CHURCH AT PERGAMOS.

In this study we will see:

the CONSEQUENCES of COMPROMISE,

or when the church begins to WALK IN THE WAYS OF THE WORLD.

Nature teaches us many lessons as we observe the various things that happen.

The frog is a very strange creature in that he can be placed in a pan of cold water and then have that pan put over the heat where the water gradually rises in temperature and the frog will make no effort to escape but will stay in the water and literally be boiled to death.

That is a graphic picture of what happens when we begin to COMPROMISE as Christians with the world.

As we had mentioned in our previous letters, these letters can be taken historically to show the panorama of the church:

Whereby in the letter to the church at EPHESUS, we have the APOSTOLIC PERIOD when their love began to cool off.

And then in the letter to the church at SMYRNA, we have the SUFFERING CHURCH when so many were martyred under the Roman domination for the cause of Christ.

We come now to the period historically when, under Constantine, the church was MARRIED TO THE WORLD. This would be from approximately 314 A.D. to 590 A.D.

This was a generation that KNEW NOT THE GOD OF THEIR FATHERS.

It was not the HEAT FROM WITHOUT but the COLDNESS FROM WITHIN.

There is a process that will set in if we are not very careful, and that is:

COMMITMENT moves into the arena of
COMPROMISE and from there
to COMPLACENCY.

You can see it in the history of a country when:

PATRIOTISM turns to APATHY
and APATHY changes into BONDAGE.

Paul Harvey said it real well:

I wish Ralph Nader would figure out a way to get the lead out of the rear end of 15 million Americans who are sitting on the wagon instead of helping to pull it.

What is true of this church at Pergamos is also true individually, and that is:

WE CAN SEE A FIERY COMMITMENT GRADUALLY TURN TOWARD
COMPROMISE AND END UP IN COMPLACENCY.

(Predators in Our Pulpits by Phillip W. Keller)

The layperson who determines above all things to do Christ's bidding, to come under His control, to submit wholeheartedly to the Sovereign Saviour, is inevitably placed in a position of tension between two opposite principles: that of God's will, which is to give and give and give, and that of the world's way, which is to get and get and get. Christ calls us to be generous. Society insists that we be greedy. Christ challenges us to lose our lives for others. Our culture cries out for us to save ourselves at any cost.
pp. 99-100

The greatest problem of this church was not EXTERNAL PERSECUTION; it was INTERNAL IMPURITY.

A few of the members of the assembly held a false doctrine of Baalam and the Nicolaitans. Baalam was responsible for teaching Israel to EAT THINGS SACRIFICED TO IDOLS and to COMMIT FORNICATION. When these believers adopted his doctrine, for example, of participating in the pagan temple feasts, they were actually worshiping the deity involved. Paul had condemned this action earlier at Corinth, concluding that it bordered on demon worship.

In addition, when they committed SEXUAL IMMORALITY, they were also guilty of sinning against God. This is a very common problem. For example, it was claimed:

we have COURTESANS for the sake of pleasure;

we have CONCUBINES for the sake of daily cohabitation;

we have WIVES for the purpose of having children legitimately, and of having a faithful guardian of our household affairs.

Furthermore, the Nicolaitans apparently held the same doctrine.

v.12 "And to the messenger of the church in Pergamos write: 'The One who is having the sharp two-edged sword is saying these things:

Pergamos was historically superior to Ephesus and Smyrna, although it did not equal them in commercial greatness.

Art and literature were encouraged. Pergamos had the honor of possessing one of the finest LIBRARIES in the world. It was second only in size to the great library at Alexandria in Egypt. It boasted a library of 200,000 volumes.

The literary life of Pergamos was known throughout the world, both in the east and the west.

Pergamos, too, had its great PAGAN TEMPLES high above the city. There was a great ledge, upon which was erected the tremendous altar of Zeus.

On the Acropolis, which rose above Pergamos, there were many other temples.

When you visit the city of Athens and see Acropolis and the remains there, you become aware of how these high places in the city became places of religious activity.

The city itself was about 45 miles north of Smyrna and about 75 miles north of Ephesus.

The two parts of the name "PERGAMOS" mean "ELEVATION" and "MARRIAGE."

We can say this church was ELEVATED by Constantine, the emperor, and MARRIED TO THE WORLD.

Epp points out:

The church at Pergamos was located in a great center of idol worship. The idolatry practiced in that locality was largely the worship of nature. Outstanding among the creatures worshiped was the serpent. This may help explain some of the references in the letter.

Here in this letter, then, we have the church that is MARRIED TO THE WORLD INSTEAD OF THE BRIDEGROOM, JESUS CHRIST.

The Lord calls us to a real separation from the world in:

2 Corinthians 6:14-18

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate, says the Lord. And do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you. And I will be a Father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me, says the Lord Almighty."

1 John 2:15-17

Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If any one loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever.

We as believers are to be IN THE WORLD but not OF THE WORLD.

