

Pergamum – Resist and Refuse

Intro: [Rev. 2:12-17] You've seen protestors before; maybe on TV, maybe in person. Anarchist groups protest every time world leaders gather. They smash in the windows at Starbucks and demand an end to globalization.

Anti-war protestors march with signs and chants, demanding an end to this war, that war, all war. "Not my son, not your son, not their sons" is their battle cry.

Animal rights protestors demand an end to the use of animals in drug and chemical testing, an end to wearing fur, or keeping "companion animals."

All of these protestors might have a point, or they might not, but one thing has always bothered me about this whole concept: upon whose authority are we calling for another person to change their behavior or lifestyle? (Steven Wright – I'm against protest marches but I don't know how to show it)

I. Pergamum –

- A.** We've moved 65 miles north from Smyrna to the provincial capital of Roman Asia.
 - 1. It had the 2nd largest library in the ancient world (behind Alexandria) with over 200,000 volumes. When Egypt stopped allowing papyrus to be shipped, they developed vellum and parchment.
 - 2. It had three temples to the Emperor cult along with the temple headquarters to the worship of Dionysus (bull), and Asclepius (snake – healing).
- B.** The Romans thought this city so important that they gave it the power to put its own criminals to death.
- C.** No wonder then, that Jesus comes to them and reminds them that HE bears the true sword – the sword that he bears by the authority of God the Father. That trumps Rome.

II. Time to Refuse and Resist

- A.** Jesus says he knows them – He recognizes their perilous situation.
 - 1. I appreciate this, don't you? Aren't you glad that Jesus recognizes that we can have very hard times and live in very hard places?

2. And, when we remain faithful, he notices.
- B. He mentions someone named Antipas – a name that doesn't show up again here or pretty much anywhere. It might not be the name this person was born with, but one given to him – perhaps in derision – by the community. It means “against everything.”
- C. Those of us who fear legalism might blink a bit here as we see Jesus praise this man who is known for being against everything.
 1. But we must see this in context. Most legalists spend their time being against their brethren. Antipas was known for being against everything in a city that was given over to Satan. That's different!
 2. I believe we need a new call to be against the world. We need to be a congregation of those who refuse to join in with the world's sins and who resist its temptations.
- D. We are surrounded by those who worship sex, their culture, human idols in music, sports, and movies, money and materialism. Imagine their response to a people right in the middle of them who resist and refuse.
 1. I believe that getting drunk – whether through alcohol or other drugs – is sinful and I will not do it. Ever.
 2. I believe that drunkenness and gluttony are sins and I will not participate.
 3. I will not over buy, over consume, or over accumulate.
 4. I believe that sex – ALL sex acts – are reserved for marriage, regardless of love, impulse, emotional attachment, or physical drive.
 5. I believe that women are to be treasured, loved, protected, admired, and heard.
 6. I believe that men are here to protect, provide, and lead.
 7. I believe that without Jesus NO ONE will have eternal life. Even if they are sincere.

8. I believe that my money, my time, my reputation are not mine to spend on me, but they belong to Jesus and are to be fully spent in his service.
- E.** Jesus here mentions Balaam and the Nicolaitians along with food sacrificed to idols. (brief description of the meat issue and how this mention seems to contradict an earlier decision until we see that it means going along with the pagans in their worship)
1. Balak, king of Moab, tried to get Balaam to curse Israel directly, but Balaam wouldn't do that. Instead, he devised an indirect way to bring Israel down.
 2. His plan used the Moabite women – renowned for their great beauty – to seduce the sons of Israel. They would then use their power over the men to bring them to Baal-peor's altar.
 3. God's judgment on Israel was over their fornication and idolatry.
- F.** God called those who were sinning to learn how to be against something! He honors that.
- G.** The congregation also had to stop accepting those who didn't resist and refuse.
- H.** Never were they called to march in the city carrying signs. Never were they told to fight for this or that political issue. They were told to live pure, clean, completely dedicated lives in service to Jesus and, in response?
1. They would be given food and sustenance that the world couldn't see or understand. (remember Jesus after meeting with the Samaritan woman? I have food you don't know about!)
 2. They would be protected – given a name that only God knows.

To know a person's true name was to have power over them. You could control them with their name. Our true name is Christian. We are the sons and daughters of God. Our true name does not give the enemy power over us. It reveals that he HAS no power over us. And neither does the world.