

## The Church in Pergamos

This week we come to the Lord's speaking to the church in **Pergamos**; as a sign, this church prefigures the church that entered into a **marriage union with the world** and became a fortified tower, having its nature changed and being full of **mixture**. We today need to be guarded against the degradation that is not only outside of us in the degraded Christianity and in the world, but also the degradation inside of us. We need to look to the Lord to apply His word **to our being** and **our situation**.

To the church in Pergamos the Lord presents Himself as the One with a sharp two-edged sword, and at the end He said He will use this sword to war with those who hold the teaching of Balaam and the teaching of the Nicolaitans. The Lord's word is living and operative, sharper than any two-edged sword, able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart and divide the soul from the spirit (Heb. 4:12). We need to have this kind of division, separation, and sanctification through **the Lord's word** today. We need to look to the Lord in a fresh way that He may shine on us and evaluate our condition according to His word.

The main problem we see in Pergamos is mixture; historically, this mixture happened in the beginning of the third century when Constantine the great adopted Christianity as the "state religion", with himself as the "head of the church" and his employees as the "priests". Anyone who would join this religion would be given money and clothing. In this way a great leavening and many tares were brought into the church, the church as the appearance of the kingdom of the heavens (spoken of by the Lord in parables in Matt. 13) became **a great mixture of believers and unbelievers**, a mixture of divine things and many worldly things. The consummation of this mixture will be the Great Babylon, a woman who is a harlot with a golden cup filled with many abominations.

Because the church in Pergamos entered into a union with the world, she dwelled where the throne of Satan is; we should not be in the place where Satan is and reigns but be **those dwelling in our spirit** and in Christ, the One in whom Satan has nothing!

The Lord's speaking to the church in Pergamos,... is both **prophetic** and **exposing of the situation** we can be in today. On the one hand, there was a stage in church history corresponding to the church in Pergamos – after Satan realized that persecuting the church doesn't make it diminish or go away but rather only helps her increase and multiply, he changed his tactic from persecution to **welcoming the church**. May the Lord save us from seeking to have a *great* work, a large church, *a big show*, or anything that would cause the church to lose its smallness with its pure, shining nature.

May the Lord really impress us that **it is better for us to be persecuted rather than welcomed**, for the welcoming of the world is so subtle that it may lead us to be joined to the world and thus be the Pergamos of today!

In His mercy, the Lord has shined on us and has brought us into His recovery; our practice today is to come completely out of the degraded Christianity and keep a gap between us and the present evil age so that we may remain and be the pure and shining testimony of Jesus on earth.

**Even among us in the church life** in the Lord's recovery there may be some mixture with the world with its worldly ways, things, and thoughts; we need the Lord's instant and present word to shine on us, expose any worldliness, and purify our heart so that we may love Him and live a life in union with Him. Today Satan may not persecute the church outwardly, trying to put the believers into prison or to death, but his strategy is to **ensnare** and **enslave** the believers with **the things and activities in the world**.

Worldly things are related to idol worship, for worldliness is always associated with idolatry; we may not have physical outward idols that we worship but we may have things or people that we love more than the Lord and who replace the Lord in our life. Like the people of Israel, we may set up **idols** in our heart, and some things or people may take more of our time and love than the Lord (Ezek. 14:3). An idol in our heart is anything within us that we love more than we love the Lord, and that replaces the Lord in our life; we need to guard ourselves from idols.

*"Little children, guard yourselves from idols." ~ 1 John 5:21*

It is easy to point out the idols in the degraded Christianity today, but what about us: is our work for the Lord an idol, something that replaces the Lord? What do we do the first thing in the morning, besides or before contacting the Lord? Do we spend more time on our phone, tablet, or computer than we spend to touch the Lord? We need to pray concerning this, because worldly things are related to idol worship, and **we need to be purified in our heart!**

Coveting money is connected with union with the world; **if we love money** and "want to make more money", we actually love the world – no matter what "good reason" we have to make more money. For example, Balaam tried to serve both God and mammon, but he ended up loving money more. We need to realize that we depend on the Lord for our living, He is the source of our sustenance, and He meets all our needs. We may work full-time, part-time, or we may serve the Lord with our full-time, but whenever we start thinking more about money and how to get more money, we worship mammon and the love of God is not in us

*"Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him; Because all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father but is of the world." – 1 John 2:15-16*

As the church we need to be a golden lampstand, the pure expression of the Triune God, and **we must have no connections with the world**; we must reject the world's enticing and ensnaring, and we must **choose to spend time with the Lord** in His living word to be purified and further attached to Him, faithful to Him. (*Excerpt from the Ministry of the Word, The Church in Pergamos*)