

Revelation 2:12–17

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[0 : 00] 29 and the blue Bibles provided at this time all kids ages 3 through 5th grade can go to team kids again the scripture reading is revelation 2 verses 12 through 17 please stand for the reading of God's word and to the angel of the church in Pergamum write the words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword 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 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 they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality so also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans therefore repent if not I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth 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 this is the word of the Lord you may be seated good afternoon family it's good to be here even though last week this time I was a man of a leisure but it's good to be back in the house of God with you and to listen to God's word together pray with me would you please Lord we love you we bless you we honor you

Lord we have sung great truth Lord accompanied by great music on this afternoon and you are our great God who are worthy Lord of all of our worship we pray father that not only with our lips but also with our lives Lord we would give all honor and all tribute and all worship to you we come may our ears and hearts today be open to what you would say by your spirit through your word to us today pray these things in Christ's name amen we continue our journey through the book of revelation we come again to one of those first century churches in Asia minor our journey this afternoon is to the city of Pergamum a strange name strange to us but was by no means strange to those who were in the first century Roman world historically speaking it was the greatest city in Asia situated on a hill about a thousand feet high Pergamum was one of the greatest and most beautiful of Greek cities it was a capital city and had been so designated for about 400 years first under Hellenistic rule and at the time of writing it was the capital of Asia under Roman rule then I want you to take a journey with me we're going to board the Pergamum tour bus this afternoon and as you ride through the streets of Pergamum there are several things that catch our attention Pergamum was a center of culture John Mulholland particularly would note that its university library held 200,000 parchments Pergamum was considered the guardian of Greek worship and living like a great throne on a hillside a 40 foot altar to the Greek god Zeus stood in front of the temple of Athene Ryan Lawrence and others would certainly want to make a stop at the famous health resort dedicated to as clip yes the god of healing people flocked to Pergamum for relief from their illnesses and would go to a clip as temples for healing these were the closest things to hospitals in the ancient world and then Dave Helm of course if he were on the Pergamum tour bus he would note that the city was the center of Caesar or emperor worship and he would get on his cell phone to contact Robert or Colleen to see about running space for a workshop on biblical exposition there. though not visible there were other entities in the city of Pergamum the church was there in Pergamum.

someone had dared to take the gospel to Pergamum. with all that was going on there all of these centers of gods and goddesses that were there somebody dared to take the gospel to this difficult assignment place.

[6 : 01] who? who? we don't know. we don't know. when? we don't know. but the gospel went nonetheless. the gospel had gone there and a church had been established because through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

it was a difficult place. you see we see in verse 13 I know where you dwell where Satan's throne is. it was a difficult place.

it was a difficult place. huh? and there was a word to the church in this difficult place from the glorified Christ. in verse 13 you will see a word of commendation.

in verses 14 through 16 you will see a word of confrontation or correction. and finally in verse 17 you will see a word of consolation.

but before we hear the word let's take a look at who it is that's sending the word and you see that in verse 12. the glorified Christ is pictured there as having an instrument of judgment.

[7 : 11] you see that in verse 12. to the words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword. huh? and normally when we think of sword that is an instrument that goes in one's hand.

but if you look at chapters 1 in verse 16 you will see that this is the sword that comes from his mouth. you see that in chapter 1 in verse 16. in the right hand he held seven stars and from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword.

and his face was like the shining sun shining in full strength. that's the glorified Christ who was sending his word to this church in this ancient city.

people who dwelt in a difficult situation and had a tough assignment in a tough place. ever had a tough assignment in a tough place?

some months ago the staff pastors we got together and we put together from our heads and thoughts a characteristic of Hyde Parkers.

[8 : 32] huh? now this is not exclusive and you can disagree if you like from what we came up with. but the profile indicates that the gospel work could have a measure of difficulty here.

because there are some reasons that cause Hyde Park to be a difficult place. we are city dwellers with a suburban mindset. religiously eclectic and religiously neutral.

longing for significance. ideological and individualistic. fiercely independent.

intentionally non-christian but smart enough, civilized enough to hide it. politically active, racially sensitive, but racially segregated.

these and other, for these and other reasons, Hyde Park can really be a difficult place for the gospel.