We are to USE the world but not ABUSE it.

Just as Jesus has been introduced in the letter:

1. To the church at EPHESUS as:

"THE ONE WHO IS HOLDING THE 7 STARS IN HIS RIGHT HAND, THE ONE WHO IS WALKING AROUND IN THE MIDDLE OF THE 7 GOLDEN LAMPSTANDS."

2. And to the church at SMYRNA as:

"THE FIRST AND THE LAST, WHO WAS DEAD, AND CAME TO LIFE."

3. So He is now introduced to the church at PERGAMOS as:

"THE ONE WHO IS HAVING THE SHARP TWO-EDGED SWORD."

This takes us back to chapter 1:16:

Revelation 1:16

And having in His right hand seven stars; and coming out of His mouth a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.

Of these three descriptions in the 16th verse, the Spirit of God picks the second one:

"THE ONE WHO IS HAVING A SHARP TWO-EDGED SWORD."

This is a reference to the word of God as it is spoken.

Ephesians 6:17

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

John 12:48

He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.

Jeremiah 23:29

"Is not my word like fire," declares the Lord, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?"

So it is the SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, the WORD OF GOD, that is going to be dominant in this particular letter.

Christ is going to be correcting this church with His word. The word is not only a way THROUGH THE WORLD, but a way to KEEP THE WORLD OUT OF THE CHURCH.

The sword is for JUDGING of believers.

The One who is wielding this sharp two-edged sword is about to divide the FALSE teachers from the TRUE.

Walvoord points out:

Its representation as a double-edged sword indicates, on the one hand, the sword as the word of God which separates the ones who are the vessels of grace from condemnation with the world; and which by its promises and message of salvation cuts loose the chains of sin and condemnation which bind the helpless sinner. On the other hand, the same word of God is the means of condemnation and rejection for those who refuse the message of grace. The word of God is at once the instrument of salvation and the instrument of death.

We need to remember that it is the word of God that is our textbook and is also the basis for our final exam.

This sword of the Spirit, the word of God, has the power:

To CONVICT,

To CONVERT,

And to CONDEMN, depending upon our response to it.

Just as we have done in the other letters, it is time for us to remember who is the One that is now going to be speaking in the following verses. I would only wish that I could fade out of the picture and that Jesus Christ could now be the center of your attention. May the words that He speaks come across with real vibrance and dynamic and also give personal direction for our lives and witness for Him in the 20th century.

v.13 I am knowing where you are dwelling, where Satan's throne is; yet you are holding fast 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 is dwelling.

Jesus is the One who now begins to speak. And as He has made reference in the other letters, He is letting us know that He is the ALL-KNOWING ONE.

And there are three things that we see here.

1. He says:

"I AM KNOWING WHERE YOU ARE DWELLING."

He knows of the circumstances and situations that they are involved in, and we as well.

He knew LOT was in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Proverbs 15:3

The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good.

2 Chronicles 16:9

For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.

1 Kings 19:8, 9

So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the Lord came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

John 1:47, 48

Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

Jesus goes on to say:

"WHERE SATAN'S THRONE IS."

He is not only aware of where the believer is dwelling but also "WHERE SATAN'S THRONE IS."

Epp points out:

Satan has his throne, his base of operations, his headquarters at different places, different times. He is not omnipresent like God, since he is an angelic being. However, Satan is able to move quickly from one locality to another. But he is not all-powerful and all-knowing. And so far as the Christian is concerned, he is to remember that Satan is the defeated foe. His power is beyond that of any of us as human beings, but it is not beyond that of any of us who walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. Satan's kingdom is apparently well organized. Daniel, at one time, had the answer to one of his prayers delayed because of the action of one of Satan's prince leaders, but eventually the message from God reached the prophet in spite of all that Satan and his cohorts could do.

2 Corinthians 4:4

in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

2 Corinthians 2:11

in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes.

2 Corinthians 11:3

But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

2 Corinthians 12:7

And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me--to keep me from exalting myself!

1 Peter 5:8

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

James 4:7

Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

1 John 4:4

You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

SATAN USES VARIOUS STRATEGIES, depending on the circumstances he finds Christians in:

1. At SMYRNA he set up a synagogue opposing the work of the Lord through a religious system.
2. At PERGAMOS he used persecution, even unto death, against believers.

God knows all these things and all else besides. So we can confidently rest our faith in Him who is our faithful Creator and Redeemer. He knows, as no one else does, whether our service is in the power of the SPIRIT or in the FLESH.

Satan is involved both in a COUNTERFEITING and CONFLICTING MINISTRY. It is his purpose also to ATTACK THE MIND.

We see the COUNTERFEITING MINISTRY in the letter to the church at SMYRNA:

Revelation 2:9

I am knowing your tribulation and your poverty, but you are rich, and the blasphemy from those who are saying they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

You can see his CONFLICTING MINISTRY both in SMYRNA and in PERGAMOS.

