

A Caution Against Compromise (*Part 2*)
A Treatise Against Tolerance
Revelation 2:12-17

Thought for the Day: When we compromise with sin and tolerate it in any area of our life, we are guilty of spiritual adultery against the Lord. Spiritual adultery is the forsaking of our love for God and the embracing of the world's values and desires.

The church in Ephesus was guilty of forsaking her first love for the Lord Jesus Christ. The church in Smyrna was the suffering church. It shows us the biblical priority of pursuing eternal, spiritual wealth vs. temporal, material wealth. The church in Pergamum was tolerating sin and allowing false doctrines to be propagated in the church. It teaches us the danger of committing spiritual adultery against the Lord.

I. The Greeting (2:12)

12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.

- This sword is a symbol of the righteous judgment that Jesus will execute against His enemies.
- It is startling here that Jesus is threatening to use this sword against people who are in the church.
- There were two groups of people that the Lord was threatening to deal with:
 - 1) Those who held to the false teachings and evil practices of Balaam and the Nicolaitans (i.e., idol worship and sexual immorality)
 - 2) Those in the church who were compromising the truth and righteousness by tolerating the presence and activity of those in group one.

II. The Commendation (2:13)

13 I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

- There were at least some in the church who maintained steadfast faithfulness to the Lord even though they were living in the very center of Satan's dominion. They were faithful in the face of intense intimidation!
- Like the church in Smyrna, the believers in Pergamum had suffered significant persecution.
- Jesus gave Antipas the title of "faithful witness," the title given to Jesus Himself in Revelation 1:5. Jesus gladly identifies Himself with those who bravely identify with Him.
- Jesus symbolically described Pergamum as the location of Satan's throne.
- Various false gods were worshipped in Pergamum, any one of which, or all of them together, being reasonably called Satan's throne.
 - 1) There was the worship of the Roman emperor (as in Smyrna). Pergamum had

- built the first temple in the Roman empire dedicated to the worship of Caesar.
- 2) There was the worship of the Greek gods: Dionysus, the god of wine, and Asklepios, the god of healing—each of whom had their own temples.
 - Snakes were associated with the worship of both of these gods.
 - Even today, in connection with the medical practices, there is the symbol of a snake curled around a staff. This was the symbol of Asklepios.
 - Revelation 12:9; 20:2 – "...that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan."
 - 3) Other Greek gods that were worshiped in Pergamum included Athena and Demeter.
 - Bear in mind that behind every false god and false religion is Satan himself.
 - Pergamum may have been the most outwardly pagan city of all the ones mentioned in Revelation 2-3. (*Charles Ryrie, Revelation, p. 87*)
 - Pergamum was "such a uniquely pagan place that it was as if Satan had set up his headquarters there." (*Mark Hitchcock, 101 Answers, p. 87*)
 - 4) There was the worship of Zeus, who had his own altar on the Acropolis. This altar exists today and rises to a height of 40 feet. Since Zeus was considered to be the king of the gods, this altar could well be described as Satan's throne.
- Even if we feel like we are dwelling in the midst of Satan's territory, the Lord expects us to remain faithful unto Him!

NO COMPROMISE

Christ rebuked the church at Pergamum for toleration and compromise (2:14-15). Compromise involves blending the qualities of two different things or conceding principle. While believers should cooperate in society as much as they can, they must avoid any alliance, partnership, or participation that may lead to immoral practices. There can be no compromise between loyalty to Christ and the sinful pleasures of idol worship or sexual immorality. Christians may differ in some areas, but there is no room for heresy and moral impurity. Don't tolerate sin by bowing to the pressure to be open-minded. (*The Life Application Commentary Series*)

Spiritual Adultery

Compromising with sin in our lives, worldliness, is spiritual adultery against the Lord. Many in the church in Pergamum wanted the eternal salvation that God offered in Jesus Christ—they wanted their "fire insurance"—but they also wanted to indulge in the sensual pleasures that were offered by the false religions.

James 4:4-5 – We are guilty of spiritual adultery when we cultivate friendship with the world while claiming to love God.

Matthew 6:24 – We cannot serve two masters, God and the world; we love one or the other.

1 John 2:15-16 – We either love God or we love the world.

1 Peter 1:14-16 – We are to be holy in all we do because our Heavenly Father is holy.

Colossians 3:2 – Set your hearts on things above, not on things on the earth.