

Revelation 2:12-17

Christ's Letter to Pergamum: "Hold Fast My Name"

The Peril at Pergamum: "I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is." (Rev. 1:4)

Proximity to Satan leads to being troubled and embattled

- There was an intimate connection between church and city: the administrative capital and the chief seat of the state religion.
- Pergamum was the official capital of the Roman province of Asia. (Rev. 1:4)
- The 'state' would bear the sword as a place of authority as well as of life and death.
 - At Pergamum, Antipas was killed, and he wasn't alone (2:13)
- How will the church live in such a place? Daily in a hostile, enemy environment.
 - Contrasts: James 3:13-18; 2 Tim. 3:1-17; Galatians 5; Romans 12
 - Warning: Do not love the world (1 John 2:15-17)
 - Define ungodliness and worldliness. Scoffs, seeing no need for God
 - I am rich enough, smart enough, and people like me
 - Satan dwells: "the official power and authority which stands in opposition to the church." (Ramsay)
- Three key enemies of the Christian: the world, the flesh, and the devil, all connected
 - Idolatry: "the willingness to perform the ritual of the state religion and make an offering to the imperial God, the divine emperor."
 - False teaching
 - Sexual Immorality

"This world is a howling wilderness, and most of the inhabitants are untamed, hideous monsters." (Richard Baxter)

"Men walk and talk as if the world were all, when comparatively it is nothing." (John Owen)

The Strategy for the Christian: a fourfold plan on how to “Hold Fast His Name” in tempting environments. God provides these gracious resources to equip us and strengthen us. Hold fast His name by listening to His Spirit. Stay near the Shepherd.

1. Deepen my understanding of Christ’s Character. (v.12)

- a. His name is His character and role. Jesus the Christ. Notice how each of the seven churches begins with an aspect of the character of Jesus.
 - i. Rev. 2:1: “The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand”
 - ii. Rev. 2:8: “The first and the last, who was dead and has come to life”
- b. Christ is the One and only with universal and absolute authority. He is the One with the two-edged sword, not the enemy. A similar, but superior authority.
- c. It is crucial to get a fuller understanding of the total person of who Jesus is in His nature and work, humbles us and encourages us simultaneously
 - i. Revelation 1:4-20. What’s in a name?
 - ii. What are all the names of Jesus? *Examples: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace; Everlasting Father (Isaiah 9)*
- d. “I fell on my feet as a dead man” (1:17)
 - i. Reverence and Worship to Him above all. (John 3:30)
 - ii. Behold the kindness and severity of God. (Rom. 11:22)
 - iii. An Admiral Conjunction of Diverse Excellencies (J. Edwards)
 1. Jesus is the Lion and the Lamb
 2. All power, glory, and authority, combined with such humility and tenderness
 3. This empowers adoration and affection, worship and devotion, leading to a motivation to never deny Jesus even unto death.
 - iv. This empowered the martyrdom
 1. Polycarp at Smyrna, who had been a disciple of John
 2. Antipas at Pergamum, a faithful witness
 3. As Christians are being killed, how will we be able to continue to say, “Jesus is Lord”?
- e. If I understand Jesus correctly, in faith I will give to Him ultimate allegiance and priority; I will live to give “My Utmost for His Highest”
 - i. Peter began to sink when he took his eyes off Jesus. (Matt. 14:30)
 - ii. Prayer and meditation on the person of Jesus: Ephesians 1:18-23; 3:14-21