In SMYRNA we read in:

Revelation 2:10

Do not be fearing the things which you are about to be suffering. Behold, the devil is about to be throwing some of you into prison, in order that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Keep on becoming faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Here in PERGAMOS the persecution results in martyrdom as far as Antipas is concerned.

Walvoord points out:

Satan's throne is a reference to satanic power and the evil religious character of the city of Pergamos, manifested in persecution of Christians and perhaps epitomized in the worship of Esculapius, the serpent god.

McGee points out:

This reveals that religion is big business with Satan because there were so many pagan temples in Pergamos. Satan is not in hell, but is prince of this world, controlling kingdoms and going up and down the earth as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

Spencer points out:

The church at Pergamos was situated in the midst of Satan's headquarters, a very perilous environment. This does not mean that they were necessarily in any danger of life and limb through persecution, as were the saints of Smyrna. On the contrary, Satan had seen that the blood of the martyrs only served to strengthen and develop the body of Christ. Observing the fact that he could not terrorize the Christians at Smyrna in his role as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, the devil changed his tactics and manifested himself as an angel of light.

When I think of Satan's throne in the 20th century, I think of the city of SAN FRANCISCO.

There are four reasons for this:

1. The SATAN WORSHIP that is there.
2. The PEOPLE'S TEMPLE that was there under Jim Jones.
3. The whole HIPPIE MOVEMENT of the 60's centered there.
4. The heavy HOMOSEXUAL POPULATION.

It is interesting to note that in the NEW AGE, there are specific points pinpointed as places to EXPERIENCE BETTER VIBRATIONS and to RECEIVE TRANSMISSIONS from the SPIRIT WORLD. Santa Fe, New Mexico, was one of these locations mentioned in one of the New Age books that I was reading, along with several other cities.

The three reasons for this being "SATAN'S THRONE" can be seen in that it was:

- 1.The center of the WORSHIP OF CAESAR and the emperor was loudly proclaimed to be lord.
- 2.The WORSHIP OF THE SERPENT in many of the pagan temples.
- 3.This was also the headquarters for the WORSHIP OF ZEUS.

The Lord does know where they are dwelling and that this church was in a very hostile environment.

The second thing that the Lord knows about them is in the next phrase:

2. "YET YOU ARE HOLDING FAST MY NAME."

They were holding to Him as being DEITY, to Him as being the TRUE GOD seen in the person of Jesus Christ.

When PETER was quizzed by our Lord as to who he thought He was, Peter passed the exam beautifully when he said:

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Their hostile position had not driven them from their loyalty to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

The third thing that the Lord says about them here is in the next phrase:

3. "AND DID NOT DENY MY FAITH."

Not only did they hold to His DEITY but also to His DOCTRINE, or teachings.

They with MARTIN LUTHER could say,

"Here I stand. God help me."

Revelation 2:2

I am knowing your works, and your toil and endurance (steadfast perseverance), and that you are not able to endure evil men, and you put to the test those who are calling themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false;

John 7:17

If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself.

The verse goes on to say:

"EVEN IN THE DAYS OF ANTIPAS, MY WITNESS, MY FAITHFUL ONE, WHO WAS KILLED AMONG YOU, WHERE SATAN IS DWELLING."

Revelation 1:5

and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who is loving us, and sets us free from our sins by means of His blood,

Revelation 3:14

"And to the messenger of the church in Laodicea write: 'The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, is saying these things:

We are introduced to A VERY FRAGRANT CHRISTIAN here by the name of ANTIPAS. And the Lord describes him in two ways:

1. as His "WITNESS,"
2. as His "FAITHFUL ONE."

Just like Jesus Christ is called these two things in the verses we just read, so ANTIPAS, like his Savior, is a "WITNESS" and a "FAITHFUL ONE."

This tells us that there are two outstanding things that the Lord loves to see in His children:

1. That we would be a good, fruitful WITNESS.
2. That we would be FAITHFUL.

His WITNESS was by his LIFE and LIP,

and his FAITHFULNESS was seen in his KEEPING ON and FINISHING.

He evidently is one of the many martyrs of this particular period known only to the Lord.

We know so little of what our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ have gone through and the suffering they have endured.

Hebrews 11:35-40

Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

(When Your Rope Breaks by Stephen Brown)

In the early seventeenth century, one of the Scottish Covenanters was in jail waiting for his execution when his son's head was brought to him on a platter. He fell back to the ground, stricken beyond belief with the cruelty of his oppressors. Then he picked himself up and very softly said, "It is the Lord. Good is the will of the Lord."

Understanding that everything comes from God and praising Him for it is an effective way to prevent bitterness. Learn to thank God in the little things like traffic jams, late appointments, crying children, angry husbands, and burnt toast. Then when the rope really breaks you will have established a hedge against bitterness.

p. 85

The name "ANTIPAS" means "EVERYONE AGAINST."

