

The book of Revelation

2:12-17

Welcome to the weekly verse-by-verse bible study in the book of Revelation.
Make sure you pray before you start this, or any bible study.

Two weeks ago, we began chapter 2 looking at the first letter to the church in Ephesus and last week the second letter to the church in Smyrna.
This week we will look at the third letter to the church in Pergamos.

✠ **Rev 2:12-17** *"And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write,*

'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it."

Here in the third letter to the church in Pergamos, we read of Jesus saying the same thing that He did to the other two churches.

✠ ***I know your works***

In fact, if you read all seven letters, they all say this: ***I know your works.***
As we read about each church, they are all different, but they are all doing. We place so much emphasis on the things that we are doing that we seem to forget why, or for Who we are doing them.

Just like we learned about with the church in Ephesus:

✠ **Rev 2:4** *Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.*

Even though all the churches were doing, and some of the people were in sin, Jesus wanted to address those sins and also give words of encouragement for those who would overcome and to those who were not sin.

✠ ***And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword***

Pergamos was about 15 miles inland and was a city of Mysia in the Caicus valley. This city was also known for emperor worship with a temple built to Rome and Augustus in 29 B.C.

They also built temples to and worshiped the false gods Asklepios and Zeus. The symbol of Asklepios was a serpent. Zeus was also known as “Zeus the savior” in this city.

✠ ***These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword***

This is referring to John’s description of Jesus in chapter one.

✠ ***Rev 1:16 He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.***

“I have read these two-edged sword things in the bible before. But what does it really mean?” you may be wondering.

Matthew Henry’s commentary explains it as:

The word of God is a sword; it is a weapon both offensive and defensive, it is, in the hand of God, able to slay both sin and sinners.

It is a sword with two edges; it turns and cuts every way. There is the edge of the law against the transgressors of that dispensation, and the edge of the gospel against the despisers of that dispensation; there is an edge to make a wound, and an edge to open a festered wound in order to its healing. There is no escaping the edge of this sword: if you turn aside to the right hand, it has an edge on that side; if on the left hand, you fall upon the edge of the sword on that side; it turns every way.

The bible explains it as:

✠ ***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.***

Think of a sword for a minute. There are hundreds of different types of swords, depending upon the country and person that uses them. Some have a blade on one edge, like a Samurai’s sword. Then there are others that have a blade on both sides like those of a Roman soldier. Each served its purpose, and each did its job well in the hands of a master swordsman.

But here in the bible, the sword is referred to as the word of God. So how could such a destructive thing be associated with the word of God?

First off, God is not against war, as you read through out the Old Testament. The purpose of war was to rid the land of sin, and if it weren't destroyed, it would infect the lives of the children of Israel just like a cancer in a healthy body.

This is what sin does to us in our lives. We could be going along just fine, when all of a sudden, out of nowhere, sin attacks us, and unless we battle this sin and destroy it, it will infect our lives.

But we of our own selves cannot destroy sin, because this is not a physical battle but rather a spiritual battle.

† **Eph 6:12** *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

This is the verse which precedes the armor of God, which you can find a study on at this website titled "Use the Sword 101".

But we always think we know how to use God's word, but the question is, do we really? Just because you watch shows on TV or a movie with guys using a sword does not make you a master swordsman. No, you must pick up a sword, and start practicing with it, and even taking lessons from a master swordsman. If you don't, then the first time you try to use it in a real battle, you will die, because you are going against a trained, seasoned swordsman.

It's the same way with the word of God, as we use it in our daily battles against sin. You can read the bible all you want, but unless you apply it to your life, it means nothing. I think I used this illustration before, but it fits here just as well.

Let's say I want a chocolate cake. So I have all the ingredients, the flour, sugar, milk, eggs, coco, etc and even a cookbook telling me how to make this cake. I can read the cookbook all I want, but unless I do what it says, (mix the ingredients together, and pour it into a pan, and cook it for so many minutes at the right temperature) I will never have my chocolate cake.

James gives us another illustration of this.

† **James 1:23-24** *For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.*

You can look in the mirror all you want, but unless you look for those little imperfections (which we all do when we look in a mirror) and take care of them, we will walk away looking the same, blackheads, zits and all.

So once again the word of God is like a sword, and in the hand of a master it will defeat the enemy and protect us from the attacks of the enemy. Now the enemy may hit us

several times with different blows (sins) in the same day, but as you study and live the word of God, you too will become a master swordsman or woman.

If you want an example of the master in action, then read Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13 of how Jesus overcame temptation from the devil with the word of God.

But also notice what it says at the end of Luke 4:13

✠ **Luke 4:13** *Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.*

Jesus won that battle that you would read in Matthew and Luke chapter 4, but that didn't stop the devil from coming back later and trying again. Just because you overcome a temptation does not mean that you are in the clear, because:

✠ **1 Peter 5:8** *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*

And you can be sure that he will return again to tempt you. So the sword (the word of God) is not used to destroy us, but rather to destroy the sin in our lives.

✠ *I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.*

In Pergamum, there was a false healing god known as Excalapius who was worshipped in the form of a serpent, which is one of the names of satan.

✠ **Rev 12:9** *So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*

Also, as mentioned before, here in Pergamum there was Emperor worship, where incense was offered before the statue of the Emperor, as if to a god. If the Christians would refuse to worship this false idol, then they were put to death.

Here the Christians were holding onto the name of Jesus, and many died because they did, and one is mentioned by name, Antipas. There is little known about him other than he was a Martyr for Jesus Christ.

Also, don't confuse the fact that Jesus mentions the throne of satan and the church.

✠ *I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is*

Don't confuse it saying that this throne of satan is in the church. That's not what is being said here, but rather the throne of satan was in the city and not in the church.

