NORTH WAY
notes outline

THE 7 LETTERS | PERGAMUM LETTER

"And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: 'The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword. "'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But 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. So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth. He 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.'"
Revelation 2:12-17

For a follower of Jesus, to live in Pergamum meant that they lived in an epicenter of pagan worship and incessant temptation to conform to cultural norms and practices. This meant regularly being tempted to compromise their faith through idolatry, drunkenness and sexual immorality.

"An idol is anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give."
Tim Keller, Counterfeit Gods

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Searching for Idolatrous Compromise today:

- Something so central and essential to your life, that if you lose it, your life is hardly worth living.
- Something you can spend your passion and energy, your emotional and financial resources on without a second thought.
- Something that is culturally popular, accepted and celebrated.
- Something that God says is a good thing.
- Something that if acquired, will "finally" bring your life meaning and security.

"Then certain of the elders of Israel came to me and sat before me. And the word of the Lord came to me: 'Son of man, these men have taken their idols into their hearts ...'"
Ezekiel 14:1-3a

Cultural idols that we tolerate today are often good-things that we've allowed to become god-things.

"You shall have no other gods before me. 'You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God ...'"
Exodus 20:3-5a

"And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: 'The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.'"
Revelation 2:12

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"In the fear of the Lord one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge. The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death."
Proverbs 14:26-27

When my fear of the Lord decreases, the attraction of an idol increases.

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols."
1 John 5:21

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