

If you recall this morning I summarized the church at Ephesus as the “forgetting church” as they had forgotten their first love, the church at Smyrna as the “persecuted church” as they were enduring severe and intense persecution, and the church at Pergamos as the “compromising church” as they had tolerated the doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitans...

This then teaches us a very important lesson—our Savior has an equal controversy with an orthodox church without love, as He did a loving church that compromised doctrine—the church at Ephesus was zealous for truth, remember, v2b—“you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars...” yet for all of their doctrinal zeal they lacked love, v4—“nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love...”—to such our Savior says—repent...

But then the church at Pergamos, while holding fast to Christ, had tolerated false teaching, they allowed those who held to the doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitans—such persons were overcoming the immoral seduction of the world, and were walking with Christ, yet, they were not striving or fighting for doctrinal purity—to such our Savior says, v16—repent...

Which affords us this great truth—Christ has an equal concern with what we believe and what we do—and the reason for this is obvious—the two are necessarily related—what we believe will manifest itself in the way we live—or put another way—how we live will prove what we believe—is our Savior concerned with how we live—absolutely—is He concerned with what we believe—absolutely—thus we must guard from a dry orthodoxy [church at Ephesus], and a doctrinal compromise [church at Pergamos]...

Thus having considered vv12-15 this morning, we come this afternoon to vv16-17—in v12 we saw a description—“these things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword...” in v13 a commendation—“I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is...” and in vv14-15 a correction—“but I have a few things against you...”—which brings us now to v16 and an exhortation, and v17 a motivation...

I. An Exhortation—v16

II. A Motivation—v17

I. An Exhortation—v16

I suggest that our Savior’s single exhortation is comprised of two parts—[1] a command—“repent...” and [2] a warning—“or else...”

A. A command—“repent...”

1. It is my contention that fewer words in the entire Bible are more grossly overlooked or misunderstood than the word “repent”...
2. Our Savior exhorts five out of the seven churches to “repent” underscoring the absolute importance of repentance...
3. This impotence is heightened if we consider it alongside the warning—“repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them...”
4. We find a similar truth in those words of our Savior in Lk.13:3—“unless you repent, you will all likewise perish...”
5. At its very core is the idea of change—to change your thinking, to change your feeling, and to change your behavior...
6. Thus repentance entails a threefold change, notice [1] a change of mind—this is to say repentance entails an intellectual element...
7. To repent is to see things from an altogether different perspective, Ps.51:3—“for I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me...”

8. He saw his behavior as sin—he no longer overlooked it or attempted to justify it, but he now saw it as sin or a violation of God’s holy law...
9. But notice the duration of his perception—“and my sin is ever before me...”—that is, he not only saw it once but it remained before his eyes...
10. Repentance is no fleeting fancy, where we hastily admit our wrong but then move on—no, true repentance keeps sin before us until it is removed by fresh forgiveness...
11. Notice [2] a change of heart—this is to say repentance entails an emotional element—to truly see things rightly will lead to remorse and self-condemnation...
12. Ps.51:17—“the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, you will not despise...”
13. True repentance affects our hearts and humbles us before God—it entails a deep and sincere remorse for the nature of our sins...
14. Notice [3] a change of behavior—this is to say repentance entails a volitional element—it ends in a changed purpose...
15. To know our sin and feel remorse for it, will inevitably result in turning from it, Ps.119:59—“I thought about my ways, and turned my feet to Your testimonies...”
16. Thus Scripture often puts repentance and turning together, Ezek.18:30—“repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin...”
17. Lois Berkhof—“There is a change of view, a recognition of sin as involving personal guilt, defilement, and helplessness...there is a change of feeling, manifesting itself in sorrow for sin committed against a holy and just God...[and] there is also a volitional element, consisting in a change of purpose, an inward turning away from sin, and a disposition to seek pardon and cleansing...”

B. A warning—“or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth...”

1. Having exhorting them to repent our Savior now provides a stern motive in the form of a warning —“repent, or else...”
2. The phrase—“I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth”—refers to a swift and thorough judgment...
3. Thus our Savior says—“I will come to you quickly”—He is not referring to His second coming but to a present spiritual coming in judgment...
4. It seems from the nature of this warning, that our Savior was largely exhorting them to repent from tolerating the immoral teachers...
5. Notice—“repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth...”
6. That is—unless the church repented from their toleration and compromise, He would come to the church and deal with the guilty party Himself...
7. Barns—“He would come against the church for tolerating them, but his opposition would be principally directed against the Nicolaitans themselves. The church would excite his displeasure by retaining them in its bosom, but it was in its power to save them from destruction. If the church would repent, or if it would separate itself from the evil, then the Savior would not come against them...”

II. A Motivation—v17

A. Hidden manna

1. The first part of our Savior’s twofold motive, concerns hidden manna—“to him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat...”
2. Now the “manna” if you recall was that bread like substance that God provided for Israel during her 40 year journey in the wilderness...

3. According to our Savior in Jn.6:32 it typified Him as the bread of life—"Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world..."
4. What our Savior meant by "hidden manna" is generally agreed by commentators, to refer to the manna that God told Moses to store in the Ark of the Covenant in a golden pot...
5. Ex.16:32-35—"then Moses said, "This *is* the thing which the LORD has commanded: 'Fill an omer with it, to be kept for your generations, that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.' " 33 And Moses said to Aaron, "Take a pot and put an omer of manna in it, and lay it up before the LORD, to be kept for your generations." 34 As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept. 35 And the children of Israel ate manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan..."
6. What is important for our present purpose is the reason why "an omer of manna" was to be stored in the Testimony or Ark of the Covenant...
7. V32—"Fill an omer with it, to be kept for your generations, that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt..."
8. The manna was to be stored within the Ark that future generations might see it and be reminded of the Lord's faithful provision to their fathers...
9. This small portion of manna was to remain in the Ark until they reached the Promised Land and then it would be viewed by the people...
10. The point I trust is somewhat obvious—Christ is here saying, that for those who persevere into the Promised Land they will be given the "hidden manna" or Christ Himself...
11. Barns—"the idea is, that the souls of those who "overcame," or who gained the victory in their conflict with sin, and in the persecutions and trials of the world, would be permitted to partake of that spiritual food which is laid up for the people of God, and by which they will be nourished forever..."
12. I think it probable that He is making a contrast between Himself and the meals eaten within the pagan temples in Pergamos...
13. The one who refuses to fill himself with the sinful pleasures of this world [those who overcome]—"I will give some of the hidden manna to eat..."