[9 : 50] the word of God has come here. and the word of God can prosper here.

but there's a certain kind of people that God wants to work through in the midst of this. that's called a difficult assignment. that's called a difficult assignment. huh? Pergamum was a Roman city that had the rare power of capital punishment, symbolized by the sword.

what we see of Christ here was a reminder to the church that Christ was ultimately in charge. though Satan's throne was there.

and thank you for the reminder, Dan, from Isaiah, chapter 66, where God says this, heaven is my throne. and the earth is my footstool.

Satan can set up these little strongholds as he will, but he needs to know who is ultimately in charge. And when you and I face difficulties, whether the difficult assignment is on your job or in your neighborhood or in our community or in our city, you and I need to recognize who it is that is ultimately in charge.

[11 : 16] What about this word of commendation? It is a word of commendation for their faithfulness, for the faithfulness of the people who were the church that was in Pergamum.

The glorified Christ in verse 13 speaks as the omniscient one. You see there, he says, I know where you dwell. He said, I know where your address is.

I know where the carton is. I know where the latitude and the longitude come together and make out your address. And I don't need a GPS system in order to do it.

I know where you dwell. He is, um, Nishian. And you know what? That should give a comfort to you and me as God's people and as God's church in this community.

He said, I got you covered. I know you're there. I know it may be a little stressful sometime and a little challenging sometime and sometimes you just can't get your words out to witness into.

[12 : 22] But, but I know where you are. And I've got you covered. He says, I know your address. He says, where Satan's throne is.

And see, the throne is the place from which dominion is exercised. And Satan certainly was exercising dominion in Pergamum. Huh?

The word Satan's throne could be a specific reference to Pergamum as a center for emperor worship. But while Satan's rule at Pergamum included the worship of Caesar, it seemed also to go beyond it.

Satan literally was having a heyday in Pergamum. Pergamum. But notice, there were faithful people.

There were those who had upheld the name of Christ in the midst of that place that was a very difficult kind of place. You see that there?

[13:23] You have, you hold fast my name and you do not deny my faith or faith in me. And even in the days of Antipas where they made an example out of him, that did not deter you.

Though there was a casualty of war, so to speak, you remain there in the war zone. You held fast to your faith in me.

You held on to his name and his name stood for all that he was, the fullness of his character. They had held on to Christ when it wasn't the popular thing to do.

Ever been there, done that? Not denying their faith in Christ, even though one had fallen in their midst. Let me ask you this.

Has the Lord placed you in a difficult, unfriendly setting? Perhaps you have felt that. And sometimes people feel that the Lord, it's not the Lord when the fires get turned up.

[14:33] Huh? No. The Lord does send us to difficult places. Where there's not a welcome mat, and where there's opposition to the gospel, and all that you stand for.

Sometimes that's true professionally. But he's got you there. He's got you there for a reason.

It's like a spiritual lion's den there. Huh? And you feel, you hear the roar, and you feel the hot breath of the enemy.

Huh? But the Lord is there with you, huh? I had the occasion about a month ago to go to the funeral of a friend, and I was back at the place where I'd started in ministry 20 years ago.

My heart was warmed as I looked and saw people who were there when I got there, and they are still there. There are those who have made their home on the west side of Chicago in the Austin community.

[15:46] If you know anything about Austin on Chicago's west side, it is not the best community in Chicago. Huh? It is not a community that lots of people are flocking to.

But as I looked up there, I saw mothers and daughters. I saw a mother with a daughter who had not been born when I came here. But they were together singing in the choir.

As I looked up there, and I just saw it, it reminded me of the faithfulness of God's people who God had called to that particular branch of the city.

