

The Exchange

Letter to the church in Pergamum

5th Slide: Read letter to the church in Pergamum Rev 2:12-17 (30 seconds)

_I am reading from the ESV and Reading from Chapter 2 v12-17

Revelation 2:12-17 English Standard Version (ESV)

To the Church in Pergamum

¹²“And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: ‘**The words** of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.

¹³“**I know** where you dwell, where **Satan's** throne is. Yet **you hold** fast my name, and you **did not** deny my faith^[a] **even** in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. ¹⁴But **I have** a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. ¹⁵So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. ¹⁶**Therefore** repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth. ¹⁷He who has an ear, **let him hear** what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who **conquers** I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a **new name** written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.’

Intro:

ESV

¹² “ **The words** of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.

Jesus had a sharp word for the Christians at Pergamum.

For us this morning, we can be encouraged and maybe for some of us challenged that Jesus is also going to speak to us with accuracy and purpose.

He too has a sharp word for us, relevant to us, to our current business or work situations, more than sufficient to walk us through these challenging times we find ourselves in. and lets be honest, these are hard times.

Just as a surgeon uses a scalpel to remove a brain tumor where the preciseness of the cut needed is so beyond most of our comprehension but he uses that scalpel with such accuracy and such care that he is able to cut out the very thing that should not be there, the very thing threatening the future of his patient

Now, how much more the preciseness of a word spoken by God Himself to you and me this morning...

A word intended to encourage you, challenge you and even, if you are like me, rebuke you. **The words** of Jesus who has the sharp two-edged sword

Now Most of us will easily trust a surgeon with our life, because they have done some studying, conducted some operations and been referred to us by someone we may know and trust.

When it comes to Jesus though, the creator, the one who died for you and me while we were still against him, enemies of him, the one who loves you in spite of anything you may have done, the one who cares enough to tell you the truth and then to make a way for you to get there... we so often hesitate, debate and question when He speaks to us.

So we need to pray, now and trust the Holy Spirit that we can all, each one of us genuinely submit our hearts to Him this morning, not to more information about Him but to Him.

Just 2 points _Jesus's word and then our right response to that word

¹³“I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is... I know about Antipas, my faithful witness, who was killed among you...

Put up next slide

6th Slide: Point 1_

- **I KNOW...**

Point 1a_ V13a: _Jesus

I know. When this church read this letter, they would have seen very clearly that Jesus was firstly *affirming* their challenging situation and that He *understood* their difficult circumstances.

Jesus was *sympathetic* towards them, *real* about what they were experiencing, He knew!

To put it another way, Jesus was not naïve to their reality; that when they would walk down the street, they were bombarded with temples erected to pagan gods, that turning a corner could have found them at the site of the first Roman ‘Caesar-Cult’ Temple, erected to ‘divine Augustus’.

No, Jesus made it very clear that He knew where they lived, he knew that they lived where Satan had His throne, that they lived in the city dominated by, centered around Idol worship.

He was affirming that He was not oblivious to, not ignorant of and not naïve about their situation, each person’s personal situation_ No, He knew!

He knew what happened to Antipas, His faithful follower. He knew what that meant for them, how they must have felt, the struggle and temptation that came from that tragedy for them, He knew.

Friends, this morning, each of us needs to hear that Jesus is sympathetic to your situation, he *does* understand the challenges that you face on a daily basis;

Jesus knows that it is hard to trade in difficult labour conditions, hard to be an employee in these same conditions.

Jesus knows that the economy is seriously broken, being managed by broken people. He knows that working righteously, doing the right thing does not mean your business will grow or that you will get that deal or promotion, in fact, it often it goes the other way and He know that too.

He knows that tolerance and being bendable, adjustable in every respect of your value system and character is what is really praised and rewarded in this world!

_ He knows the ungodly environments you are in on a day to day basis, the ungodly people you deal with on a day to day basis and He even knows how you feel having to work in this city, in this time on a day to day basis.

_ Jesus is real. He doesn't have blinders on guys. He is not 'living in the clouds' out of touch with what's really going on. He's not surprised or confused about your situation.

_ The underlying truth is that God knows. Jesus knew where they lived, where Satan had his throne. Jesus knows where you live (sounds like a mafia movie)

_ No, Hear this clearly this morning. Jesus knows where you work, where you labour, where you toil. _He knows.

_ So How does the truth that Jesus Knows change our reality when we go back to work later, how does it change anything, really?

_ **It Changes Everything because** He not only knows what you are facing but He Cares.

_ That's why this word to the Christians in Pergamum was such a comfort because not only knew but He cared.

