

“The Compromised Church”

INTRODUCTION: I want to begin with a “quiz” today: a “World Religions Quiz.”

1. Five questions; 20 points each; true or false...
 - a. The more educated people become, the less they tend to be interested in any form of religion. (T/F)
 - b. Christianity has historically been a religion of rural and small-town/village people. Urbanization of the 20th century has hurt Christianity’s growth. (T/F)
 - c. During the medieval period of Christendom, large churches and cathedrals were built because most people attended church. These churches were full on Sundays. (T/F)
 - d. Government sponsorship of religion (i.e., state churches) actually helped create an atmosphere where all religions grew in that culture. (T/F)
 - e. Because Europeans are mostly unchurched, they are primarily secular in their thinking.
2. One of my favorite authors, **Rodney Stark**
 - a. Professor of Sociology and Comparative Religions at *Baylor University*
 - b. Author or co-author of over 30 books
 - c. Spiritual journey: agnostic, deistic but irreligious, and now “an independent Christian” (?)
 - d. Latest book: *The Triumph of Faith: Why the World is More Religious Than Ever* (2015)
3. **Naomi Schaefer Riley:** “*The God Profusion*”, a book review of Stark’s new book, *The Triumph of Faith*; Jan. 4, 2016 in the *Wall Street Journal* (p. A13)

God is not dead. Despite the predictions of academics and liberal religious leaders, the world is becoming more faith-filled, not less. According to Rodney Stark, the co-director of the Institute for Studies of Religion at Baylor University, there has been no rise of the “nones” – no increase in the number of the world’s self-professed atheists and no triumph of reason over revelation.
4. Now...back to our quiz...
 - a. Answer #1 – The more educated people become, the less likely they are to go to church. **False!** In the USA, college-educated people are more likely to attend religious services than their counterparts with only a high school diploma. This is true around the world.
 - b. Answer #2 – Christianity was largely a rural and small-town phenomenon. **False!** Stark calls this “the myth of Medieval Piety.” In Medieval Europe, 90% of Europeans lived on farms or in villages where churches were not built. Stark writes...

Therefore hardly anyone could have attended church. Moreover, even after most Europeans had access to a church, whether Catholic or Protestant, most people still didn’t attend, and when forced to do so, they often misbehaved.

Christianity has always been an urban movement!
 - c. Answer #3 – In the medieval period, churches in Europe were full. **False.** (see answer #2)

- d. Answer #4 – Government sponsored religion promotes the growth of all religions. **False.** Competition causes revival when religions fervor. Stark comments.

In general, the government sponsorship of religion is a hindrance to the growth of a faith. Monopoly destroys competition, and competition causes growth—in religious affiliation as much as in the marketplace for goods and services. In many places around the globe, the competition among Muslims, Evangelicals, Catholics, Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses and hundreds of smaller religious groups has resulted in an atmosphere of revival. A smug complacency has been replaced by a fervor to win souls.

- e. Answer #5 – Europeans are unchurched and largely secular. **False.** False, because Europeans are unchurched, they are deeply spiritually confused. Reason has not triumphed over religion in Europe. (*Gallup Poll’s findings...*)
- i. In Austria: 28% believe in fortune tellers
32% believe in Astrology
33% believe in lucky charms
(Not the Kellogg’s cereal brand!)
 - ii. In Sweden: more than 20% believe in reincarnation
50% believe in mental telepathy
 - iii. In Iceland: over 50% believe in the *huldufolk* (*hidden people*) – elves, trolls and fairies.
 - iv. Europeans are returning to mysticism, superstition and folk religions!

5. **Dr. Timothy Keller** is correct (*Reason for God; p. x*)

A century ago most U.S. universities shifted from a formally Christian foundation to an overtly secular one. As a result, those with traditional religious beliefs have little foothold in any of the institutions of cultural power. But even as more and more people identify themselves as having “no religious preference,” certain churches with supposedly obsolete beliefs in an infallible Bible and miracles are growing in the United States and exploding in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Even in much of Europe, there is some growth in church attendance. And despite the secularism of most universities and colleges, religious faith is growing in some corners of academia. It is estimated that 10 to 25 percent of all the teachers and professors of philosophy in the country are orthodox Christians, up from less than 1 percent just thirty years ago.

