

Revelation 2.12-17

“Boundaries – Firm and Fuzzy”

Some DECISIONS in Life are BLACK & WHITE > MANY are Shades of GRAY  
 Some things are ALWAYS WRONG > Other things are SOMETIMES RIGHT  
 Relativistic Trend of MODERN SOCIETY > NO ABSOLUTE TRUTH  
 Christian > Some BOUNDARIES are FIRM > but others are FUZZY  
 CHALLENGE > Knowing the Difference

3<sup>rd</sup> of 7 Letters from Exalted Christ to Churches across Roman Province of Asia  
 Message to 1 is Message to ALL > All Churches of Jesus > all Places, all Time  
 v. 17 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

1<sup>st</sup> Church Ephesus: LOVE / 2<sup>nd</sup> Smyrna: SUFFERING / 3<sup>rd</sup> – Pergamum: TRUTH  
 Pergamum > 90 kms. from Smyrna > 25 kms. inland from the Aegean Sea  
 Built on Cone-Shaped Hill > 400 meters high > Pergamon = “Citadel”  
 1. Firm Beliefs      2. Fuzzy Behaviors

### 1. Firm Beliefs

a. Conviction > Called to Stand FIRM on Truth of Gospel of Jesus Christ  
 v. 13 “you remain *true to my name*. You did not renounce your *faith in me*”

Pergamum > City SEARCHING for Truth > LIBRARY 200,000 Volumes  
 Writing Medium PARCHMENT invented in Pergamum

Pontinus Pilate asked Jesus – “What is TRUTH?” never listened for the ANSWER  
 “For this I came into the world, *to testify to the truth*. Everyone *on the side of truth*  
 listens to me.” John 18.37

Jesus said - “I am the way and *the truth* and the life.” John 14.6  
 “Christianity is Christ...The irreducible minimum of Christian belief is that Jesus  
 of Nazareth is the unique Son of God and that He died to be the Savior of the  
 world.” John Stott

Intellectual Agreement AND Personal Commitment > Jesus is MY Lord, MY God  
 v. 13 “you remain *true to my name*. You did not renounce your *faith in me*”

ABSOLUTELY NO Wiggle Room > No Negotiation > No Appeasement  
 “Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is  
 the antichrist--he denies the Father and the Son.” 1 John 2.22

## b. Challenge

v. 13 “you live--where Satan has his throne.... your city--where Satan lives”

WORST NIGHTMARE > after Moving to NEW PLACE > BAD NEIGHBORS  
LOUD Music > Husband & Wife Boxing in Apt Next Door> Shower Leaks Above  
IMAGINE finding out - “you live--where Satan has his throne”

Opposition in SMYRNA > was JEWISH > Pergamum from GENTILE PAGANS

1) Romans gods - Temple to the Divine Caesar Augustus – built 29 B.C.  
The Imperial Cult had its Center at Pergamum  
If EPHESUS was the New York City of Asia > Pergamum was Washington D.C.

2) Healing god - Temple to Asklepios – connected to a medical college  
Asklepios symbolized by a Serpent > Sign hangs from Apteka’s in Almaty

3) Greek gods – Enormous Temple to Zeus the Savior – city’s highest point  
Center of FALSEHOOD > SUPERSTITION > FEAR > Home of Anti-Christ

“Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.” 1 Peter 5.8,9

He is only a CREATURE of God: “The devil is God’s devil” Martin Luther

a) He is Not Omniscient – Only God knows all Things  
Doesn’t know GOD’s Plans or YOUR Plans > at best he makes experienced guess

b) He is Not Omnipotent – Only God has all Power – God binds him for 1000 years

c) He is Not Omnipresent – he can only be in 1 place at 1 time

LIVE WITH JESUS > Devil knocks on your door > “Wait a minute...it’s for you!”

## c. Courage > that was how the Christians of Pergamum answered their Doors

v. 13 “even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city --where Satan lives.”

