

## To the Church in Pergamum

June 10, 2018

*Revelation 2:12-17 ESV*

12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: 'The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.

13 "'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

14 But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality.

15 So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

16 Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.

17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.'

**Revelation 2:12 ESV**

**12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.**

*"The kingdom of Pergamum yielded much wealth, especially in agricultural surpluses and silver, first to the Attalid rulers and later to Rome."*

*"The Attalids made the city of Pergamum one of the most important and beautiful of all Greek cities in the Hellenistic Age; it is one of the most outstanding examples of city planning in that period. They built a library excelled only by that at Alexandria. The kings after Attalus I collected many works of art from Greece to adorn the city's temples and courtyards, supplementing the many works of sculpture, painting, and decoration commissioned from resident artists. In Roman times its population was an estimated 200,000."*

*"Its monuments included a theatre; the temple to Athena Nicephorus; and the great altar of Zeus with its richly decorated frieze, a masterpiece of Hellenistic art."*

*"The civic structures of the lower city included a large marketplace, a gymnasium, and temples of Hera and Demeter. Roman remains include an amphitheatre, a theatre, and a racetrack."*

—Encyclopaedia Britannica

*"The people of Pergamum were inventors and innovators. They perfected a parchment made out of calfskin and built the world's first psychiatric hospital."*

*Pergamum was also a well-known center for the arts. The city's theater seated ten thousand people a night. The acoustics were so good that a whisper on stage could be heard all the way in the top row.*

*The city's acropolis rivaled Athens, and its library was the second largest in the ancient world. Its collection was so great that the Roman general Marc Antony presented it as a wedding gift to Cleopatra.*

*The people of Pergamum were known as the "Temple-keepers of Asia." The city had three temples dedicated to the worship of the Roman emperor, another for the goddess Athena, and the Great Altar of Zeus, the king of the Greek gods. Many scholars believe this altar is the 'Throne of Satan' mentioned in the book of Revelation."*

—Gordon Robertson, CBN.com

## Revelation 2:13 ESV

**13 I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.**

*"...Antipas, a disciple of the holy Apostle John...was bishop of the Church of Pergamum during the reign of the emperor Nero (54-68).*

*During these times, everyone who would not offer sacrifice to the idols lived under threat of either exile or execution by order of the emperor. On the island of Patmos (in the Aegean Sea) the holy Apostle John the Theologian was imprisoned, he to whom the Lord revealed the future judgment of the world and of Holy Church.*

*By his personal example, firm faith and constant preaching about Christ, Saint Antipas began to turn the people of Pergamum from offering sacrifice to idols. The pagan priests reproached the bishop for leading the people away from their ancestral gods, and they demanded that he stop preaching about Christ and offer sacrifice to the idols instead.*

*Saint Antipas calmly answered that he was not about to serve the demons that fled from him, a mere mortal. He said he worshiped the Lord Almighty, and he would continue to worship the Creator of all, with His Only-Begotten Son, and the Holy Spirit.*

*The enraged pagan priests dragged the Hieromartyr Antipas to the temple of Artemis and threw him into a red-hot copper bull, where usually they put the sacrifices to the idols. In the red-hot furnace the martyr prayed loudly to God, imploring Him to receive his soul and to strengthen the faith of the Christians. He went to the Lord peacefully, as if he were going to sleep (+ ca. 68).*

*At night Christians took the body of the Hieromartyr Antipas, which was untouched by the fire. They buried him at Pergamum."*

—The Orthodox Church in America, OCA.org

## Isaiah 43:2 ESV

**2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.**

*"The pagan priests went to the Roman governor and complained that the prayers of Antipas were driving their spirits out of the city and hindering the worship of their gods. As punishment, the governor ordered Antipas to offer a sacrifice of wine and incense to a statue of the Roman emperor and declare that the emperor was 'lord and god.'*

*Antipas refused.*

*Antipas was sentenced to death on the Altar of Zeus. Most of that altar still survives today, and surrounding it are some of the world's most famous marble friezes...At the top of the altar was a hollow bronze bull, designed for human sacrifice.*

*[Rick] Renner [author of 'A Light in the Darkness'] describes the method of execution suffered by Antipas.*

*"They would take the victim, place him inside the bull, and they would tie him in such a way that his head would go into the head of the bull. Then they would light a huge fire under the bull, and as the fire heated the bronze, the person inside of the bull would slowly begin to roast to death. As the victim would begin to moan and to cry out in pain, his cries would echo through the pipes in the head of the bull so it seemed to make the bull come alive."*

*Even in the midst of the flames, the elderly bishop Antipas died praying for his church. The year was AD 92."*

—Gordon Robertson, CBN.com

## Revelation 2:14-15 ESV

14 **But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality.**

15 **So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.**

*"...a heretical sect who followed the teachings of Nicolas — whose name means 'one who conquers the people' — who was possibly one of the deacons of the early church mentioned in Acts 6:5. It is possible that Nicolas became an apostate, denying the true faith and became part of a group holding 'the doctrine of Balaam,' who taught Israel 'to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality.' Clement of Alexandria says, 'They abandoned themselves to pleasure like goats, leading a life of self-indulgence.' Their teaching perverted grace and replaced liberty with license."*

*They, like the Gnostics and other false teachers, abused the doctrine of grace and tried to introduce licentiousness in its place (2 Peter 2:15, 19; Jude 1:4)."* —GOTQUESTIONS.org

## Revelation 2:16 ESV

16 **Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.**

- *We must be just as intolerant with the evil within as with the evil without.*
- *It's easy for our human nature to assume that we can let our guard down among those who profess to be one of us in the Church.*

*Acts 20:25-32 ESV [the Apostle Paul to the Ephesian elders]*

*25 And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again.*

*26 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all,*

*27 for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.*

*28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.*

*29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;*

*30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.*

*31 Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.*

*32 And now I commend (paratithēmi - to present, deposit, intrust, commit to one's charge) you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.*

*Philippians 1:9-11 ESV*

*9 And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,*

*10 so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,*

*11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*

*1 Timothy 3:15 NASB*

*15 but in case I am delayed, [I write] so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household*

*of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.*

*1 Timothy 4:1 ESV*

*1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons.*

*1 Timothy 4:13-16 ESV*

*13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.*

*14 Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.*

*15 Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.*

*16 Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.*

*2 Timothy 2:15-22 ESV*

*15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.*

*16 But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness,*

*17 and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus,*

*18 who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some.*

*19 But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."*

*20 Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable.*

*21 Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.*

*22 So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.*

*2 Timothy 4:1-4 ESV*

*1 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom:*

*2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.*

*3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions,*

*4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.*

**Revelation 2:17 ESV**

**17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.**