

**Grace Chapel Church of Christ**  
**Sunday Morning Bible Study**  
**7-26-2015**

***Letter to the Church at Pergamum***  
***Revelations 2:12-17***

**Teacher: Paul Huyghebaert**

And in Revelation 2 and 3 as we examine these Letters to the Seven Churches, we are on the letter to the Church in Pergamum. And we are going to set this up a little bit this morning as we look first at the letters that we've already glanced over..., glanced through in a little more depth. We began with the Letter to the Church in Ephesus, a couple of weeks ago then last week, a Letter to the Church in Smyrna. And if we would have a map up here this morning that probably would be, pretty wise and I will get one up there for next week.

***About the Seven Churches:***

You would see the relation to each other in location that these seven churches have. They were on a horseshoe shaped road that came along the coast. And so you had these three churches Ephesus kind of the farthest south along the coast, then Smyrna, then Pergamum a little bit further up the coast. And then that road went inland and then came back down south and you have the next churches. And so these letters are actually written in the order that if you happen to land at the port of Ephesus which was again a major shipping port. They are written in that order so that when they would be delivered, when the letter would be delivered to these seven churches, it would be delivered in order to these seven churches.

First to the ***church in Ephesus***. Then you would go up the road to the next church and you would hit then the ***church in Smyrna***, and then the ***church in Pergamum***, then you would go do East and you hit the ***church in Thyatira***, then ***Sardis***, ***Philadelphia***, to ***Laodicea***. Right down the list you would hit all those seven churches by following that road, which you know, obviously, this was written pretty purposefully.

And so that's why we have the order that we have and why we get to the church in Pergamum next. And this is certainly a really solid letter with a lot of good stuff. What it does is it also sheds a little bit more light on some of what was going on at the church in Ephesus. They had some similar struggles that they shared and again if you read ahead- it's kind of the challenges every week to read ahead, these are very short little letters and little sections of scripture. You are reading basically a third or a fourth of the chapter and I think it's in Chapter 3, it's just a fourth of a chapter. Right now it's a third of the chapter, each week just to get a familiarity with some of the things that Jesus says to these churches.

***Framing the Issue: Get Right Church***

Again we are going to continue to frame this; I am going to continue to hammer this home. Often times we think that the gospels are where all of the red letters, Jesus words, are found. We see him here in the Book of Revelation as well and so that should be exciting to us. It should also make us really pay attention, take heed, take notice. Jesus is addressing these seven churches directly. If you haven't been here, just again, to put that within the proper frame, what he is doing is he is pointing out some things that are fantastic in some of these churches.

And then, also, challenging some of these churches to get it right. Wakeup! You know as the old song that we used to sing and it's kind of old now because if I go back to my church camp days, that means it's old. Right? So for some of you like, wait a minute! That's a new song. But the song ***Get Right Church***.

Right? And it's kind of like Jesus is the author of *Get Right Church* because you are about to go home. So we need to get this straight. We need to figure this out, and *I want you to get right church! I want you to understand what it is that you are doing that is really centered on me, focused on me* and when that is there, Jesus comes out and he says, *Man, I love what you are doing here. This is fantastic, this is great.*

***Pergamum's Serious Issues and the Church today:***

But in the times where they are struggling and certainly the church in Pergamum had some struggles, some pretty serious issues, and certainly the town of Pergamum had some pretty serious issues. And we will see again Jesus uses some very direct language as he addresses the church in Pergamum,... about the issues and the struggles taking place in that town. We are going to do the best we can to give a little background information in just a few minutes. But Jesus builds them up when he needs to build them up, and then he exhorts them, and calls them out. And you can really say, rebukes them, in the things that they need to be rebuked in, the places where they are really falling short. And so this is important for us as a church, as the church body, as we try to find out: *What is it that pleases God?* We should be asking that question all the time.

As we try to shape vision, you should hope and pray for the leadership here that the leadership is constantly asking this question.