STORM of PERSECUTION > about to hit Smyrna > Already Burst on Pergamum

DEATH and TERROR more than just HUMAN WICKEDNESS > EVIL ONE  
Believers & their Ultimate Adversary live in Same City > Martyrdom No Surprise

Antipas > One of their NOBLE Believers > Paid the Highest Price > “put to death”

RECEIVED Highest Accolade > Jesus called him - “*my faithful witness*”  
1.5 “Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness”

“Those steeped in Rome’s civil religion, especially Asians accustomed to deified monarchs, would view with suspicion anyone who declined to honor the emperor as Lord and God. Such simmering suspicion could boil over into mob violence or arbitrary bureaucratic decisions to teach such troublemakers a lesson in loyalty. When Satan flexed his strength on the site of his throne, silencing Antipas’s witness by bloodshed, the church stood fast.”  
Dennis E. Johnson

#### d. Confidence

v. 17 “To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna”

MANNA God’s SACK LUNCH for Israel > During 40 year PICNIC in Wilderness  
‘Manna’ > ‘What is this stuff?’ > Failed to Recognize God’s Gracious Provision  
1500 years later Jesus came - Jews called Him Manna > ‘Who is THIS GUY?’

Promise SYMBOLIZED by Manna was Fulfilled in Christ

“I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died...  
I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he  
will live forever. ”  
John 6.48-51

Believers in Pergamum > No Need for TABLE of IDOLS > Invited to God’s Table

“The incarnate Son who was crucified for us is now the risen and ascended Christ,  
removed indeed from our physical sight now that he has entered into the heavenly  
sanctuary. It is he, then, who is the Hidden Manna that sustains and strengthens us  
on our pilgrimage to the celestial city, while at the same time, because he is our  
Life, we have the assurance that our life is ‘hid with Christ in God’.”

Philip Edgcumbe Hughes

v. 17 “I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known  
only to him who receives it.”

“Commentators have tumbled over one another with the rich variety of their interpretations.”  
John Stott

“The "**white stone**" may refer to the ballot that was used by citizens of a Roman city to cast their votes during meetings. To have such a stone, one's name had to be on the citizenship rolls of the city. Jesus seems to be indicating that God's faithful people are citizens of God's kingdom.”  
M. Robert Mulholland, Jr.

Opposite BLACK STONE = REJECTION & EXCLUSION > BLACKBALLING

## 2. Fuzzy Behaviors

a. Challenge v. 14 “Nevertheless, I have a few things against you...”

If ROARING LION can't break thru Front Door, SERPENT looks for a Window

12.9 “that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”

vs. 14,15 “You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.”

“Seduction, or persecution – the choice of evils the world offers the church. A soft-centered permissive society can be curiously hard on those who refuse to go along with it...either you buy or you burn.”  
Michael Wilcock

“Nicolaitans” Greek for ‘to rule the people’

“Balaam” Hebrew for ‘lord of the people’

OT Story – book of Numbers -

Balaam TRUE PROPHET of God who PROSTITUTED his Gifts for MONEY

Balak – King of MOAB – Rival Tribe – wanted to Hire Balaam’s Anointing

Balak ORDERED Balaam > CURSE Israel 3 X’s > God turned Curse to Blessing

King Balak got MONEY’S WORTH > Balaam had a PLAN to make Israel FALL

Be FRIENDLY > Invite ISRAEL to your FESTIVALS > Meet Friendly GODS

TASTE > Delicious Foods > SACRIFICED on Altars of your Idols

ENJOY > Delights of your Moabite Women > All QUITE EXCITING for Israel!

“the women...were the ones who followed Balaam's advice and were the means of turning the Israelites away from the LORD” Numbers 31.15,16

King Balak’s wish was Fulfilled > through the Lusty Appetites of Israel’s Men

“The men of Israel began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate and bowed down before these gods. So Israel joined in worshiping the Baal of Peor. And the LORD's anger burned against them...those who died in the plague numbered 24,000.” Numbers 25.1-9

Ancient TRAGEDY > Repeated in Church of PERGAMUM > Same Sinful Nature

“Balaam became a prototype of all corrupt teachers who betrayed believers into fatal compromise with worldly ideologies.” Robert Mounce

Commentators Disagree whether - v. 14 “committing sexual immorality”  
Physical > ADULTERY or Spiritual > IDOLATRY > Answer Probably YES!!