This was probably similar to the experience recorded in Acts chapter 7 when STEPHEN stands alone and proclaims Jesus Christ before the Sanhedrin; and it only results in his being taken out and stoned to death following this witness.

Spencer points out:

The name Antipas means "against all." This may be a symbolic name which describes a faithful witness who stood all alone against the forces of evil.

We certainly see this in the apostle PAUL in:

2 Timothy 4:16-17

At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. But the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, in order that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the lion's mouth.

When we think of STEPHEN and his standing alone, the great and glorious message that he preached of Jesus Christ was a tracing of Jewish history from Abraham down to the Christ.

As he traced the Jewish history down to the coming of Messiah and presented Christ as the fulfillment of all that they were looking for, they, in their anger, then rose up and as a savage mob, took him out and stoned him to death.

Walvoord points out:

The church at Pergamos was, as a whole, commended for standing unwaveringly for Christ, even though one of their members had paid the supreme price.

I think it is interesting to note that in this 13th verse, we have the little word "MY" occurring four times:

"MY name,"

"MY faith,"

"MY witness,"

"MY faithful one."

These are the four major things that the Lord addresses in this verse:

1. "MY NAME" reminds us of:

Acts 4:12

And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.

2. "MY FAITH" reminds us of:

Hebrews 11:6

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

3. "MY WITNESS" reminds us of:

1 Peter 3:15

but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to every one who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence

Acts 1:8

but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth

4. "MY FAITHFUL ONE" reminds us of:

Matthew 25:23

His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master."

v.14 But I am having a few things against you, because you are having there some who are holding 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 acts of immorality.

Here in this 14th verse, "BUT" forms the contrast and causes us to move from:

CONFIRMATION to CRITICISM,

or,

from AFFIRMATION TO ADMONITION.

"BUT I AM HAVING A FEW THINGS AGAINST YOU."

Revelation 2:4

But I am having this against you, that you left your first love.

For the church at SMYRNA there were no words of criticism or admonition, and there is a TOTAL ABSENCE OF ANYTHING AGAINST THEM.

He only had one thing against the church at EPHESUS and that was that they had LEFT THEIR FIRST LOVE.

In this particular letter now, it is:

"I AM HAVING A FEW THINGS AGAINST YOU."

The first thing that he mentions is:

1. "BECAUSE YOU ARE HAVING THERE SOME WHO ARE HOLDING THE TEACHING OF BALAAM."

This is different from the church at EPHESUS:

Revelation 2:2

I am knowing your works and your toil and endurance (steadfast perseverance), and that you are not able to endure evil men, and you put to the test those who are calling themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false

Ryrie points out:

The condemnation was in the realm of morals. In the doctrine of Balaam, recorded from Numbers 22:1-25:9, Balaam, finding himself unable to curse God's people, instructed Balak, king of Moab, to corrupt them through immorality and idolatry so that God eventually judged them. His doctrine is the teaching of compromise in life. p. 25

Since Balaam was unable to CURSE them, he took the second route of CORRUPTING them.

Spencer points out:

In spite of the many evidences of faithfulness during previous times of duress, there was a terrible tolerance of evil within the fellowship of believers in Pergamos. The church was putting up with false teachers who were promulgating the heretical teachings of the pseudo-prophet Balaam and of Nicholas. Theirs was a grand testimony, tragically marred by the kind of broadmindedness which is actually disobedience. Balaam's error was that he thought that God could be persuaded to curse Israel (Jude 11). His way of error was brought about by his love of money, to the end that he sought to sell his prophetic gift to those who hated the people of God (2 Peter 2:15). His doctrine or teaching was that intermarriage with the heathen and compromise in worship was perfectly proper in the sight of God.

The sad thing about our day is that such nice people are broadminded.

McGee points out:

When Balaam could not curse Israel, he told Balak that by sending the Moabite women into the camp of Israel, he would bring about fornication and the introduction of idolatry into the homes through mixed marriages. From Genesis to Revelation God warns against intermarriage of believer and unbeliever. It was in this period of church history that the world entered the church. Spiritual worship was destroyed and pagan practices were introduced. When the devil found that he could not hurt the church from the outside, he joined the church and did his work on the inside.

It was a case of INFILTRATION with the FALSE.

The church at Pergamos had failed to deal with this problem of error and false teaching, and thus became a church of COMPROMISE.

Just like LOT SAW THE WELL-WATERED PLAINS OF JORDAN and chose them to be his place of dwelling, he became a picture of what it is like for the believer to be married to the world and live for the things of this world.

The tragic results of this teaching are three-fold:

1. It is to put a STUMBLING BLOCK before the sons of Israel.
2. To EAT THINGS SACRIFICED TO IDOLS.
3. To commit ACTS OF IMMORALITY.

Living in the society in which they were living, where it would be very difficult to buy meat that had not been offered to idols; and also to be caught up in the heathen worship and the immorality of the day, would indeed take someone most strong in his personal and moral life.

