

Intolerable Tolerance

Revelation 2:12-17

This study is making me tremble. You might say well it is not making me too comfortable either with the warning about the consequences of losing our first love and also the fact that persecution is actually expected for all believers. Well I want to show you something in this passage.

So why does that make you tremble, you might ask? What if I fail to give you the message out of fear of your response? Or what if I get it wrong? Or what if I change the message to suit the current culture or philosophical bent? Is that such a danger? Yes it is. Turn now to Hebrews 13:7, 17.

- Heb 13:7 Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.
- Heb 13:17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

Do you see that part about watching out for your souls and having to give an account? I sometimes wonder when people enter the ministry flippantly, or like Paul says supposing that the ministry is a source of monetary gain. I am going to have to give an account for the body of believers at Grace Church. That is kind of scary. What these passages say is that at the end of his work he will not stand to give an account to a ministerial association, a denominational headquarter, or even to the opinion of the culture or congregation. He (I) will stand and give an account to God and to Jesus the Chief Shepherd.

- He has full knowledge of whether we really love Him and his family like at Ephesus.
- He has the complete story about how we react to persecution like at Smyrna.
- And today He knows everything about just what we tolerate as believers like at Pergamus.

Pergamus was the **Tolerant** Church. – It was the **compromising** church; it was the **worldly** church.

This is the 3rd city on the postal route. It was a very beautiful city and had a royal air about it.

In addition to being a religious center it was an educational center with a school of medicine and a library of more than 200,000 volumes second only to Alexandria.

Even before Smyrna it was a center for Emperor Worship. Here the people were so pleased to give Caesar Credit that they built 3 actual Temples to Cesar on the acropolis where the citizens could come to offer their pinch of incense. Cesar is Lord they were proud to say, that is, everyone but the Christians.

When Jesus comes to Church:

1. He examines our **congregation** (2:12) Jesus is running a constant inspection of his church.
 - a. He **works** through his ministers – "to the angel of the Church" Ephesians 6:19-20; Colossians 4:3-4 *meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, 4 that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.*
 - b. He ministers through his **word** – "He has the sharp two edged sword" *Psalm 119:89 says forever oh Lord thy word is settled in Heaven.* The Bible is a settled book. It has been given to us and it is binding. God is going by the book. Listen God is holding us accountable to what he has said.
 - i. *Re 1:16 He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.*
 - ii. *Heb 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*
 - iii. *Eph 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;*
 - iv. Only God can take a two edged sword and use it for both **punishment** and **healing**.
2. He gives his **commendation** (2:13)

- a. He knows **what we do** – "I know thy works"
 - b. He knows **where we live** – "Where Satan's throne is, Where Satan dwells."
 - i. *2 Cor 4:4- whose minds the **god of this age** has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*
 - ii. *Eph 2:2 - in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the **prince of the power of the air**, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience*
 - iii. *These words are used to let these people know that Jesus knows they are living in a tough place. He knows where they are and He has a word just for them.*
 - iv. **Note:** _____
 - c. He knows **what we believe** – No one believes anything that doesn't have an impact on the way he lives.
 - d. He knows **what we endure** – "Antipas, my faithful martyr" - We talked about this extensively last week.
3. He does precise **confrontation** (2:14-16)
- a. He won't tolerate **our tolerance** – "you have there those that hold to the doctrine"
 - b. He won't tolerate **loose teaching** –
 - i. "Balaam, who taught" (Nu 22-25)
 - ii. The doctrine of the Nicolaitans
 - c. He won't **hesitate** to fight against "**them**" – "I will come to you quickly and will fight against them"
4. He gives a promise of **consolation** (2:17)
- a. His appeal is personal – "He who has an ear"
 - b. His promise are personal – "To him who overcomes."
 - i. a personal **supply** – hidden Manna
 - ii. a personal **pardon** – a white stone This stone, also called "Tessera," had many usages in the ancient Near East
 - 1. White and black stones were used to indicate **judgment** in ancient courts of law.
 - 2. White stones were used to signify **citizenship**.
 - 3. White stones were used as a symbol of **victory**.
 - 4. White stones were used to **gain access**. When a wealthy person would throw a party, they sometimes gave their invited guests a white stone. When it came time for the celebration, the person who presented a white stone was granted access to the banquet. Jesus

allows His people access to the greatest banquet of all times: the marriage supper of the Lamb, **Rev. 19!**

- iii. A personal **change** – a New name – a new reputation and a new character.

Lessons from Pergamus

God **reviews** his church – Christianity is not a weekend hobby or a social club. Jesus expects something of his people. He expects us to learn about him, his ways and will. He wants us to love him and we will love him as we understand the depth, height, width and length of his Love.

God **requires** holiness - this is really significant – Jesus requires that we do right and act right according to unchanging truth no matter what the culture around us is doing. No, God is not more tolerant than he used to be. The Bible still says in Hebrews 10: 31 that: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God.

God **rewards** faithfulness -

Now we have heard the Sermon – but do we get the **message?**