

To The Seven
Churches

Pergamum



To The Seven Churches Pergamum Revelation 2:12-17

What is a time you felt pressure to abandon something you felt strongly about? What did you do?

When you think of a bad neighborhood, everyone tends to get a similar picture in their head. Everything is broken and sullen, with the streets cracked, buildings with busted windows, and probably run down cars lining the streets. The Church in Pergamum was in a bad neighborhood, but in a spiritual sense. The area of Pergamum was surprisingly a well off area housing temples to Caesar as the Lord. Pergamum remained dedicated to the worship of the Roman Empire as the primary incarnation of divinity that mankind would see. Furthermore, the people of Pergamum lived their life in celebration of the influence of Rome and chasing after their personal wants and desires, following a hedonistic bent. This presented the church in Pergamum with unique challenges and opportunities to represent Christ in the world but also to withstand the influence of the outside world.

Holding Fast to the Name

Throughout the immense pressure that the church in Pergamum faced, the church is exhorted for holding fast to the name of Jesus Christ. Various deities were represented in the city of Pergamum. Furthermore, Caesar mandated that He be worshipped as god rather than as a mere human ruler. Caesar was purported to be god's representation on earth. Thus, keeping to the proper view of Jesus Christ in this cultural atmosphere would contrast the law of the day. Jesus Christ is supreme even over the name of Caesar. It was precisely in this atmosphere that the Church of Pergamum

Rejection of the name of God is not as overly dramatic as people make it to be. There is no formal ceremony of abandonment or large declaration. Often times, the rejection of the name of God comes in the form of subtle and gradual changes to the truth until it is unrecognizable from the actual truth. Holding fast to the

name of Jesus Christ as the bedrock of our faith means standing firm to the truth amidst the onslaught of competition. The world's influence attempts to move us off the foundation of Jesus Christ towards the chaos of a life apart from God. Yet, the word of God provides the foundations for our footing. The double edge sword cuts through the world with its truth and protects those from the attacks of the enemy.

Enticed to Sin

It is very likely that the church in Pergamum suffered with issues of descending into antinomianism. **Antinomianism** is the idea that Christians are free from the moral law because we are covered by grace. Thus, for the antinomian, there is no particular law or standard of behavior that a Christian needs to follow. The church in Pergamum, while proclaiming faith in Jesus Christ, had become enticed by the standards of the world, with their members descending into pursuing personal gain and satisfaction. While they claimed faith in Jesus Christ, their actions painted a different picture. They ate food sacrificed to foreign gods, a form of idolatry, and engaged in sexual immorality. In seeking to free themselves from the weight of the law, they abandoned holiness all together. Thus, as Jesus responds to this, the consequence of not returning is the full weight of the word of God, the double edge sword that they purportedly wielded.

The proper place of the law is subservient to faith. We express our faith through our actions. God gave the law as a blessing as a guide and protection for the people of God for their safety. The law manifests the standard for holiness with God. The fundamentals of the faith are highly important yet the expression of the faith is equally as important. The word of God serves as the guide for the Christian to avoid the temptation of sin. The word is truth and the Christian's faith should be rooted in that same truth. The pressure to sin is enticing yet the glory of God is a righteous life based in eternity with our heavenly Father, having been returned to our right standing with Him.

Discussion Questions

1. Define the following term
 - Antinomianism _____
2. What does it mean to hold fast to the name of Jesus Christ?
3. Where do you face the most pressure to reject the faith in your daily life? What things help to alleviate the pressure to abandon the name of Jesus Christ?
4. How does Antinomianism conflict with the fullness of the teachings of God?
5. Why do people tend to be hesitant to talk honestly about their sin but open to encourage and joke about a sinful life? What does this do to desensitize or encourage sin?
6. What consequences are there for the church in Pergamum continuing to walk in the pursuing the flesh instead of Christ?
7. How does sin entice the believers to abandon the faith? What enticement is the biggest struggle to you?
8. Why is it important for us to avoid sin? How does the word of God inform and direct the believer to avoid sin?