



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Revelation 2:12-17

Fall 2025

"Where Satan Dwells"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth, and it's good to have you back. And it's good to be with all of you, and I agree with what Seth stated about this Christmas hymn that we just sang: "Christ was born to save!" I was thinking the same thing, as he was, when I sang that.

That's not just the point of Christmas...that is Christianity. Christ was born to save—and He actually did save all of His people, (an innumerable multitude), on the cross when He died. And He declared it so when He said, "It is finished!" (Jhn 19:30). He saved you, then.

And so, that's really what Christmas is about.

Well, we're in the Book of Revelation, and we are in chapter 2 looking at the seven churches of Asia Minor. And we are looking at the third church this morning—the church of Pergamum. Revelation 2, beginning with verse 12, through verse 17;

¹² "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:

¹³ 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. ¹⁴ But I have a few things

against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit *acts of* immorality. ¹⁵ So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

¹⁶ Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. ¹⁷ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give *some* of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.' "

Revelation 2: 12-17

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word, and bless our time of study in it together. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

LORD, we do consider it a great blessing, a privilege, to be able to come together on a Sunday morning and read the Scriptures, consider the meaning of them, and then do this very thing that we're doing now, (and that we all can do), because we have been blessed by You...You've made us, as Your children, as Your people—*priests, believer priests*. And each of us as a priest can come before the Throne of Grace with our petitions and our words of praise—and that's a great privilege.

And so LORD, we first of all pray that You bless our time together, that it would be effective, that it would be profitable for us—that as we study this third church, we would see ourselves in light of it and examine ourselves, and be instructed of You.

And may we see You in Your glory and Your righteousness, and be drawn closer to You and filled with greater love for You. We pray that You would do that within our hearts...increasingly fill our hearts with Christ, the knowledge of Him, a love for Him, and that that would compel us to live lives gladly in obedience to You and for Your service... and service to others. So LORD, bless us in this hour, build us up in the faith, sanctify us.

And we pray for the material needs we have. You know them, and You know what we will need tomorrow and next year...and, LORD, prepare us for all of that and provide for us as is according to Your wisdom. So we pray Your blessings upon us materially. Bless those who are not well, who are under the weather or dealing with various issues, and give them healing and encouragement.

Bless all of us now, LORD, as we continue our service. May this be an edifying time, may we be instructed, may we be built up in the faith, may we learn—and may we also worship as we do.

We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

(Message) Mark, in his Sunday school class, mentioned 1961, and then he said, "Mickey Mantle, remember this?" Well, Sam Rayburn goes back to that time. He was from a small town in north Texas who became Speaker of the House of Representatives, and one of the most powerful men in Washington D.C. Known for his integrity, he had a simple political philosophy. His motto was, "You have to go along to get along."

'Politics...,' we're told, 'is the art of compromise.' Well, that's true in personal relationships, as well. We can't have everything our way. We often have to compromise...in marriage, in friendships.

But in the church, in the Christian life, our motto must be, "No compromise." Now, not in regard to the non-essentials—but in regard to the fundamentals, 'No compromise!' Conviction must guide us in matters of faith and practice. In fact, compromise is, "...where Satan dwells." (vs13).

The church of Pergamum is an example of that. It was a good church—and in some ways, a model church to us for faithfulness.

But the church was tolerating sin. So the Lord now addresses that problem in the third letter to the seven churches and appears to the church...and announces Himself to the church in an alarming way...as, "The One who has the sharp, two-edged sword..." (vs12). The message is simple: "...repent; or else I am coming to you quickly..." (vs16). 'And I am coming in judgment; coming in discipline.'

Again, things weren't all bad in Pergamum. Before convicting them of sin, He compliments them for faithfulness. Verse 13, " 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.' "

What a place to live... "where Satan dwells", where he has his throne.

What is that about? Well, obviously, nothing good and a lot evil.

Pergamum was a place for that—but it was also an important city. The postman, who has been delivering these seven letters, has traveled east across the sea from the Island of Patmos to the city of Ephesus on the western coast of Asia Minor. From Ephesus, he went 35 miles north to Smyrna. Now he continues north along the coast 40 miles and then turns 10 miles inland from the Aegean Sea to the city of Pergamum.