Modern Nicolaitans in Pergamum ECHOED Balaam’s ENTICEMENTS...

“Hey, you do you want to wind up like Antipas? That’s very extreme!!!”

“Why not, put a little incense on the altar before the bust of Caesar?”

“What can it hurt to mumble a few meaningless words, ‘Caesar is Lord’??”

“While you’re down there – check out the Temple Prostitutes – men and women!”

“Take it Simple – Take the Easy Way – Everyone is Doing It!!”

THEN > Doors of Opportunity would open for them:

VOCATIONAL > Welcome into TRADE GUILDS to get the BEST JOBS

CONSUMER > Welcome to BUY tasty MEAT which was OFFERED TO IDOLS

SOCIAL > Welcome to PARTICIPATE in All Activities of Roman Society

Best Seats in Theater – Daughters get Ballet Lessons – Sons can Play Football

Even In DEATH > Faithfulness to Trade Guild INSURED a PROPER BURIAL

“Do you really want to continue being the NERDS OF PERGAMUM??”

Apostolic Council in Jerusalem > Advice for Gentile Christians “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols... and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things.” Acts 15.28,29

Perhaps Believers in Pergamum > Read this Advice as a TO DO LIST  
Food Sacrificed to Idols....Sexual Immorality...Hey! Great Ideas!!

What MODERN PARALLELS are there to these ANCIENT CHALLENGES??

Do we make SPIRITUAL COMPROMISES for our....

EMPLOYMENT? Who Pays the Piper that Calls the Tune we DANCE TO?

HEALTH? Does it matter that the Serpent Symbol of hangs on signs at APTEKA?  
Is the Lord our Healer? thru Faith and Science?

ECONOMIC GAINS? Are we Materially Rich and Spiritually Poor? Opposite?  
Who Gains when We Pay?

ENTERTAINMENT?? > How many swear words must our film stars utter before we consider a film unwatchable? How many sex scenes are too many to see?

“In a culture like ours, where toleration has become the primary virtue, it is easy for the community of faith to ‘Christianize’ tolerance and allow all sorts of destructive perspectives and behaviors into its fellowship. Since the surrounding culture cultivates and promotes toleration as the ultimate level of maturity and caring, who would want to be accused of being “intolerant?”

M. Robert Mulholland, Jr

b. Confrontation Jesus identification of Himself >THIS is SERIOUS BUSINESS!

VISION: Jesus in Glory 1.16 “out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword”  
“Wow!! That dude has some sick braces!!”

Description NOT a Police Artist’s Sketch > Spiritual Impression > Power of Christ  
*Mouth held double edged sword* – Executive authority of His Word

v. 12 "To the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword.”

TWO GUILTY GROUPS > Whole Church needed to REPENT:

- 1) Sinners - Victims of Satan’s Siren Song > Embraced Lie of Nicolaitans
- 2) Supporters – Words of False Affirmation? Silence of False Assurance?

False Teaching & Practice > Done by Some > Tolerated by All  
 “The Emperor’s New Clothes” All Silently Looked – No Little Boy Laughed

v. 16 “Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.”

“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword... Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”  
 Hebrews 4.12,13

Antipas had FELT Sword of Rome > Church about to feel SWORD OF CHRIST

DOOR OF GOD’S GRACE AND OPPORTUNITY REMAINS OPEN!!  
 NOT TOO LATE TO REPENT > But they better HURRY UP > Sword will Fall  
 Alternative to Repentance > CHRIST WILL FIGHT AGAINST YOU!

