

November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017  
Pinecrest Baptist Church  
a.m.

Sermon Series: What the Spirit Saith to the Churches  
Sermon #4 Title: The Cure for Corruption  
Sermon #4 Text: (Revelation 2:12-17)

C.T. Studd – a cricket player from England, born in 1860, is credited for the short, but powerful saying, “Only one life, will soon be past; only what’s done for Christ will last.” – That has been a life changing thought for many, many people, for many, many years. Stephen Olford, the great British Baptist preacher, who was to the United Kingdom, what Adrian Rogers was to the United States, often gave that quote as the thought that drove him to the scriptures and to the ministry.

But the good Bro. Studd is also noted for something else he said that has lived through the last century and a half.

“Some want to live within the sound  
Of church or chapel bell;  
I want to run a rescue shop,  
Within a yard of hell.”

Though bro. Studd wasn’t there, this morning we look at people who had both. –

They had both the church and the chapel bell;  
located barely a yard from hell.

They weren’t in hell, but you could smell the smoke from there.

This is a unique and telling letter. Exactly what would Jesus expect from a church founded in the shadow of Satan’s throne? What would He address, and how would He evaluate it, seeing their unusual circumstances?

Answer – “the exact same way that He would each and every church that He claimed as His.

- This morning we are introduced to the church at Pergamos, in Asia Minor. – And I assure you, we have it better than they did, and the Lord accepted no excuses, and received no alibis. It is incumbent on us to “hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

## I. The Setting the Lord Addressed

\*note – Without question, no other church faced such intense hostility from hell, as did the church at Pergamos. – Right off the bat we see the setting as the Lord sees it.

### ***A. They All Dwelled in Satan’s City***

#### 1.) Pergamos

- the name means “fortified, or tower”  
in the Greek language.

\*Note – Socially and economically it was the place to be . . .

\*Note – Like Ephesus and Smyrna before it, the city was full of Roman temples.

- While the other cities had temples to Caesar, Pergamos had the privilege of being sort of the Capital City of Caesar worship.

- the city boasted the second largest library in the world behind the great library of Alexandria – it was a city that prided itself in Knowledge, and Philosophy, and Wisdom.

- it was most known for the Asclepios, - medical center dedicated to the god of medicine Asclepius. – it was the central place of medical studies.

As a matter of fact this pagan god lives today on the side of every ambulance, and medical symbol in the world.

"The rod of Asclepius, a snake-entwined staff, remains a symbol of medicine today. Those physicians and attendants who served this god were known as the Therapeutae of Asclepius."

- This is why the universal symbol for medicine today is a serpent wrapped around a staff.
- the most famous physician in the empire would be born in Pergamos about 30 years after this letter is written, and his name is Galen.
- Now all of that being said, from an earthly standpoint, this was ideal cosmopolitan city.
  - elite universities, world renowned libraries, capital city for magnificent temples, favored city of the empire, and a booming economy – it was all that an eager minded man could wish!

But there was one other problem – It was Hell's Headquarters on earth.

## 2.) "where Satan's seat"

### a.) "thronos" – literally throne

\*Note – This was the place on earth that the Lord said, Satan is ruling his domain from. –

\*Note – one of the noted features of Pergamos that has been preserved unto this day, and put in a museum is the "altar of Pergamos".

- "It was 120 by 112 feet. It had an altar, an actual altar in the middle that was 18 feet high. The base, according to historians, ran for about 446 feet around that horseshoe. And all the way around was a frieze, or a carved work of art, depicting the battle of the gods and the giants."

- Now the truth is that being "dedicated to Zeus" the highest of Greek gods that was an altar dedicated to Satan. –

regardless of the name, all gods' are nothing more than store-front facades for Lucifer himself.

## 3.) "where Satan dwelleth." – (katoikeoh)

### a.) permanent dwelling

### b.) place of abode

\*Note – never get the idea that the devil lives in hell, or is ruling from hell, because the last word we have from the Lord is that he rules from Pergamos, and he dwells in Pergamos.

