

# The South Florida Avenue MESSENGER

**A Friendly Church With a Vital Message Proclaiming the Unsearchable Riches of the Lord Jesus.**  
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## SUNDAY SERVICES

Bible Study.....9:30 a.m.  
Worship.....10:30 a.m.  
Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.

## WEDNESDAY

Ladies Class.....10:00 a.m.  
Bible Study.....7:00 p.m.

## HOME OF

Florida School of Preaching  
since 1969

## MISSION FIELDS

Dub Hill.....Russia  
Don Iverson.....India  
Marc Veary.....Malawi, Africa  
Graham McDonald..Scotland  
J. Paguaga.....Honduras, C.A.  
Joey Treat.....Pacific Islands  
Ted Wheeler.....Ghana, W.A.

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IN  
**SEARCH**  
OF THE LORD'S WAY

Sundays @ 8:30 a.m. Check local listings

## The Church At Pergamos: "Satan's Stronghold"

Brian R. Kenyon

John, while on the isle of Patmos, wrote the Book of Revelation. In Chapters 2-3, there are recorded seven letters to the churches of Asia Minor. Although each letter was written to a specific congregation, each is also applicable to us (cf. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches," Rev. 2:17). The third of these letters was written to the church at Pergamos. The subtitle, "Satan's Stronghold," is adapted from Ray Summers (*Worthy Is the Lamb*).

### Background of the City

Pergamos was located fifteen miles inland from the Aegean Sea, north of Smyrna. Near the ancient City of Troy, it was situated between two rivers and a mountain range, thus making it a "stronghold." The city was founded by Greek colonists, but was given to Rome by its last king on his death bed in 133 BC. It was well known for its library of about 200,000 volumes.

Religiously, Pergamos was considered to be the center of emperor worship. Asklepios, the god of healing, was also associated with the city. People came for miles around to seek healing from their ailments. The city also contained many pagan temples, including the temple to Zeus, the chief Greek god. This temple, along with its altar, was located 800 feet up the side of a mountain and resembled a chair (cf. "Satan's seat," Rev. 2:13). Historians say that fire and smoke could be seen from long distances as sacrifices were continually burned. The temple of Zeus was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It is against this background that Jesus through John writes.

### Relevance of the Writer

This letter was written by "He who has the sharp two-edged sword" (Rev. 2:12 cf. 1:16). The "sword" shows that Christ has authority, not Rome, and that He is able to protect His own, even in the face of persecution (cf. Rev. 2:10). The "sword" also shows that Christ has the power of discerning judgment (cf. Heb. 4:12), as is evident by the insight He reveals into their situation.

(continued on page 2)

# Christ's Evaluation

In assessing this church, Jesus first says, "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells" (Rev. 2:13). The environment of Pergamos produced an oppressive atmosphere upon the church, which is ultimately attributed to Satan (cf. 1 Thes. 2:18). Despite this pressure, they held fast to Christ's name. They did not deny "My faith." Generally speaking, the Pergamites did not compromise the doctrine of Christ (cf. Col. 1:23; Jude 3). Their uncompromising stand, even in Satan's stronghold, resulted in the death of some. Little is known about "Antipas," except that he was "faithful until [unto, KLV] death" (cf. Rev. 2:10), which speaks volumes (cf. Heb. 11:4). Christ's commendation shows us that a faithful church can exist in a wicked community. There are no outward circumstances that can keep us from being faithful, if being faithful is our goal (cf. Mt. 28:20b; Acts 5:27-29; 2 Tim. 4:6-8).

Secondly, Jesus lists some things for which they needed to repent. "But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. <sup>15</sup>Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate" (Rev. 2:14-15). In the Old Testament, Balaam was willing to make material gain at the expense of spiritual loss (Num. 22-24). A "stumbling block" literally refers to the part of a trap on which the bait is placed. Balaam, by his counsel, baited the trap for Israel. Balaam knew he could not curse the children of Israel (Num. 22:7-14), but he figured if he could get them to participate in idolatry, God would curse them. Thus, Balaam lured Israel into committing "harlotry [whoredom, KJV] with the women of Moab" (Num. 25:1 cf. Num. 31:16). Some in Pergamos were likewise willing to make spiritual compromise in exchange for material safety. Worshiping the emperor would relieve persecution, but at what price? Additionally, some in Pergamos were holding to the "doctrine of the Nicolaitans." Little is known about the Nicolaitans. Some think they were a sect of Gnosticism. The Ephesians were commended for hating the "doctrine of the Nicolaitans" (Rev. 2:6), but some in Pergamos were tolerating it. To please God, however, we must not only love what the Lord loves, but we must also hate what the Lord hates (Ps. 45:7).

## Christ's Solution and Promised Blessings

Christ gives only one solution to their dangerous condition: "Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth" (Rev. 2:16). Jesus cannot tolerate the sin of compromise (cf. Mt. 6:24). Unless they repent, Jesus will slay them with the sword of God's word, just as God slew Balaam with the sword of those whom he sought to curse (Num. 31:8).