It was not an important city commercially...but it was important politically. Someone said, "If Ephesus was 'the New York' of Asia, Pergamum was its Washington." It was the official capital of this province of Asia.

It was an impressive city to see. Behind Pergamum, and looming over it, was a huge acropolis, 'a conical hill', a kind of cone-shaped hill a thousand feet high that dominated the valley all around it...and the city below. Temples were built on the upper part of that mountain. The Temple of Athena was built there, and the shrine to Asclepius, (the serpent god), who was 'the god of healing.' He was called 'Soter', (*savior*).

Pergamum was the center of the Cult of Asclepius which had a large temple and a medical school outside the city. It was where the famous physician, Galen, studied...and perhaps Luke, as well. One of the older commentators, R.H. Charles, called Pergamum, "The Lourdes of the ancient world". And you know what Lourdes is...that place in France where people go to be healed. It's a holy site.

[My wife informed me that I'm mispronouncing it. I had asked her, "Do you know where Lourdes is?" No, she didn't know about *Lourdes*, so I told her, "Well, it's a place in

Spain"... "Oh!", she said, "Lourdes...you're mispronouncing it!" ...I said, "Okay, you got me; you just drew me in so you could correct me." *[laughter]*.

I then informed her that, 'I respect Winston Churchill'. Winston Churchill didn't know French, didn't know German, didn't know any other language but English...and he was an authority in English. When he spoke of those places in France, like Paris, he said, "Pair-is", and the city of Lyon, he said, "Lions." When he talked about Marseille, it was, "Mar-sell-ās", *[laughter]*, and so, I'm not trying to be anybody I'm not. I'm "Lords!" (Lourdes).]

And that's what Pergamum was... 'The Lourdes of the ancient world' —and thousands of people came there seeking healing.

Most impressive though, was a huge altar of Zeus near the top of the mountain overlooking the city. It had the appearance of a great throne, which could easily have been seen as Satan's throne, 'where Satan sat.'

Really though, the mountain is covered with heathen temples and was a place where Satan's power and authority were enthroned. But of all these cults, (and we're still thinking about , 'How is it that Satan dwells there?'), of all of these cults, the greatest menace to the church that threatened its existence was, 'The cult of the Emperor.'

In 28 BC, the city built a temple to Augustus, 'Divine Augustus'; then later, two more temples were built to the Caesars. So of all the seven cities of Asia, Pergamum was the one where the church was most liable to clash with the imperial cult—and which was enforced by the government located there.

Emperor worship became a test of loyalty to the empire. Refusal to offer a pinch of incense at the shrine of Caesar was considered treason. That made Pergamum a hostile environment for the church—a place where believers were forced to choose whether to compromise their faith—or die for their faith.

State religion is a powerful institution; it's able to exert strong influence over a population and be a real danger to a small church. History is filled with examples of that...even in Christian lands throughout Europe and Britain, where the state put people to death, or deprived ministers of their living; this is what happened in these places. And even in England and Scotland; the burnings of the Smithfield Martyrs in London, and the persecution of the Covenanters in Scotland, all the work of a ruthless state religion; it was Satanic.

In Pergamum, it was a pagan government enforcing the state religion of paganism, 'Emperor worship'. And there was a great temptation to yield, (as you can imagine), to burn a little incense to Caesar. But by God's grace, they remained faithful. They had not yielded to the pressure to confess 'Caesar as lord' and save their lives by denying the faith. They stayed loyal to Christ.

Some had even given their lives for their faith. Antipas was one. The Lord recalls that, "...you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells." (vs13).

Well, nothing is known about Antipas other than what is written here, but the context suggests that he was killed by the local authorities for not confessing Caesar as lord. Clearly, it was an intense period of persecution because the Lord recalls their faithfulness, "even in the days of Antipas", 'even in those especially trying times'. Still, He said, "You hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith." (ibid.).