- *What is it that pleases God?*
- *What is it that pleases God and what is it that pleases God directly in our setting?*
- *What is it that pleases God in the town of Cumming?*
- *What is it that pleases God for Grace Chapel, specifically as a church, as a body of believers? Right?*

I mean that's a prayer that the entire church body should take seriously. *Father let this church be about your will.*

***As we represent Jesus in this community, what do you, God, want us to look like?***

We often times pray that for ourselves and that's good,... don't stop that prayer. I challenge you every day to pray in your life: *Father show me your will and then give me the strength and wisdom to make it happen.* But I hope that you don't just stop there because that's the temptation in our very individualistic society, and we read the words of scripture and it's with "me and mine." Right?

But the reality is, this letter was written to, and, in fact, they (all) were written to churches, to churches as a whole. A lot of the promises in scripture are written to a body of believers, not just individuals. And so as we break these things down, I want to challenge you to not just pray for yourself, *Father let me see what your will is, for me, but for this church. Father what is your will for this church, for this body of believers?* As we get together and as we serve, not just individually, although that's important too, but as we serve in this community, as we represent Jesus in this community, *What do you, God, want us to look like?*

***Grace Chapel and looking like Jesus...not like the world. It starts with being different.***

So that's the first thing I am going to ask of you this morning, if you have already been praying, "God show me your will," and you need the strength and wisdom to do it, good. Add one more layer to that please?

- Pray for Grace Chapel.
- Pray for the leadership here.
- Pray for this entire body that as we react and move as the body of Christ, the representation of him on earth today that we will honor him in everything we do.

And that's exactly why Jesus wrote these letters or dictated these letters to John so that the body of Christ would look like Christ. Because when the body of Christ on earth doesn't look like Jesus we have a problem. Right? I mean we've got an issue. If the body looks like the world, that's a problem. If the church is just like the world that's a problem, and I have often said,...and I am sure I probably stole it from somebody else,..., but I have said it so many times now that it feels like I came up with it, so whatever. But if we want to make a difference and we are not different and so it's kind of like swinging in the air. You are not going to contact with anything. Right? It's not going to be meaningful. It's not going to be purposeful. It's certainly not going to be intentional like we talked about earlier this morning. If we want to make a difference, then it starts with being different.

***Drawing People to Jesus by being different like Him:***

We need to be like Jesus. Jesus was very different from religious folks that he walked the earth with, from pagan folks that he walked the earth with, from other rabbi's of his day, Jesus was very different. And we are supposed to be his body, his reflected image in the world today. And so we want to make a difference. But it begins with being different. Not just being different for the sake of being different, but being Jesus, and I guarantee you, the more our life becomes like Jesus, the more different we are going to look at times, that's great. That's okay. Because if we are showing and reflecting his love in this world, people are going to be drawn to that difference.

***Side Note: The Church and the World***

In fact, I believe,...and this is you know one of those side notes,.. and you get this one for free. That one of the reasons that churches aren't growing in a lot of places the way that they used to grow is because we have done this deal, a good friend of mine puts it this way. So 50 years ago, maybe or 60 years ago, 70 years ago the world and the church were maybe about this far apart. Right? I mean the church was being the church it was doing the things that the church was supposed to do. And the world was over here somewhere, maybe this is what, we will put the church over here and we will put the world over here. *(Teacher gesturing with his hands about 2 feet apart)*

***We cannot change the message to accommodate the world. It is His message.***

And so here is the church, here is the world, and then the world started moving and shifting a little bit. And the church said, well as long as we stay about this far from the world, we are still the church. Right? And so the church started moving and following the world and things and changing in some ways. And I am not saying that we don't need some change folks. I mean there are times when we need to change some of the things we do, but there are times when we have compromised not just change in the methods. We have changed the message at sometimes. And the message isn't ours it's his. We have been entrusted

with it but the message belongs to him. We have been given the task of finding the modes and the methods by which to communicate that message but --.