Jesus offers two promises: "To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it" (Rev. 2:17). First, in contrast with eating "things sacrificed to idols" (Rev. 2:14), they will eat "some of the hidden manna," which is a reference to the sustenance that can only be found in Christ by those who look for it (cf. Jn. 6:33-35). Second, they will receive a "white stone" upon which "a new name is written." The color white represents holiness, purity, and victory (cf. Rev. 1:14; 4:4; 6:2, 11; 7:9, 13). In Biblical times, a white stone was given as a sign of acquittal, as a token of freedom for former slaves, as a trophy for winning a race, or as an award to a soldier returning from victory. All these are applicable to the one who overcomes. The name is "new" because it signifies a new relationship with Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), a relationship that no worldly person can comprehend ("no one knows except him who receives it"). Both of these promises will be ours when we overcome.

## Conclusion

The church at Pergamos teaches that we can be faithful to God no matter our surrounding environment. This is encouraging to know, especially given the culture in which we live. Let us not compromise the truth for material security, but rather hold fast to all for which Christ stands. ♥ *Brian*



**PEW PACKERS THIS SUNDAY EVENING AT 5:45**

# SFA FAMILY MATTERS

## Prayer List

**Our Members:** Bernetta Green has been home with Bronchitis. Sharon Washington, Dorothy Trice, Ron Cox, Wayne Shearer, Faith West, Jim Turner, Bill Long, Ginny Hamby, and Margaret Coone.

**Shut In Members:** Carol Eason, Virginia Plumlee, Dick & Joyce Burbage and Sharon Edler.

**Others:** Harold Hooks, Lynn Stevens, Chrissi Fuesner, Joyce Stearsman, Ruth Brunson, Chip Bolding, Ray Parker, Barbara Paulin and Alexa Williams.

## Upcoming Events

**Wednesday Sept. 5th:** Ladies Bible class will resume at 10:00 a.m.

**Saturday Sept. 8th:** Youth Devotional at 5:00 p.m. hosted by the Sweeneys.

**Sunday Sept. 9th:** Elders/Deacons Meeting at 4:30 p.m.

**Sunday Sept. 9th:** Scrapbook meeting at 5:00 p.m. to plan this year's scrapbook.

**Thursday Sept 13th:** Evening Ladies Bible class will resume at 7:00 p.m.

**Saturday Sept. 15th:** Men's Breakfast: North Jackson in Bartow at 8:00 a.m.

**Tuesday, Sept. 18th:** FSOP Ladies Class 7:00-8:30 p.m.

**Tuesday Sept. 18th:** Senior Saints Meeting at 9:00 a.m.

## Thank You's

Thank you so much for the cards, thoughts and prayers during my medical testing that has been done recently. Continue to keep me in prayer as I am on this journey. I have peace with whatever God has planned for me. Pray I can stay strong.  
Love, Barbara Paulin

Thank you everyone that has signed up for the Food Ministry and prepared meals so far. It is a great work of the Lord. Thank you John McShane for heading up this ministry and all the help and support you and Linda have provided for all of us. Thank you Nona Williams for all your help and encouragement as we all work together. Continue to keep us in prayer.

Love you all, Brenda Mask

## Placed Membership

Veda Roach and Wadi Khoury have requested to place membership with us! Let us please welcome them into our family.

## Congratulations

Dennis & Jean McCarter are proud grandparents of a baby girl! Morgan Paige McCarter born to Cameron & Sarah McCarter on Aug. 21st. Dennis and Jean are in St. Louis Missouri to welcome their first grandchild into the world.

## Visitors

T Jean Tomlinson, Alex Szabo, Mr. & Mrs. Bill Davis, Leana Palmer, Karen Napier, Melina Hamblin, Jerry Green, Debbie Bush and Katherine Nester.

## SCHEDULED TO SERVE

### September

Charles Paulin ..... **Table** ..... C.J. Grimes  
Tucker Sweeney ..... **Assist** ..... Bobby Sheumaker

**Sunday, September 9, 2018**  
9:30 A.M.

**Song at Bible Class**..... Tucker Sweeney  
**Prayer** ..... Bobby Sheumaker

10:30 A.M.

**Announcements** ..... Wayne Shearer  
**Song Leader**..... Jason Hendrix  
**Opening Prayer**..... David Williams  
**Sermon**..... Hiram Kemp  
**Closing Prayer**..... Wayne Shearer  
**Sound Booth**..... C.J. Grimes

6:00 P.M.

