Audio Transcript of Sermon
November 7, 2026
The Church in Pergamos

Hello. Thank you for joining us today. My name is Tom Laign with Sabbath Bible Study. Having grown up as an army brat living on three different continents, I am grateful for all who serve in our nation's military, and I'm quite sure that in other nations there are army brats in those nations with similar feelings of gratitude. As an army brat living in the safety of a military housing area, my exposure to the military was limited to what happened on post. My understanding of what happened during military training exercises and combat would have been no different than somebody who grew up without a parent in the military. I remember my dad telling me that the military was a great job to have in times of peace. He also added that in times of armed conflict, being in the military came with a different set of challenges, even though the military is trained for armed conflict. Even though my dad served in various capacities during the time of the Korean and Vietnam conflicts, he never had to serve in a combat zone. The closest he ever got to combat was when he was stationed in Taiwan in the late 1960s. His job there in the army was to maintain communication links between Vietnam and stateside.

Even though he never served in a combat zone, he had been recruited for military intelligence, and at the time, they recruited him to be an asset that could be placed behind enemy lines or in hostile countries, sort of like being a military spy. My dad liked the idea, but when he found out that he could be gone for years at a time, and that if he were to die or be captured behind enemy lines or in a hostile country, his service and death would not be confirmed by the military. He chose family over career and was able to step aside from the training that was leading him on that path to covert military service. I am grateful for the choice my dad made to choose family first, but I am equally grateful for those who made the choice to be placed behind enemy lines and in hostile countries. Most of us will never have to make that type of military or espionage choice. We will live where we want to live, not where we are told to live.

I find myself living in El Paso, and you find yourself living wherever you live. All cities and towns have good and bad things about them. One of the bad things about El Paso is storm drainage and during times of heavy rainfall even major

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streets and roadways can get flooded. That flooding typically subsides in a few hours, but it can cause lots of damage to the roads. Homes are sometimes impacted, but flooded roads are a bigger problem. The other day when I went for a walk the morning after heavy rainfall, I had to backtrack a bit because even the sidewalk was flooded. Most of the time, El Paso is sunny, dry, and hot. Housing tends to be cheaper here than in other areas of the country, but property taxes are very high. Because of the Marty Robbins song, most think of El Paso as a west Texas town. El Paso is the twenty-third largest city in the United States. Adding to our area's population is the adjoining city of Juarez in Mexico that is about two and a half times the size of El Paso. In addition to being a larger city, El Paso also ranks as a safer city to live in.

Thousands of years ago, some people found themselves living in the city of Pergamos, a city known today as Bergama in the Republic of Turkey. We might not know how it was to live in that city back then, but we can read the message to the church in Pergamos from Revelation two starting with verse twelve.

Revelation 2:12-17
12. And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;
13. I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.
14. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.
15. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.
16. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.
17. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

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During the Hellenistic period, Pergamos was the capital of the Kingdom of Pergamon, and it became one of the major cultural centers of the Greek World. Within the city was the Pergamon Altar, which was so large, it made it on some lists of the seven wonders of the ancient world, though is not typically included on lists used today. Relief panels from the altar were taken to Berlin by a German archeologist and today are housed in the Pergamon Museum. Pergamon was built to be like a second Athens, and it had a notable library with the only more notable library during that time being the Library of Alexandria. During that time, it was a prominent city, and according to the message we just read in Revelation, it was where Satan's seat is. We don't know exactly what is being referenced by Revelation in declaring Pergamos to be where Satan's seat is. Historical records show it was the seat of a regional assembly called the conventus, and it had a neocorate, a temple office, meaning a temple had been built to the emperors. Temple priests were holders of the neocorate.

Wherever we live we might see ways our city could improve, but even if it is really bad, it doesn't come close to being a city where Satan's seat is. For Christians, living in a city where Satan's seat is would almost be like being a spy or serving in military intelligence where you are dropped behind enemy lines or in a hostile country. That was the reality for the church in Pergamos. They were praised for doing a few right things. They held fast to the name of Jesus and did not deny the faith, even when they saw a faithful person being martyred. Their problems arose from following the practices of Balaam which caused the faithful to eat things sacrificed to idols, committing fornication, and having some who followed the practices of the Nicolaitans, which we looked at in the sermon to the church of Ephesus. Outwardly they would have appeared to be loyal but upon closer inspection, it would have been like they were disloyal.

