

**Series: Letters from Jesus**

**March 23, 2016**

**Message: The Church on Satan's Turf**

**Scripture: Rev. 2: 12-17**

**Introduction:** Christ's third letter is addressed to the Church in Pergamum (NASB+NIV) /Pergamos (KJV). This city was the capital of the Roman province of Asia. The chief characteristic of the city was its deeply entrenched idol worship and immortality. Believers in this city found themselves bombarded by temptation. The idol worship led to the immorality. The wickedness of this city led Jesus to call it where Satan's throne or seat is located.

When a person is convicted of sin and chooses to repent and place faith in Jesus alone for salvation the person is eternally saved. Nothing can change this truth! Once a person experiences this new birth the person is a part of God's family. The person is now a part of the Body of Christ. In this family God desires for the new believer to grow to in love for God and others, to live out the truths and commands of Jesus with a desire for holiness, and to serve others. As the believer follows Christ in this loving, living, and serving the result is God works through the believer to make disciples.

Believers do however continue to struggle with sin. Inside a war is waging for control. The old sin nature's influence continues to attack urging sin while the Holy Spirit who now indwells the person urges the believer to choose faith and obedience. When a believer faces the challenge of being placed in an evil environment the struggle is more intense yet NOT impossible.

Jesus describes Himself as the One with the sharp two edged sword. Jesus is the Word and Jesus also holds the Word of God. (**Hebrews 4:12-13**)

Through His Word He can free each believer from sin's power. His Word is the standard which He expects us to follow.

### **(Illustration – Joseph in Potiphar's house – Genesis 39)**

#### **1. Jesus commends the faithful (vs. 13)**

- a. Jesus knew the struggle and He saw the ones who had remained faithful to Him
- b. Jesus commended these faithful for **3 reasons**:
  - i. **Holding fast His Name** – This means they wore the Name of Christ well & did not bring shame to His Name.
  - ii. **Holding fast His Faith** – This refers to living out the truths and commands of Jesus Christ. It means refusing to water down the truth to try to fit in or make it more appealing to the world.
  - iii. **Being faithful in the face of ultimate persecution**- These believers continued to be faithful even though one of their own, Antipas had been martyred.

#### **2. Jesus rebukes those who have compromised (vs.14-15)**

- a. Jesus said some in the church had compromised His Name and His Faith and He took it very seriously.
- b. Jesus said the unfaithful were following two doctrinal errors
- c. **The teaching of Balaam**- Balaam's story is found in Number 25 & 31. Balaam advised the king of Moab to use the Moabite women to seduce the men of Israel. Once they intermarried then the women could bring the idol worship into the home and influence the children. In Pergamum some of the believers intermarried with non-believers and added the idol worship with its immorality to their lifestyle while still claiming to walk with Christ

- d. **The teaching of the Nicolaitans** – in this case it seems to be referring to a warped view of Christian Freedom. Basically the teaching was our forgiveness covers all sin so it is okay to indulge in the sins of the culture. The truth of God's holiness is ignored while the truth of His love is misused to excuse sin. (**Galatians 5:13**)

### 3. **Jesus calls the church family to repent (vs. 16)**

- a. Those who had compromised were to repent. They were to recognize the wrong beliefs, see their actions as sin, and express brokenness and a desire to turn from the sin. Once they had received Christ's forgiveness they were to be restored to the church and begin to walk in holiness.
- b. The church was to no longer ignore the sin. The church was not to allow these who continued to compromise in these lifestyles do be a part of the church as if nothing was wrong. If they did not repent the church was to exercise discipline. This should never be an easy or joyful experience. Exercising discipline as a church should be done in love, with patience, desiring to see the person restored. However, we must also understand that Jesus takes the purity of His Bride seriously and if a person does not respond to the attempted discipline then the church must be obedient. Matthew 18:15-20 / 1 Tim. 1:18-20
- c. Jesus promises consequences. If those involved in this sin did not repent **and** if the church did not take action Jesus would move swiftly with His Word to deal with the church. It is a sad day when Jesus has to make war against those who claim to follow Him. It is important to note that just because we may be facing difficulties or persecution we are still accountable to carry well the Name and Faith of Jesus.

### 4. **Jesus reminds them of 3 encouraging truths (vs. 17)**

- a. Hidden manna – Jesus is their spiritual food and strength to stand. Fellowship with Him would feed and strengthen them for the daily battles. Manna had to be picked up daily. Our time being fed by Jesus also needs to be daily
- b. White Stone – This represents being acquitted. By Jesus Blood each one of them had been forgiven and made acceptable to God.
- c. New Name – Jesus makes each believer into a new creation. We now carry our Father's Name and are promised His inheritance. This could also mean a special name for each of us like a nickname. This would signify the uniqueness of our relationship with the Father.

### **Conclusion**

Have you trusted Christ alone for forgiveness?

Are we holding fast His Name and Faith?