



# Dear Church

## Dear Church: Letter to Pergamum September 27<sup>th</sup> / 30<sup>th</sup>

**Speaker:** Joshua Symonette

**Scripture:** [Revelation 2:12-17](#)

### Sermon Summary:

*There is no doubt that we are living in an era where cultural tensions are all around us. This was certainly the case for Christians in the Roman Empire as well as in our world today. In the letter to the Church at Pergamum, Jesus affirms their effort to stay true to him despite the pressure they faced. But He warns them concerning some of the compromises they are making as they try to fit into the culture around them. He gives clear instruction for how to address them and offers a promise of provision and victory if they follow the guidance of the Spirit.*

### Sermon Series Questions:

1. What did you think the letter meant to the original audience?
2. What do you think the letter means to the Church today?

### Sermon Specific Questions:

1. Pastor Joshua begins his sermon sharing his experiences with *tough love* from his mother. Growing up, what did *tough love* look like for you?
2. **AFFIRMATION:** Share a story when receiving or giving positive affirmation impacted you or someone else's life?
3. **ACCOUNTABILITY:** Just like the Church of Pergamum, we all need some tough love. How do you react and respond to being held accountable?
4. **ACTION:** What recent actions or decisions have you made that forced you outside your comfort zone?
5. Hearing is about paying attention and understanding what has been spoken. How are you hearing the Spirit of God concerning your life?

## Digging Deeper

### Letters to the Seven Churches

As we study the *Letters to the Seven Churches* found within Revelations, we need to try to understand what **DID** it mean to the original audience **BEFORE** we try to understand what **DOES** it mean for us today. You do not have to be a Biblical scholar to study scriptures! Yet, below you will find information, resources, and questions to guide you and your group in studying these letters together.

### Geography of the City of Pergamum

Pergamum was a city of about 200,000 people located on lofty isolated hills. The natural fortress allowed the city to be a strategic location for the first capital of the Roman province of Asia.

### Religion in the City of Pergamum

A Jewish community existed in Pergamum since the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC; however, a Christian congregation was established by the mid-80's. Nevertheless, the city's patron goddess was Athena, who was revered as "the bringer of victories" and "the guardian of the city." Pergamum was also home to the largest altar in antiquity, the Altar of Zeus. Some scholars believe, Revelation 2:13 is referring to this as the "throne of Satan," but others believe that the reference is towards the prevalence of the imperial cult that existed in Pergamum.

### References to the Church in Pergamum

Revelation assumes that the readers at Pergamum knew the Jewish traditions about Balaam, Balak, and manna. Within Jewish tradition, Balaam was a prophet tasked by Balak, king of Moab, to curse the people of Israel. However, every time Balaam seeks the word of God, he ends up blessing the Israelites (Numbers 22-24). This continues several times until Balaam and Balak give up (Num. 24:25). Instead, Balaam advises Balak on how to tempt and seduce the Israelites to commit idolatry and sexual immorality and turn God's wrath towards them (Num 25:2). By mentioning Balaam, John is acknowledging groups of people who possess the goal of turning Christians astray from their faith

### RE-READ REVELATION 2:12-17

### Questions for the Church Today

1. How does the Church today relate to the Church in Pergamum?
2. What topics is our culture asking the Church to compromise on today?
3. For the topics addressed above, what actions do you believe God is calling the Church to do?