In short, the world is polarizing over religion. It is getting both more religious and less religious at the same time. There was once a confident belief that secular European countries were the harbingers for the rest of the world. Religion, it was thought, would thin out from its more robust, supernaturalist forms or die out altogether. But the theory that technological advancement brings inevitable secularization is now being scrapped or radically rethought. Even Europe may not face a secular future, with Christianity growing modestly and Islam growing exponentially.

6. This is **good news** for Evangelical Christians, in three-fold sense.

- a. Though the Academy, the Media, and Washington treat Christians as dangerous and stupid, most Americans see us as deeply religious – for them that is a good thing.
- b. More and more people are interested in God and in religion; the question is *which* God and *which* religions.

- c. Immigrants to America are open, more than ever, to a new faith – one centered on *Jesus Christ*. The nations are coming to America; a mission field across your backyard fence or at the desk beside you in school.
7. No church in the New Testament times of the early church faced the *religious pluralism* as did the Church in **Pergamum**.
- a. This pluralism challenged their own faith...
 - b. ...stressed their church's mission...
 - c. ...and presented a spiritual danger: *Compromise*...
8. So, Jesus speaks to them as a *Comprised Church*...
- a. In their city of religious pluralism rather than lead others to the Truth in Christ, they were being led astray from Truth in Christ.
 - b. Here's what Jesus says to the Church of Pergamum:

“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)

9. **Dr. Douglas Kelly:** *Revelation: Mentor Commentary*; p. 47.

Jesus is saying to that church, ‘If you will be faithful to me and follow me and avoid the moral compromise with the culture that you are living in, I am going to show you a secret so wonderful that you wouldn't give it up for ten worlds’. The secrets God keeps are at least as good as those he reveals in his Word.

I. THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH OF PERGAMUM (Revelation 2:12-17)

1. First: The Identity of Jesus Christ: *The Christ of the Word* (v. 12)

- a. *“And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: ‘The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword. (Revelation 2:12)*
 - i. *In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. (Revelation 1:16)*
 - ii. *Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one*

knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. (Revelation 19:11-16)

b. The two-edged sword is the *Word of God* (Scriptures)

- i. *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. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (Hebrews 4:12-13)*
- ii. *...and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:17)*

c. A Messianic Figure – The Christ – is this two-sided sword

*Listen to me, O coastlands,
and give attention, you peoples from afar.
The LORD called me from the womb,
from the body of my mother he named my name.
He made my mouth like a sharp sword;
in the shadow of his hand he hid me;
he made me a polished arrow;
in his quiver he hid me away. (Isaiah 49:1-2)*

d. Why “two-edged”? Like the Roman battle-sword, with two edges

- i. Law and Gospel; Old Testament and New Testament; Mercy and Judgment
- ii. **Robert Mounce:** *Revelation: NICNT; pp. 80, 96.*
 - “the irresistible power of judgment”
 - *The authoritative word of Christ is to be understood over against the fraudulent demands of the imperial cult. It is the word of Christ which will ultimately prevail.*
 - *In the context of life in a provincial capital where the proconsul was granted the “right of the sword” (ius gladii), the power to execute at will, the sovereign Christ with the two-edged sword would remind the threatened congregation that ultimate power over life and death belongs to God.*
- iii. *And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. (Matthew 10:28, 34)*
- iv. *And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will*

pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.
(Luke 2:34-35)

- e. Jesus, the Savior, came the first time to *save* the world through His Word (Gospel).
- f. When He comes the second time, it will be to *judge* the world with His Word.

And Jesus cried out and said, “Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. (John 12:44-48)

- g. **Here is a picture of Jesus, the Word, judging the world by means of the Bible.**

2. The Commendation: *They had not denied Christ or the Faith (v. 13)*

- a. *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)*

- b. They had suffered some persecution – even martyrdom.

- c. “Antipas, my faithful witness” had been killed for the faith.

- d. Tradition: Antipas was roasted alive in a brazen altar to the gods.

- e. But, that martyrdom was in the past. Now they were less zealous for Christ.

