

Bible Studies for Life: June 20

Uncompromising with Truth • Revelation 2:12-17

By Clay Anthony



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We all know there are many avenues of life which Bible-believing Christians are not to venture down. We learn at an early age the difference between right and wrong. Have you ever considered that one of the greatest mistakes a Christ follower can make is becoming soft on the truth?

When we water down the Gospel requirements of faith or cut corners in our call to holiness, we are guilty of compromise. This is an often stealthy and destructive sin to which many fall prey by giving away pieces of their faith when faced with opposition to what they believe.

Jesus' message to the next church in our study of Revelation reads as a warning to a church caught in such a compromise. Pergamum is best viewed as the Washington, D.C., of its era. While Ephesus was a much larger city, the center of government and trade was in Pergamum.

Visitors to this city would be confronted with the required worship of Roman emperors (v. 12) and also confounded by the large altars to false gods such as Zeus (v. 13). Into that setting, place a group of believers who are attempting to grow

in their faith. To that church, Jesus had something to say.

Boldness is needed (2:12-13). As the youngest of four sons, I discovered early in life that times to be bold came easy – my level of bravery would always increase when I knew that one or more of my big brothers was near. The church of Pergamum was commended for holding fast to the name and truth of Jesus, but reading between the lines one can see that the opportunity to slip into casual faith practices had started to creep in.

Paying homage to and even worshipping Caesar was expected of these people. At some point in their recent history, a believer known as Antipas had held fast to his faith to the point of death. Why? Chances are this man knew full well that the sword wielded by the Roman government was simply no match for his “big brother,” Jesus, and the sword that He carried (Heb. 4:12).

Intolerance is expected (2:14-15). Along with having to face down the constant threat of the prevailing government, Pergamum had to deal with false teachings as well. Whether it be age-old teachings like Balaam, religious questions over food, immoral actions winked at, or new-found teachings from sects such as the Nicolaitans, this church was warned to stand firm against it all.

Much of the ancient world could pass for our own, in that everyone was asked to be tolerant of any and all viewpoints. This church was hearing from Jesus’ own mouth that there is never a right time to do the wrong thing. Christ followers in Revelation author John’s day – and in ours – must be intolerant of anything that goes against orthodoxy Christianity as laid out in the pages of Scripture.

Honor is coming (2:16-17). Jesus closes out His message to this particular church with a warning, an invitation, and a promise. The warning is to simply heed His words. He’s not kidding around when He warns His people to stand firm against

false teaching or living with a watered-down faith. He does promise that those who ignore His warning will be dealt with accordingly.

These people are then invited to hear what is being said. This message is for anyone who has ears to hear. Let all who can hear comprehend what is being told. They are not to just lend Jesus an ear but to take His message to heart and live out that message as proof that they have indeed listened.

Jesus closes by making a promise of honor on anyone who would follow Him. In Roman culture, stones were given as we use tickets or reservations to an event. Your name on that stone would show that yes, you were invited to a particular function. Many times, debtors or even slaves were given such stones to prove that their freedom had been purchased by another.

This was the type of stone everyone wanted back in that day. Today, such a stone would be understood as the Gospel. That is a stone worth sharing. **Live it Out.** As seen in the text, Jesus mentioned a martyr named Antipas. Jesus gave him a great description for his faith. If Jesus were to describe your faith to others, what do you suppose He would say?

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