Often in the Bible, (and I know you know this), one's name stands for the person himself or herself...it is a revelation of who the person is, or who the person would become—what he or she has done. Abraham means, "father of a multitude", and he would be that, not only physically, but more so spiritually—and Sarah means "princess", and she would be the princess of all of that. So for Christ to praise them for, 'holding to His name', means that they affirmed Him—they did not deny His person or His work... which is essential to Christianity.

What is Christianity? Christianity is Christ—and a Christian is one who believes in Christ.

Now, that means believing that He is the eternal Son of God, "Very God of very God," as the Nicene Creed put it; 'Eternally generated from the Father, no beginning, no end – eternal.'

It is believing that He became a true man, fully God, fully man, not mixed natures. Divine nature/human nature in one person, and that He died as a sacrifice for sinners, and was raised from the dead as proof that the Father accepted His sacrifice for us. When He said, "It is finished!", (*Jhn 19:30*), the Father raised Him from the dead. Or as it has been stated, 'The resurrection is God's, "Amen!", to Christ's, "It is finished!" ' That is where He saved us. And it is believing that, 'His sacrifice alone saves'...that is Christianity.

Salvation is not achieved by our works. Baptism is required of the believer as a testimony of faith—but it doesn't save; it adds nothing to your salvation. Taking the Lord's Supper is vital to our spiritual life—but it doesn't save us. Nothing saves us but the Cross of Christ—and that can only be received through faith alone, in Christ alone.

And that faith is a gift: So, believe and be saved, (if you haven't)...and having believed, persevere. That is the Christian life, persevering in the faith, which we can do by the grace of God.

Well, that is the Gospel, and believing that is what it means, 'to hold fast Christ's name'. The Christians of Pergamum held fast to that confession of faith against strong pressure to compromise.

When Polycarp was taken before the Roman official, (the judge in Smyrna), to be tried for his faith, (*in AD155*), the two officers who accompanied him tried to persuade him to save his life. 'Deny Christ', they were saying, 'Save your life. What is the harm...', they asked, '...in saying, 'Lord Caesar', and making a small sacrifice?'—And it does seem like a small thing...'Remember, just a pinch of incense to preserve one's life'.

Well, that's strong pressure: 'So little to keep so much!' But Polycarp refused, and he paid with his life; he knew that a small compromise would have been everything.

Antipas was that kind of man; and maybe he inspired Polycarp years later...the church of Pergamum was as well, for it was a faithful church against strong, satanic enemies. There is, as I say, a lot to admire about these Christians in Pergamum—and the Lord reassured them that He knew their situation and that He was with them...and He would continue to be with them.

Still, the church that resisted the emperor was not equal to a subtle heresy—and that is the Lord's complaint. It didn't apply to everyone, but it would affect all...it would affect everyone if it was not dealt with quickly, "A little leaven leavens the whole lump..." (Gal 5:9).

Verse 14, "But I have a few things against you..." (and the 'few things' reduced to one), "...because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam."

Later, He identifies *them* and the "teaching" as that of the Nicolaitans—but here He calls it, "the teaching of Balaam". They followed the example of Balaam, the false prophet whose story is told in the Book of Numbers. Balak, the king of Moab, invited the prophet to come and curse Israel as it was about to cross its border, Moab's border, and go into the Promised Land.

Well, I'm sure you know the story...God restrained the prophet, (and it's almost amusing as you read the story)—but He turned all of the prophet's curses into blessings, and it caused him to give one of the great Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament, in Numbers 24:17, of "A star coming from Jacob".

Well, his failure to curse, instead of bless, infuriated Balak, (he had paid him a lot of money to curse, and all he could do was bless), 'I didn't want you to bless my enemies; you were to curse them!', (Num 23:14). It all failed in terms of Balak's plan.

But Balaam was a clever man and he had a second plan, and one that would entice Israel into committing idolatry. So he advised Balak to do what he said, which was, 'Send in the girls, into the camp of Israel, and they'll seduce those men.'

The plan worked; Balaam understood human nature and the weaknesses of it. Numbers 25, *verses 1-2*, says, "...the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab...and bowed down to their gods."

