

The Church in Pergamum

(Rv 2:12-13) "To the angel of the church in Pergamum write : These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. I know where you live--where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city--where Satan lives.

Today's passage is Jesus' commendation of the church in Pergamum. Before we look at what he praised, we need to know what Jesus thought about the church. 1) Jesus knows the local church better than anybody because he is the founder and the owner of the church. 2) The Lord wants the local church to grow. We should understand that it's not financial success or expanding in size. 3) Jesus said that the church should be different from the world. It means to think differently from the world, dream differently, and live differently. Anyone who believes in Jesus wants to belong to a good church. What kind of church is a good church? Obviously, a church that experiences the worldliness within the church is not a good church. Through the words given to the church in Pergamum, I hope that we hope to 1) become a good church and 2) become good believers who build up a good church.

1. Gathering Church

In order to speak to the Church in Pergamum, the Lord told the Apostle John to write to the angel of the Pergamum Church. The "angel" of the church is the messenger. It meant the pastor and public preacher who led the Pergamum Church. God wants to guide the life of the believers. How does he lead? Look into the Bible. After the Exodus, He led the Israelites in the wilderness through visual methods such as a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire. In the Old Testament, God led them through priests, prophets, and kings anointed by God, and after Jesus came into the world, He led them through His words. Jesus called his disciples by his word and led the Samaritan woman to true worship with his word. Through His words, Jesus taught believers about the Holy Spirit, who is with them forever, about sin, about righteousness, and about judgment. Why does he guide the life of believers with the words of Jesus? For Christ is the perfect priest, the perfect prophet, and the anointed Christ as the perfect King. We must believe in the guidance of the words of the Old and New Testament, that is, the Bible.

Then, what did the pastor of the church in Pergamum have to preach and teach to the members of the church after receiving the apostle John's letter? It was the word of Christ. Then, why did the members of the Church of Pergamum have to gather in the church to worship? At that time, Pergamum was the Asian capital of the Roman Empire. It can be said that it was the gathering place of those who pledged allegiance to the Roman emperor, those who faithfully administered the Roman emperor's orders, and those who competed to be seen by the Roman emperor. Their god was the Roman emperor. So in Pergamum the worshipers of the Roman emperors overflowed. Let's think for a moment. The emperor worshipers were the majority. There were people who did not worship the emperor, it was the pastors and some members of the Pergamum Church. Why? This is because God is the only God that man should worship. Worship was not the subject of compromise. It wasn't a negotiable topic.

The people who gathered to worship the emperor wanted to become exemplary citizens by listening to and learning from the emperor. And from whom did the believers gathered in the Pergamum church to listen and learn to follow? It is the word of Christ! Members of the congregation were to gather in churches, not places of worship of the emperor. They had to listen to the words of Christ preached by the pastor.

Why should believers gather regularly in their local church? Why should we set aside time and mind for regular meetings? It's to hear the word of God. You have to listen to the Word to grow your faith. Growing in faith is spiritual growth. To grow spiritually and see the world differently from yourself. As much as you see differently, you can obey with joy. As we obey the Word, the thoughts of God hold our heart and soul strongly. Don't think we could do this alone!

(Rv 2:12) "To the angel of the church in Pergamum write : These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword.

The word of the Lord was delivered to the apostle John, the letter of the apostle John was delivered to the pastor of the Pergamum church, and the pastor preached and delivered the word of the Lord to the members of the church. As in the Pergamum Church, as we gather before God to worship, God will speak through the preacher.

God's Word is like "the sharp, double-edged sword." 1) Because the word of God is alive and has power. 2) Because it is the sharp blade of God who heals and operates on our souls. 3) Because it is a sharp sword piercing to the division of the things that wrap our outer man. So, everyone who hears the word is renewed in the inner person. Although thoughts and intentions of the heart are revealed, there is no shame but people come to repentance. The Word of God teaches us what kind of heart we should have, what purpose and intention we should live for. This is the word of life. It is the word of eternal life. It is not for evil, but a message of hope. That's why Peter said he would not leave the place where the word of God was.

The church is an ecclesia. It is the church where God has called believers from the world, in order to worship God. In order to praise God with all our heart. In order to preach and listen to the word of God. If we exalt and praise people or governments, if we gather together because other reasons are more important than worship, praise, and the Word, we have lost the ecclesia of Christ.

2. The Believers' Stadium

The place where believers should gather is the church, and we need to ask and answer frequently about where we should live by faith. If you do not know this properly, or if you forget it, you will not gradually gather in the church and you will not be able to live by faith, and you will fall into the consciousness of being a loser. Look at verse 13. Jesus said that he knows where the members of the Pergamum Church live. Pergamum was a city where Satan's power was powerful. This means that the citizens of Pergamum, including some members of the congregation, worshiped the emperor, left the church, and left God. Who is the one who claps and rejoices? it is Satan. Satan who wants to control the world with lies. But what was the Lord's heart toward the church members living in spiritually dangerous area? Did Jesus say that 'such a city' is so dangerous that they should only gather in the church? No! He said, "Keep your faith in me, and do not forsake your faith in me" in such a city. What does this mean? He told them to strengthen their faith with the word in the church and go out into the world and live by faith.

We must gather as a church and go out into the world. This is because the world is the arena that believers must strive to win through faith. Please keep in mind that the arena of believers, that is, the place where we have to live by faith and overcome by faith is not in the church, but in the world. A good church is a church that gathers for worship and praise. The place where you have to live a new life, renewed with the Word of God is the world outside church. We must gather at church to worship with the word of truth under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and we must live the same life with the word of truth under the guidance of the Holy Spirit even when we are scattered to home, school, and work. This is the life living by faith! Just as we are saved by faith alone, so the principle of our life is faith alone.

A good church and a good believer try to strike a balance in two ways. One is a gathering church, and the other is a dispersing church. The gathering church and the scattered church are one. A good believer is a believer who gathers in church to experience God, is renewed with the Word of God, and is scattered to the world. What is it for? To live a life that witnesses God I met in the Word.

On April 20, 1994, on the day of the mass shooting at Columbine High School in the United States, a male student pointed a gun at Rachel Scott and asked, "Do you still believe in Jesus?" Rachel looked into the boy's eyes and said, "I believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, today and tomorrow." The boy asked what the reason was. Then, before Rachel could answer, he fired a gun at her chest. A passage from a diary that Rachel wrote a year before she was murdered. "I will not hide the light that God has put in me. If I had to sacrifice everything for that light, I would be willing to sacrifice it. I won't hide the light God put inside me!"

We have seen the light, and we know we cannot hide the light because it shines brighter in the dark. Even if the world is dark, the church and the faithful are honorable. I hope us to become a diaspora that shines the light of Christ in the world, an ecclesia that gathers with hard work and our burden, in order to worship God.