



“Fighting the Shadows.”
May 25, 2025
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“To the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. 13 I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives.

14 Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: There are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality. 15 Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 16 Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

17 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.

Revelation 2:12-17

SUMMARY

Every church is called to meet God’s uncompromised standard of holiness. The church in Pergamum had held fast to the Name of Christ in the face of persecution. Yet, many of them embraced the idolatrous and immoral practices that surrounded them on every side. Life in the literal shadow of Roman paganism tempted many to live in shady, compromised ways while also bearing the name, Christian. Repentance was the way out of the shadows for them and remains true for us today.

Passage Outline

Christ's Commendation - 2:12-13

Christ's Complaint - 2:14-15

Christ's Command - 2:16-17

Passage Principle

God's holy standard does not permit sinful compromise.

12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword. Rev 2:12 ESV

"The Word of God is at once the instrument of salvation and the instrument of death."

Walvoord, J. F. (2008). The Revelation of Jesus Christ (p. 66). Galaxie Software.

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.

Rev 2:13 ESV





14 But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. 15 So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.
Rev 2:14-15 ESV

16 Behold, these, on Balaam's advice, caused the people of Israel to act treacherously against the Lord in the incident of Peor, and so the plague came among the congregation of the Lord.
Numbers 31:16 ESV

15 Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, 16 but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.
2 Peter 2:15-16 ESV

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!
Isaiah 5:20 ESV

**God's holy standard does not permit sinful compromise.
Sinful compromise begins in the two ever-present shadows.**

“Now, I say, whatever your heart clings to and confides in, that is really your God.”
Martin Luther, *Luther’s Catechetical Writings*, vol 1., 44.

“In the expressivist framework, anything that gets in the way of self-exaltation or self-fulfillment is a problem. This means that any universal or binding ethic, morals that are absolute, truths that are transcendent—in our culture, they all fall down before the idol of the mighty Me. God may still be present, but “Me” is on the throne.”

Trevin Wax, *Why Is Expressive Individualism a Challenge for the Church?*, thegospelcoalition.org

“For a society awash in expressive individualism, the greatest commandment is to be yourself and the second is like it: to affirm and applaud whatever self your neighbor chooses to be. The greatest sins, then, are to deny yourself or to question or judge someone else’s self-expression.”

Trevin Wax, *What Expressive Individualism Does to Sin*, thegospelcoalition.org

“Do not turn away after useless idols. They can do you no good, nor can they rescue you, because they are useless. For the sake of his great name the Lord will not reject his people, because the Lord was pleased to make you his own. As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right. But be sure to fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you.”

1 Samuel 12:21-24 NIV

16 Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth. 17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.

Rev 2:16-17 ESV

9 “For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His. You have acted foolishly in this. Indeed, from now on you will surely have wars.”

2 Chronicles 16:9 NASB

“Jesus went into the heart of the shadows, becoming sin for you. He took on your shame, rejection, isolation, and futility that you could have his grace, power, authority, and kingdom. . . . He went to the darkness of the grave that you may live in His light.”

Bethke & Tyson, *Fighting Shadows*, p. 187.

12 The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

Romans 13:12-14 NASB

5 For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. 6 So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. 8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

1 Thessalonians 5:5-8 ESV

“Light heals us and transforms us, but we must fight to stay in its radiance.”

Bethke & Tyson, *Fighting Shadows*, xxii.

God’s holy standard does not permit sinful compromise.

Sinful compromise begins in the two ever-present shadows.

Fight to stay in the Light.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. As a kid, where was your local “haunted house” in your town? Did you ever dare to go in?
2. What pressures are the Christians in Pergamum facing? At what point are they strong? Where are they tempted?
3. Which do you think is easier to endure: persecution by enemies or seduction by the culture? Why?
4. Why is the title by which Christ reveals Himself so appropriate to these Christians?
5. What is the significance of the sword (v. 16)? Of the manna and stone (v 17)?
6. What cultural influences distract you from your relationship with Christ? How subtle are these influences in your life? How direct?
7. What weapons has God given you with which to do battle?
8. Which has proved very helpful?
9. What is your take away from this week’s passage?

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*Discussion Questions adapted from The Serendipity Bible.