The Lord, here in Revelation 2, (*vs14*), calls the teaching of Balaam "a stumbling block". Balaam kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the Sons of Israel. Now, remember this, go back in your thinking...this is the second generation—this is 'the faithful generation'. Their parents had balked at going in because the 10 bad spies, (sent in of the 12), said: 'We can't defeat these people, they're giants. We're like grasshoppers before them. Their cities have these cyclopean walls...they're huge. We see ourselves as grasshoppers before them, and they see us as grasshoppers before them. We are doomed if we go in there!' (*Num 13:25-33*).

Joshua and Caleb said, 'No, we can go in!' (*Num 14:6f*).

But they didn't listen to them. They listened to 'the majority report'...and Israel failed. They spent the next 38 years wandering in the desert until that old generation, that '*first generation*' had died out—and then the new generation was raised up and they were ready to enter Canaan...and they were ready to take their inheritance. Victory was assured, they knew it, they trusted God, and they knew that it was all right there before them.

It was then, when their confidence was high, that temptation came and they stumbled. [When we think we stand, beware that we do not fall.] Balaam led them into paganism and immorality—enticed them into practicing both.

And that was the problem in Pergamum: Christians adopting, or tolerating, the morals of the city. The Lord said that some in the congregation were teaching them to

"...eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit *acts of* immorality." (vs14b). From the connection with Balaam, we should probably understand that this is eating meat sacrificed to idols, and that the acts of immorality were associated with the pagan festival. So I think that's probably the main idea here in what was going on—but we shouldn't limit it to religious festivals.

Immorality among the Gentiles was commonplace. Paul speaks of it in Romans 1. The Greeks were notorious for all kinds of sexual immorality and perversion—and the Romans adopted the same life...that's the life of a Gentile. And that's why the Jews spoke of the Gentiles as 'dogs' and, 'They live like pariahs.' (*outcasts*).

And that's why at the Council of Jerusalem, in Acts 15, (where Jewish and Gentile believers were recognized as equals in Christ), that James insisted on some rules. Not many, they're not under the Mosaic Law, but he had these certain rules that he set forth. And one of them was to, 'Abstain from fornication'. Now, you read that and you think, 'Abstain from fornication? Well, shouldn't that be a given?...You have to make that a rule?'

Yes! In that world, in the Gentile world, temple prostitution was common, as were all kinds of other immoral practices—so those who had been saved out of that milieu, (that whole realm of the type of life that was common in the Gentile world), those who had been saved out of it were to be instructed in a higher morality.

In Pergamum, the opposite was occurring. Some were teaching that, 'It was permissible to follow lower standards.' Now, they didn't call them 'lower standards', rather they were saying, 'We're free!'. And since most of them had been saved out of paganism, (where those kinds of things and that kind of life was a habit), it was probably very easy for them, when they heard this, to fall back into old practices and conform to the morals of the city... 'Compromise'.

It's a problem we face today...the temptation to adopt society's moral standards because we're surrounded by them. We're constantly under the pressure of it, whether we realize it or not. It's very subtle, it's all around us.

And sometimes teachers come along, into the church, with a distorted view of grace. It hasn't happened here, by God's grace, but it does happen. And under the guise of 'Christian liberty', they teach that we can lower our standards. Again, they don't say '*lowering our standards*'...rather, 'We're free!' Certainly, that's an easier way to live...but it is a destructive way to live and it is 'teaching from the Pit'.

Pergamum was a dark place; a place, "where Satan dwells". (vs13b). He is the author of error and temptation to draw us off the true path. He filled the city with pagan temples, shrines and altars, and anti-Christian philosophy...and in those ways he maintained his hold on the world—blinding people with attractive lies. *Satan is Alive and Well on Planet Earth*, to quote a book title.

We'll come to chapter 20 eventually, and we'll learn about the kingdom on the earth that is coming, where Christ will reign for a thousand years. And you follow that from chapter 19 into chapter 20: Christ returns with a "two-edged sword", (vs 12), and the last thing He does in chapter 19, (vs20), is take the beast and the antichrist and throw them alive into "the lake of fire."