- Whatever else may be said, the last word we have on his earthly whereabouts is Pergamos.

- yes he walketh about seeking whom he may devour
- yes he is seen going to and fro in all the earth
- but Jesus said this is the place he has made his home on earth....

- Now mind you, Satan is not omnipresent – he is limited to a location.

Ephesians 6:12 tells us, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

- Pergamos is 109 miles, north, northeast of Ephesus.
- Jesus said, those "principalities, powers, rulers of darkness, and spiritual wickedness in high places" had their central command and control in Pergamos.

- This was ground zero, for Satan's rule . . .

- they peddled knowledge without God in their libraries and schools – healing from false god Asclepius

- Now that is where the church dwelled

## ***B. Some were Delivered from Satan's City***

1.) vs 13 – "I know thy works, . . . thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr . . ."

\*Note – Right smack dab in the front yard of Satan’s house there were saints – that held tight to the “name of Jesus” to “the faith” of Jesus

\*Note – Listen to the Lord’s possession of what’s His

- a.) “my name”
- b.) “my faith”
- c.) “my faithful servant”

- There are three preeminent and paramount treasures of the Lord Jesus . . .

*#1 – His Name* – Those who never vary, or wary of that name have the same treasure Jesus has . . .

- He does all that He does for “His Name’s Sake.”

\*Note – He leads in paths of righteousness for His Name’s Sake – Psalm 23:3- Over 30 times in the scriptures we find the Lord working, moving, doing, forgiving, guiding, redeeming for “His Name’s sake.”

- there is nothing more precious than the Name of Jesus

*#2 – “My Faith”* – as opposed to all other forms, creeds, claims, or religions.

- We often speak of “The Faith” which is rightly spoken of . . . the Bible speaks of “the faith, once for all delivered unto the saints.”

- Jesus is revealing to us all that “The Faith” belongs to Him. It is His, and there were those in Pergamos insisted on it as much as He did.

*#3 – “My faithful servant.”* –

- He is speaking of a man named Antipas that was martyred there in Pergamos.

- Jesus used the Possessive pronoun, “My”

- As though Antipas was His Personal Property – and oh the glory, Antipas is his personal property, as is every single person who has been saved.

\*Note - Now all of that being said, Jesus draws a line between those things He claims as His, and everything else.

- There is no higher place, or greater peace than to be on His side of that line.

### ***C. Some had Died in Satan’s City***

1.) Antipas my faithful martyr who was slain among you.

\*Note – Domitian the Roman Emperor at that time was without question, the most vicious and most hostile to the people known as Christians. He did not merely put them to death, He found some of the most painful ways for men and women to die.

- Jesus notes here, and calls his name – “Antipas”

- He was “among you”

\*Note – One thing the Lord Jesus will never say to Antipas is “I never knew you.” – He puts it down in His Word for all eternity that Antipas is mine!

- The unverified legend is that Antipas was placed inside of a Brass Bull, and then roasted like he was in an oven.

- The Bible says, “Precious in the sight of the Lord, is the death of His saints.”

\*Note – Now all of this was the setting and the city and the saints that Jesus was speaking to.

## **II. The Sword the Lord Announced**

- go back to verse 1 – Here is out the Lord identifies Himself to this church – “He which hath the sharp sword with two edges.”

- The sword is the symbolic weapon of judgment.

- This is Jesus with His sword drawn, ready to strike – or being from His mouth, it is ready to speak.

**A. Has a Single Action Cut** – “sharp”, or “swift”

1.) The Lord’s Sword is His Word –

a.) Ephesians 6:17 – “the sword of the spirit is the Word of God.”

**B. Has a Double Edged Blade** – “cuts both ways” no wasted action.

a.) Hebrews 4:12 “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

The Lord showed Himself to the church at Pergamos in strike position, ready to deal the problems at hand.