And they stayed there, and they were raising their families there in a difficult, difficult kind of place. Dr. Bob and Carol Stannard, medical doctor, lives in a three-flat, the first four of a three-flat.

Three children. This is a white couple. And Ben, their son, Tyler, is a gospel piano player, nurtured in the confines of that predominantly now black church.

[17:03] God has raised up that young man, and not only plays for the rock church there, but plays in other churches around. You've got this gospel playing white kid, basically, that's been raised in the hood.

Several months ago, I spoke at Taylor University and used an example of Dara Johnson. Dara Johnson and her family used to stay in the same apartment that the standards stay in now.

Dara was raised in the hood, went off to Taylor, came back, and is now working for by the hand kids club. God has used her.

And there, Ed Johnson came as the youth pastor of Rock Church about a year after I got there. And Ed and his wife, Demurma, are still there after spending 23 years in the Air Force.

He came here as this over six-foot-tall, white-haired guy, youth pastor. But they stayed there in a difficult place because God called them there.

[18:12] You see, faithful people are those who hold fast in tough situations. And that's what's needed in difficult places.

People who not just pack up and run. People like Dan who racked when after the education is over, stick around. We know that everybody's not going to do that, but some will, praise God.

Huh? People in churches in tough places are commended by the Lord for their faithfulness.

But there's something else that we can see. There's not only a word of commendation for their faithfulness. There is a word of confrontation because of their foolishness for this particular crowd.

And if you look on down, look at verse 14. He says, but I have, notice what he says, a few things against you. You have some there, not everybody there, but some there who have embraced the teaching of Balaam.

[19 : 15] Let's look back in the Old Testament to just get an idea of what this pagan prophet was about. Turn with me to Numbers chapter 25.

You recall him. This was the guy that wanted to line his pockets. He had been hired to go and to curse the people of God.

But the Lord wouldn't let him. He said, well, I mean, and he kept on trying, didn't he? The Lord said no, but he says, Lord, I don't know if I heard you right the first time.

Let me go back again. I just need to check it out. You ever really heard God clearly, but went back anyhow? Because you wanted to hear something else. But here we have him, chapter 25.

Notice his ploy. He could not get in the front door, so he went around the back. While Israel lived in Shittim, the people began to whore with the daughters of Moab, 25 and 1, 133 in your Bible.

[20 : 33] These invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods. And the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor.

And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. And the Lord said to Moses, take all the chiefs of the people and hang them in the sun before the Lord, that the fierce anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel.

And Moses said to the judges of Israel, each of you, kill those of his men who have yoked up with Baal of Peor. And behold, one of the people of Israel came and brought a Midianite woman to his family in the sight of Moses and in the sight of the whole congregation of the people of Israel, while they were weeping in the entrance of the tent of meeting.

Look at that contrast there. When Phineas, the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, the priest saw it, he rose and left the congregation and took a spear in his hand and went after the man of Israel into the chamber and pierced both of them, the man of Israel and the woman, through her belly.

Thus the plague of Israel was stopped. Nevertheless, those who died by the plague were 24,000.

Turn with me to a place in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 where Paul, speaking to a church, makes a veiled reference to this particular situation and challenges them regarding their idolatry and immorality.

[22 : 10] Look at chapter 10, page 957, verse 1. It says that I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea and all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ.

Nevertheless, with most of them, God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things took place as examples for us that we might not desire evil as they did.

Do not be idolatrous as some of them were, as it is written that people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them and 23,000 fell in a single day.

Look on down to verse 14. Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. So it was not just an, it was a first century AD problem as well as in ancient Israel.

But again, the numbers account acquaints us with Balaam. He was a prophet from Mesopotamia who was hired by Balak, king of Moab and others to curse the children of Israel.

[23 : 29] God would not allow him to do this. According to numbers 31 and 16. And let's look on page 139 at that. And I'll give you two references so we won't have to turn back here again.

But 139 numbers 31 and 16.

This verse here implicates Balaam in what happened in numbers chapter 25. How was it?