**Song Leader**..... Paul Romine  
**Opening Prayer**..... Jimmy Sweeney  
**Sermon**..... Hiram Kemp  
**Closing Prayer**..... Tyler Anderson  
**Sound Booth**..... C.J. Grimes  
**Greeters** ..... Kenyon (before) Kenyon (after)  
**Att. Cards**..... Paul/Sebastian  
**Open & Close Building** ..... Jimmy Sweeney

**Wednesday, September 12, 2018**

**Song Leader**..... Steve Hunley  
**Opening Prayer**..... C.J. Grimes  
**Closing Prayer**..... Jeff Bingle

*Please meet in the library. If you cannot serve, please call Stacey Paulin so he can get a replacement - (863) 838-8911*

**Sunday, September 16, 2018**  
9:30 A.M.

**Song at Bible Class**..... Frank Hamby  
**Prayer** ..... Kyle Bingle

10:30 A.M.

**Announcements** ..... Wayne Shearer  
**Song Leader**..... Jason Hendrix  
**Opening Prayer**..... Matt Willcut  
**Sermon**..... Vince Daugherty  
**Closing Prayer** ..... Tim Croson  
**Sound Booth**..... Tucker Sweeney

6:00 P.M.

**Song Leader**..... Paul Romine  
**Opening Prayer**..... Kyle Faneuf  
**Sermon**..... George Beals  
**Closing Prayer** ..... Jim Edmonson  
**Sound Booth**..... Tucker Sweeney  
**Greeters** ..... Shearers (before) Frenchs (after)  
**Att. Cards**..... Antonio/ Paul  
**Open & Close Building** ..... Jimmy Sweeney

**Wednesday, September 19, 2018**

**Song Leader**..... David Williams  
**Opening Prayer**..... Tucker Sweeney  
**Closing Prayer** ..... Fred Strickland

## ~ HOW ARE WE GIVING ~

August 12.....	\$5,546.63
August 19.....	\$5,273.72
August 26 .....	\$4,995.17
Sept 2 .....	\$7,194.09
Contribution Average.....	\$5,798.43
2018 Weekly Budget.....	\$4,887.98

## ~ Communion to Shut-ins ~

Sept 9.....	Kemp
Sept 16.....	Parramore
Sept 23.....	McShane
Sept 30.....	Shearer
Oct 7.....	Sweeney

# God Is Self-Evident

The question is often asked, “Where did God come from?” or “If God created everything, who created God?” These are relevant questions and answering them helps us to better appreciate God. The quick answer is that God is not created; He has always been. God is not dependant upon any outside factor for His existence. When Moses asked God what he should say when the children of Israel asked, “What is His [the God who is sending you’s] name?,” God told him, “I AM WHO I AM ... Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent me to you” (Ex. 3:14). The term translated “I AM” means something like “the always existing one; the uncaused cause” (Ralph Gilmore, *Theology: The Nature of God*, 1993). God’s existence is not grounded in God’s will, but in God’s very nature. If God could have caused Himself to be, then God could cause Himself not to be, but God’s perfection and unchanging nature prevent these possibilities. God has always been as He is now. He has never been more or less powerful, loving, just, etc. than He is this very moment. There has never been a time nor will there ever be a time that God’s nature is not exactly as it is now! God is eternal (Gen. 21:33; Ps. 90:2-4 [cf. Mic. 5:2]; 102:27; Isa. 57:15; 1 Tim. 6:16). Although the human soul/spirit lives forever (cf. Eccl. 12:7), humans have a definite beginning point (i.e., conception), but not God. God is infinite in relation to time. As creator, God is the very cause of time (cf. Gen. 1:1-31). Time is of no essence with God, for “with the Lord one day (*continued below*)”



*South Florida Avenue*  
**CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
*1807 South Florida Avenue*  
*Lakeland, FL 33803-2653*

Return Service Requested

The End of Your Search for a Friendly Church . . .

## God’s Plan of Salvation

**Hear God’s word (Rom. 10:17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17)**  
**Believe in Jesus as God’s Son (Jn. 8:24)**  
**Repent of Past Sins (Lk. 13:3, 5; Acts 17:30-31)**  
**Confess Faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:9-10)**  
**Be Baptized for Forgiveness of Sins (Acts 2:38)**  
**Live Faithfully by God’s Word (Rom. 12:1-2),**  
**which includes assembling for worship**  
**(Jn. 4:24) & encouragement (Heb. 10:25)**

Think souls! Let’s love our friends, families, and neighbors enough to invite them to church assemblies and/or to one-on-one Bible studies!



(*continued from above*) is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Pet. 3:8). As humans, we know our present time; we know a little bit about past history; and have no knowledge of the future, though we make plans according to what we expect. God, however, sees past, present, and future at the same time because He transcends time. Eternity for God is now. God is also infinite in relation to space. The immensity and vastness of God is beyond containment (Jer. 23:24; 2 Chr. 2:6; 1 Kgs. 8:27). These facts about God should help us realize we can totally put our trust in Him! His eternity and vastness gives comfort, knowing that He will always be where we are, ready to comfort, protect, and advance His cause! Let us not be afraid to stand with Him! ❤️ Brian

**Praise ye the LORD (Ps. 147:1)**