

***HOLD FAST TO MY NAME*****Revelation 2:12-17****(Read Revelation 2:12-17)**

**Intro:** This is a news report from 2018:

Chris Gursky of Florida was on his first day of vacation in Switzerland. He went hang gliding for the very first time, and ended up hanging on for dear life because his pilot forgot to attach his harness.

Video shows the moment they took flight, as he and the pilot both quickly realized there was a major problem.

"It was like time stood still, just looking for a handhold, looking for somewhere to hold onto and wondering what the heck is going on," Gursky said. As he joked about the nice views, he was left holding on with a death grip, barely able to hold on with one hand.

The instructor tried to make an early landing but now he was left to pilot with one hand, trying to hold Gursky with the other. As the pilot wrestled to hold onto Gursky, he couldn't control the glider, so they both soared higher.

"I didn't have much grip left in me at all," Gursky said. "My hand was opening. I was slipping... I was just trying to stay calm, trying to hold on for dear life. I looked down once and I thought to myself: 'This is it. I'm going to fall to my death - I'm a goner.'"

After the four longest minutes of his life, they made it close to the ground and Gursky let go, landing on the ground going 45 miles an hour.

The 54-year-old broke a wrist and ended up with seven screws and a titanium plate in it. He also tore a bicep and hurt his left shoulder.

The video is harrowing. It is NOT something for the faint of heart. It was desperate and it was a life or death situation.

The Church in Pergamum was in a dangerous situation of its own, and Jesus applauds them with "*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.*" Revelation 2:13. They were remaining faithful in a tremendously difficult society they flew in the face of everything they stood for. Like Mr. Gursky who hung on for dear life – Jesus is warning them that their grip is in danger of slipping if they continue to compromise with culture.

Pergamum was the capital city of the region. Unlike Ephesus and Smyrna who were both port cities and derived notoriety and prestige from that, Pergamum was famous for its history and connection with the imperial cult. The city had been the home of emperor worship for hundreds of years and they were home to the temple of Augustus who had proudly and vainly given them permission to build it there. You might remember who Augustus was, from a familiar passage from Christmas time that begins, *In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.* Luke 2:1, and so Mary and Joseph headed off to Bethlehem where their son, Jesus, would be born. Yep – he's the same guy – or should I say god.

As I've been pointing out over this study, Roman emperors liked to think they were gods and worthy of worship. So that was one danger lurking in the shadows for the Christ Followers in Pergamum – they didn't worship Caesar. They also didn't worship the Greek goddess, Athena, and gods, Dionysus and Zeus. There were also temples for Egyptian gods like Serapis. They were the odd ones out and this conspicuous lack of reverence was extremely dangerous.

There was another danger and that is the warning in this letter – the Christ Followers in Pergamum were getting lax and were in danger of losing their grip of faith. Let's unpack and learn from this letter the importance of Holding Fast to His Name.

First . . .

**Jesus means what he says**

- These are *The words of him who has a two edged sword* Revelation 2:12b. The writer of Hebrews gives us, *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* Hebrews 4:12. The words of God are not nice suggestions to be followed when it's convenient – he means what he says. We do well to follow it closely.

- I know where you live – Yes – you live in a spiritual cesspool. I’m aware of that. And I’m aware of your faithfulness even and witness even in the face of persecution and death. Jesus is assuring them he knows of the fact they are in an extremely wicked and hostile environment. This is wonderful encouragement for them. It’s not easy and Jesus acknowledges it.
- And then he drops the boom – *But I have a few things against you.* Revelation 2:14a. They are allowing their hardship to be an excuse to slip away into compromise. Yes, I know . . .

### **It’s bad. Stay good**

- Watch out! You have allowed false prophets to entice you. Again he refers to Balaam, who through Jewish holy history had become a prototype of all corrupt teachers who betrayed believers into fatal compromise with worldly ideologies. In Numbers 22-24 we have the original account of Balaam who was a prophet enlisted by Balak, King of Moab who wanted him to pronounce a curse of the Children of Israel as they waited to enter into the Promised Land. It’s a serious story but almost humorous as Balaam attempts various times to do so, but can only pronounce blessings. Balaam is also famous for being the prophet who had his donkey take him to task. This same Balaam had become the favored designation of anyone who tries to lead people away from true discipleship. This is just as prevalent today as then. So I say to us – WATCH OUT!
- At Pergamum, where Satan sat enthroned, some within the church had decided that accommodation was the wisest policy. It was a policy of compromise. Compromise is deadly. Eternally deadly.
- When we studied First Corinthians a couple years ago, you may remember that Paul addressed the issue of food sacrificed to idols. Some were really getting hung up about it, and others were going whole hog (pun intended). We learned at that time that if you wanted meat in your diet it was a good reasonably priced protein for people who lived on the edge of poverty. Similarly, what is referenced here and prohibited probably refers to meat that was eaten at pagan feasts rather than that sold in the open market after having been offered to idols. If you’re celebrating the false god as you eat, that’s one thing and it’s wrong. Also, especially in the case of the god Dionysus, who was the god of wine-making, orchards and fruit, vegetation, fertility, festivity, insanity, ritual madness, religious ecstasy, and theatre, it meant that all kinds of perversion was part of the pagan festivities.
- Don’t give in! Don’t tolerate its teaching and practice just hoping it will go away. Contrary to the belief of some who think that allowing sleeping dogs to lie is the way of Christ, we need to know that tolerance is not a Christian virtue. Again, we see the Nicolaitans – and we don’t know any more about them than we did two weeks ago as we looked at the letter to Ephesus, but they were certainly a problem and they were tempting Christ Followers to accommodate with society.
- Jesus is warning . . .

### **DON'T MAKE ME COME DOWN THERE!**

- You’ve seen the billboard, well, that’s essentially what Jesus is saying in verse 16. Listen, *Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.* Revelation 2:16.
- There’s that double edged sword again that separates the sheep from the goats, the faithful from the accommodators. Repent! Turn around! Stop the downward trend. You’ve got my word, follow it. If something you are hearing sounds wrong or even if it is trending toward compromise, it almost certainly is wrong. Turn away. Come back to Jesus. James writes to us, *Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* James 4:7. That’s what it takes. Don’t make him come down here – instead point others to him with your faithfulness. Hold fast to that name you are known by.
- You will have your name written on a white stone. There are at least 15 interpretations of the final phrase verse 17 is saying, but I’m voting for the fact that it is a ticket to glory. It’s not a gravestone but a symbol of admittance. As you are faithful you are a conqueror and you will enjoy the fruits of obedience.

**Conclusion:** Hold fast to Jesus’s Name. He is the name above all names and he is our deliverer. Hold fast and he will hold you fast.

In the words of Keith and Kristin Getty

*When I fear my faith will fail  
Christ will hold me fast*

*When the tempter would prevail  
He will hold me fast  
I could never keep my hold  
Through life's fearful path  
For my love is often cold  
He must hold me fast  
He will hold me fast  
He will hold me fast  
For my Saviour loves me so  
He will hold me fast*

*Those He saves are His delight  
Christ will hold me fast  
Precious in His holy sight  
He will hold me fast  
He'll not let my soul be lost  
His promises shall last  
Bought by Him at such a cost  
He will hold me fast  
He will hold me fast  
He will hold me fast  
For my Saviour loves me so  
He will hold me fast*

*For my life He bled and died  
Christ will hold me fast  
Justice has been satisfied  
He will hold me fast  
Raised with Him to endless life  
He will hold me fast  
'Til our faith is turned to sight  
When He comes at last!  
He will hold me fast  
He will hold me fast  
For my Saviour loves me so  
He will hold me fast. Amen.*