(Evidence for Joy: Unlocking the Secrets of Being Loved, Accepted and Se

Does it trouble you that in the next 30 minutes, 285 children will become victims of broken homes; parents will beat, molest, or otherwise abuse 228 children; 685 teenagers will take some form of narcotics; and 57 kids will run away from their homes? Or that 5,000 new people each day will try cocaine?
p. 15

On any school day in America:

there are 2,700 teenagers who become pregnant,
3,700 who drop out of school,
and each year 700,000 graduates cannot even read their own diploma,
there are 30 million illiterate in America.

(Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist
by John Piper)

There is a deep difference between the temporary thrill of a new toy and a homecoming hug from a devoted friend. Who do you think has the deepest, most satisfying joy in life, the man who pays \$140 for a fortieth-floor suite downtown and spends his evening in the half-lit, smoke-filled lounge impressing strange women with ten-dollar cocktails, or the man who chooses the Motel 6 by a vacant lot of sunflowers and spends his evening watching the sunset and writing a love letter to his wife?
p. 157

(Against The Night: Living in the New Dark Ages
by Charles Colson and Ellen Santilli Vaughn)

Societies are tragically vulnerable when the men and women who compose them lack character. A nation or a culture cannot endure for long unless it is undergirded by common values such as valor, public-spiritedness, respect for others and for the law; it cannot stand unless it is populated by people who will act on motives superior to their own immediate interest. Keeping the law, respecting human life and property, loving one's family, fighting to defend national goals, helping the unfortunate, paying taxes--all these depend on the individual virtues of courage, loyalty, charity, compassion, civility, and duty.
p. 67

(Is It Worth Dying For? by Robert S. Eliot, M.D., and Dennis L. Breo)

The Hamadryas baboon forms a strong lifelong attachment to its mate. Russian researchers removed male baboons from their mates and placed them some distance away--perhaps 14 feet--in a separate cage and in full view of the mate. A new male was placed in the female's cage. The displaced baboon was forced to observe his longterm mate with a new lover. He was helpless to change the situation, yet had to endure it. With no alteration in diet or any other factor, within six months the baboons experienced the whole spectrum of heart disease in the modern industrial world: some developed high blood pressure, some had heart attacks, and some died of sudden cardiac death.
p. 17

(Gee Whiz . . . I'm Old by Agnes Durant Pylant)

The best simile of all, however, is the dachshund dog.

There was a little dachshund once
So long he had no notion
How long it took to notify
His tail of his emotion.
And thus it was that though his eyes
Were filled with woe and sadness,
His little tail kept wagging on
Because of previous gladness.
p. 28

Whereas the main concern of the letter to the church at EPHESUS was THEIR LOVE, the major concern here is the TEACHING, or the DOCTRINE.

v.15 Thus you also are having some who in the same way are holding the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

Back in verse 14 it was:

"HOLDING THE TEACHING OF BALAAM."

And now here in verse 15 it is:

"HOLDING THE TEACHING OF THE NICOLAITANS."

Not only is the church involved in the:

"TEACHING OF BALAAM,"

but also there are some here who are:

"HOLDING THE TEACHING OF THE NICOLAITANS."

This could be a comparable group in that they were promoting LICENSE TO SIN and "DO YOUR OWN THING" among believers, but it is believed to be more accurate to think of it in terms of its actual meaning from the Greek root "NIKAW" which means "to conquer" and "LAITY" which refers to the "laity."

This reminds us of verse 6 in the letter to the church at EPHESUS:

Revelation 2:6

But this you are having, that you are hating the work of the Nicolaitans, which I also am hating.

Whereas the church at EPHESUS HATED THIS,
the church in PERGAMOS TOLERATED IT.

It was DEEDS in EPHESUS;

it is DOCTRINE here.

1 Peter 5:1-3

Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow-elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

3 John 9, 10

I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words and not satisfied with this, neither does he himself receive the brethren, and he forbids those who desire to do so, and puts them out of the church.

v.16 Therefore have a change of mind; but if you do not, I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.

The word "THEREFORE" points us back to the few things that He has against them and He then issues a command:

"HAVE A CHANGE OF MIND."

REPENT, in other words.

We have a COMMAND first of all:

"THEREFORE HAVE A CHANGE OF MIND," or repent.

Deal with these problems in discipline that have to do with false teaching that is among the flock.

The only cure in this situation is for REPENTANCE--to "HAVE A CHANGE OF MIND."

It is Spencer who says:

Five out of seven of the churches in these two chapters are warned by the Son of Man to "repent, or else." We are quite safe in saying that since these seven churches represent the church as a whole. Throughout the church age, five out of seven churches in our day are in need of repentance.

It is a real mistake to assume that all is well in the church. The people resist the preaching of the whole word of God and clamor for pleasant sermons that do not offend the self-satisfied membership. Then we can know for sure that a Spirit-led revival is greatly needed.