Let's examine in closer detail by looking first at what they were praised for. They held fast to the name of Jesus. In the Book of Hebrews, priests are compared to Jesus, and a conclusion is made that a priest could only complete ceremonial rituals about sin, but that only Jesus could take away sins. Jesus died so our sins could be forgiven and sat down at the right hand of God. Through His death and resurrection, the called and chosen are brought to perfection, and through the Holy Spirit that we have been given, we are reminded of His sacrifice, knowing that Jesus will be faithful to forgive our sins. Having this promise and incredible

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sacrifice so that we can have eternal life through the forgiveness of sins, we hold fast our profession of faith. Hebrews ten verse eleven.

Hebrews 10:11-23
11. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:
12. But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God;
13. From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.
14. For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.
15. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before,
16. This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;
17. And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.
18. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.
19. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,
20. By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;
21. And having an high priest over the house of God;
22. Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.
23. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised;

In another passage from Hebrews, we are reminded that as Christians, we must hold fast our confidence, the profession of our faith, until the end. The conviction is not something that we make once and are done with it. Each day must be a day where we hold fast our confidence, the profession of our faith, until the end. There can never be a day where we allow ourselves to waiver and decide that the faith is not for us. Hebrews three verse twelve.

Hebrews 3:12-15
12. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

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13. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.
14. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;
15. While it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

Holding fast the profession of our faith means that each day we live as Christ would expect us to live, to do good as Jesus would see it not only among others of the faith, but among all people. In a world where there is anger and confusion, we should have comfort in the knowledge of the Kingdom of God to come and the return of Jesus Christ. That comfort should lead to happiness, and it should also lead us to maintain a close relationship with God and Jesus Christ. When others live a life of worry and doubt, we should live a life of gratitude, living our life so the fruit of the Spirit grows and grows. But it should also lead us to consider the wisdom in proving all things, because not all people are people of God, and we are to hold fast to what is good as we avoid even the appearance of evil. First Thessalonians five verse fifteen.

1 Thessalonians 5:15-22
15. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.
16. Rejoice evermore.
17. Pray without ceasing.
18. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.
19. Quench not the Spirit.
20. Despise not prophesyings.
21. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.
22. Abstain from all appearance of evil.

We do not abandon what we have been taught for something new, even when that something new is presented as new truth. We hold fast to what we have been taught. Second Thessalonians two verse thirteen.

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2 Thessalonians 2:13-17
13. But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:
14. Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.
15. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.
16. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,
17. Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

Jude wrote to the audience of his time that they should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. That means when Jude wrote his letter, about thirty plus years after the death of Jesus, that some had already walked away from the faith. In some ways thirty years is very short and in other ways thirty years doesn't even cover the time a person spends working. In thirty years without diligence it is easy to walk away from the faith that was once delivered. Jude one verse three.

Jude 1:3-13
3. Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.
4. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.
5. I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.
6. And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.
7. Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

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8. Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.
9. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.
10. But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.
11. Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.
12. These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;
13. Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

We must hold fast to the name of Jesus, and we cannot deny the faith of Jesus. The church in Pergamos was praised for not denying the faith of Jesus. Going back to the Book of Hebrews, we are told right before the faith chapter that the just will live by faith, and that there is no place in walking away from the faith we have been given. Walking away from the faith we have been given will lead us back to sin, and being faithful until we die will bring us closer to the return of Jesus Christ and our place in the Kingdom of God. Hebrews ten verse thirty-two.

Hebrews 10:32-39
32. But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;
33. Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.
34. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.
35. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.
36. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.
37. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

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38. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.
39. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Peter wrote that we are to be ready to have an answer for every person who asks why we believe what we believe. He also advised when we answer those questions, we need to be able to answer those questions having a good conscience, knowing we are sincere in our beliefs and not just living as hypocrites. Though no person wants to suffer at the hands of another person, if we suffer it is better that we suffer for doing what God expects of us instead of not doing what God expects of us, because through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, even if our suffering ends in our death, we have hope of the resurrection. First Peter three verse thirteen.

