

FAITH CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY

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"From the Pastor's Desk..."

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OUR DWELLING PLACE

"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..." Rev. 2:13

When our Lord told the Church of Pergamos, that He knew their dwelling place, it should have comforted them in the fact that He had their literal addresses as well as a general understanding as to the kind of environment and circumstances in which they dwelt; *"even where Satan's seat (throne) is: and thou holdest fast my name."*

"The throne of Satan" has perplexed many Bible commentators. But I feel it probably refers to the infamous idolatry practices at Pergamos, which had a cluster of temples to the gods of Zeus, Apollo, Athene, Dionysus, and Aphrodite. These all lay together in a striking grove called the Nicephorium. One may say the pagan people there took as much pride of Pergamos, as the worshippers of the pagan temple of Artemis did in Ephesus.

But those who had become followers of Christ realized that they and their families were now surrounded by a very evil, demonic environment. Thus exposing their children to every wicked device that Satan could use to deceive and torment the people of God. Of course the question one raises is, "Why would such godly people continue to remain in that kind of environment?"

WHY DO WE CONTINUE TO LIVE IN SUCH AN ENVIRONMENT

Each of us, who are blessed to have a place called home, enjoys the serenity and peacefulness that such provides. It is the place where we have chosen to find solitude, rest, and security. Homelessness is probably one of man's greatest fears. We don't want to worry each night as to where we are going to lay our head when the evening hours approach. We know that in the darkness evil lurks and there is a need of safety and security at the end of the day.

There are many reasons why we all chose to live where we do. Sometimes it is due to our various family members, friends, and work associates. In fact even our place of employment has a dominate factor deciding our dwelling place. I am sure that many people would prefer a better living environment if they could earn an equal or better living elsewhere. But there are other reasons as well, such as climate, availability of where we enjoy our pass time activities such as fishing, hunting, shopping, or if you are like me, eating.

However, the believers who attended the Church of Pergamos may have been born in this city and having deep roots never found the opportunity to dwell elsewhere. Sometimes people never even consider dwelling anywhere else but in the environment in which they were born and therefore grew accustomed to the living conditions regardless of the negative aspects of their particular community. In my travels I have gone through some cities in which I have asked: "Why in the world would a person want to live here?" But I am sure they had their reasons which were satisfactory to them regardless of what I personally prefer.

I have always preferred large cities due to their ability to accommodate my various interests. I like living in a city where if I need to purchase something I don't need to wait on the postal system to deliver it. I like plenty of restaurants in a community, and I like having access to various department stores. The only thing I hate is the parking lot on the freeway that you must plow through to get to those places. But I guess you must put up with the bad to enjoy the things you prefer.

Which leads me back to the question of Pergamos as to where they were dwelling...the place Jesus called, Satan's throne (seat). Why dwell so close to the devil? However, when it comes to the Church and its mission to reach the lost, why wouldn't the people of God dwell there? Because if our mission is to heal the sick, we must go where the sick people dwell. If our mission is to reach the youth...we must go where young people are dwelling. According to our calling, as true followers of the Lord that determines our dwelling place.

God interrupted Ezekiel's plans one day and placed a call upon him to go and speak to the Children of Israel whom the Lord referred to as a "*rebellious nation that had rebelled against me.*" (Ez.2:3) Ezekiel tells us that it was not easy for him to comply with such a calling. Thus he said, "*So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me.*" Ez. 3:14

So Ezekiel being filled with indignation was due to know how he felt about the wickedness and obstinacy of his people. Thus he went, determining to speak the Word of God without disguise, and to reprove them sharply for their rebellion. However I believe that he was personally greatly distressed because of the heavy message which he had been commanded to deliver. Such a message would not be easy to convey to a people who had no interest in hearing in the first place.

It is evident that the people of Pergamos felt the same concern because our Lord referred to the faithfulness of His Church there in spite of the fact that they experienced and witnessed Antipas who was a faithful servant of God and who had been martyred, "*slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.*" No doubt the government pronounced that kind of judgment upon Antipas to intimidate the followers of Christ from spreading the news of the Gospel.

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

In a few days, after receiving this newsletter, many of you my readers will go to the polls to vote in order to elect new leadership for our nation. You are being asked by various political parties to vote for your particular candidate for the various offices. We feel this is one of the most important elections of our lifetime, if for no other reason than the fact that our President will nominate three or four members of the Supreme Court who will determine the legal issues regarding, late term abortion, religious liberty, health care, etc.

In this election many churches, including our own, have not been silent in our pulpits about the issues at stake and the kind of leadership we feel is best for our nation in times like these. In the past pastors have been reluctant to express their views about things as this because of the fear of reprisal from the government as well as members in the church assembly who feel we should not deal in politics. However, what we are facing in this day are Biblical issues. We are dealing with life and death issues. And now that the word marriage has been redefined we are dealing with issues which affect the home.

Some of us feel that we too find ourselves dwelling in a place where Satan has attempted to set up his throne. We know he has attempted to remove from government the influence that Christianity has had on our Congressmen when deciding issues which affect our personal lives. Unfortunately it appears we are more concerned about the economic issues than the religious and social issues of our times. Therefore I feel we cannot afford to be silent. Will it be said of us that was said of the Church at Pergamos "*thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith?*"

I have no idea as to whether the people who are identified with the Church, at least in name, will go to the polls and vote Biblically. The major media outlets have basically tried to influence this election and whether they will have the impact they are hoping we are not sure. Some leaders of our own faith say that we should not worry about it, that God is taking care of everything. Think about Germany in the days of Hitler; that attitude brought about the Holocaust of the Jewish people. They too thought the same thing. There is a role God has given Christians to play. Maybe we should consider this and remember that Satan would love this nation to be his dwelling place. Maybe we should consider Christ's message to the Church at Pergamos. Amen