And then, chapter 20 begins with, "an angel coming down from heaven" with 'the key to the abyss and a great chain', and he binds Satan, called "the dragon", "the devil", and "Satan", and casts him in the pit for a thousand years so that he cannot "deceive the nations". Then at the end of the thousand years, he is "released."
(Rev 20: 1-3).

[Now, there are some who take a different view on the Book of Revelation than what I'm going to teach you. And they say, (when we come to chapter 20), that we are back to the cross; that chapter 20 is not the future...that it's past, and it's at the cross. And the reason it is 'at the cross', is because there *Satan was bound*...and so Satan is not active today. As they say: 'Therefore, he, (Satan), can no longer 'blind the nations' by deceiving them...so the church can go out into the nations, and give the Gospel...and people will believe.'

Well first of all, that's not new to us. Jonah went to Nineveh and 120,000 were saved, so Gentiles have been saved in the past. But I can't see that Satan is bound today, when Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:4, that, 'he, (*Satan*), blinds the mind of the unbelieving today'. So if he is in the pit today, what is he doing in Pergamum with his throne? No, Satan is very much active today.]

That has not yet happened, as we will see when we get there. (*Chapters 19&20*). I think it's important that we know that, because *Satan is alive and well on planet Earth*, and we need to be aware of his activity...and know that he is after you as much as he was after them. He is "like a roaring lion", not bound...and walking the earth, "seeking someone whom he may devour". (*1Pe 5:8*).

He is real...he works in the world to deceive people, to blind the minds of the unbelieving, and that is why people don't respond to your Gospel when you preach it to them, tell it to them. That's the nature of the unregenerate man—he's under the influence of Satan.

But he also works within the church in the same way—with error but in a more subtle way...through teachers that identify themselves as 'Christians' and use 'the right language.'

That's what Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 11, verse 13, where he speaks of "...deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ." The devil is not some character with horns, and a tail, and cloven hooves...you know that. (I'm not saying that because I think you're all deceived about that. You know that.)

He is an attractive individual; he is a sophisticated, winsome spirit. He understands taste and style, and he appears as an "angel of light". (*2Cor 11:14*).

He is a deceiver and a seducer, a master at calling "evil good and good evil", (*Isa 5:20*)...of making error appear beautiful, either by hiding it in glorious temples—or disguising it in biblical language. His wiles and stratagems disarm people and draw them away from the truth and into sin.

I have an example of that, and this is a very public thing. I don't like, (and I've been criticized for this), mentioning names and people and going after them, but this is historic, this is very public...and the minister I'm referring to is Henry Ward Beecher.

In the middle of the 19th century, he was the most famous preacher in America. His sister was Harriet Beecher Stowe, who wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, so this is a prestigious, well-known family. In fact, his father was a preacher and, as I recall, his father was a good preacher, had good theology. (Maybe not perfect theology, but better than his son.)

Henry Ward Beecher was a dramatic and witty preacher who reduced Christianity to morality—denied a literal hell, stressed the love of God, and emphasized politics and social reform. He didn't offend anybody, he was beloved...but he had a secret life.

Throughout his ministry, he was involved with numerous women and affairs in the church. Church historian, George Marsden, wrote that he may have persuaded women that such relationships were, "Justified by a higher spirituality that transcended legalism." [I think what he meant by *legalism* was just 'the law', 'moral principles'.] So, he had a theological justification for sinning—and he was persuasive.

But he was found out, ("...your sins will find you out." *Num 32:23*). And so he was put on trial for adultery...and it was a famous trial; it was in all the newspapers and everybody read about it, (probably like some of the trials we've had in our time). But, as Mr. Marsden wrote, "His charm was so great that he survived with his reputation only slightly tarnished."

Satan's ministers are charming; they appear as lights. That's what was happening in Pergamum; that's, "the teaching of Balaam"; it encourages compromise and justifies sin by giving a seemingly plausible excuse for it, from the Bible, from theology, (bad theology and a corruption of the Bible).

But sin is never an option, error never a path. We have been saved from that; we have been saved to righteousness, and we have been saved to truth. God has made us a new creation, and instructs us to live new lives.