1 Peter 3:13-22
13. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?
14. But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;
15. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:
16. Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.
17. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.
18. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:
19. By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;
20. Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.
21. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

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22. Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

Like Paul, we cannot be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ and the hope of the Kingdom of God it brings us. Through faith, the righteousness of God is revealed to us, as we do what God expects of us. Faith without works is dead, and because we believe Jesus died so our sins could be forgiven, so that we could be part of the Kingdom of God to come, we live our lives accordingly aligned to what is expected of us. Romans one verse fourteen.

Romans 1:14-19
14. I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.
15. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.
16. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.
17. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.
18. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;
19. Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

The church in Pergamos did not deny the faith of Jesus. That means they did what was expected of them living a life of faith and works. But they also had a problem. They held to the doctrine of Balaam, and Balaam was the person who was hired by Balak to place a curse on Israel, which to Balaam's credit he did not do, but, and this is a big but, he told Balak how to place a stumbling block before them so they could in effect curse themselves. Imagine living a life doing everything that God expected, but then also allowing situations to continue that bring people to sin, where in effect they can be cursed. We would think that the loving and right thing to do as Christians is to keep ourselves unspotted from the world and to help others do the same, especially within the household of faith, but somehow in Pergamos, they were fine with situations being allowed to continue that would lead people to sin. Let's read the account of how Balak hired Balaam to curse Israel. Numbers twenty-two verse two.

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Numbers 22:2-6
2. And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites.
3. And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they were many: and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel.
4. And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time.
5. He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me:
6. Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.

God told Balaam that men would come to him asking him to travel with them, and God told Balaam to go with them, but when he went with them, he was still to do what God told him to do. God became angry with Balaam, because he left with the princes of Moab. An angel of God tried to stop Balaam who was riding his donkey. Even though Balaam couldn't see the angel, the donkey could and stopped, causing Balaam to get angry at the donkey, and this happened three times. After the third time the donkey laid down and God used the mouth of the donkey to convey a message to Balaam, asking him why Balaam was hitting the donkey. Eventually, the angel of the Lord was revealed to Balaam, and it was explained to Balaam that what he was doing was perverse, showing that God was already aware of Balaam's twisted thinking to have Balak cast a stumbling block before Israel. Numbers twenty-two verse twenty.

Numbers 22:20-32
20. And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do.
21. And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.

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22. And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him.
23. And the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field: and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way.
24. But the angel of the Lord stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side.
25. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall: and he smote her again.
26. And the angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place, where was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left.
27. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff.
28. And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?
29. And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee.
30. And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay.
31. Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face.
32. And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me:

Eventually Balaam met up with Balak and let him know he could not curse Israel. All he could do was bless Israel. Numbers twenty-three verse eighteen.

Numbers 23:18-20
18. And he took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor:
19. God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

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20. Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.

Because Balaam would not curse Israel, it made Balak angry, and outwardly Balaam told Balak he could not curse Israel even if Balak gave him all his wealth. Numbers twenty-four verse ten.

Numbers 24:10-13
10. And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together: and Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times.
11. Therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee unto great honour; but, lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honour.
12. And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying,
13. If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do either good or bad of mine own mind; but what the Lord saith, that will I speak?

Ultimately, the people of Israel stumbled and married wives from Moab. These foreign wives pressed the men of Israel to adopt the religious practices of Moab causing people of Israel to sacrifice to the gods with a small “g” of Moab. Revelation tells us this was caused by Balaam. Now, Balaam did not speak a curse against them, but there is no indication he took any action to tell the people of Israel they shouldn’t marry foreign wives. Even if he said nothing, it was almost like he was telling them not to worry about the law of God. Numbers twenty-five verse one.

Numbers 25:1-9
1. And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.
2. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.
3. And Israel joined himself unto Baal–peor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.

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4. And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel.
5. And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye everyone his men that were joined unto Baal–peor.
6. And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.
7. And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand;
8. And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.
9. And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.

Eventually, Baalam was killed in a battle against the Midianites. It's strange how a person who knew what God expected aligned themselves to people opposed to the people of God. Numbers thirty-one verse six.