Revival is nothing less than a new beginning of obedience to God, a breaking of heart, and getting down in the dust before Him with deep humility and forsaking of sin. A revival breaks the power of the world and of sin over Christians. The charm of the world is broken and the power of sin is overcome. Truths to which our hearts are unresponsive suddenly become living; whereas, mind and conscience may assent to truth. When revival comes, obedience to the truth is the one thing that matters.

(Against The Night: Living in the New Dark Ages
by Charles Colson and Ellen Santilli Vaughn)

The problem will only be adequately addressed when we deal with the individualism and relativism that are destroying the notions of duty and commitment central to the marital and familial bond.

p. 128

With the command also comes a two-fold warning:

"BUT IF YOU DO NOT":

1. "I AM COMING TO YOU QUICKLY,"
2. "I WILL MAKE WAR AGAINST THEM WITH THE SWORD OF

MY MOUTH."

The church at Pergamos may compromise and tolerate this teaching, but the Lord recognizes that it must be dealt with quickly. It is interesting to note the distinction that the Lord sees between the true believers and these apostates who are teaching error.

And He goes on to say:

"I WILL MAKE WAR AGAINST THEM WITH THE SWORD OF MY MOUTH."

The Lord Jesus will use the SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, which is the WORD OF GOD, DIVINE TRUTH, to deal with this problem that is in Pergamos.

We now understand why He introduces the letter in verse 12 with this statement from chapter 1:16 that describes Him.

Revelation 1:16

And having in His right hand seven stars; and coming out of His mouth a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.

John 12:48

He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.

(On the Anvil by Max Lucado)

He wanted a life he couldn't have. He had a life he couldn't handle.

Juan was caught in a shouting match between the world on one side and a handful of us on the other. "Life isn't worth it!" screamed the world. "Yes it is," we yelled back. "No it isn't." "Yes it is!" And there was Juan in the middle, caught and confused. He'd look at us--then at the world. A puppy between two masters. Finally, we were outshouted. "You're right, it isn't worth it!" He despaired and jumped.

p. 64

(Against The Night: Living in the New Dark Ages
by Charles Colson and Ellen Santilli Vaughn)

Pollsters tell us that fifty million Americans say they are born again. No doubt about it, religion is up. But so are practices unremittently opposed to the truth of Christianity: one out of every two marriages is shattered by divorce; one out of three pregnancies ends in abortion. Homosexuality is no longer considered deviant or depraved behavior; it is an alternative life-style. Crime continues to soar: in "Christian" America there are one hundred times more burglaries than in "pagan" Japan.

Sin abounds in the midst of unprecedented religiosity.

Why?

p. 164

(The Martyred Christian: 160 Readings from Deitrich Bonhoeffer)

It is true that encounter with Jesus meant the reversal of all human values.

p. 5

(The Snare by Lois Mowday)

Getting rid of denial

If you recognize denial as a part of your own life, then consider taking the following steps.

- * Admit the truth. Whatever it may be, just admit it to yourself.
- * Risk admitting the truth to your spouse or the person you are involved with.
- * Be willing to live with some pain as you go through the process of working out unresolved issues.
- * Determine to live by biblical standards--no matter what happens.
- * Replace denial with God's perspective of your problems or needs.
- * Seek help, if needed, to determine God's perspective.
- * Recognize that your problems and needs can be met in a godly way.

p. 37

v.17 He who is having ears, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches: To him who is gaining the victory, I will give to him the manna which has been hidden, and I will give to him a white stone, and a new name has been written on the stone which no one is knowing except the person who is receiving it.'

1 Corinthians 2:14

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

He then goes on to say in this verse:

"TO HIM WHO IS GAINING THE VICTORY."

This refers, as we have learned in our previous two letters, to the BORN-AGAIN BELIEVER, one who has continued to be faithful to walk with the Lord.

There is a THREE-FOLD promise that is given to this person, or persons, in the latter part of this 17th verse:

The first is seen in the phrase:

1. "I WILL GIVE TO HIM THE MANNA WHICH HAS BEEN

HIDDEN."

The "HIDDEN MANNA" suggests to us the manna in the wilderness and the pot of manna that was placed in the ark (Hebrews 9:4). This manna speaks of the person and death of Christ:

John 6:32-35

Jesus therefore said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world." They said therefore to Him, "Lord, evermore give us this bread." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."

He is indeed food for us.

Psalm 34:8

Taste and see that the Lord is good;
blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.

Ryrie points out:

The hidden manna is the sufficiency of Christ in contrast to the allurements of the world which compromise offered.

Walvoord points out:

This seems to refer to the benefits of fellowship with Christ and the spiritual strength that is afforded by that experience.

Whereas the first thing that is going to be given is:

1. "I WILL GIVE TO HIM THE MANNA WHICH HAS BEEN

HIDDEN."

The second thing that is going to be given:

2. "AND I WILL GIVE TO HIM A WHITE STONE."