The first command that Paul gave in the Book of Romans is Romans chapter 6, verse 11, (and you've heard this before—that's okay, we learn by repetition, so I'm going to repeat myself.)

It's the first command given:

"Consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

What I find interesting about that is Paul has been speaking about doctrine from chapter 1 into chapter 6:

Total depravity in chapters 1 and 2;

The Atonement at the end of chapter 3;

Justification by faith alone in chapters 4 and 5;

"Abraham believed God and was credited, (*reckoned*) to Him as righteousness",

...He gained righteousness through faith alone. (*Rom 4:3*)

And then;

Sanctification in chapters 6 and 7...a positive side,

and then the difficulties of it in chapter 7.

But there, in the middle of chapter 6, *verse 11*, he says,

"Consider yourselves to be dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

That word *consider*, 'Reckon to be true', is an imperative...It is a command.

That's what we are to do. It seems to me he, (*Paul*), is saying that:

'Christian life successfully begins with understanding you are a new creature in Christ, and because you are who you are, you must live like it. You can't go back to the old life... that's "dead". You must live according to your new life...

Consider it to be so and act upon it!

Then later, in chapter 12, verse 2, (*of Romans*), he says:

‘Do not conform to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.’

No compromise! Be different from the world!

But in Pergamum, some were conforming. So the same congregation that was uncompromising in its witness to the world was *compromising* in response to sin in the church. The Lord's response is sharp and clear in verse 16, "Repent," He said, and the sense of that is, ‘Repent right now! Stop being indifferent, stop tolerating this...make an immediate and complete break with the Nicolaitans!’

And it's a command given to the whole church. Only some, a few, had fallen into the error...but the whole church was guilty of not taking action against it. The fault in Pergamum was the opposite of Ephesus, (where they dealt decisively with the Nicolaitans and drove them out).

That's what the Lord requires. We are not to tolerate heresy, we are not to tolerate immorality. So they were to ‘root it out’...and if they did not, He would. He was “coming quickly”, He said.

‘I'm not going to delay!’...“I am coming quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.” (vs16). That's a warning of judgment.

But to those who do respond, who obey, the Lord holds out the promise of verse 17...that He will give to them “hidden manna” and “a white stone.”

“Hidden manna” is probably a reference to ‘the pot of manna’, (Exo 16:30), that was hidden in the Ark of the Covenant, along with the two tablets with the Law written upon them, and the rod of Aaron that budded.

Manna was God's supernatural supply of heavenly bread that sustained life...and here it means that the faithful believer will be given special spiritual nourishment. (Something similar, I think, to what Jesus spoke of to His disciples in John 4, (vs32), where He said He “...had food that they did not know of.”).

Pagan festivals can't give that kind of food, nor can the world's luxuries give that kind of food. That is spiritual nourishment, spiritual life that only the Lord gives...and He promises to give it.

The white stone is a little more enigmatic, a little more difficult to understand. (In fact, I read that they calculate there are a dozen plausible interpretations of it...so it's hard to know the meaning.) But, I think what it probably does mean is something in regard to the Law courts, because a white stone was used for acquittal and a black stone for condemnation—so the judge, or the jury, would put in a white stone for someone who was innocent.

I think what supports that idea is Acts 26, verse 10, where Paul spoke of votes against Christians that he gave in his former life as a Pharisee, (as Saul of Tarsus), and that he voted against the Christian, and 'voted' for them to be put in prison or put to death, [And that word for "vote" is *pebble*, a small stone.]

So, those who are faithful and obedient will be acquitted of wrongdoing and exempt from discipline. And they will be justified, and they will have that declaration about them for all eternity. So that's the blessing He speaks of with the stone.

But then we're told that on the stone they, ("the faithful"), will have, "...a new name written on the stone...", and He would give them that new name, He says, "...which no one knows but he who receives it." (vs17c). The name, again, represents the person, and his or her character. Christ will transform our character and He will give us a special relationship with Himself.

Close friends have names for one another...'nicknames'. Husbands have 'pet names' for their wives...and wives for their husbands. Spurgeon called his wife, "wifey"...it was a term of affection.