***The Church struggling with wanting to follow the world: Pergamum and us today.***

So we followed the world and pretty soon we were all the way over here and where was the world 50 years ago? Somewhere over here. Right? And now the church is over here, way past where the world was 50 years ago. (*Teacher gesturing with his hands next to each other*) And I don't want to use that as a kind of a doomsday example and to really drag us down, but it's just a quick illustration of reality that there are times when we have followed the world. And certainly in Pergamum that was part of the struggle they were having. And I think it's, in some places, it's even become unpopular to talk about the world and the churches, two different realities and two different entities, in a sense. And certainly Jesus wants the church to reach all the world so that all the world becomes the church. Right? I mean that's true, isn't it?

***To make a difference for Jesus in the World, we must be different.***

Jesus wants the entire world, the whole population. That's *John 3:16*, *For God so loved* just the people of this church. Right? Is that it? God so loved just the people that woke up on Sunday mornings and made it out of bed and got to a church service.. somewhere to church, (but) God so loved the entire world that he gave his son Jesus, that anybody that believes in him would have eternal life. I mean, that's a huge challenge and calling. And so we have to find a way to engage the world lovingly as Jesus did, but we still have to be the church in the process. I think sometimes we have kind of watered down what it means to truly be the body of Christ in an effort to reach the world, and God bless us for our desire to reach the world. But again in order to make a difference we have got to be different. We have got to be like Jesus. We have to be!

***Jesus and the double-edged sword: Serious stuff!***

And so as we look at the letter to the church here in Pergamum, oh we are going to jump in hard right away and I have to set the stage a little bit because Jesus doesn't really set the stage in this one like he did in the others. The first two letters that we looked at- like with the church at Ephesus - he doesn't butter them up, but he says some nice things first. Right? I mean he gives them some kind words. *I know your faith, your deeds, boy you are really, you guys are working hard.* And he says *but you lost your first love.* Right? In the church in Pergamum, he just jumps in right away and he says these words Verse 12, "*To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: hope you guys are having a great time, and then, have lots of fun and you know again... that's not what Jesus does at all. Jesus jumps right in and he says, these are the words of him who has the sharp double-edged sword. And I am coming swinging, that's what Jesus does right away. I mean he comes out of his corner swinging and I have got this sharp double-edged sword. And in case you think that I am here and I am all hugs and that there are two sides of God. There is his love and his judgment. Right? There is the love and the wrath of God.*

And sometimes we think, well, as though there are two separate aspects of God. There is an author named N. T. Wright. He does a phenomenal job of putting this into perspective because when we see that, *here are the words of him who has the sharp double-edge sword*, I mean not only did he say, a *double-edged sword*, he said, *I have taken the time to sharpen it.* So look out! This is serious stuff. So we have this hard time dealing with God having wrath... yet God being loving at the same time. I mean, you know a sword is. It's a weapon of battle. I mean it is. Nobody would have any question about that. That's like Jesus saying, *here are the words of him who has all of the tanks and the bombs*, and the sword was the weapon of war at that point in time. And so they wouldn't have mistaken what Jesus was saying at all.

***Sin and God's wrath: God is angry over sin.***

There is a side of me that is pretty terrifying as well. If you are learning how to come in contact with Jesus, you just have to come in contact with an angel to know this is scary. And so there is this part of God as we talk about, this proverb says that *The beginning of knowledge, is the fear God*. There is this part of him that is the little bit scary. I mean he is God. He created it. He created all of this. Everything you see just by talking. Right? Do a lot of things by talking,...but I (God) can make something. Right? And that's God. God is serious. God is to be respected,... to be feared.

And so when he says this, again back to N. T. Wright, he says that actually the love and the wrath of God, they got together. It's because of God's love that he is wrathful, that he has anger, and sometimes we have to understand where that anger is correctly applied,...that God hates sin. He does. God loves people. And so when sin and people come into contact, God is angry about that. Because God knows that sin destroys people; that sin destroys the relationship we can have with him; that sin is the barrier and the boundary; that exists between us and him. And God sent Jesus to do away with that to show his love because it's love that conquers sin. It's love that conquers death as well with Jesus that conquered death and buried death forever. But God still deals with this issue of sin and is angry about sin and is angry about the way that we allow sin to infect us and invade us and at times it's our sinful actions that really hurt others. Right? I mean really hurt others. We can just,... we can destroy someone's world with one wrong action. And so there has to be part of this where God is not pleased with that.

***God's love can move His anger to action:***

And so when we see this idea of God having the sharp double-edge sword, we need to understand that it is God's love that takes him to a place where he has to be moved to action, that we call anger or wrath. I mean, if God just sat by and was like, *yeah I don't care, that's cool, guys hurt each other, do whatever you want*. I mean what kind of a God would that be? Right? If God was not angry over sin, if God was not angry when people hurt each other, if that didn't move God emotionally, would we be okay with that?

I mean, you know when I see my two kids and you know Andrew is older and bigger and so you know Nate may start it half the time and I get that, he is kind of an antagonist that way, but when Andrew gets to where he is going whoop on Nate and it's like, it's go time, he has got the double-edged sword. Here it comes. There are times where I get a little bit frustrated because "Hey, man you can't do that! You can't beat on your brother that's not okay!" And I get angry. Why? Because I love my kids, both of them.

Now just because I am angry with what happened, does that mean I stop loving Andrew? I mean, did I not love him in that moment? No, absolutely not. I love him to pieces in that moment. Even when he is beating on the younger one, I love him. I love them both equally in that moment even, but I want Andrew to stop kid doing what you are doing. And so certainly when we see the wrathful side of God, it makes sense. It has to be there. If we take that out of the picture, then God is not God anymore and then that's not real love either. So it's because of this love, that God has moved at times be angry about the way things are, to be disappointed, to be hurt and broken,... and if he wasn't, guys, we would have to stop and examine who he really is.

***Pergamum: Satan's throne. Compromising the Church.***

And so here he comes with *these are the words of him with the sharp double-edged sword, I know where you live, where Satan has his throne*. Again strong words right off the bat. Pergamum was a very interesting city. If you look at drawings of ancient Pergamum what you will see is there is this hill that extends really high up. It's actually more than a thousand feet above the surrounding country side and Pergamum was built on that hill. Now, obviously, that gives them a very defensible position, but it also

became very well-known because of that. You could see Pergamum from miles around because here was on top of this hill. Imagine if they had, if Sawnee Mountain was big enough, and they had taken the time to build Cumming, the City of Cumming, on top of Sawnee Mountain. Right? And Sawnee Mountain is what like 700 feet above the surrounding countryside. So we got more than a thousand feet. Up here is Pergamum that's built on top of the city. And Pergamum was, it was the city that was again, the center for some serious idolatry that took place. And some really serious idolatry that took place. And there was some serious efforts to push this idolatry into every religious movement whatsoever to extend that idolatry. To mesh (with) that idolatry. They were known,.. in fact, in Pergamum they worshipped four Gods. They didn't worshipp just one. They worshipped four. They had a lot of temples. A lot of cities had a temple to one God primarily and that was the God they focused on for that city. Pergamum was different than that. In fact they were big about Zeus, they were big about Dionysius, they were big about Asclepius and Athene or Athena. They were big about all four. And so they were cool with kind of blending things.

And so when the Christians were there. They were like, hey that's fine, you can do that if you want. I mean that's alright as long as you worship these gods too. We don't mind if you add something to the mix. You just can't do away with these guys. And that was one of the big problems in Pergamum.

#### ***Antipas: Jesus faithful witness put to death***

And so he goes on and he says, *where Satan has his throne, you remain true to my name, you did not renounced your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness who was put to death in your city.* And so again you know, he says where Satan lives. So we see very quickly here, again like the other churches that we have seen so far, there is some pretty serious stuff going on.

Here is this guy name Antipas who Jesus says, *he was faithful. He was my faithful witness.* Maybe he was a preacher. Again, imagine if here we were today teaching class. All of the sudden the authorities come in here, dragging me out and next thing you know I have been put to death. How do we feel about that as a church? I mean I hope you are like man --, we like that God, he was alright, he shouldn't have killed him. But I hope on some level that that would shock us. But at the same time, would we be where Pergamum was to be so faithful. That even when this faithful witness is dragged out, put to death in the streets, that as a church we would say *that hurts but it doesn't change anything. It doesn't change our faithfulness, our response in faith.*

#### ***Living "out loud" for Jesus:***

I mean these guys were living out loud in a lot of ways in and among a city where there was prosecution to the point of death. And so he commends them for that, and that's a good thing. But remember he started with this idea of, *hey you know who I am? I am the guy with the double-edged sword, that's me, remember. I am going to say something good here and this is great, you have been faithful in this way but, he says, I have a few things against you.* Because you have people there and I assume by there and most scholars do as well, they are not just talking about the town, although it was true for the town, very much so, but when he says you know people there. He is talking about the church.

#### ***Some in Pergamum Church holding to false teachings and false idols:***

*There are some folks in your church who hold to the teaching of Balaam* he says; *who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality.* Now that's kind of an Old Testament reference that initially you may not get but Balaam was this prophet, Balaam was the prophet who on a couple of different levels kind of mislead the Israelites. Balak was a king who kind of, he went along with it as well. And so you had the Israelites committing some pretty

serious sins. Again as they point out, as Jesus points out that the Israelites were enticed to eat food that would sacrifice the idols which certainly was a no, no. Paul comes along and kind of changes that a little bit. He says, look, if in your conscience doesn't bother you to eat food sacrifice to idols that's okay. You eat knowing that this is meat and it's you know, the idols are nothing. If an idol is nothing to you that's fine.

Now for the Israelites, the Israelites had a pretty serious problem with idols. They, all you got to do is read the Book of Judges and kind of this recurring theme over and over in the Book of Judges where and again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord. I mean it starts to wear on you after a while. You got a good faithful judge. The judge leads them in the right way. Judge dies. Next thing you know the Israelites are worshipping idols again. That's not just in the time of judges. We see Moses goes up on the mountain to get the 10 Commandments. What happens? He comes down. His own brother and sister are leading the charge to worship idols! So the Israelites had an issue with idol worship, ... a major problem, over and over again. They would rather worship an image than they would rather worship God.

And so God made forbidding, God forbade the eating of food to idols, and Balaam, and then Balak as well, allowed and enticed the Israelites into that which was a way that they would be lead astray again. But then crank it up a notch even. Balaam was able to convince the Israelites that engaging in sexual immorality was cool, and a way to interface and engage with God. Well a lot of the cultures around them believed that to be true.

***False religious beliefs and practices at Pergamum and today:***

Again as we talked about in the first letters we looked at the letter to Ephesus, the center for Goddess worship. One of the ways that you came in contact with the Goddess there was by going up to the temple, paying a fee, and sleeping with the temple prostitute. I mean that was one of the ways that you had religious ceremony and some of that exists in our world today.

And some of that exists in our world today, where people believe that engaging in kind of what would end up being, I mean not my words, but Jesus words. The church in Pergamum engaging in satanic rituals like that is actually what gets them in contact with God. Now what's even crazier is that there are people who have thrown the name of Jesus into that, in our times, in our day and in our age. That if we really want to know who Jesus is, we need to engage in satanic worship in some sense and engage in sexual immorality and all that other stuff. And we will have this "mystical experience" and all of that and somehow they will know Jesus better.

In the church in Pergamum some folks were being enticed to believe that that might be true. And that maybe blending of religions was just fine, no big deal. Has anybody ever come in contact with somebody who is, yeah they like Jesus, they just want to be able to like other stuff too. You ever met anybody like that? My roommate had a, really a super, super nice guy (friend). He was from Nepal and he was Hindu and you know loved this kind of Hindu panoply of Gods. And when he found out about Jesus he was thrilled because here was this God he had never been introduced to.

And so we were working with this guy and he is kind of really coming to where yeah he has got a faith in Jesus and at some point in time, we learn that he just wants to add Jesus to a list of Gods. And we're showing him things like John 14:6 *I am the way to the truth and life and you can't come to the Father except through him.* There is no other access. And so, he said to us that, he said, well listen. When you think about this campus here and this was college that we went to Ohio Valley. He said, *There are a lot of different ways to get here, especially where I started from in Nepal.* That he said, *I can fly all the way*

*across the world and maybe I will end up landing in Columbus finally or maybe another time I land in Pittsburg and then I am going to come from different ways but I am going to get to the campus. And there are different ways you could get in, even once you go out in town, you could go around the south side and come up the mountain that way and you could go around the other side, I mean there are different ways you could get there. And so I believe it's the same with God. There are lots of different roads to God.*

***Jesus is the only way to God:***

*You know so Jesus is, he is a way to God, but there are other ways to God as well (according to this friend). And so we see in our day and age this thinking pervades. And sometimes it makes its way even into the church. You know that and it's kind of a raw statistic when we look at it, but Barna said that, We are to the point where people who claim to be Christians are only about 70% of folks who claim to be Christians believe that Jesus is the exclusive way to God" okay. I mean 3 out of 10 folks who claim to be Christians at this point will say, now there are other ways to get to God, Jesus is just one of those ways. So you can see how even today, I mean we look at this and we think oh we are disconnected from that. Nobody is doing that. But can you see where some of the other parts of that can work their way into our thinking because of culture? Yes!*

[Audience comment/question]

Sure, sure yeah sometimes it can be folks who believe that they can work their way to God, absolutely [teacher referencing those who erroneously believe they can work their way to Heaven, and favor with God]. You know sometimes they believe that you know this God can get you to you know to heaven and this God can get you to heaven and have you, I mean --, they.

[Audience comment/question]

Okay, well when you are talking about Christians, absolutely. So there are people who would be Christians and who would believe that Jesus made a pretty exclusive and kind of narrow-minded claim when he said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one gets to the Father but through me." And so that actually that's a pretty narrow minded claim. Now I think again that's cultural influence because the culture today says, being narrow-minded is really bad, right. You shouldn't be narrow minded, I mean if you believe that Jesus is the only way then you are, that's right, then you can be a bigot and other things yeah. [Teacher responds to a question and points to the fact that some claim it is narrow-minded to believe that there is only one way to God- Jesus]

[Audience]

Absolutely.

[Audience]

Yeah, yeah, that's right. And you know I can't remember who it was that said you know there was a conversation going on with a Buddhist about this at one point in time. One of the old famous preachers and I will recall it in a second, but that they were having a conversation and the Buddhist said, *You know I follow Buddha and I can take you to his grave*, and I mean all this stuff. And this guy said, *You know what, I could take you to Jesus's grave, but Buddha's bones are in there (when) you go to worship Buddha's*, but my God is the only one who was raised from the dead on the third day. (Jesus bones are not there in the grave --.) So there is a difference between us and others. Yes, Jesus died, was raised for



us, you know on our behalf, so that he could be the first fruits of many and that's a big thing. And so yes there is a giant difference and certainly when we look at that, only Jesus has the power, only God has the power to do in us what needs to be done, so that we might be saved, absolutely. Yes Bill?

[Audience]

***Engaging with non-believers:***

True, absolutely that, there is a real danger of that at times. You know I think, one thing we need to see clearly too here, the way that Jesus addressed kind of insiders if I can use that term. Jesus was often pretty blunt and bold with the church about, hey you need to get your act right, you got to get it together, get right church. He was pretty bold and blunt with those who were calling themselves Christians. But we see certainly the way that Jesus, you know, he engaged with outsiders... was kind of different. Right? I mean Jesus doesn't come and say, *hey you don't believe in me, by the way I got a double-edged sword*. You know that's not the way, that's not the way he works, he says to those who do believe in him, *I am the one with the double-edged sword, you believe in me...* and that kind of changes things.

***Engaging the World like Jesus:***

And so when we engage with the world, whether it be non-believers or people who believe in another type of faith system, we need to make sure that we are still engaging like Jesus. Sometimes we take what's written to the churches, and we say okay that means that we need to go after the world with a double-edged sword,... but that's not the way Jesus engaged. And so certainly the way that Jesus engages the church, to keep the church faithful is different than the way he engaged people in the world to get them to where they would become faithful. And I think we need to keep that front and center as well in the way that we interact with folks to know that... Look, if you are starting with somebody, the first thing they need to see is the love. And when they see the love maybe they will start to understand why God does have this kind of wrathful, angry side at times. Why God does have standards that he wants us to embrace. So again here he goes on to say, *Likewise, (Verse 15) you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans*, we already dealt with those a little bit... the Nicolaitans. Those are the folks that actually he has addressed already. These folks who believe that *if we take a little bit of Jesus, and a little bit of some other things, and we mix them together, we can go engage in temple practices, you know worshiping pagan Gods as well and that will be just fine. That will be just fine.*

***We have our own idols today.***

You know church, let's be honest with ourselves because Jesus might have some words for us from time to time as well. We may not have Pagan Gods all over the place, but that doesn't mean we don't have idols in just about everywhere in our society that we can worship and say, *Well I want a little bit of this and a little bit of this and I have a little bit of Jesus and I will have some of that too and I want some of that*. And Jesus says, *To the church in Pergamum, I am glad you are not doing that to the ones who aren't* (don't have idols), but to the ones who are (have idols) he says, *Get right church, you need to get this right. You know you need to have all of me and trust that in me you have everything you need*. And so certainly we don't need to get to that place where we are quick and dismissive because we don't have Pagan temples,... that idol worship doesn't happen in our culture in this day and age as well.

***Repent and don't mess with the sword:***

And so, of course Jesus, says, repent because otherwise I will come to you and.... Listen. I don't want you to miss this: the sword, the double-edged sword. Listen to what Jesus says he is going to do with that double-edged sword. He says, *I will fight against them with the sword of my mouth*. Again Jesus realizes that that sword is a weapon. In this context, he is not mincing words. The sword is a weapon. And he

says, *If we allow ourselves to become caught up in practices, idolatry, he is going to come and deal with us.*

***A faithful church is an extremely important witness in the world.***

Now, the reason Jesus deals with us is because he wants us to return to faith. Do you see that repentance? He says *Repent! I want you to be faithful again.* That's the whole point. Jesus didn't come with a sword so he could cut us off and so we are gone forever. I mean a day could come where there is a cutting off. Certainly we see that in John 12 talks about every branch that's not fruitful, the Father comes... and the branches that are fruitful even those he prunes. And so absolutely Jesus is working hard, but he is working for what purpose? To keep the church faithful. Because a faithful church is an extremely important witness in the world, the church has got to be faithful. Again, be different to make a difference.

***Nourishment from Jesus and our unique special relationship with Him.***

Then he goes on and says again of course, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna." This is kind of this, and I've used the hidden and secret several times this morning, but this is this idea that you know believers find strength and nourishment from Jesus that nobody else can explain at times. That I have seen people suffer things and this church in Pergamum was suffering things that the world would have looked at and said, there is no explanation for that. One of your witnesses maybe your preacher was dragged out on the streets and was put to death, how in the world will you survive that? Well because God provides the strength to survive that. Whatever it was. This hidden manna God provided. I mean that's the whole idea of manna, God was the one providing it, and it was a secret because people won't always understand it, but there is the strength that comes from God that gives us the ability to endure things that there is just no other explanation for. It is the piece that passes all understanding. Sometimes we don't even know how we are doing it but it's God's power in us. And he says, *I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it and known only to him who receives it.* Again that's this relationship with God that is very personal, very special.

