**Session 3**

**June 20, 2021**

**UNCOMPROMISING WITH TRUTH**

**Revelation 2:12-17**

Pergamum (or *Pergamos*) was located about 50 miles north east of Smyrna, about 15 miles from the sea. As the capitol of Asia, it was considered Asia’s greatest city.

Pergamum was known for two main things. First, it was known for its library. With a reported 200,000 handwritten volumes, it was the second largest in the world (the largest was in Alexandria, and the rivalry between the two ended with Egypt cutting off the supply of papyrus which was used as paper. The result was that Pergamum developed a new writing material made from animal skins called *parchment*).

The second thing that Pergamum was known for was its temples to pagan gods, including a temple to Zeus, the highest of the Greek gods. Like Smyrna, this was another city that idolized Rome. In Pergamum stood the first temple ever dedicated to worship the emperor (Augustus), built 30 years before Christ was born. The atmosphere proved to be a challenge for the struggling congregation there.

**Commendation: Courage (vv. 12-13).** Christ’s commendation of the church involved their courageous commitment to both Christ Himself and the Christian faith in a very difficult place. Two terrible characteristics stand out. First, *the devil dwelt there!* In fact, the Lord indicated that Satan’s *throne* was in the city. This might refer to the temple for Zeus, the highest of the Greek gods, or to the temple dedicated to the Roman emperor. In any case, the presence of Satan was so strong, it was as though the devil himself both dwelt and ruled from there. Second, *death dwelt there*. We don’t know anything about the Antipas mentioned, other than his faithfulness, and the death he suffered as a result. Interestingly, the word *witness* (v. 13) is the same word for *martyr.* For reflection: *In these culturally tumultuous days, what are some ways that your church family stands for what is right? Do you think your own convictions are worth dying for?*

**Condemnation: Carnality (vv. 14-15).** While the church as a whole held fast to Christ and His doctrine, false teaching was infiltrating the congregation. Both examples mentioned involve worldliness. The *teaching of Balaam* comes from the story in Numbers 22-24. Essentially, Balaam committed two grave sins. First, he thought his influence as a prophet of God could be bought and sold. Second, he suggested to the enemies of God’s people that they entice them with immorality. In Pergamum, these ideas were further corrupted by the teachings of *the Nicolaitans* (v. 15), whose lives were renowned for worldly indulgence. Together, the indication is that the church in Pergamum was carnal, allowing the world’s sinfulness to creep into the congregation. For reflection: *While the church is living* in *the world, we are not to be enticed* by *the world. What are some ways that you think the “world” has infiltrated the church? At what point should the church push back?*

**Correction: Re-commitment (vv. 16-17).** It’s difficult to think of the two-edged sword (from verse 12 above) without equating it with the word of God which, according to Hebrews 4:12, penetrates “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.” Hence, the Lord uses the standard of His word to convict and correct the carnality demonstrated by the church. The Bible cure for all sin remains the same: repentance. There is an interesting shift in pronouns in verse 16. *You* repent, or I will come to *you* quickly and fight against *them*. The idea is that the church has the responsibility of purging carnality from its midst. But if that doesn’t work, the Lord will purge the guilty ones with the righteous judgement of His word. For reflection: *What is the best way to purge worldliness from your church? Has your church ever exercised church discipline on a member or members? What do think would happen if it did?*