_ Friends, Jesus is not your mom or dad, wife or husband, best friend or pastor. Where they can try to understand what you're going through or feeling, Jesus is able to actually know what you are feeling, to sympathize (Hebrews 4v15 says "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.")

_ Jesus experienced all the temptations we experience on a daily basis.

_ He may not have gotten retrenched from a job or had his business hanging on a shoestring, or had legislation change that would alter the course of your industry or livelihood, or have to deal with reality of violent strikes, of having to make tough decisions in tough times but he knew the temptation to worry, be anxious, the burden of caring for people.

_ He knew what it was to feel the full effects of human weakness and the full effects then of Satan's taunting offers to compromise, to give up.

_ Jesus knew then what their current environment, their past tragedy with Antipas being killed; what this would mean for his church. Jesus knows now what these times mean for you and friends and that changes everything

_ So if this is true and Jesus does know, so what, so what do we do

6th Slide: Point 2_

- I KNOW...So..
- HOLD ON

¹³“...Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith^[a]... The NLT says

NLT

¹³“...yet you have remained loyal to me. You refused to deny me...

Point 2a:

V13b:

_ **Yet.** In Spite of what they had faced and were facing, the people in this church had chosen to trust in Jesus, they chose to continue to trust in Jesus and this is what they were commended for. **Holding on.**

I think its important then to consider then the motivation behind their response

_ I believe they could continue to Hold on because their response was motivated by the grace God *had already* shown them, the mercy and love Jesus *had already* poured out on them, it was motivated by the gospel
_ That is why their response was not based on their circumstances or on God having come through for them in tough times_ no, their response came from a firm foundation in what Jesus had already done on the cross; their roots ran deep.

_ *And this is what Jesus was commending, their right and biblical response to difficult circumstances*

_ Some of us are facing or have faced some incredibly tough times

_ The strikes are affecting most if not all business

_ Jobs are being lost, companies are closing down and things are getting harder

_ The world is not cared about trading righteously, justly, fairly, legally, just as long as they are trading.

_ these are real situations, real times we are living in.

_ So lets be honest then, responding biblically then to all that is going is really easier said than done.

_ You see, Holding on to Jesus in the marketplace means showing love where anger and frustration is expected, showing mercy and grace even though we have every right to be impatient, to judge!

Holding on to Jesus means responding to challenging clients, employees, bosses, suppliers in a way that is different to the world, in a way that shows reality of Christ and this is easier said than done...

We're in business, we're in the corporate world, things are not as simple as that, they are complicated and messy and there are just factors. Our response therefore needs to be weighed strategically, rationally, sound business sense. Not so!

Of course there is truth in that BUT we need to ask, when we respond, are we showing that our main motivation is to show the Gospel, to show Christ? OR to keep the status quo, to get that deal, to do what needs to be done.

I don't believe God makes a distinction between business and ministry, of course there are differences...but...because all of it involves people and God is all about people

So Please...Please choose now to Trust in Jesus, to Persist in Jesus, to respond in a way that shows the Grace that God has already shown you. Choose to HOLD ON

You know, the best thing that happened in our business was not God providing through the recession, no, it was when after standing in faith, things got worse and then getting to the point, on our knees, being able to say that even if God does not provide as we would hope, in order to see this business serve the Kingdom of God, that we would still trust in Him, even if we had to lose everything, and we did lose a lot, we would continue to trust in Him alone,

The moment my brother and I on our knees were able to make that genuine proclamation through tears, it was then that I knew God had done a work that would supercede any temporary provision.

This was the miracle, this was eternal provision He had given us.

Now in His divine will and not because we deserved it, he chose to move our business forward and continues to do so, for the sake of His Kingdom but friends, we hold lightly on that,

But what we hold firmly onto, everyday, is the revelation that we have of Jesus Christ, that supercedes our circumstances and from that place we then go forward wrestling with how best to respond to these times in a way that please God and loves people!

Later I am meeting a client, on the most challenging clients we have ever had and I have been really challenged with my motive, do I really care about the relationship, do I care about showing grace and mercy and patience, or do I just care about the final payment, the money. I need to choose to hold on to Jesus later today but choosing to respond in love in spite of what's going on!

_ I know that this morning, some of us are just not there and ...

_ Jesus knows, that some of you are not there and that continuing to persist in Him, holding onto the gospel just seems too weak a solution, a foolish 'super-spiritual' choice even when considering your situation

_ But its not, Persist friends, persist in Jesus. The NLT says that the people in the church in Pergamum **refused** to deny the gospel, refused to deny the grace of God, the love and mercy of God.