- f. **Note:** Jesus knows where they dwell, just as He “knows” about all the churches in which He lives and walks.

- i. *I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. (Revelation 2:2)*

- ii. *I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. (Revelation 2:9)*

- iii. *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)*

- iv. “I know your works...” (Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea)

- v. Jesus knows our deeds, our sufferings, and the **places we live, worship, witness.**

- g. “...where Satan’s throne is...where Satan dwells... (v. 13)

- i. i.e., Pergamum, a deeply pagan city

- ii. 55 miles north of Smyrna: “a City of Altars”

- Library of 200,000 volumes
- **Pliny:** “By far the most distinguished city in Asia”

- iii. The *Acropolis of Pergamum*, 1,000 feet above the Valley of the River Caicus (*Pergamum* means “Citadel”)
- iv. Crowned by the altar (Temple) to *Zeus*, but also
 - 1. The Temples to *Athena, Apollo, Asklepios*
 - 2. Temples to *Dionysus, other gods* (“Savior”)
 - 3. Temples to *Caesar Augustus* and *Domitian*
 - 4. The *Heroon*: cult of the local rulers
- v. And the famous *Altar of Pergamum*
- vi. Citadel of the Gods
- h. The *Altar of Pergamum*, now in a Berlin Museum
 - i. Large altar surrounded by a *frieze* – sculptured scene of an event – depicting *The Battle of the Gods Against the Titans (giants)*
 - ii. Myth: The gods of Greece fought back the Titans (giants) for control of the earth. The gods won.
 - iii. *The Pergamon Altar; p. 21*
 - 1. *When we stand before the full scale reconstruction of The Pergamon Altar on Berlin’s Museum Island, we get a very good idea of the grandeur and scale of the original building. Its original massive platform was almost square, 36.44 meters wide and 34.20 meters deep. In the reconstruction, five steps rising from the platform support a monumental pedestal consisting of a base whose sides are covered by a 2.30 meter high frieze of relief panels crowned by a great projecting cornice. The monumental, sculptured frieze is 120 meters long and encircles the entire altar. On the west side the frieze is interrupted by a 20 meter wide flight of stairs which rises against the building and leads to a magnificent colonnade; behind the colonnade where an altar for burnt offerings stood in an open court. The colonnade which rises above the frieze is shallow. Its columns are delicate with profiled bases and Ionic capitals which support a richly ornamented entablature. Originally the roof was decorated with teams of horses, quadrigas, lion-griffins, centaurs and figures of gods.*
 - 2. Converted: platform 119 ½ feet by 112 feet; frieze was 7 ½ feet tall and 394 feet long; a flight of 30 stairs 65 ½ wide; Colonnade Building at top.
- i. The Frieze depicts the battle of the gods against the Titans. The Pantheon of Rome (Greece) was there –
 - i. *Zeus*: father of the gods in a chariot
 - ii. *Hera*: Zeus’ wife and *Letto*: Zeus’ mistress and mother of *Apollo and Artemus*
 - iii. *Apollo*: god of medicine and prophecy (messenger)
 - iv. *Artemus*: goddess of the hunt

- v. *Hekate*: goddess of witchcraft and magic
- vi. *Athena*: daughter of Zeus; patroness of Pergamum
- vii. *Ares*: god of war, and *Nike* = goddess of victory
- viii. Zeus' twin sons: *Polydeuces and Castor*
- ix. *Uranus*: god of earth and father of the Titans
- x. *Themis*: goddess of law and justice
- xi. *Helios*: sun god, and *Theia*: goddess of the morning

- *Nyx*: goddess of the night
- *Selene*: moon goddess
- *Eos*: goddess of the dawn

- xii. *Poseidon*: god of the sea and *Triton* (his son)

- *Nereus*
 - *Doris*
 - *Tethys*
 - *Okeanos*
- } gods and goddesses
} of the waters

- xiii. *Keto*: the lion goddess, *Cybele*: goddess of Asia Minor

- xiv. *Aphrodite*: goddess of love and *Dionysus*: god of wine

- xv. Even *Moirae*: goddess of the destiny of men

- xvi. And *nymphs, monsters, satyrs, seahorses and tritons*

- xvii. And *Herakles*: a man and hero of the Battle

- xviii. With his son *Telephus* – **The Founder of Pergamos!!!**

- j. **Please note:** *Everything about life, history and civilization was attributed to false gods and “sons of gods.” A complete corruption of the truth about God and His Son, Jesus Christ.*
- k. *For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. (Rom. 1:21-23)*

