



"DEAR CHURCH", PART 4 PERGAMUM: FAITHFULNESS AND THE PRESSURE TO COMPROMISE

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BIBLICAL TEXT(S)

"Jesus claims to truly have the power of life over death, not Rome. Jesus hold's the 'right of the sword' not Rome...and He judges not on the basis of faithfulness to Rome, but on faithfulness to the Kingdom of Heaven which is ultimately faith in Jesus."

–Pastor Alex

MAIN TEXT:

"To the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives.

Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: There are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality. Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it." (Revelation 2:12-17)

ADDITIONAL TEXTS:

"This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too." (Luke 2:34-35)

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:14-16)

...God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?" (Hebrews 13:5-6)

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:

"Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!

For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear."

Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" And he added, "These are the true words of God." (Revelation 19:6-9)

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy

and true."He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. (Revelation 21:1-7)

Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor. 6:9-11)

MESSAGE SUMMARY

The third church in the book of Revelation that Jesus writes to is the church in Pergamum. Pergamum was an impressive city and was home to many temples, including a temple to the Roman Emperors. It also had the power to execute people as the leaders of the city saw fit. It appears from Jesus' letter, that at least one church leader had already been put to death in that city. Jesus reminds this church that he is ultimately in control, no matter what the leaders of the city might think. Additionally, he commends them for remaining faithful despite living in a place where evil has a strong foothold.

However, not all in Pergamum were remaining faithful. It seems have few Christians in the city have compromised in order to save face. Jesus calls the church as a whole to repent, even though only a few it seems have strayed. He promises that if they will remain faithful, he will remain faithful to them, providing for their needs and making them great in his soon coming kingdom. That message remains true for us today.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you lead your group through

Cont.

a progression of engagement with the Bible passage and the speaker's message, helping

LEAN IN

These are icebreaker/warm up questions, mostly just to get the group talking and start the flow of conversation. Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.

1. Have you ever gotten in trouble or been rebuked, not for your own actions, but for the actions of others? What happened?
2. What example or story stood out to you in Sunday's sermon? Why was it significant to you?
3. What was the last personal letter you received in the mail? Who was it from?
4. Have you ever had to compromise in order to get something done? What happened?

LOOK DOWN

These are questions on the passage and observations about what's been read. Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. Each of these letters to the churches is generally made up of four parts: a description about Jesus, a note about something the church is doing well, a note about something bad going on in the church, and a promise. Can you identify the four parts in this passage? Is there a theme or anything that stands out to you?
2. Based on verse 13 of this passage, what do you think the church at Pergamum was facing? What was going on in their city?
3. What is verse 14 referring to with Balak and Baalam? (Hint, it might be helpful to read Numbers 25 and Numbers 31:16). What happened in the Old Testament that this verse is referring to?
4. What does God promise to give to the church in Pergamum if they are victorious? What do these items symbolize? (It may be helpful to refer to Sunday's sermon for this question.)
5. Are all in the church at Pergamum going astray from the teachings or just some? Does Jesus rebuke all the church or just some?

**DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS,
CONT.****LOOK OUT**

These questions help connect the world of the Bible to today.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. The church at Pergamum was facing persecution and pressure to submit to the governing authorities and political/cultural pressure. How are those same sorts of pressures at work in our modern world?
2. What do you think about the fact that Jesus called out the church in Pergamum for something only some of them were doing? What does this teach you about the church and how God views it?
3. How/where do you see people facing persecution well, as many in the church at Pergamum seem to have done?
4. Do you think the Church (not just our church, but the church in North America and around the world) has compromised to the world around it? How so?
5. How have you seen God provide what was needed to those around you (either that you know or know of) as he promises to do for the church in Pergamum?

LOOK IN

These are questions that help you consider personal application.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. Where in your life do you face pressure to compromise your faith?
2. Have you ever compromised your faith in order to save face? What happened?
3. How have you seen God provide for you in your own life as he promises to for the church in Pergamum?
4. What can you do to help correct compromises that the Church (again, not just ours, but the church around the world) has made? Do you think you are even responsible for such things?
5. Where in your life do you look for something outside of God to meet your needs?

LIVE IT OUT

These action steps help apply this week's message to day to day life.

Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.

1. Where are you most susceptible to compromising your faith?
How can your group pray for you to support you?
2. Is there anything you feel called to do in order to help the Church at large remain true to what God has called them to be?
3. What do you need God to provide to you right now? How can your group pray for you in this need?

NOTE: On the following page (for most weeks) you will find a set of sermon notes created by Charissa Burns, an artist who calls B4 home. We include them purely for your enjoyment and encouragement, courtesy of Charissa. You can follow her on the 'Gram @charissaburnsstudio