2. Sharpen my application of Christ's Word (v.12)

- a. The two-edged sword is the Word of God. Jesus has it and gives it.
 - i. "Out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword." (Rev. 1:16)
 - ii. "He has made my mouth like a sharp sword" (Isa. 49:2)
 - iii. "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword (Heb. 4:12)
 - iv. "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Eph. 6:17)
- b. Since the Word is the sword, handle the Word with reverence; sharpen your skills in using God's word defensively and offensively
 - i. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to equip and transform the child of God.
 - ii. But you, however, continue in the things you have learned. (2 Tim. 3:14)
 - 1. Hear it - faith comes by hearing, hearing by the word of God
 - 2. Know it
 - 3. Study it
 - 4. Meditate on it
 - 5. Put it into practice
 - iii. See Psalm 119 on how we are called to relate to God's Word
- c. Satan's crafty tactics always include lies and deception, false teaching
- d. Jesus, when tempted in the wilderness, utilized God's Word to remain faithful and overcome Satan's temptations (See Matthew 4)
 - i. It is written . .
 - ii. It is written . .
 - iii. It is written . .
- e. What are some of the truths in God's Word which would have motivated Antipas to remain faithful unto death?
 - i. Matthew 10:28: "Do not fear those who can kill the body but are not able to kill the soul"
 - ii. 1 John 4:4: "Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world."
 - iii. Romans 8:37: "We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."
- f. Preach the Gospel to yourself every day; this is food for the soul which provides the daily nourishment you will need.

3. **Quicken my repentance to Christ's Call (v.14-16)**

- a. "But I have a few things against you."
 - i. They may have imagined that 'all is well'. By nature, we often mollycoddle ourselves spiritually and do not see ourselves clearly.
 - ii. We are called to live a life of repentance. To deny ourselves and take up our cross daily and follow Jesus. And to never let up in this passion and pursuit.
- b. We need a continual examination before Christ and His word to know what in our lives needs changing and adjusting. He alone has the authority to diagnose our spiritual health. *What did Christ see in Pergamum?*
 - i. Some hold the teaching of Balaam
 - 1. Put stumbling blocks in the way of the sons of Israel
 - 2. Encouraged idolatry
 - 3. Encouraged sexual immorality
 - ii. *Some* hold the teachings of the Nicolaitans
 - iii. *Some* is too much. A little leaven affects the whole loaf, in our personal lives or in the church. A zero tolerance for sin.
 - 1. Be killing sin, or it will be killing you.
- c. Therefore repent
 - i. Or else I am coming quickly
 - ii. I will make war against them
 - iii. With the sword of my mouth
- d. Clearly, Jesus takes the spiritual health of His church seriously. How quickly am I to seek His input and to change my ways, rather than become stiff-necked, stubborn, and defensive? We are called to constant adjustments; pray for Jesus to continue to prune us to mature us (See John 15)
- e. "But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ." (2 Cor. 11:3)

4. Tighten my grip on Christ's Reward (v.17)

- a. Jesus follows these severe warnings with the promise of His incredible blessings.
 - i. Each letter has rewards. As these accumulate, our hope for these future glories should inspire us to remain faithful witnesses.
 - 1. "I will grant to eat of the tree of life in the paradise of God" (2:7)
 - 2. "I will give you the crown of life" (2:10)
 - 3. "Will not be hurt by the second death" (2:11)
- b. To him who overcomes. . . (these seven letters each are empowering spiritual endurance and faithfulness to Christ)
- c. I will give him:
 - i. Some of the hidden manna
 - ii. A white stone
 - iii. A new name is written on the stone
 - iv. Which no one knows but he who receives it.
- d. These gifts are given as rewards to those who endure. They are gracious; they are surprising and mysterious; they stretch on into eternity.
- e. He called us by His own glory and excellence. "For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust." (2 Peter 1)
- f. The trouble and torment the church in Pergamum would face were limited. It would soon be over. They will not face or feel this forever. God will quickly come to the aid and rescue of His children because they belong to Him.
 - i. Hold fast, My name: His name is at stake
 - ii. Did not deny My faith
 - iii. My witness
 - iv. My faithful one who was killed.

"Our only hope in life or death is that we are not our own, but belong, body and soul, to our faithful savior, Jesus Christ."

"The true name expresses the character, the nature, the being, the meaning of the person who bears it. It is the man's own symbol, his soul's picture, in a word - the sign which belongs to him and to no one else. Who can give a man this, his own name? God alone." (Os Guinness, The Call)