He didn't curse Israel openly, but through his counsel, it was that Israel went a whoring after these strange women.

Behold, these on Balaam's advice caused the people of Israel to act treacherously against the Lord in the incident of Peor. And so the plague came among the congregation of Israel.

[24 : 32] Look at verse eight. I'll make reference to this later, but just so we won't have we won't have to turn back to it. It says they killed the kings of Midian with the rest of their slain. Eva, Rechem, Zur, Hur, Reba, the kings of Midian.

And they also killed Balaam, the son of Beor. How? With. The sword. Huh? So. According to Numbers 21, 25 verses one through nine, the women of Moab invited Israelites to the sacrifices of their God.

It amounted to a wild party involving idolatry and sexual looseness. And the wrath of God was incited against Israel.

So whereby again, Balaam didn't curse them directly. His poise led to them being judged by the Lord. And like Balaam, there were some who taught believers in the first century at Pergamum that it was their right to participate in religious practices of those who worshiped other gods.

That also there, there, there, the sibling of the Balaamites were, were the Nicolaitans in verse 15. It seems as if those who held the teaching of Balaam and those who held the teaching of the Nicolaitans were in the same camp.

[25 : 53] They were like siblings. Both of these recipes had come from the same source straight from hell itself. And had they been discerning, they would have seen the skull and the crossbones on the label indicating that indeed was poison.

One commentator notes that these teachers claim not that they were destroying Christianity, but they were presenting a new and improved version of it. This is the insidious fifth column destroying from within.

End of quote. End of quote. Again, didn't get them from the front door, but came in the side door. They had escaped the false religions. They had not bowed down to the resident gods of Pergamum, but they were ensnared by the false teaching that encouraged fleshly indulgences, feasting on sacrificial meat and sexual looseness.

And as a whole, they had stood for the faith, but some in their ranks were behaving like unbelievers. And what that amounted to was folly.

Huh? You also have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore, notice the Lord's recipe for them. Repent. Huh?

[27 : 13] Repent. Repent. Some of you perhaps felt the ache this week in the news of this polygamous sex temple secret haven for sex with underage brides.

And do you know, they probably have some religious justification. Doing what they did. Or what they do. And other kinds of things that heavenly have a way of weaving their way in working their way in.

And it's all because the right guards have not been set up and people are not rightly dividing and applying. The word of God.

Huh? Taking in false teaching that strays from the historic Christian faith, both in belief and in practice, is like taking in poison.

Huh? Huh? Huh? Bit by bit. And our Lord knows this. And he issues this kind of love rebuke in verse 15. Huh?

[28 : 21] Those who had the fate, the folly of Balaam were going to experience the fate of Balaam. They would be victims of the sword. Huh? As Balaam was disciplined with the sword, numbers 31 and 8, so these first century counterparts would be disciplined from the sword of God's word.

And there's a warning here for us. Beware of compromising biblical standards and of those who encourage on the basis of such interpretations of the word.

We cannot afford to compromise biblical standards and of those who are not. There are two words that stick out for me there in verse 14. Theanaly. Theanaly.

Theanaly. Theanaly. Theanaly. Theanaly. Theanaly. Theanaly. Theanaly. Theanaly. Theanaly. Theanaly.

Theanaly. Theanaly. Theanaly. Theanaly. Theanaly. Theanaly. Theanaly. Theanaly. Theanaly. Theanaly.

[29 : 27] Theanaly. Theanaly. Theanaly. Theanaly. Theanaly. So all of us flee from idolatry, Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, flee from immorality, he says in 1 Corinthians chapter 6.

Foolish people. There's faithful people on the one hand, then there's foolish people on the other. And those who compromise or indulge the flesh in the name of religion are foolish.

Those who buy into poisonous doctrines that allow for violations of the word of God are foolish.

Failure to rightly divide the word of God can lead to serious errors in doctrine and in practice.

A word of commendation for their faithfulness. A word of confrontation because of their foolishness. And finally, a word of consolation about their future.

