

Exactly How Revelation 2 Rings True Today

Although Revelation was written nearly 2000 years ago, it rings true with resounding clarity for churches today. In Revelation 2, Jesus addresses a church in Pergamos that compromised doctrine and was silent about sin. They were motivational and encouraging, but powerless against breaking Satan's grip.

While Pergamos was soft on sin and compromise, churches at the opposite end can be critical and judgmental sin-sniffers. Neither attitude or position is pleasing to God.

The compromising, silent church often lacks boldness; it's easier to be passive. But it's not healthy, wise or God-honoring. Jesus lovingly challenges the silent compromisers in this church: "You're a nice church—you feed the homeless and reach out to those in need—but I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality" (see Rev. 2:14).

The silent church allows false teaching because they don't want to rock-the-boat. They are liberal in twisting or reinterpreting the truth, or they avoid it all together. This is where the word "liberal" comes from. "Can't we all just get along?" is their rallying cry. The pulpit may not be dead (as it was in Ephesus) but it will be misled. Pastors of these churches are cheerleaders but never coaches. They encourage but rarely convict. Like a thermostat, the pulpit affects the spiritual temperature of the church. The leaders of this church keep the thermostat comfortable: "Come on in ... the temperature is perfect: not hot with the realities of hell and not cold with boredom."

What if God's Word remained silent about sin? What if worship lyrics and preaching failed to convict? What if those who offer counsel simply listened but never challenged? What if law enforcement never enforced the law? You see where I'm going with this: the true church that Christ built cannot remain passive or silent about sin.

Granted, Matthew 7:5 sheds much needed light. Jesus said, "You hypocrite! First take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." Our sinful tendency is to point out the flaws in others. With this in mind, a first step toward confrontation begins with removing our plank first. Words seasoned with grace coming from a merciful heart—carry power and weight. Words from a critical, judgmental spirit will hurt and destroy.

Now on to The Doctrine of Balaam. The lesson here is that you cannot curse what God has blessed. However, free choice, fueled by compromise and liberalism, can entice followers to leave God's protection by disobeying Him. People can harm themselves when enticed by fleshly and sexual appetites. Where might you be compromising? Ask God to help you see clearly.

The Pergamos mentality may please men, but it does not please God. There is a very troubling trend toward moral compromise in the evangelical church. I've witnessed soft-porn images on Christian websites, questionable movie clips played during sermons, and youth pastors talk about their favorite sexually charged movie with the youth, all under the guise of "relating" to the culture. Wake up, Pergamos!

The church in Pergamos, and many today, still "have there those who hold" to false doctrine—that purity and holiness do not matter. Reader Harris once challenged a congregation about power and purity: "Those who want power, line up to my right. Those who want purity, line up to my left." The congregation lined up 10 to 1—for power! It's no secret why we lack New Testament power—because we lack New Testament purity. Our

silence about sin and obedience is deafening.

I've learned that the little compromises lead to the big problems. How do little compromises begin? "It's just one drink! A little flirting is not a big deal. It's a harmless glance ... or two. We'll make a little money on the side—no one will get hurt. I'll buy just one more prescription to get through this week. Kids sports will be over in a few years—then we'll get back to church." And on and on it goes.

Most walk away from Christ not because He fails them, or because the Word of God proves to be untrue, but because of the love of this world (gratifying the flesh). In short, the doctrine of Balaam. We cannot overlook the seriousness of this issue. Jesus said that the worries and desires of this world, along with the deceitfulness of wealth, come in and choke the Word of God, making it unfruitful (see Mark 4:19).

The passion we once had for the purity of God's Word can easily be exchanged for the pollutants of the world. What we put into our mind affects our relationship with God at a very deep level. Remove the "little" compromises before the "big" problems are born. Jesus adds. "If you don't remove them or deal with them, I you may find yourself fighting against Me" (paraphrasing Rev. 2:15).

We cannot love both Christ and this world. Carnality destroys our relationship with Him and genuine fellowship with other believers. It destroys our prayer life as well. A carnal Christian does not pray, really pray and seek the heart of God. A deep prayer life exposes facades and crushes hypocrisy. Carnality also destroys spiritual power and hinders the infilling of the Spirit. It also affects our home life. In short, everything that God calls us to be is compromised.

In closing, remember how subtle sin is. Woe be to the church who is silent and compromises God's standard. They may find themselves in the same spiritual condition as Samson: "He knew

not that the Spirit of the Lord had departed from him” (see Judg. 16:20).

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