3. The Admonition/Rebuke: *You have been compromised (vv. 14-15)*

- a. The *Pergamum Church* had been polluted by and compromised by this throne city of Satan –
 - i. *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. (Revelation 2:14-15)*
 - ii. *Eating food sacrificed to idols: idolatry*

- iii. *Sexual immorality*: Greco-Roman immorality
 - iv. *The Nicolaitans*: Greek Gnostic dualists (false Christianity)
 - b. A **Christianity warped to look like, feel like and be comfortable with** pagan society. Compromise!
 - c. A church where the *Gospel Truth* about the uniqueness of Jesus Christ was compromised and clouded by the surrounding culture.
 - d. Persecuted, seduced and tempted into *cultural Christianity*
 - e. **Cultural Christianity**: the only Christian viewpoint tolerated by the world!
4. The Exhortation: very brief: “*Therefore, repent.*” (v. 16)
- a. Turn away from cultural Christianity
 - b. Turn back to Biblical Christianity
5. The Warning: *War with Christ; Christ at war with us!* (v. 16)
- a. *Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.* (Revelation 2:16)
 - b. i.e., if we ally ourselves with the world’s religions, we make ourselves the enemy of God.
 - c. The very Word designed to save us will judge and destroy us! We perish with Satan!
And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. (2 Thessalonians 2:8)
6. The closing statement: “*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches.*” (2:17a)
7. The Promise of Reward: *A three-fold gift of grace for being faithful to Gospel Religion* (v. 17)
- a. *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.* (Rev. 2:17b)
 - b. *The hidden manna*: like that in the Ark of the Covenant, instead of the food of the gods. (meat sacrificed to idols)
 - c. *The White Stone*: the one Greek jurors used to cast a ballot of innocence: “not guilty”
 - d. *A new name known only to faithful Christians*: i.e., God’s name branded on them.
 - e. The Greeks wore amulets or carried charms, with the names of gods or goddesses on them, to keep them safe.
 - f. Jesus says, “He who has My name on his white stone will be safe and secure in Me!”
 - g. A reward for the *victors, conquerors, overcomers...*
There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height

nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:1, 37-39)

II. THE MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH OF PERGAMUM

1. **First:** *All churches that live in multi-religious cultures will face both opportunity and danger – both!*
 - a. In the New Testament, the word usually used for Christians *dwelling* on earth is the Greek word *paroikein*.
 - i. *paroikein*: to sojourn; to live somewhere temporarily; the word describing the temporary residence of a pilgrim.
 - ii. But here, in Revelation 2:12, Jesus used the word *katoikein* = permanent residency.
 - iii. Meaning: *“You cannot escape Satan’s throne in this fallen world. There are no places where it is easier to be a Christian, because in every place you live, you will face the cultural religion of the people. And then religions will never be Christ-centered!”*
 - b. **Opportunity:** We offer them the truth about Jesus Christ and eternal life –
And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. (John 17:3)
 - c. **Danger:** We will compromise our faith in Christ to look more like the pagan beliefs all around us, so that we are treated better by the world, and more people like us.
 - d. *You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:13-16)*
2. **Second:** *The word your pastors preach to you is a two-edged sword to be taken seriously...*
 - a. Gospel/Law; Promise/Warning; Forgiveness/Judgment
 - b. My sermons are **not** one man’s religious opinion,
 - c. My sermons are **not** for you to critique, grade or correct,
 - d. My sermons are **not** “food for thought” (optional).
 - e. My sermons point to the *inevitable reality...* The coming judgment of Christ.
 - f. *I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth*

and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

3. **Thirdly:** *We must look hard and long at our own Christianity and ask ourselves how much of Pergamum has infected it.*
- a. Is Biblical Christianity compatible with our Republican (or Democratic) politics? Our practice of American capitalism? Our vision for what's "good for America"?
 - b. Is Jesus Christ *egalitarian*? Is He a *feminist* or a *male chauvinist*? Does Jesus endorse our *gender preferences* or *new morality*?
 - c. Does Christ really believe that it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're sincere?
 - d. Is Christ going to allow us into heaven if we've not been *baptized*? Members of His *Church*? Active in His *service*?
 - e. Do you really believe that Jesus will put His New Name upon you simple because you once asked Him into your heart (but never really followed Him)?
 - f. Does Jesus *really* want the music you like on the radio sung to Him in church?
 - g. The Christ of the Cross – do you think He is open to other religions as a way to God and heaven?