The church was in one place and this temple to this false god was in another place. The question could be, where people attending both the church and this satanic temple? A lot of people think that they can go out on Friday and Saturday night and party hardy, then go to church on Sunday (hangover and all) and get cleansed from their sins. But as we will read to another church, Jesus says:

† **Rev 3:16** *So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.*

Jesus also said:

† **Matt 6:24** *No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*

Yet so many Christians try to serve God and their flesh/material things at the same time, most end up backsliding and/or walking away from the Lord.

✠ *But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.*

If you read the book of Numbers starting in chapter 22, there you will find the entire story about Balaam and Balak.

But here are two main verses that give us a quick overview of it.

† **Num 25:1-3** *Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel.*

† **Num 31:16** *Look, these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.*

“Go ahead and do it, God will forgive you.”

“It’s ok, because that was hundreds of years ago and things have changed.”

“God didn’t really mean that.”

“Everyone else is doing it, why not go ahead and do it too.”

“It’s a new way to worship.”

“We need more than just the bible; we also need this companion book to help us understand What God is saying.”

How many of these have you heard in the church or even by believers?

Unfortunately, guys are good at using some of these to get women into bed with them. Some people will use them to get others to leave the church and join their church. But every one of these statements is 100% false and unbiblical. When you use them or any statement that is contrary to the bible, you are putting a stumbling block before others. Here are a few more examples:

- *Mother nature:*

God is not a woman, and God is our Father, not our mother.

† **Romans 1:7** *To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

- *God helps those who help themselves:*

This you will also NOT find in the bible, nor it's teaching.

† **Heb 13:15-16 (NLT)** *With Jesus' help, let us continually offer our sacrifice of praise to God by proclaiming the glory of his name. Don't forget to do good and to share what you have with those in need, for such sacrifices are very pleasing to God.*

If we can help ourselves, then why would we need God?

- *Fight fire with fire:*

I'll let Jesus answer this to explain why it's wrong thinking.

† **Matt 12:25-26 (NLT)** *Jesus knew their thoughts and replied, "Any kingdom at war with itself is doomed. A city or home divided against itself is doomed. And if Satan is casting out Satan, he is fighting against himself. His own kingdom will not survive."*

You don't fight against sin with sin, as we learned earlier you fight sin with the word of God, period.

† **Jude 1:9** *Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"*

One more, that really gets on my nerves.

- *The big guy, or the man upstairs:*

No, HE IS GOD! Don't be ashamed to speak it out or to speak the name of Jesus. Show me one place in the bible that calls God "The man upstairs" or "The big guy".

† **Luke 9:26** *For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels.*

So just a warning to watch what you say or quote, just because you hear it all the time, even in the church, doesn't mean it's in the bible, and if it's contrary to the bible, you could be putting a stumbling block before others.

✠ *Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.*

Peter writes about these false teachers:

† **2 Peter 2:12-19** *But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.*

For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.

Jesus has a word of warning for those who are doing these things.

✠ *Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.*

"There's that "R" word again. Can't we come up with something better than that?"

The word "**Repent**" is one of the first things that Jesus preached.

† **Matt 4:17** *From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*

As we know, the word repent means to turn from your sin. Many want to be saved, but they don't want to turn from their sins. They want to continue in their sins and not have to answer for them, and they think they won't because they are "saved". They only want fire insurance, but not a relationship with Jesus Christ. Being saved is more than just praying a prayer; it's also wanting to turn from your old life and into a new life in Jesus Christ.

† ***Eph 4:17-24 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.***

Maybe you have been out partying on the weekends and coming to church on Sunday to get cleaned up.

Maybe you have been saying and teaching things to others that are not in the bible.

Maybe you are living in sin with a man or a woman, or maybe you are not living together, but are in sexual sin together.

Maybe you are not involved in any of these things, but you know that they are happening in your church and you just sit back and let them continue.

If you found out that your friend had cancer and they didn't know it, would you just sit back and watch them die, or would you tell them and make sure that they get the help that they need?

So, why then are you allowing this cancer (sin) to continue in the church? Are you waiting for everyone to get infected with it as you sit back and think, I knew that was going to happen?

Jesus says to all these things: ***Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.***

If the devil couldn't overcome the word of God, do you think you can?

I wouldn't even want to try.

Finally, Jesus says in this letter:

✠ ***"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it."***

After the children of Israel entered the Promised Land, the Manna stopped coming. Imagine that, for forty years they were fed in the wilderness, then it stopped. What to do, what to do?

How about depending upon the new provisions that the Lord has given you?

But one day we will be provided for in heaven by the Lord, and if you ever wondered what this manna tasted like, here is a description in the bible:

† **Ex 16:31 (NLT)** *In time, the food became known as manna. It was white like coriander seed, and it tasted like honey cakes.*

You will get to find out in heaven, if you overcome.

“Ok, what is this white stone thing?”

White represents purity.

Back in the book of Exodus, we read of the twelve tribes having their names, each engraved on a stone

† **Ex 28:21 (NLT)** *Each stone will represent one of the tribes of Israel, and the name of that tribe will be engraved on it as though it were a seal.*

These names were worn over the heart of Aaron.

† **Ex 28:29** *So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel on the breastplate of judgment over his heart, when he goes into the holy place, as a memorial before the LORD continually.*

We are seen as pure, because of what Jesus did on the cross for us. As God sees us pure, our names are close to His heart, and He will give us a new name. What will it be or represent? Only God knows, and you will also know when you receive it in heaven.

Well, that's it for this week. Next week we will continue on with the forth letter to the church in Thyatira.

May the Lord richly bless you in His love, grace and mercy, and I'll see you in heaven where we can share some manna together.