Ryrie points out:

The meaning of the white stone with the new name written is derived from either or both of two customs of the day. The first was that of judges who determined a verdict by placing in an urn a white and a black pebble. If the white one came out, it meant acquittal. Thus the white stone would mean the assurance that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. The other custom was the wearing of amulets as good luck charms around the neck. if this is the reference, then the stone is the Lord's way of reminding the people that they had Him and needed no other thing.

Whereas He is our FOOD in the "HIDDEN MANNA,"

He is our FREEDOM in the "WHITE STONE."

Christ is all we need:

Colossians 3:11b

. . . Christ is all, and in all.

Through the BLOOD of CHRIST, we have been washed "white as snow."

Isaiah 1:18

"Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord.
"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as
white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they
shall be like wool."

1. Whereas the MANNA, which is hidden, speaks to us of
FOOD,

2. And the WHITE STONE speaks to us of FREEDOM IN
CHRIST in that we have been set free from the
bondage of sin and death,

In the third we see our FUTURE:

3. "AND A NEW NAME HAS BEEN WRITTEN ON THE STONE WHICH
NO ONE IS KNOWING EXCEPT THE PERSON WHO IS
RECEIVING IT."

The OVERCOMER has:

1. The promise of the HIDDEN MANNA, which refers to Jesus
Christ;

2. And a WHITE STONE, which refers to their freedom from
condemnation and judgment in this person of Jesus
Christ.

3. And thirdly, a NEW NAME written on the stone which no
one knows except the person who is receiving it.

Walvoord points out:

In the Old Testament the high priest had the names of the twelve tribes of Israel inscribed upon the stones carried upon his breast, symbolic of the fact that whenever he appeared before God, he was a mediator, representing the entire twelve tribes of Israel. Here is the name that belongs to the individual. Some consider it to be that of Jehovah, the unspoken name of God in the Old Testament. Others have regarded it as a personal name, indicating their own enrollment in heaven. Whatever its character, the name symbolizes the personal heritage of the glories that are beyond this world and the assurance of eternal salvation. Christians in this modern day, as well as Christians in the church at Pergamos, are reminded by this scripture that it is God's purpose to separate them from all evil and compromise, and to have them as His peculiar inheritance throughout all eternity. However difficult their lot in this life, they are assured infinite blessing in the life to come.

Back in verse 13, as Jesus begins this message to the church at Pergamos, He says:

"I AM KNOWING WHERE YOU ARE DWELLING, WHERE SATAN'S THRONE IS; YET YOU ARE HOLDING FAST MY NAME."

The NAME equals OUR PERSONAL HERITAGE beyond this life. It is the ASSURANCE of ETERNAL SALVATION.

John 1:12

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.

1 Peter 1:3-5

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Just like in marriage, the bride receives a new name, so we too through our union with Jesus Christ will receive a new name. No one knows it except the person who is receiving it.

The stone is like a DIAMOND. The diamond tells the young lady, "You belong to me," and we then begin looking forward to a wedding.

What a glorious anticipation is ours as believers in Christ as we look forward to the WEDDING SUPPER OF THE LAMB.

Philippians 3:18, 19

For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.

These are compromising in every area of their lives. The Lord Jesus is the one who has the "SHARP TWO-EDGED SWORD," that is, the word of truth. And as He speaks to the church at Pergamos, it is a church that is involved in COMPROMISE.

So much of COMPROMISE today is seen in the realm of:

MORALS,

MARRIAGE,

and MINISTRY.

May God cause us to come under deep conviction of the Holy Spirit:

to REPENT,

to CHANGE OUR MIND,

to TURN OUR BACK on the allurements of the world

and MAKE A FRESH NEW COMMITMENT to Jesus Christ

and a HEART FILLED WITH OBEDIENCE to His word.

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: The Lord uses the WORD to judge our lives.

1 Corinthians 11:31, 32

But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world.

LESSON #2: The Lord Jesus wants us married to Him, rather than to the world.

LESSON #3: Pergamos was holding fast to the DEITY and DOCTRINE of Jesus

LESSON #4: Antipas is called a "WITNESS" and a "FAITHFUL ONE."

LESSON #5: It is the Lord's desire that we separate from those who are teaching error.

LESSON #6: The "HIDDEN MANNA" found in Jesus Christ is to be our spiritual sustenance.

LESSON #7: Jesus Christ is ours to enjoy and gives much more than the w

LESSON #8: It is a sin to be broadminded when the truth is narrow.

Is your name in the Lamb's book of life?

Christian, how important is the world to you?

Do not make the mistake of living for the temporary.

Jesus Christ is:

our FOOD,

our FREEDOM

and our FUTURE.

(Healing Grace by David Seamands)

Perhaps you've heard this good news-bad news story.

A farmer who had experienced several bad years went to see the manager of his bank.