Numbers 31:6-12
6. And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand of every tribe, them and Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war, with the holy instruments, and the trumpets to blow in his hand.
7. And they warred against the Midianites, as the Lord commanded Moses; and they slew all the males.
8. And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain; namely, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian: Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword.
9. And the children of Israel took all the women of Midian captives, and their little ones, and took the spoil of all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods.
10. And they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles, with fire.
11. And they took all the spoil, and all the prey, both of men and of beasts.

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12. And they brought the captives, and the prey, and the spoil, unto Moses, and Eleazar the priest, and unto the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the camp at the plains of Moab, which are by Jordan near Jericho.

We cannot be like Balaam as people who know the truth and create situations or allow situations to continue that would cause the people of God to stumble from the faith. That means we cannot be friends with this world. James four verse one.

James 4:1-6
1. From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?
2. Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.
3. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.
4. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.
5. Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?
6. But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

Jesus taught we are his friends if we do what he commanded. We are the world's friend if we do what the world commands. We cannot choose the moral values of this world over the spiritual teachings of Jesus, but we also do not automatically reject everything that is of this world because this is a world of both good and evil, where there is some good and some evil. Sadly, where evil is allowed to coexist with good, evil tends to overpower what is good. Even though not every last thing of this world is evil, there is much more evil in this world than there is good, and the good that is in this world is overpowered by the evil of this world. It's as if even though this is a world of good and evil, the whole world seems to be consumed by what is evil. We must always reject what is evil. Having friendship with this world does not mean we reject all who are not yet of the household of faith. We never know how and when God might use our connection with another person who is not yet of the household of faith to call that person. We do not become like people who are not yet called, but we live our life as a testament to

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doing what God expects. One way how we do that is never surrendering the Sabbath and Holy Days by doing what they do instead on the Sabbath and Holy Days instead of what we should be doing on the Sabbath and Holy Days. We need to be doing what Jesus expects of us to be a friend of Jesus. John fifteen verse twelve.

John 15:12-17
12. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.
13. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.
14. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.
15. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.
16. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.
17. These things I command you, that ye love one another.

We know those who are of the household of faith are of God, and that the whole world lives in wickedness. That tells us we need to be cautious with the people in our lives who are not of the household of faith. First John five verse eighteen.

1 John 5:18-21
18. We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.
19. And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.
20. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.
21. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

The church in Pergamos was faulted for having some hold fast to the doctrines of the Nicolaitans. Who exactly were the Nicolaitans, we are not sure. Some have looked to the Greek language to derive meaning from the name, with scholars looking to the Greek words *nikao* meaning to conquer or overcome, and *laos*, meaning people, resulting in the name Nicolaitans which means something like to

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conquer or overcome the people, which to scholars suggests a group which tried to establish a hierarchy with the church, and/or possibly the establishment of an authoritarian agenda. When we consider the meaning behind Nicolaitans to conquer or overcome the people, that indicates conflict and confrontation. If there was agreement, there would be no need to conquer or overcome people and that reasonably leads to several possible conclusions.

First, Nicolaitans could have been big on confronting non-believers and using strong language to compel conversion to the faith, even if belief was lacking. Today, when people have negative views of Christians, especially in countries where Christianity is the dominate faith, the negative views are frequently tied to Christians trying to force their views on non-believers. Second, looking internally within the household of faith, Nicolaitans could have believed the need to tightly control the brethren to the point the brethren were essentially conquered by the ministry. Within this scenario, the brethren surrender a great deal of autonomy to the ministry.

In thinking of what we could do to avoid the mistakes of the church in Pergamos, we need to remember our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and we should live our life doing at all times those things that are expected of us, remembering we were bought and paid for with a very high price. First Corinthians six verse fifteen.

1 Corinthians 6:15-20
15. Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.
16. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.
17. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.
18. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.
19. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?
20. For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

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We cannot make the mistake of the church of Pergamos where the members lived outwardly as Christians but inwardly lived a life where they allowed stumbling blocks to come before the people of God by telling them they don't need to worry about the law of God, and where some used an authoritarian approach in faith. We must live our lives remembering that through the death and resurrection of Jesus, we were bought with a very high price.

Thank you for joining us today. God-willing we'll get together next time on the Sabbath. Until then, thank you for joining us today.

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