_ It may not , and hear this, please, that persisting in Jesus, responding in love and grace and mercy, will mean that your business will be saved or your job restored or your situation get any easier, it may get worse, for Antipas, He got killed.

_ BUT your soul will be saved, it may not mean that your life will not be uncomfortable and uneasy but your heart will know rest and peace, It may not mean that there are happy days ahead but your existence will be Joyful. That is what Jesus promises!

_ For the church then, all Jesus had to say was that He knows, He knows and that is all we should need to hear. So Hold on Cause Jesus Knows!

Point 1b: V14-15:

Similarly we see that Jesus knew not only what their current circumstances were, their past challenges and tragedies but also how some of them were aligning themselves with the *current times, its teachings and its ways*.

Jesus knows when we compromise.

Next point...

7th Slide: Point 1

- **I KNOW...**

¹⁴But I have a few things against you: (I know...) you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam,...¹⁵ (I know) you also have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. ¹⁶ ...

Jesus already knew what was going on within that church, what's going on within us! Jesus knows

There were those in the church who were trying to hold to two contradictory things at the same time holding on to faith in Jesus and yet at the same time compromising by *holding* on to a worldly view on God, a worldly approach to life. Jesus knew this and rebuked them for it.

Balaam, who Jesus mentions and whose story can be found in Numbers, was a prophet of God who persuaded Balak, the king of Moab, to encourage 'religious harmony' with Israel.

His idea to send good-looking Moabite girls to invite Israelite men to their lustful and idolatrous religious festivals! Basically one big party that didn't end well for the Israelites.

the Nicolaitans had the same kind of teaching, persuading the Christians to take part in worship of other idols! Jesus knew this too.

We even see from history that Rome had such a powerful influence over the city of Pergamum and so we can see how this Roman way of thinking and culture of submitting yourself to various gods, found its way not only into the streets of Pergamum but **into** the church.

Jesus knew this, He knows what's going on and because He loves us, He speaks a sharp word!

For some of us here this morning, we need to hear the truth that Jesus not only knows our hardship and challenges but that He also knows when we are

trying to hold on to Him while responding to our situations and to people in a worldly way.

_Jesus knows we compromise when we give authority to people in our lives *who themselves are compromised* in their thinking, they themselves do not submit to the authority of God and therefore His words to us.

_Jesus knows we compromise when our work, our efforts, our reputation, our career, our business, security, pleasure become of more value than God Himself,

_Jesus knows we compromise when get so consumed with our work, with the possibilities of what if's? What if the strikes continue, What If I get retrenched, what if my business fails, what if I don't get payments in, what if. What If I succeed, What if I can just get that job, that deal, that turnover, then things will be in a good place. Then I will be in a good place. Jesus knows when we are fearful or when we are needing something apart of him in order to feel secure, in order to feel at peace. He knows.

_Jesus knows when we compromise by just adding some of the worlds teachings, the worlds philosophy on business and work to the word because we don't believe His word is sufficient to lead us through these times.

_Jesus knows, He knows we submit to others instead of Him, He knows some of us think very little about what He thinks, cause this is business, this is how its done.

_These subtle lies that parallel the truth / we don't need to reject the truth of God, we can just have two truths / two ideals / two or more authorities / all the while compromising!! Jesus knows

Jesus knows and for some of us this morning, that has *comforted* you as it should, *encouraged* you even as it must, but for others Jesus knowing has *disturbed* you and that is right.

So if Jesus knows when we are compromising, what should our response be?

¹⁶Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.

Repent so that you can....HOLD ON

7th Slide: Point 2

- I KNOW...so?
- ...HOLD ON

Point 2b:

V16:

Repent,

To those who were compromising in the church in Pergamum, the response was clear, repent so that you can *hold on* to me alone.

The fact that God offered repentance to those in the church in Pergamum and the fact that God is calling some of us here this morning, now to repent, is because He loves us! Because He loves you!

Hebrews 12 speaks of God rebuking us and it is because He loves us. Jesus loved the church in Pergamum and He loves us as His church today and that is why He will call us out when something is wrong, He will not leave us as we are and this morning, He will not leave you as you are.

He will not and cannot tolerate us responding to these hard times with worry and anxiety, with fear and worlds approaches to crisis, He will not let us become a bitter, hard and angry people.

This is how the world is responding. We are seeing it everywhere with more broken relationships, more hardened hearts, more excuses for not doing the right thing, more justifications for bad attitudes, violence, corruption and deceitfulness, rudeness.

No, Jesus would not tolerate their idolatry, their compromise and thank God that today He loves us too much to tolerate our compromise

The opportunity to repent given by God to the church in Pergamum and to us this morning is again the gospel, Its because of Jesus that we can repent, say sorry, be forgiven and move forward in freedom, Its because of Jesus!

