

“FAITHFUL, YET UNFAITHFUL”

Revelation 2:12-17

1. THE CITY OF PERGAMUM

Pergamum was the capital of the Roman province of Asia. Its most outstanding characteristic was its devotion to Caesar-worship. It was the principal center of the imperial cult in that part of the empire. In John’s days there were at least three temples in honor of emperors in Pergamum.

Now notice v. 13: *“I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is.”* The most likely explanation for this throne has to do with the fact that Pergamum had preeminence in emperor-worship. Once a year, every citizen was expected to offer incense and declare that “Caesar is Lord.” No Christian could do that in good conscience. Thus the stage was set for all-out spiritual conflict.

2. THE CHURCH AT PERGAMUM

It was not easy to be a Christian in Pergamum. Yet notice the words of commendation that Christ gives this church in v. 13: *“Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith...”* They continued to confess Christ before men, and this in spite of grave danger. Notice that the believers didn’t yield to pressure *“even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells”* (13b).

Unfortunately, the words of commendation take a rather sobering negative turn in the very next phrase. Jesus Christ says to this church, *“But I have a few things against you”* (14). All was not well in Pergamum.

We can learn a lot from a church that was generally faithful yet capitulating in certain key areas.

a. The greatest danger often comes from within, 14-15

- How is it possible for a church to be faithful on the one hand but so unfaithful on the other?
- What can we learn from this as a church?
- What does this teach you personally?

b. Stopping spiritual drift involves a change of mind, 16

- Why is repentance so essential for a church?
- How do we know if we have really repented?
- What does the phrase mean: *“I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.”*

c. Living as overcomers offers great hope, 17

- In this context, what does it mean to be an overcomer?
- Try to explain each of the elements Christ promises the overcomer: hidden manna, a white stone, a new name.
- How can the fact we will be given a new name encourage us in a special way?