Well, each one of us is of infinite importance to Christ who has infinite affection for us.—'And throughout eternity', I think this is what is being said... (and I'm following

Dr. Johnson on this, but I think it's correct)...‘He will have a special, unique relationship with each and every one of us individually.’ That's a great promise!

You think of how many people are saved...We'll come to chapter 7, and during the Tribulation period, ‘How many people will be saved?’ (And I think it's due to the 144,000 Jewish witnesses that a multitude of Gentiles will be saved. ‘Who are these?’, the angel asks John. He says, ‘You know...they are the Gentiles who have come out of the Great Tribulation!’) (*Rev 7:11f*).

Thousands and thousands and thousands of them...and that's the history of the Church and the people of God.

Yet, Christ will have a personal relationship with each and every one of them, each and every one of you. It won't be like, ‘I don't have time...we'll get to you in a hundred years.’ No, He has infinite attention for you always—and He will always have that for every one of us at the same time, the same moment. (That is the great God that we serve.) And it is for all who “overcome”, (who are faithful through trials), they will be changed, and they will be blessed greatly.

So, we are to be ‘overcoming’ all of the pressures of life that we have; we are to be persevering in the faith.

But how does a person *overcome* rebellion in the world? How do we *overcome* that? Or, how do we *overcome* error in the church?...How do we *overcome* indifference in our own hearts?

Well, these were the problems that the people in Pergamum faced, and these are the weaknesses that lead to compromise in the Christian life. How do we overcome them? How do we prevent them?

And the answer is, ‘In The Sword!’ That’s what Christ brought to the church. That’s how the letter began, "The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says ..."

‘The sword’ is the Word of God which can be used in judgment or it can be used in correction; (and it can be used for blessing). Paul calls the Word of God, “the sword of

the Spirit.”, (*Eph 6:17*). The author of Hebrews says it is, ‘sharper than any two-edged sword...dividing the soul and the spirit.’ (*Heb 4:12*). The Word of God dissects us... exposes us.

So, we must use the Word in the Gospel...it’s through the proclamation of God’s Word, God’s Word alone, that people are saved and delivered from the temples and the cults of this age—the Word of God.

And we must use it in the church. The only way a church will mature and grow strong, and be wise, wise to the wiles of the devil and his false teachers, (and be able to identify them), is with an accurate knowledge of the truth. Knowledge is critical, it’s the standard—and we have it in the Word of God. And so we must know the Word of God and the doctrine and theology of the Word of God.

And then of course, we must turn the sword on ourselves. We must study the Bible personally. We must examine ourselves in light of the Scriptures—or better, let the Scriptures examine us. ‘Scripture alone is sufficient for faith and practice’—for creating conduct. (*See 2Tim 3:16-17*). And we must know God’s truth to stay in “the ancient paths where the good way is...”, as Jeremiah described it in Jeremiah 6, (*vs6a*).

That’s basic to knowing the Lord and loving Him: Knowing about Him, knowing who He is, what He has done, and what He is doing. And as we understand that, and it takes hold within us, it changes our hearts and it sets them aflame. It is, *The Expulsive Power Of A New Affection**, and may God give us that.

Someday, that ‘sword’, which heals souls, will destroy souls; Christ will return in judgment—and Revelation 19, verse 15 says, ‘He will come with a sharp sword for war.’

The story of Balaam didn’t end with the seduction of the Israelites; it ended with the prophet himself being slain with the sword...and that’s the end for all who reject Christ.

*By Thomas Chalmers

So, if there are any here who have not believed in Him, this may be your moment. This may be your moment...Trust in Him as God's Son, who became a man to die, so that all who believe in Him would have life—and not death.

May God help you to do that.

(Closing prayer) LORD, may our hearts always hunger for Your healing and grace, and for Your person and work...may we truly love You, for that's the greatest protection from drifting and from falling prey to false ideas.

So LORD, bless us that way.

Now,

May Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,

And make you stand in the presence of His glory,

Blameless, with great joy,

To the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ, our Lord,

Be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority before all time, and now and forever.

Amen.

(End of Audio)