When I was preparing for this time, God gave me a picture of two people, the one was sitting inside, tending to a warm fire on a cold winters evening. The other person was standing outside though, arms folded, shivering and frustrated.

The person inside was God, the one outside was you or I when we don't want to come to Him and hear what He has to say.

I remember thinking well, that's your choice, stand outside in the cold and freeze, It's your decision, yes and that's consequences of our action but you know what God does, *He shows us Grace*, undeserved favour.

He leaves that warm room and comes outside and stands next to you in the cold then asks you to come in.

He keeps doing this, all the while going back inside to ensure the fire keeps going. We don't deserve this kind of love, God knows I don't,

My brother and I didn't deserve the opportunity to repent of the way we had done things in our business, especially of how we had not held on to Him alone But that's the gospel. That's the good news, it doesn't make good business sense but it makes sense to God, you see.

So come in. Please come in. sit with God and start by saying sorry, even **right now.**

you may need to say sorry for the love of money this morning, finding your security and purpose in the money you make, or try to make and not in Jesus, that is sin and compromise, so repent, come inside

you may be so negative, these strikes, this government, these people, you accuse, judge and even hate them for disturbing the life you are trying to create! You need to come inside, say sorry, and then listen to what God has to say about these people, these strikes, this government and most importantly your approach to it all.

How many of you us plan makers, we find a ways, we make it happen, we get it done? We will find a way_Pride, fear, arrogance are all at the center of this approach to the marketplace. You too need to come inside, hold on to Jesus and listen to what God says about plans, about business strategy, about what is most important to him, about what success in the marketplace looks like to him

and finally, are you worrying, anxious? Things are so bad, so hard, you feel as they you were forced to try other things, listen to other people because Jesus didn't work...you just couldn't bring yourself to respond as God would want. Come inside, God really wants to talk to you, He really wants to talk about Himself to you so that you can get to know him better and so that you can then know Him and trust Him.

Unfortunately, Jesus knew there those in the church in Pergamum who might have refused to repent and there may still be some of you here this morning or maybe you have repented this morning but years from now you find yourself compromising again and let this be a loving warning to all of us.

You know what I think Jesus was saying when he said, 'If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth'. I think He was saying that He loved them too much to leave them as they are and that if needed, He would increase his efforts and go to the greatest of extremes in order to bring them to a place that was best for them! A place of saying sorry, which would bring freedom,

If we don't listen to Jesus when he speaks to us friends, eventually he may take it from our hand, that which we are holding on to so tightly, He may speak more firmly and it be embarrassing even, may cause suffering. I have experienced this and you do suffer and others connected to you do to but it is his mercy to us.

Finally ,Jesus says, and with this our conclude our time this morning *but I really do hope* this has been helpful, I hope you feel loved and encouraged and challenged and changed! I hope you have heard what Jesus has said this morning.

¹⁷He who has an ear, **let him hear** what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.'

8th Slide: What's the bottomline **I know, So Hold on to me, only me!**

A conqueror as the bible seems to define it, as I believe Jesus is defining it here, is the person who Holds on to Him in spite of anything that may happen, good, bad or ugly.

Looking at His promise then, we need to be honest as I know that this promise of honour and a new name and this secret manna or provision, For most of us means can not mean much...

Honour is not a word we use too often in this day and age, a name is something that doesn't carry the same weight as it used to and when it comes to provision, well...

for most of us here, its hard to think of needing much when most of us are quite confident that there is supper for us this evening, even now there is breakfast waiting although I think I could have made a point on provision if all we served this morning was some hot water and bananas

So what is Jesus promising I think He's promising Fulfillment!! Jesus is promising fulfillment. And this promise is for all of us.

He is promising that even us, in business, in the marketplace can know such an intimate and special relationship with Him, that he will give us hidden manna, personal grace for us to know Him in this way.

Most of us here are not in full time ministry but we can know Him in this way, this is His promise

If we Hold on to Him no matter what, If we persist in our relationship with Him, in spite of what we are shortly all going to be going back to, He promises that He will give us Himself and that we can know Him.

Friends that Is everything, knowing Jesus, Be fulfilled in Jesus, We then get to be in the marketplace, not as punishment but fulfilling a role

and Because Jesus knows, We can continue to Hold on by responding in love and grace, showing this world that Jesus is real and that we are different because of Him!Amen

Please, I plead with you this morning because this changes everything..
pursue Jesus, Persist in Jesus.

Allow Him to whisper in your ear this morning...

_I know, So Hold on to me, only me! AMEN, amen