\*Note – It is only the Mercy and Restraint and Grace of God alone that keeps Him from putting a stop to all the evil and wickedness in this world . . .

He never holds back judgment because “we’re good” but because He is. – He shows this church that He is ready to act.

**III. The Sin the Lord Admonished** – “I have a few things against thee.”

- With all the things that were right, there was something wrong, and wrong enough to cause the Lord to get ready to strike.

\*Note – The Lord focused on the Doctrine of some of the people within the church.

\*Note – Don’t miss this . . . He chastised the church Body because of the phony few.

- Their faithfulness to the name of Jesus – didn’t overcome their tolerance of terrible teaching in the name of Jesus.

\*Note – Jesus makes it plain that what He hated about this church was wrapped up in certain “Doctrines” held by some of the people.

- He names them, the Doctrine of Balaam, and the Doctrine of the Nicolaitans.

- First things first, we need to identify what we’re speaking of when we speak of their “Doctrine.”

- the word here for Doctrine is “Didache”

It means, “an instruction” – either in the act of instruction, or in the matter of instruction.

- there were those in this church that were “propagating an instruction that the Lord hated.”

\*Note – Now if there is nothing else that you catch out of this, at the very least catch this . . . the Lord CARES deeply about the “instruction that goes on within His church.”

- Proponants that try to teach you that “Doctrines” do not really matter to Jesus, as long as you love Him, have no idea of what they are speaking of. – Jesus pointed out two doctrines here that He not only Hates, but threatens the church with Judgment if they do not do something about.

- False Doctrine, False Instruction will cause the Lord Himself to Judge a church.

(Which comes in many forms - )

In this church, exactly what Doctrines did our Lord despise?

**A. The Doctrine of Balaam**

\*Note – Numbers chapter 22-25 tell the full story of Balaam. Balaam was a true prophet of the Lord for Israel, who betrayed the people of God for personal gain.

\*Note – In those days, Balak the king of Moab approached Balaam, and offered him the moon to curse the people of Israel.

- He wanted to conquer the people of God, destroy what he could and subjugate the rest . . .

- In Numbers 23:8 – Balaam responded faithfully, like he should have saying, “How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the LORD hath not defied?”

- Balaam said on three separate attempts, I can’t curse who God has blessed!

- BUT . . .

Numbers 31:16 – “Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.”

\*Note – To shorten things up a bit, essentially, Balaam said to Balak, I can’t curse them, but if you get them to sin, God will punish them. He taught Balak how to bait Israel into sin.

- Look at the middle of verse 14 – “who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel”

- Thus the spirit of Balaam’s problem, and counsel and thinking was this:

1.) The spirit of his Desire –

He wanted what Israel’s enemy offered

2.) The spirit of his Duty

He would not openly cross the Lord’s Words

3.) The spirit of his Doctrine, - He would stick to what God said on the outside, Ignored what God wanted on the inside, and tried to use the Word of God to manipulate things for his own desire.

\*Note – Balaam outwardly declared the Word of the Lord, but inwardly tried to manipulate and control the Lord of the Word.

What did Balak do? – He laid a stumbling block of seduction, and attraction before Israel, and they fell right into it.

- Now listen, - it was not Balak’s fault Israel fell for it – but it was Balak’s fault that he laid it down. – Furthermore, it was Balaam’s fault that Balak knew what he could do . . .

\*Note - The doctrine of Balaam, was not what he taught Israel, but what he taught Balak.

a.) The Specific Result, as it was in old Israel, was the idea that they could “eat things sacrificed to idols” and to “commit fornication.”

- eating things sacrificed to idols was to join in the pagan culture, and the false religious culture.

**- The teaching of Balaam, or the doctrine of Balaam at its heart was the idea that you can use the Words of God, to your own benefit, and in your own way, to get what you want!**

\*Note- The indication is that what happened in Israel, was happening to the members of the church at Pergamos. To commit fornication was most likely two fold. 1 was specific to the sexual perversions of the Roman culture and religion – temple prostitutes, etc . . . 2.) Was the disregard for matrimony – disregard, and belittling of the institution of marriage.