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)

4. **Fourth:** *The three sins pushing in on the saints in Pergamum are the same forces pressing against us and our children –*
- a. *Meat sacrificed to idols:* mixing devotion to Christ with the food of the gods – manna and cotton candy
 - b. *Sexual immorality:* obviously – America's sickly, distorted view of gender, sexuality, marriage and intimacy
 - c. *The Nicolaitan heresy:* tolerating false teachings that made life in the Church compatible with life in America!
 - d. *Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. (Jude 3-4)*
 - e. Idolatry...immorality...worldliness...
5. **Fifth and lastly:** *We must listen more intently and regularly to the Holy Spirit, speaking in His Word.*
- a. *"He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches"* (seven times!)
 - b. There are **many voices** clamoring for your attention – media, internet, schools, friends, television and cinema, the message of pop music, sports, politics, law, business and fashion; parents, pastors, coaches, teachers, bosses and spouses; what the kids want and what your neighbors expect, etc., etc.

- c. **But there is another voice:** *soft, clear, patient but compelling...the Voice of God the Spirit*
- d. It's the Voice John heard; it's the Voice that borrows your pastor's vocal cords each Sunday: *"Thus saith the Lord..."*

For thus said the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength."

(Isaiah 30:15)

Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him. For a people shall dwell in Zion, in Jerusalem; you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. As soon as he hears it, he answers you. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left. (Isaiah 30:18-21)

- e. **Please hear me:** *Not everything Mike Ross says is God's Word. But whenever the preacher or teachers set before you the clear meaning and true intent of God's Word, the Lord has spoken.*
- f. **Eugene Peterson** (*Reversed Thunder*; p. 49) noted that when God made human beings, He gave them eyelids but not earlids.
 - i. They can (and do) shut their eyes when they want to avoid seeing something...
 - ii. But they can't shut their ears!
 - iii. *Nature has not equipped mankind with earlids. But we compensate for nature's oversight by developing selective listening. We are conveniently deaf to sounds that challenge our pride, or command our obedience, or interrupt our fantasies, or call attention to our lapses.*
- g. **Danger:** *Just because the Word goes forth does not mean we really heard it. Listening is more than picking up sound waves in space!*
- h. If we become *listeners and doers* of God's Word, we will never have to worry about **Compromised Christianity!**
- i. *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world. (James 1:22-27)*
- j. *Undeceived...unstained...uncompromised*

CONCLUSION: How does one do this?

1. Answer: *By winning the battle of the mind, we conquer our souls for God.*

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

2. Three steps to this Victory (Conquerors)...

- a. **First: Humility:** We acknowledge that we, as individuals and as a congregation, do not have a corner on the truth. God does. We are often wrong. We are sometimes worldly. We are never perfect.

Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:5-7)

- b. **Second: Teachableness.** We must constantly open our ears, minds and hearts to “The Voice” – Jesus speaking to us in the pages of the Bible.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. (John 10:27-28)

- c. **Third: Willingness to Change.** Regularly asking the Holy Spirit to speak to us, in the Word, and correct our pagan ideas, overcome our immoral tendencies, and prevent us from becoming worldly Christians.

Search me, O God, and know my heart!

Try me and know my thoughts!

And see if there be any grievous way in me,

and lead me in the way everlasting!

(Psalm 139:23-24)

3. To be the people of God and the Church of Christ we must all of us – every person – become a person of the *The Book*.
4. “*He who has an ear to hear...*” It takes only one ear!
5. “*...let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches*” – Jesus is still speaking through His Spirit and His Word, to Christ Covenant Church.