## B. White stone

1. I think I am right to say, that it is virtually agreed upon that there is no way to be dogmatic in what our Savior means by a "white stone"...
2. Most commentators assume that our Savior was referring to a common ancient practice of using small white stones in the judicial system...
3. Matthew Henry—"This white stone is absolution from the guilt of sin, alluding to the ancient custom of giving a white stone to those acquitted on trial and a black stone to those condemned..."
4. Our Savior describes this stone—"and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it..."
5. It is probable that by "a new name" our Savior refers to the new relationship they would sustain with Christ in heaven...
6. Fundamentally the idea is that of adoption—when a person becomes a Christian he is renamed as a child of God or Christian...
7. 1Jn.3:1—"behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God..."
8. But there is another sense in which a Christian receives a new level or aspect of his adoption in the life to come...
9. Rom.8:23—"we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body..."
10. Isa.62:1-4—"for Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp *that* burns. 2 The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD will name. 3 You shall also be a crown of glory In the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem In

the hand of your God. You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, Nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; But you shall be called Hephzibah [my delight], and your land Beulah [married one]; For the LORD delights in you, And your land shall be married...”

11. Now before we leave this passage with a few summery observations, let us briefly consider this final phrase—“a new name...which no one knows except him who receives it...”
12. By this phrase our Savior at least means, that no one but a Christian can know the full meaning and blessing of this new name...
13. 1Cor.2:9—“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him [Isa.64:4]...”
14. Rev.14:1-4—“then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. 2 And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. 3 And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. 4 These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb...”
15. Notice several similar statements in this passage that we find back in Rev.2:17—[a] the saints have a name upon their foreheads (they had a new name), [b] they sang a new song, [c] no one could learn the song but the redeemed, and [d] they were pure (they were given a white stone)...

Obs.1—we behold the simplicity of our Savior’s counsel

1. There were certain persons within the church who had become influenced or at least tempted by the teaching and immoral living of the false teachers...
2. Our Savior doesn’t specify how deep these persons had become entangled in their sins—some no doubt were on the verge of apostasy others perhaps were but flirting with the idea...
3. Our Savior’s counsel is simple, plain, and generic—repent—He doesn’t offer all sorts of elaborate, prolonged, psychotherapy...
4. In fact, what does our Savior tell five of these seven churches but to repent—this is the sum total as it concerns a remedy for their conditions...
5. The church at Ephesus had left their first love—what were they to do—“repent”—the church at Pergamos was compromising with the world—“repent”...
6. The church at Thyatira allowed false teaching in the church—what were they to do—“repent”—the church at Laodicea was proud and self-sufficient, 3:19—“therefore be zealous and repent...”
7. Oh my dear friends, it is a great tragedy, that the church has largely bought the lie, that modern man’s problems are too complicated for the simple gospel...
8. The problems of post-modern man need hours of intensified professional counseling—it needs the attention of the professional...
9. Poor ignorant pastors armed with nothing more then the Scriptures and primitive and impotent to address such complicated and complex issues...
10. But my dear brethren, how refreshing is the counsel of our Savior to His needy and complicated churches in Asia Minor...
11. Repent—think about what you are doing, and in the case of the Ephesians—“remember...from where you have fallen...”
12. Find out where you have gone wrong and at what points you have deviated from the perfect will and law of your Savior...
13. Feel the weight of your sins as you bow before Him in humble contrition—“lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom...”
14. Turn from your sins and flee to Christ—find in Him renewed forgiveness, cleansing, acceptance, and joy....

Obs.2—we behold the powerful influence of sin and sinners

1. By this I refer to the fact, that the church at Pergamos was guilty by association—because they were tolerant, the church needed to repent...
2. Notice again the text, v14—“but I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam...”
3. Thus within this passage before us, we come face to face with our need to remain pure from all forms of false doctrine and practice...
4. Oh my brethren, isn't it a sad reality that much of modern day Evangelicalism can be described by a single word—compromise...
5. We have reared a generation of compromisers—a generation who not only tolerates false teaching but also celebrate it...
6. But the question for us is not, are we doing better then the average church, but does Christ have anything against our us...
7. Are we faithfully and diligently dealing with our sins or have we begun to compromise with the doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitans...
8. Let me briefly suggest a few modern proponents of the doctrine of the Nicolaitans that we must watch out for...
9. Notice [1] there are those who teach what is commonly referred to as “easy believism” which reduces salvation to “walking to the front of the church...”
10. Notice [2] there are those teach what is commonly referred to as “carnal Christianity” which divides the church between those who are spiritual and carnal...
11. Notice [3] there are those who teach what has hectically been called “antinomianism” which denies the continuation of the moral law in the live of a believer...
12. With reference to these let us beware—if we would not here the words of our Savior—“but I have a few things against you” let us purge the church from such lies...

Obs.3—we behold the glorious nature of the saints' inheritance

1. Rev.21:5-8—“then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." 6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. 7 "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. 8 "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death...”