"I've got some good news and some bad news to tell you. Which would you like to hear first?" he asked. "Why don't you give me the bad news first and get it over with?" the banker replied.

"Okay. With the bad drought and inflation and all, I won't be able to pay anything on my mortgage this year; either on the principle or the interest." "Well, that is pretty bad."

"It gets worse. I also won't be able to pay anything on the loan for all that machinery I bought, nor on the principle or interest."

"Wow, that is bad."

"It's worse than that. You remember I also borrowed to buy seeds and fertilizer and other supplies. Well, I can't pay anything on that either--principle or interest."

"That's awful--and that's enough! Tell me what the good news is."

"The good news," replied the farmer with a smile, "is that I intend to keep on doing business with you."

p. 108

(Help Lord My Whole Life Hurts by Carole Mayhall)

God uses failure to soften us, because the hurt of defeat makes us sympathetic with the weaknesses of others.

How can I be judgmental of others when I have failed myself? We must believe that God permits failure--that a loving God permits hard things; because the hard things bring the greatest victories, the deepest lessons, the most lasting changes. Hannah Whitall Smith wrote in *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*:

To the child of God, everything comes directly from their Father's hands, no matter who or what may have been the apparent agents. There are no "second causes" for them. Second causes must all be under the control of our Father, and not one of them can touch us except with His knowledge and by His permission.

It may be the sin of man that originates the action, and therefore the thing itself cannot be said to be the will of God; but by the time it reaches us it has become God's will for us, and must be accepted as directly from His hands. No man or company of men, no power in earth or heaven, can touch that soul which is abiding in Christ, without first passing through His encircling presence, and receiving the seal of His permission. . . . Nothing can disturb or harm us, except He shall see that it is best for us, and shall stand aside to let it pass.
p. 36

(Love Her . . . Like Him by Pat and Jill Williams)

"Our lives may be a scrap pile, but God can build trophies from scrap piles. To gain God's perspective on your wounds, keep an eye out for how He has used and can use your pain and failures and wounds for good."
p. 183

(Predators in our Pulpits by Phillip W. Keller)

It is in this manner, as you choose to deliberately lay down your life daily for Him and for others, that you discover the stimulating surge of His presence--His very life, His love, His Spirit, His energy and strength--surging into your spirit, into your soul, into your very body. He does in fact become your life! It is no longer you but Christ living in you that enables you to move and live and have your very being in quiet obedience to His will.

Only in this way (His way) do you come to know firsthand the essential character of the Risen Christ. He becomes your closest confidant. He is your dearest associate. He is the motivation and inspiration for your very life. He is your life itself, as He Himself said so plainly: "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing!" (John 15:5).

p. 140

(Against The Night: Living in the New Dark Ages
by Charles Colson and Ellen Santilli Vaughn)

I believe it's because many Christians fall into the same trap my editor friend did. We treat our faith like a section of the newspaper or an item on our "Things to Do Today" list. We file religion in our schedules between relatives and running. It's just one of the many concerns competing for our attention.

Not that we aren't serious about it. We go to church and attend Bible studies. But we're just as serious about our jobs and physical fitness.

The typical believer, says Harry Blamires, prays sincerely about his work but never talks candidly with his non-Christian colleagues about his faith. He is only comfortable evaluating his spiritual life in a "spiritual" context. This results in a spiritual schizophrenia as the Christian bounces back and forth between the stock market and sanctification.

Such categorizing would be plausible if Christianity were nothing more than a moral code, an AA pledge, or a self-help course. But Christianity claims to be the central fact of human history: the God who created man invaded the world in the person of Jesus Christ, died, was resurrected, ascended, and lives today, sovereign over all.

If this claim is valid--if Christianity is true--then it cannot be simply a file drawer in our crowded lives. It must be the central truth from which all our behavior, relationships, and philosophy flow.
p. 165

The hymnwriter has it right:

"I HAVE DECIDED TO FOLLOW JESUS"

I have decided to follow Jesus.
I have decided to follow Jesus.
I have decided to follow Jesus.
No turning back.
No turning back.

The world behind me, the cross before me.
The world behind me, the cross before me.
The world behind me, the cross before me.
No turning back.
No turning back.

Though none go with me, I still will follow.
Though none go with me, I still will follow.
Though none go with me, I still will follow.
No turning back.
No turning back.

Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
No turning back.
No turning back.

THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

Love not the world, neither the things that are
in the world. 1 John 2:15

While switching channels on TV recently, my attention was drawn to a well-known performer--one who has publicly declared his faith in Christ. He was introducing a woman friend as a guest on the program. And from the way she was dressed, it was quite obvious she was no Sunday school teacher! Together they strolled to the front of the stage as the audience gave them a thunderous applause. The comments that followed were suggestive and degrading. I turned off the set in disgust. But the picture of that Christian man walking hand-in-hand with that ungodly woman was fixed in my mind.

It reminded me of a poem I first heard as a youngster. One of the stanzas begins like this: