

NOON BIBLE STUDY: REVELATION 2: PERGAMUM

REVELATION 2:12-17 - PERGAMUM

REVELATION 2:13 - I KNOW WHERE YOU DWELL...

DESCRIPTION OF CHRIST:

COMMENDATION:

SOLUTION:

PROMISE FOR THOSE WHO OVERCOME:

WHAT CHRIST KNOWS & SEES:

REBUKE:

CONSEQUENCE OF DISOBEDIENCE:

WE NEED SOME BACKGROUND ABOUT THE CITY OF PERGAMUM:

"IF EPHEBUS WAS THE NEW YORK OF ASIA, PERGAMUM WAS ITS WASHINGTON, DC, FOR THERE THE ROMAN IMPERIAL POWER HAD ITS SEAT OF GOVERNMENT. THERE ALSO WAS BUILT THE EARLIEST TEMPLE FOR THE STATE-SPONSORED WORSHIP OF THE EMPEROR." (MICHAEL WILCOCK, "THE MESSAGE OF REVELATION", PAGE 47)

"PERGAMUM WAS THE FIRST CITY OF ASIA TO SUPPORT OPENLY THE IMPERIAL CULT. IN 29 BC A TEMPLE WAS DEDICATED "TO THE DIVINE AUGUSTUS AND THE GODDESS ROMA," AND THUS PERGAMUM BECAME THE CHIEF SEAT IN ASIA OF THE WORSHIP OF THE EMPEROR. OBSERVANCE OF THIS WORSHIP BECAME A TEST OF LOYALTY TO ROME, FOR THE IMPERIAL CULT WAS THE KEYSTONE OF IMPERIAL POLICY, AND REFUSAL TO TAKE PART IN THE OFFICIAL CULT WAS CONSIDERED HIGH TREASON.

PERGAMUM WAS ALSO THE CENTER FOR MANY OTHER DEITIES. IN THE CITY WASN ACROPOLIS, ABOUT A THOUSAND FEET HIGH, UPON WHICH HAD BEEN ERECTED MANY TEMPLES TO PAGAN DEITIES. THE ACROPOLIS WAS CROWNED BY A HUGE ALTAR DEDICATED TO ZEUS, AND BY A TEMPLE OF ATHENA. PERGAMUM WAS ALSO THE CENTER OF THE WORSHIP OF ASCLEPIUS, THE SERPENT-GOD OF HEALING, AND WAS FAMED FOR ITS COLLEGE OF MEDICAL PRIESTS. THUS PERGAMUM WAS A STRONGHOLD OF BOTH PAGAN RELIGION AND EMPEROR WORSHIP AND PROVIDED AN UNUSUALLY DIFFICULT ENVIRONMENT FOR A CHRISTIAN CHURCH." (GEORGE ELTON LADD, "A COMMENTARY ON THE REVELATION", PAGE 45)

JESUS KNOWS WHERE THESE CHRISTIANS "DWELL". HE SAYS THAT THEY LIVE IN THE PLACE OF "SATAN'S THRONE" AND "WHERE SATAN DWELLS." SANDWICHED BETWEEN THESE TWO STATEMENTS IS THE MEMORY OF A CERTAIN CHRISTIAN (ANTIPAS) WHO WAS MARTYRED. JESUS COMMENDS THE CHURCH FOR HOLDING FAST TO HIS NAME AND HIS FAITH.

UNDERSTANDING A BIT ABOUT THE CITY OF PERGAMUM HISTORICALLY HELPS US MAKE SOME SENSE OF WHY HE CALLS IT THE PLACE OF SATAN'S THRONE. THE CITY IS THE CENTER OF ROMAN LIFE: PRACTICALLY, POLITICALLY AND RELIGIOUSLY. REMEMBER FOR ASIA, THE WORSHIP OF THE EMPEROR (AND THE CONFESSION: "CAESAR IS LORD") ORIGINATED HERE. IDOLATRY IS RAMPANT AND THE CITY IS FILLED WITH IDEAS AND OPPORTUNITIES. ALL THAT IS IN OPPOSITION TO GOD



AND CHRIST (*REMEMBER SATAN MEANS ADVERSARY AND OPPONENT*) IS SEATED HERE. ZEUS PROCLAIMS THAT HE IS THE GREATEST GOD. CAESAR PROCLAIMS HE IS LORD OF THE WORLD.

AND YET, HOW DID THE PERGAMUM CHRISTIANS DO IN FACING THESE PRESSURES? THEY HELD FAST AND DIDN'T DENY, EVEN WHEN FACING DEATH. YET, WE WILL DISCOVER THAT THOUGH THEY ENDURED PRESSURES WELL, IT WAS THE PLEASURES THEY NEEDED TO BE WARNED ABOUT.

REVELATION 2:14-15 - BUT I HAVE A FEW THINGS AGAINST YOU...

HOW INTERESTING THAT AFTER RECEIVING A COMMENDATION LIKE THE ONE ABOVE (V. 13), THERE ARE SERIOUS THINGS THAT JESUS HAS "AGAINST THEM" (V. 14)

THROUGH JESUS' MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH IN PERGAMUM WE LEARN A LITTLE MORE ABOUT THE TEACHING OF THE NICOLAITANS, WHO WERE MENTIONED PREVIOUSLY IN THE LETTER TO EPHESUS (V. 6). THERE ISN'T REALLY HISTORICAL AGREEMENT AS TO WHO THESE NICOLAITANS WERE, BUT THIS SECTION GIVES US SOME INSIGHT INTO THE CORE OF THEIR TEACHINGS AND BELIEF AND WHY IT WAS WARNED AGAINST BY JESUS.

TO GET AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE TEACHING OF THE NICOLAITANS, WE MUST REVISIT AN OLD TESTAMENT STORY FROM THE BOOK OF NUMBERS. IT HAPPENS AFTER THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL HAD BEEN REDEEMED FROM SLAVERY IN EGYPT AND WERE IN THE WILDERNESS, HEADING TOWARDS CANAAN, THE PROMISED LAND. AS THEY JOURNEYED THROUGH THE WILDERNESS, THEY WOULD PASS THROUGH DIFFERENT REGIONS. SOMETIMES THE RULERS OF THOSE REGIONS WOULD ALLOW SAFE PASSAGE, SOMETIMES WAR WOULD ENSUE.

IN THIS INSTANCE, THE ISRAELITES ARE CAMPING IN THE PLAINS OF MOAB, NEAR THE EAST BANK OF THE JORDAN RIVER. THEY HAD NO INTENTION TO ENGAGE WITH THE MOABITES, BUT THE KING OF MOAB, A MAN NAMED BALAK, BECAME VERY UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THE VAST AND NOW WELL KNOWN ISRAELITES CAMPING NEAR HIS LAND. WITH HIS ANXIETY LEVEL RISING, HE FEELS THAT HE NEEDS TO DO SOMETHING AND FAST. RATHER THAN TRYING TO ENGAGE WITH THE ISRAELITES MILITARILY, HE DECIDES TO HIRE A WELL KNOWN SEER TO DEAL WITH ISRAEL A DIFFERENT WAY.

NUMBERS 22:1-20: 41-23:12 - BALAK HIRES BALAAM TO CURSE ISRAEL

(NUMBERS 23:13-26 — 2ND ATTEMPT)

(NUMBERS 23:27-24:9 — 3RD ATTEMPT)

(NUMBERS 24:10-25 - FINAL WORD)

NUMBERS 25:1-2 - ISRAEL FALLS A DIFFERENT WAY

IF THE EVIL PROPHET AND PAGAN KING COULDN'T DEFEAT GOD'S PEOPLE BY CURSING THEM OR KILLING THEM, THEY WERE ABLE TO CORRUPT AND DESTROY THE PEOPLE OF GOD THROUGH SEDUCTION AND SEXUAL IMMORALITY. APPARENTLY WHAT HAPPENED AFTER MOAB STOPPED TRYING TO CURSE ISRAEL, SOME OF THE MOABITE WOMEN ENTICED THE MEN OF ISRAEL AND THIS LED TO THE ISRAELITES WORSHIPING IDOLS THROUGH FEASTING AND CELEBRATION.

THE ORIGINAL STORY DOES NOT INDICATE HOW THIS HAPPENS, THE TEXT WILL CONTINUE ON AND GIVE EXPLANATION AS TO HOW THIS COULD HAPPEN. A LITTLE WHILE LATER GOD COMMANDED MOSES TO DESTROY THE MIDIANITES (WHO HAD CONSPIRED WITH MOAB DURING THE TIME OF BALAAM):

NUMBERS 31:1-2 (NLT) - THEN THE LORD SAID TO MOSES, 2 "ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL, TAKE REVENGE ON THE MIDIANITES FOR LEADING THEM INTO IDOLATRY. AFTER THAT, YOU WILL DIE AND JOIN YOUR ANCESTORS."

NUMBERS 31:7-9 (NLT) - THEY ATTACKED MIDIAN AS THE LORD HAD COMMANDED MOSES, AND THEY KILLED ALL THE MEN. 8 ALL FIVE OF THE MIDIANITE KINGS-- EVI, REKEM, ZUR, HUR, AND REBA-- DIED IN THE BATTLE. THEY ALSO KILLED BALAAM SON OF BEOR WITH THE SWORD. 9 THEN THE ISRAELITE ARMY CAPTURED THE MIDIANITE WOMEN AND CHILDREN AND SEIZED THEIR CATTLE AND FLOCKS AND ALL THEIR WEALTH AS PLUNDER.

NUMBERS 31:13-16 (NLT) - MOSES, ELEAZAR THE PRIEST, AND ALL THE LEADERS OF THE COMMUNITY WENT TO MEET THEM OUTSIDE THE CAMP. 14 BUT MOSES WAS FURIOUS WITH ALL THE GENERALS AND CAPTAINS WHO HAD RETURNED FROM THE BATTLE. 15 "WHY HAVE YOU LET ALL THE WOMEN LIVE?" HE DEMANDED. 16 "THESE ARE THE VERY ONES WHO FOLLOWED BALAAM'S ADVICE AND CAUSED THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL TO REBEL AGAINST THE LORD AT MOUNT PEOR. THEY ARE THE ONES WHO CAUSED THE PLAGUE TO STRIKE THE LORD'S PEOPLE.

NUMBERS 31:16 (NIV) - "THEY WERE THE ONES WHO FOLLOWED BALAAM'S ADVICE AND ENTICED THE ISRAELITES TO BE UNFAITHFUL TO THE LORD IN THE PEOR INCIDENT, SO THAT A PLAGUE STRUCK THE LORD'S PEOPLE.

WHAT WE DISCOVER HERE IS THAT BALAAM, WHO WAS UNSUCCESSFUL IN CURSING ISRAEL, HATCHED ANOTHER PLAN TO DEFEAT THEM. HE HAD APPARENTLY COUNSELED SOME OF THE WOMEN OF MIDIAN TO ENTICE THE MEN OF ISRAEL. THESE WOMEN SEDUCED THE MEN OF ISRAEL AND TEMPTED THEM NOT ONLY TO COMMIT SEXUAL IMMORALITY, BUT ALSO WORSHIP THEIR IDOL.

SO BALAAM BECAME KNOWN AS SOMEONE WHO USED SEXUALLY IMMORAL AND SEDUCTIVE WAYS TO GET GOD'S PEOPLE TO SIN AND WORSHIP IDOLS. LET'S RETURN TO PERGAMUM AND THE REASON WHY WE ARE REVISITING THIS OLD TESTAMENT LESSON

REVELATION 2:14-15

THE PERGAMUM CHURCH MIGHT HAVE READ JESUS' WORDS AND THOUGHT "HOW ARE WE FOLLOWING AFTER THE TEACHING OF SOME OLD TESTAMENT FALSE PROPHET LONG DEAD FROM THE BOOK OF NUMBERS NO LESS?!" AND JESUS REPLIES: "SO YOU HAVE SOME WHO *IN THE SAME WAY* HOLD THE TEACHING OF THE NICOLAITANS. WHAT ISRAEL DID THEN BECAUSE OF BALAAM IS WHAT THE CHRISTIANS WERE DOING NOW BECAUSE OF THE NICOLAITAN TEACHING.

IN THE ROMAN WORLD, ONE OF THE MAJOR WAYS PEOPLE WOULD WORSHIP THEIR GODS WAS THROUGH ENGAGING IN FLESHLY PLEASURES AS A WAY TO WORSHIP. IT WAS COMMON TO SEE TEMPLE PROSTITUTES AND SPRAWLING TABLES OF FOOD AND DRINK IN GREEK AND ROMAN TEMPLES. THESE PROSTITUTES WOULD SYMBOLIZE THE GODDESS AND THROUGH A SEXUAL ENCOUNTER WITH THE PROSTITUTE, YOU WERE SPIRITUALLY UNITED TO THE GODDESS AND PLEASING THEM. THE FOOD WOULD BE HIGH QUALITY IN NATURE AND OFFERING THESE EXPENSIVE ITEMS TO THE STATUES AND THEN EATING AND DRINKING IN THE TEMPLE WOULD BE A WAY TO OFFER GOOD THINGS TO THE GODS. THE ROMAN EMPIRE WAS SATURATED WITH SEXUALIZATION, PLEASURE-SEEKING, SENSUALITY, FLESHLY OPTIONS, GLUTTONY, SUBTLE PATHWAYS TO IDOLATRY AND FEEL GOOD PRIORITIZATION.

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN VERY HARD TO RESIST THE PULL OF THE CULTURAL CURRENT.

REVELATION 2:16 - SO WHAT TO DO?

AS WE HAVE SEEN ALREADY, THE WAY JESUS INTRODUCES HIMSELF TO THE CHURCH IS UNIQUE TO THE SITUATION. JESUS WILL REFERENCE TWICE THE "SWORD" WHICH WE HAVE LEARNED IS A TWO-EDGED SWORD THAT COMES OUT OF HIS MOUTH (1:16; 2:12, 16). THIS IS A POWERFUL SYMBOL WHICH COMMUNICATES THAT THE WORDS OF JESUS ARE VERY POWERFUL. FOR THE SAINTS OF PERGAMUM, THEY HAVE HELD FAST TO THE NAME AND

FAITH OF CHRIST, TRUSTING THAT HIS WORD IS TRUE AND POWERFUL. AND YET, IT WILL BE THE SAME S(WORD) OF CHRIST THAT THEY WILL FACE IF THEY DO NOT REJECT THE TEACHING OF THE NICOLAITANS.

"THE POWER OF THE SWORD RESTS NOT WITH THE RULERS OF ROME, NOR WITH THE RULER OF THIS WORLD, BUT WITH (CHRIST)" (WILCOCK, PAGE 48)

THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL GOT TRICKED INTO WORSHIPING BAAL AND COMMITTING IMMORALITY WITH MOABITE WOMEN BECAUSE THEY LET THEIR FEELINGS DETERMINE THEIR CHOICES RATHER THAN THE WORD OF THE LORD. SOME OF PERGAMUM'S PEOPLE HAD GOTTEN TRICKED INTO WORSHIPING IDOLS AND COMMITTING IMMORALITY BECAUSE THEY HAD FOLLOWED THEIR FEELINGS AND CULTURAL NORMS RATHER THAN THE WORD OF JESUS.

HIS WORD WOULD BE A POWERFUL GUIDE TO HELP THEM WALK OR A PIERCING JUDGMENT THAT WOULD MEAN WAR. WHICH ONE PERGAMUM EXPERIENCED WOULD BE BASED ON THEIR RESPONSE TO CHRIST'S CALL TO "REPENT (2:16)" AND "HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAYS...(2:17)"

REVELATION 2:17 - TO THE ONE WHO OVERCOMES...

IF PERGAMUM FULLY RETURNED TO THEIR PRACTICE OF HOLDING FAST TO CHRIST'S NAME AND RESOLVE TO NOT DENY HIS FAITH, EVEN WHEN FACING TIME OF PERSECUTION - OR FACING TEMPTATIONS OF PLEASURE - THEY WOULD BE REWARDED WITH "THE HIDDEN MANNA" AND A "WHITE STONE, WITH A NEW NAME WRITTEN ON THAT STONE WHICH NO ONE KNOWS BUT THE ONE WHO RECEIVES IT..."

Q - WHAT DO YOU THINK THAT MEANS?

INTERESTINGLY AFTER WE LOOKED AT THE OLD TESTAMENT RECORD FROM THE TIME OF THE ISRAELITES, ONE OF THE PROMISES FOR THOSE WHO OVERCOME IS BEING GIVEN SOME "HIDDEN MANNA". MANNA WAS THE SUPERNATURAL FOOD THAT GOD PROVIDED FOR THE ISRAELITES DURING THE WILDERNESS JOURNEY. MIRACULOUSLY IT PROVIDED ALL THAT THE PEOPLE NEEDED FOR THEIR FOOD AND SUBSISTENCE EACH DAY! GOD GAVE IT TO THEM AND IT HAD THE PERFECT NUTRITIONAL MAKEUP TO KEEP THEM SATISFIED AND HEALTHY.

SO WHATEVER IT EXACTLY HIDDEN MIGHT MEAN, JESUS HAS HIDDEN MANNA FOR THOSE WHO OVERCOME. SO WHAT OF THE WHITE STONE?

"IN THE ANCIENT WORLD, WHITE STONES HAD A VARIETY OF USES. A WHITE STONE SIGNIFIED ACQUITTAL BY A JURY, A BLACK STONE: CONDEMNATION. WHITE STONES WERE USED AS TICKETS OF ADMISSION TO PUBLIC FESTIVALS. THIS MEANING FITS THE CONTEXT BEST. THE WHITE STONE IS A SYMBOL OF ADMISSION TO THE MESSIANIC FEAST. (LADD, PAGE 49)

IN ADDITION, THE ESV STUDY BIBLE NOTES THAT "HISTORICALLY, A **WHITE STONE** WAS GIVEN TO VICTORS AT GAMES FOR ENTRANCE TO BANQUETS (ESV STUDY BIBLE NOTE, REVELATION 2:17)"

IN THE BIBLE, NEW NAMES WERE OFTEN GIVEN TO PEOPLE AFTER THEY HAD EXPERIENCED A MAJOR EVENT WITH GOD OR THEY ENTERED INTO A NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM. MOST NOTABLY, ABRAM'S NAME IS CHANGED TO ABRAHAM AFTER RECEIVING AND BELIEVING GOD'S COVENANT PROMISE (GENESIS 17:5). SARAI'S NAME IS CHANGED TO SARAH FOR THE SAME REASON (GENESIS 17:15). JACOB'S NAME IS CHANGED TO ISRAEL AFTER HE EXPERIENCES GOD'S POWER (WRESTLING WITH AN ANGEL ALL NIGHT), AND COMES TO BELIEVE THAT GOD IS WITH AND FOR HIM (GENESIS 32:28).

THOSE WHO OVERCOME WILL BE GIVEN A NEW NAME, WRITTEN ON THIS WHITE STONE. AND THIS NAME WILL BE SPECIAL BETWEEN THE PERSON WHO RECEIVES IT AND CHRIST. THAT IMPLIES INTIMACY, CLOSENESS AND LOVE. NAMING SOMEONE IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT AND SPECIAL ACTS OF THEIR LIFE (PARENTS KNOW THIS!). JESUS DOES NOT JUST KNOW HIS CHURCH GENERALLY, HE KNOWS HIS CHURCH PERSONALLY - HE KNOWS THEM **BY NAME**. HOW POWERFUL MUST IT HAVE BEEN FOR THE PERGAMUM CHURCH TO READ THAT JESUS CITES "ANTIPAS, MY WITNESS, MY FAITHFUL ONE,

WHO WAS KILLED AMONG YOU..." HE KNOWS THOSE WHO ARE HIS. AND TO THOSE WHO HOLD FAST TO HIS NAME AND OVERCOME, HE WILL GIVE A NEW NAME.

LET'S BRING THIS ALL TOGETHER:

PERGAMUM DOESN'T NEED TO WASTE TIME BEING KNOWN AT THE FEASTING AT THE ROMAN TEMPLE, FOR THEY ARE GIVEN A GREAT PROMISE FROM THE TRUE KING OF THE WORLD.. CHRIST HAS FOR THEM ALL-SATISFYING MANNA TO FEAST ON AND AN ENTRANCE TICKET WITH THEIR NAME ON IT TO THE GREAT KING'S BANQUET IN THE AGE TO COME.

SO WHAT DO WE NEED TO HEAR?

IN JESUS' FOUNDATIONAL TEACHING OF THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER, HE WARNS US TO WATCH FOR TWO MAJOR CATEGORIES WHICH WILL THREATEN THE GOSPEL'S WORK IN OUR HEARTS - PERSECUTION/TRIALS AND PLEASURES/TEMPTATIONS. IF YOU DON'T FALL WHEN TRIALS COME, WATCH OUT FOR HOW THE PLEASURES OF THIS WORLD MAY ENTICE YOU. IF YOU ARE ON THE WATCH FOR WORLDLY AND FLESHLY TEMPTATIONS, BE CAREFUL THAT PERSECUTION OR AFFLICTION AREN'T WHAT LOOSENS YOUR GRIP TO CHRIST.

IN OUR WORLD TODAY MANY ARE NOT DEALING WITH WHAT JESUS CALLS "THE DECEITFULNESS OF RICHES...AND DESIRE FOR OTHER THINGS" (MARK 4:19), BECAUSE THEY ARE FACING UNIMAGINABLE PERSECUTION. FOR OTHERS THERE IS LITTLE TO NO PERSECUTION BUT THEY ARE SWIMMING IN THE CULTURAL SOUP OF SEX, SOCIAL MEDIA, STOCKS, STORES, SHOES, SOUNDS, SANDWICHES, SCHOOL, AND STUFF.

THE THINGS THAT ARE GOING TO SEVER US FROM CHRIST DON'T TYPICALLY ANNOUNCE THEMSELVES BEFORE THEY WALK INTO OUR LIVES. THEY ARE SUBTLE, SNEAKY AND UNSEEN. BALAAM COULDN'T CAUSE ISRAEL TO FALL BY CALLING DOWN SOME EVIL CURSE, SO HE SLID IN BY SENDING THE ANCIENT EQUIVALENT OF A DM (OR EMAIL). AND IT WORKED. ISRAEL FELL. ISRAEL DIDN'T SEE THAT THEY COULDN'T WORSHIP YAHWEH AND ALSO SLEEP AROUND.

TEMPTATIONS WILL ALWAYS EXIST AND WE NEED TO WATCH FOR THEM AND LOOK FOR THE WAY THAT GOD WILL PROVIDE TO ESCAPE THEM. BUT IN PARTICULAR, WE NEED TO BE MINDFUL ABOUT THE SEXUALIZATION OF OUR WORLD RIGHT NOW. THIS IS PART OF WHAT PERGAMUM FACED. THEY HAD PROSTITUTE INVITATIONS ON EVERY CORNER - AND IN THEIR DAY THEY DIDN'T HAVE TO FEAR "WHAT IF SOMEONE FOUND OUT" THEY HAD TO FEAR BEING FOUND OUT AS SOMEONE WHO WOULDN'T. TODAY THE PROSTITUTES INVITE US THROUGH OUR SCREENS AND DEVICES WHERE A QUICK CLEANSING OF OUR BROWSER'S HISTORY MAKES IT ALL GO AWAY. YET WE ALL KNOW IT DOESN'T.