What Jesus is saying again this is about you can know me, and in knowing me there are things that you and I will have that are very unique and special. It's a relationship. And that's exactly what Jesus is saying, I am going to give you something here. It's a stone: a white stone with your name. A white is just purity but it's from Jesus and it has a name on it,... which is the way that Jesus feels. I mean think about the Old Testament, the significance of names. God steps in and renames people. And when he renames them they become what he named him. Right? I mean God stepped in and he said, *Abram you are no longer Abram, you are Abraham. Jacob you are no longer Jacob, you are Israel now.*

And so God steps in and renames. God renamed Paul, he said, *You are no longer Saul, you are now Paul, I am renaming you.* God did that. That your parents give you a name, that's cool, I am going to give you another one and God does that, because God has a relationship with these folks and God has relationship with us as well where he gives us something unique, special, awesome, because he wants to have that one-on-one personal with us, but don't forget, he wants to have that with our community as well, not just about me, it's about the community as well.

So certainly that's what we see again not only to him to who receives it, some pretty neat things again in this short section we will be in, the end of Chapter 2, next week with the letter to the church in Thyatira. Any comments and thoughts on what we have looked through? Yes Dale.

[Audience till 00:38:28]

***Standing for things as Christians versus standing against things:***

Amen and there is a group of ministers who got together some pretty well known pastors in the country and what they did was they came up with a list that, we as Christians, of things that we should stand for instead of always standing against things. Now I think that is may be the distinction that Dale (is making) is that we look at that and we say as a body there are things we must stand for. We are going to stop being against people all the time and you know I mean that's one thing you know when you ask, I mean one of Barna most recent books when people are asked, you know well, what do you think about Christians, non-believers, this is primarily they would call the anti-church, what do you think about Christians? Well they are ones, they just don't like gay people. Is that true about us as Christians? I mean certainly there are, there are stances in scripture where God is pretty blatant about what he believes is proper and the types of relationships we ought to have and the type of relationship that he calls marriage, absolutely. But do we as a church, we do not like gay people. I mean that is not true, it better not be true, or else we are not like Jesus right, else we're not going to be like Jesus when he interfaces with the woman at the well, Jesus would have just said, "Look, get on out of here, because I don't like you." And Jesus doesn't do that, he talks with her and he loves her, he brings her into relationship with him and he does say, "Look, there are some things you've got to go and change for my sake, to be my witness. You got to change some things because I want you to look like me, I mean I want you to be my witness- be part of my body- to the world but I love you. Right? If, as a church, we are communicating anything different to the world than we are not really being fully Jesus to the world for sure.

Again, we got to hold ourselves to some pretty serious standards, what we should be, but we should never be surprised when the world doesn't act like Jesus, what should surprise us is when the church isn't acting like Jesus, right? Yes, Bill.

[Audience]

***Jesus the master fishing captain:***

Yeah that's very true, I love the shirt and as a fisherman and for some of you guys who like to fish and ladies as well, there is this shirt that says ***Jesus is the Master Captain***. You know you catch the fish. He cleans them. Right? So I love that shirt because well, partially because I love going on a trip with the charter [captain] where the captain cleans the fish and I don't have to do it, but really I mean that's the way that things operate. Right? We bring him the fish and he cleans them. That's through the power of the spirit, through the words of God that people are challenged and convicted. I mean that's the spirit's job to convict people and bring them to a place where they say, *Yes, I do need to change.*"

***Change: Jesus is still working on us.***

Now let's be honest. I mean we are quick to point fingers at very specific issues sometimes because of the personal struggles we have with people who might live that way. But did anybody come to Jesus and didn't have some things that need to be changed? I mean anyone? Because if this is so, you are pretty awesome. And maybe you are (new to) Jesus. I don't know. But we all came to him with things that needed to be changed and in reality, even those who have been believers for quite a while, well that's right, he is still working on us, amen.

Alright so we will jump into Thyatira next week, look forward to seeing you guys then. God bless you.