
CHAPTER 2

Jesus' Evaluation of Ministry: Message to the Seven Churches

The Danger of Compromise: A Message to the Church at Pergamum

Revelation 2:12-17

RECAP

- (1) The importance and necessity of the evaluation of the churches
- (2) The significance of the one doing the evaluation
- (3) The evaluation of the church at Ephesus: the loveless church
- (4) The evaluation of the church at Smyrna: the suffering church

Today's evaluation focuses on the church at Pergamum

Depending on the situation compromise can be a good thing. If two family members have a disagreement and agree to reach a compromise that would be beneficial for both parties that is a good thing. If two companies are seeking to merge and come to a compromise that benefits both parties that's a good thing. If a coach and a player has a difference of opinion in regard to an approach to a particular game and come to a compromise that could be a good thing. If two countries at war comes to a compromise to end the war that could be a good thing. Most married couples arrive at the point of compromise in their marriage knowing that it is sometimes best to reach a consensus than to win an argument. So compromising is not necessarily a bad thing, if you desire success in marriage.

On the other hand, there is a compromise that is cancerous. It operates like an infectious disease; at first there are no symptoms and when the first symptom appear it is dismissed. Soon the compromise has spread from one area of the body to the next. . Chuck Swindoll states that, "like a cancerous tumor that penetrates and spreads through healthy flesh, compromise allows the sinews of falsehood to invade the truth, ultimately destroying it."¹ Only a sharp scalpel in the hands of a precise surgeon can remove the cancer without killing the patient. Likewise, Christ, the Great Physician, is qualified not only to diagnose, but also to successfully treat the insidious disease of compromise."

Today we are going to encounter a compromise in the church at Pergamum that led to a very

¹ Swindoll, Charles R.

critical evaluation by the One who has the sharp two-edged sword.

12 “**And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this.**”

1. Christ Sovereign Judge Over the Church (v. 12)

In other words Jesus is the one doing the evaluation. Notice how He (Jesus) quickly points out that it is He who holds the sharp two-edge sword. The sword is a symbolic representation of the Word of God’s twofold ability to separate believers from the world and to condemn the world for its sin. It was the sword of salvation as well as the sword of death

16 “**In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword;**” (Revelation 1:16)

16 “**Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.**” (Revelation 2:16)

15 “From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations”... (Revelation 19:15)

21 “And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse”... (Revelation 19:21).

17 And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17).

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” (Hebrews 4:12).

2. Christ Commends the Church for Its Faithfulness (v. 13):

Just like to two churches before (Ephesus & Smyrna) Christ after introducing Himself evaluates the church’s strengths and weaknesses.

13 “**I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is; and you hold 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 dwells.**”

‘I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is.

Where is Satan’s throne?

According to Walvoord, “This may refer to the great temple of Asclepius, a pagan god of healing

represented in the form of a serpent.”²

8. “Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; 9. and he said to Him, “All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me” (Matthew 4:8–9).

13. “But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia” (Daniel 10:13).

13. **“... and you hold 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 dwells”**

There is not much known about Antipas (against all) other than he was persecuted for his faith. Notice Christ words concerning Antipas.

“My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.”

Christ first commends the church for standing strong in the mist of Satan’s kingdom. Note: “My name” demonstrates personal loyalty and “my faith” seems to indicate the truth of Christ gospel.

3. Christ Indicts the Church for Its Compromise (vv. 14-15)

Observe, the compromise of the church is not in its faith but rather in its teaching.

“Who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak; teaching of the Nicolaitans.”

Christ reference to Balaam refers back to Numbers 22-25. Bā’ lām was a non-Israelite prophet whom Balak, king of Moab, promised a fee if he would curse the Israelites; Balaam could not curse Israel because of God, so he perfected a deception. Balaam counseled King Balak to cause Israel to sin through intermarriage with heathen women and through idol-worship. Balaam introduce a plan that would cause the nation to compromise, thus removing themselves from God’s blessings. Introduce the men to unbelieving women who worship other gods. This will be a defining character of the nation of Israel from this point on (cf. Ezra; 1 Kings – Solomon). Intermarriage with heathen women was a problem in Pergamum where any social contact with the world also involved worship of idols and encouraged idolatry, sexual immorality and all sort of impurities. The meat in the marketplace was usually meat offered to idols.

15. **“Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness”** (2 Peter 2:15).

Realize in this evaluation that Christ is not indicting the “false teachers,” but rather “the faithful.”

² Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 936). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

It was the compromise of the faithful that brought the indictment.

Remember the church at Ephesus received commendation from Jesus for hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans; we see here that Pergamum accepted the Nicolaitans. Whereas the church at Ephesus accepted the sinner but rejected the sin; the church at Pergamum accepted both the sinner and the sin. Swindoll states that, “they compromise doctrine and morality for the sake of peace and unity.”

4. Christ Warns the Church to Repent (v. 16)

16 **“Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.”**

Repent. The verb means to “change” previous ways, both spiritually and ethically. In this context it means to change their approach and take a strong stance against the false teaching. To fail to do so would constitute sin. (Osborne, 146)

“Or else I am coming to you quickly”...

Note this coming is not a good one. “Coming to you quickly” is a reference to judgement (Osborne, 146). The text is indicating that the coming is not just for the false teachers but to the whole church. The believers are given a choice; go to war against the false teacher or God will go to war against them (1 Cor. 6:15-16).

“I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth”.

5. Christ Invitation and Promise to the Church (v. 17)

17 **“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him 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 but he who receives it.”**

Like the two churches before (Ephesus and Smyrna) there is once again an invitation to those who have an ear to hear and who overcomes. A promise is also made to the overcomers; a threefold promise

(1). The receiving of hidden manner. The “hidden manna” is a reference to Christ as the Bread from heaven, the unseen source of the believer’s nourishment and strength. Whereas Israel received physical food, manna, the church receives spiritual food.

48 **“I am the bread of life.** 49 **“Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.** 50 **“This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.** 51 **“I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh” (John 6:48–51).**

(2). A white stone: no one knows the identity of the white stone

(3). A new name: a name that no one knows but God.

Application and Warning

- (a) Compromise never occurs quickly
- (b) Compromise always lowers the original standard
- (c) Compromise is seldom offensive
- (d) Compromise is often the first step towards total disobedience

Do Not Compromise your walk with Christ!!!