Judgment in Revelation > NOT ALL at END of TIME or SECOND COMING  
 He is already WALKING AMONG THE LAMPSTANDS > in the Church  
 Some Corinthian Believers who ABUSED Lord’s Supper DIED

“For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?”  
 1 Peter 4.17

“God’s way to overcome error is the proclamation of the gospel of Christ which is God’s power of salvation to everyone who believes. Falsehood will not be suppressed by the gruesome methods of inquisition, or by the burning of heretics at the stake, or by restrictive State legislation, or even by war. Force of arms cannot conquer ideas. Only truth can defeat error. The false ideologies of the world can be overthrown only by the superior ideology of Christ. We have no other weapon but this sword.”  
 John Stott

c. Contemplation What about decisions where apparently Scripture is ‘silent?’

What will it do for God? Will it promote His Glory?  
 What will it do for His Church? Will it enhance her Edification?  
 What will it do for the World? Will it advance its Evangelization?  
 What will it do for You? Will it strengthen your Sanctification?

Rupert Meldenius

“unity in the essentials, liberty in the non-essentials, and charity in all things”

d. Comfort “I know where you live” > NO COMFORT > IF you are RUNNING!!

Gk. Word for LIVE > Christians not PASSING THRU Pergamum > their HOME  
REMAINED THERE > ENDURED whatever DIFFICULTIES Satan Devised

X’s INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE > Told Ephesians: He knows their WORKS  
Smyrna – He knows their ENDURANCE // Pergamum – Knows where they LIVE

“He is not ignorant of the fact that the Christian Church is set in a non-Christian world, and that it feels on all sides the continuous pressure of heathen influence. Christians are constantly aware that the pagan neighbors who surround them have different ideas, a different religion, a different philosophy.” John Stott

Interesting what they’re NOT TOLD by Jesus –

1. Get Out of that ‘Satan Ruled’ City > Satan’s Throne is God’s Footstool!

“The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.” Romans 16.20

2. Cast Satan Out of City > Bind him / Curse him / Slay him / Rebuke him

“Even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" Jude 9

Not told to TALK TO SATAN > Talk to God > He will deal with Satan!

3. Go on PRAYER WALK > Go up to Highest Point of City > Spiritual Mapping!

PRAYER WALKING > CLIMBING > friend in Hawaii used Helicopters

+ GOOD > as you see, smell, feel, and taste > NEW VIGOR & ZEAL in PRAYER

- Prayer NOT Enhanced by Positioning > Spiritual Mapping Bogus Science

Godly Babushka > stuck in Apt can’t walk downstairs > No \$ for Prayer Vacation  
Her SINCERE Prayer > In the Mighty Name of Jesus > Just as EFFICACIOUS

As Prayers from a Mountaintops – Helicopters – or Prayer Towers  
Only Advantage of Prayer Walking around ACAPULCO > Get a Nice Suntan!



“The presence of a church where Satan’s throne is gives some indication not only of the devil’s sway in Pergamum but also of the power of the gospel in a satanic milieu.”  
Philip Edgcumbe Hughes

v. 17 “I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.”

IMPORTANCE of Stone NOT COLOR > but NAME WRITTEN ON IT

3.12 Jesus to Church in Philadelphia: “Him who overcomes...I will write on him the name of my God...I will also write on him my new name.”

In Christ we are > PRECIOUS TO GOD > HIS SPECIAL POSSESSION

Not a Divine Name but DIVINELY GIVEN NAME to Each Overcomer  
Abram became ABRAHAM > Simon became PETER > Sarai became SARAH

Inscribed White Stone > Assurance of God’s Approval and Acceptance

God doesn’t see Multitude of Redeemed as Mass of Believing Humanity  
Not just CHRISTIAN # 832,456,729  
Each One > UNIQUE > Fearfully and Wonderfully Made in His Image

No CONFUSION of NAMES in the MIND OF GOD  
GOD NEVER asks > which Victor, Sasha, or KIM Family are you ??

“The new name represents a new character. The fact that no-one knows it would be a crippling disadvantage for us. In the modern world what is the use of a name nobody knows? But for people of antiquity the hidden name was precious. It meant that God had given the overcomer a new character which no-one knew except himself. It was not public property. It was a little secret between him and his God.”  
Leon Morris

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior”  
Isaiah 43.1-3