*- There were those in the church at Pergamos that taught others how to use the Word of the Lord for their own personal gratification, how to use the Word of the Lord to accomplish your will, satisfy your flesh, and still fit comfortably in that pagan culture.*

### **B. The Doctrine of the Nicolaitans**

1.) The word means “follower of Nicholas”

\*Note – What exactly was the “Doctrine of the Nicolaitans”?

a.) No one is exactly sure –

b.) there are indications, and it is really irrelevant which indication, because

whichever it is, the Lord hates each one of them.

- Some have the idea that the Nicolaitans were the New Testament version of Balaam, and that the Lord is not talking about two different doctrines, merely that just as Balaam's doctrine prevailed, the Nicolaitans were the newest version of the same thing.

- that may be

Brother MacArthur - "Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria – wrote this about the Nicolaitans: "They live lives of unrestrained indulgence, abandoning themselves to pleasure like goats, leading a life of self-indulgence."

- Some have the idea that this is a separate doctrine, which was sort of taught "class warfare" within the church.

- The root word for Nicolaitan means to "conquer" or to "suppress."

- Some scholars tell us that this was an attempt to use the Bible to formulate a hierarchal system in the church between the "Elite Christians" and the "Common, or ordinary Christian" with different rights and privileges.

- Some tell us that this is where the man-made distinction between "Clergy and Laity" was born – with the idea that the "Clergy" were "special, and above" the "laity, and ordinary people."

- According to the good Dr. Criswell – this was essentially the structuring of the Catholic priesthood, suppressing and oppressing people . . .

- which may be the inference –

- At either side, the Lord's response is unmistakable clear – "which thing I hate."

- that word hate – is the Greek word, "miseo" – and it means "hatred"

- This is the same thing the Lord said to the church at Ephesus 2:6 – "But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate."

- The deeds were mentioned in Ephesus – their doctrine is mentioned here, and both are married together in the hatred of the Lord Jesus.

#### IV. The Solution the Lord Approved

\*Note – The Lord didn't tell them all of this just so they could worry until it happened. He forewarns, that He might forgive!

**A. Repentance** – vs 16 – "Repent or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them."

1.) Here is the burden –

a.) "I will come to thee . . . to fight them."

\*Note – The Lord wasn't talking to the people teaching false doctrine – He was talking to the faithful people ABOUT those who taught false doctrine.

- He told the faithful people, "If you don't get them out of my church" I'm coming to fight them.

b.) the Lord Expected the Faithful ones, to stop the phony ones....

\*Note – His anger is against the Nicolaitans, His warning is to the Faithful Christians. We might say, "He was furious that the Baptists let the Balaamites in."

2.) What were they to do? – Repent!

a.) how could the Christians repent of the Nicolaitans and the Balaamites? – They couldn't repent of their doctrinal sins, but they could repent of allowing those doctrinal sins to have equal footing in the church.

Furthermore, rightly understood, we don't want the Lord to Fight the Nicolaitans and the Balaamites, we want them Forgiven . . . and they will not be forgiven without be confronted, not comforted, rebuked not rewarded, submissive, not Satanic.

**B. Reward – vs 17**

- 1.) hidden manna – not meat to idols
- 2.) white stone – the victors stone
- 3.) new name, which no man knoweth
  - a.) a name between me, and the Lord Jesus.

\*Note – I don't know all that entails. I don't know the why's the meanings, and the nuances of such a reward, but one thing that I know, and know for sure . . . is that a "A new name between me and the Lord indicates my family identity with Him, His affection for me, and His purpose for Him, and His blessing for me.

Conclusion: - Whoever will hear that – Let him hear!

Whosoever will place their faith and trust in Jesus alone, will be saved. Whosoever will place their faith and trust in Jesus Doctrines, Word, and Will – Alone – will be Saved and Blessed!