The Lord comforted with a word about their future. You see that in verse 17. He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches.

[30 : 38] Notice what we see there. To the one who overcomes, 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.

This for me has somewhat of a counterpart in our world. This looks to me like a victory banquet for overcomers.

And it was going to be in the future. And like a banquet or a dinner after a long season, it was going to be a feast for overcomers.

Jesus himself would be the host. Notice what he says. I will give some of the hidden manna. And notice hidden manna. I mean, it's not to have a good dinner or banquet.

You got to have the right entree, don't you? Notice what the entree is going to be. Hidden manna. Huh? This would refer to Christ himself as the bread who is presently hidden from us in heaven.

[31 : 44] But did he not say that he was the bread that came down from heaven and he that eats this bread will never die? He is the one who satisfies us now and for all eternity.

That's just one entree. And that's Jesus himself. In Christ alone my hope is found. Huh? Huh? He's the only entree. The banquet is for those who overcome. But what's a banquet without a trophy? Huh? Notice what Jesus says here.

I'll give him a white stone. There have been several possibilities as to what's indicated here. White stone of acquittal. In ancient times when the jury gave him a white stone.

Stone indicated acquittal. It could be a stone of admission. A victorious athlete would be given this stone to gain entry into the winner's celebration.

[32 : 48] Huh? A special token of friendship. A special token of friendship would change between two parties which gave rights and privileges to each other's homes. There are many. There are several conjectures, guesses.

Perhaps the best is merely a guess. But if you really want to know, overcome and you'll get what's there. Huh? But what's a trophy without some kind of engraving?

Huh? Huh? See what he says there? There's going to be a new name written. It's going to be the name. It may remain somewhat of a mystery.

Not only to the one. But of course, naming indicates power and ownership over that which is named. While mystery is to what it might actually be.

There's no mystery as far as who's giving it. It comes from the one who gives every good and perfect gift. Huh? What is the Lord's word to those who are engaged in ministry in tough places?

[33 : 51] With tough assignments. A couple of things and I'm through. Number one, be faithful, not foolish. Be faithful so you can bloom where you're planted.

In spite of the difficulties. It's not ultimately folks about geography. It's about the gospel and the power of the gospel. And the gospel prospers through faithful people wherever they dwell.

Huh? Hyde Parkers and other places in the 77 Chicago neighborhoods can be difficult places. Huh? But they're just right for the gospel.

Be faithful. Don't be foolish. But also be a conqueror, not a compromiser. You and I must watch out for brand X versions of the Christian faith.

That dilute doctrine, that compromise biblical morality in the name of religion. Beware of the temptation to compromise doctrinally or morally.

[34 : 53] Oh. Those things take people down and take churches down. Beware. Doctrinal or moral compromise do not adorn the gospel.

Gospel living must adorn the gospel message. And beware of anything that requires less than that. But then, the final word for those in tough places, be ready. Because, never forget, brothers and sisters, that the best is yet to come.

Huh? Huh? One of these days, the one who calls us to love him will call us from labor to reward. That includes living in his presence forever.

So, therefore, even if your lot and my lot is like Antipas' lot, huh? The best is yet to come. Oh, this should encourage us to labor.

[35 : 58] Huh? Huh? Huh? Huh? This should encourage us to labor, even to the point of exhaustion. For the glory and honor of God. May it be so, is our prayer.

In Jesus' name. Musicians, won't you come even as I pray? Lord, we love you. And we bless you. And we give you praise. And thank you for the honor, even in tough places in this world, giving, having given us tough assignments.

Lord, we have the call to be faithful, not foolish. Call to be overcomers and not compromisers. And we look forward to the future when you too will call us from labor here to reward there.

In Christ's name, amen. Won't you stand and sing the closing song with us? Jesus calls us. Jesus calls us. And as we do this, there's going to be a deacon offering for those in need among us.

[37 : 06] This is... Thank you.