THIS ISN'T JUST A MALE PROBLEM EITHER. (SOME STUDIES SAY THAT 30% OF TRAFFIC TO INAPPROPRIATE WEBSITES ARE BY WOMEN.) THIS IS A HUMAN PROBLEM AND INCREASINGLY IN AMERICA, IT IS A CHRISTIAN PROBLEM. WE CANNOT ALLOW OURSELVES TO BE SEDUCED BY THE SENSUALITY OF THIS WORLD. WE CANNOT ALLOW OURSELVES TO BE SEDUCED BY THE MATERIALISM OF THIS WORLD. WE CANNOT ALLOW OURSELVES TO BE CAPTIVATED BY WHAT THE WORLD IS SCREAMING FOR US TO GIVE ATTENTION TO.

AND THAT'S EASIER SAID THAN DONE.

ULTIMATELY THIS IS A CONVERSATION ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF A *HOLISTIC* VIEW OF FOLLOWING JESUS (MEANING THE WHOLE PERSON). THE CHRISTIAN NEEDS TO CARE ABOUT HOLDING ON TO THE TRUTH AND BEING A FAITHFUL WITNESS WHEN THE SPOTLIGHT TURNS ON. AND THE CHRISTIAN NEEDS TO CARE ABOUT THE INNER AREAS OF THE HEART THAT NO-ONE ELSE SEES. HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAYS TO THE CHURCHES.

TO PERGAMUM, JESUS SAID YOU "**HOLD FAST**" TO THE NAME OF CHRIST BUT ALSO "**HOLD** THE TEACHING OF BALAAM" AND "THE NICOLAITANS". BROTHERS AND SISTERS THESE THINGS OUGHT NOT TO BE SO.

THE FIRST CENTURY CHRISTIANS LIVED IN A TIME OF DIFFICULT POLITICAL PRESSURES AND CULTURAL AND MORAL CHALLENGES. I THINK WE CAN SEE MUCH OF THE SAME CHALLENGES IN OUR DAY. SO WE NEED TO BE AWAKE AND ALERT AND HOLD FAST TO THE NAME AND FAITH OF CHRIST AND CLING TO THE SWORD OF HIS WORD.

PETER WILL WELL SAY A FINAL WORD FOR US IN LIGHT OF THEIR MOMENT, AND OURS:

1 PETER 4:1-5 - THEREFORE, SINCE CHRIST HAS SUFFERED IN THE FLESH, ARM YOURSELVES ALSO WITH THE SAME PURPOSE, BECAUSE HE WHO HAS SUFFERED IN THE FLESH HAS CEASED FROM SIN, 2 SO AS TO LIVE THE REST OF THE TIME IN THE FLESH NO LONGER FOR THE LUSTS OF MEN, BUT FOR THE WILL OF GOD. 3 FOR THE TIME ALREADY PAST IS SUFFICIENT FOR YOU TO HAVE CARRIED OUT THE DESIRE OF THE GENTILES, HAVING PURSUED A COURSE OF SENSUALITY, LUSTS, DRUNKENNESS, CAROUSING, DRINKING PARTIES AND ABOMINABLE IDOLATRIES. 4 IN ALL THIS, THEY ARE SURPRISED THAT YOU DO NOT RUN WITH THEM INTO THE SAME EXCESSES OF DISSIPATION, AND THEY MALIGN YOU; 5 BUT THEY WILL GIVE ACCOUNT TO HIM WHO IS READY TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD.

1 PETER 5:8-10 - BE OF SOBER SPIRIT, BE ON THE ALERT. YOUR ADVERSARY, THE DEVIL, PROWLs AROUND LIKE A ROARING LION, SEEKING SOMEONE TO DEVOUR. 9 BUT RESIST HIM, FIRM IN YOUR FAITH, KNOWING THAT THE SAME EXPERIENCES OF SUFFERING ARE BEING ACCOMPLISHED BY YOUR BRETHREN WHO ARE IN THE WORLD. 10 AFTER YOU HAVE SUFFERED FOR A LITTLE WHILE, THE GOD OF ALL GRACE, WHO CALLED YOU TO HIS ETERNAL GLORY IN CHRIST, WILL HIMSELF PERFECT, CONFIRM, STRENGTHEN AND ESTABLISH YOU.