

To The Church

Letters from the book of Revelation

Standing Firm

Context/Introduction

Pergamum was an ancient city set 25km away from the Aegean Sea, in the Anatolian region of Turkey. As the city was granted permission to worship Caesar Augustus as a god, the area became the seat of emperor worship within the Roman Empire. There were all sorts of other temples for worshipping the different Greek gods, and they had a rich cultural life that included hosting games and festivals. The city boasted a licentious lifestyle in which rampant immorality and evil were the norm, and it was into this context, where the church was swimming upstream, that the letter to the church in Pergamum was sent.

Today's Text - Revelation 2:12-17

1. Christians Under Siege

The church was experiencing pressure – from both the outside and the inside - to ditch their faith in Christ.

- i. There was the pressure of surrounding pagan practices, against which the church had to fight strongly:
 - Idolatry
 - Immorality
 - Persecution
- ii. There was also pressure from the inside, and they had to stand firm against false teachers, who taught them that, in order to survive, they would need to compromise in:
 - Worship
 - Sexual Immorality

We need to ask ourselves if we are compromising our faith because of the cultural influences that we face. We may not be currently facing persecution, but we are being pressed on what we hold to be true. Some of this even comes from within the broader church which is, over time, changing certain doctrines and beliefs that the church has always held to. Most of us are accustomed to Christianity being easy, and when we are put under pressure to stand for our faith, we are tempted to think that something is wrong, and we want to back out. But we should expect opposition (2 Tim 3:12).

We may be tempted to compromise our faith in more subtle ways, by worshipping things other than God. Without realising it, many of us worship ourselves. We are not dependent on God, and rely purely on ourselves for everything in life. Others amongst us may be compromising our faith by not keeping our sexual purity. This can occur in a variety of ways: it need not be as overt as being in a sexual relationship with someone you are not married to, but can include maintaining unhealthy relationships, and crossing lines that are not appropriate. As a community of Christ-followers, we should be set apart in this area, fully confident that it is for our own good and the good of society.

Q. What happens to your faith when you are pressed to hold onto something for which the culture persecutes you?

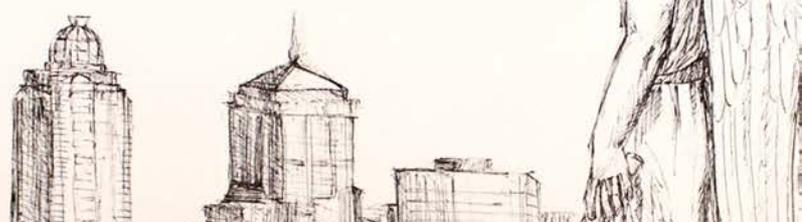
Q. In what ways, if any, are we as a church community being tempted to compromise our faith because of cultural pressure/persuasion?

Q. Why do you think that keeping sexual purity is such a big deal for us, as we hold to our faith in Christ?

Q. How do we help people in our community who have been/are currently walking in a place of sexual compromise?

Q. What is our role, within our Gospel Communities, regarding the sexual sin of others in the group?

- What is our role, if any, with couples in our Gospel Community who are living together without being married?
- How should you handle a situation where you can see that someone in the group is in an 'unhealthy' space with someone else, which has the potential to lead towards sexual sin or compromise?



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2. **Stand Firm**

What is a Christian supposed to do, when he/she is under siege for their faith?

- They stand firm on what they believe!

I. **A stand in salvation**

We stand firm in the salvation that Jesus gives us.

- i. Remember the Jesus that saves
- ii. Question whether or not you are saved
- iii. Consider becoming saved

II. **A stand in repentance**

When we have compromised, God calls us to repent so that he can lovingly restore us. Even though facing our sin is tough and hurts, by returning to God in repentance and faith, we experience healing and freedom. God's call to repentance is an act of his grace; it frees us from his judgment.

III. **A stand in future promise**

When we stand under siege, we can hold onto Christ's twofold promise to us:

- i. Jesus is the reward
- ii. Jesus gives us access to our eternity in heaven

Q. When we are under siege for our faith, why is it critical to hold onto what we believe about Christ's gift of salvation?

Q. Why do you think we so often have such a negative view of repentance?

Q. Why is repentance from our sin and compromise actually God's gift of grace to us?

Q. Why do future promises from Christ about our eternal destiny help us to fight against sin and not give up?

Q. What is the solution for the Christian who does not see the heavenly reward as a motivation?

Concluding Question: What is your one big take-away that you feel God is asking you to take home and apply this week?

