

Lesson 3: Letter to the Church at Pergamum
Sermon Date: August 12

1. Ideally, when we face evil, we can turn from and leave it behind. However, sometimes, the situation is such that we must face that evil and endure its presence. What has been your experience in this latter scenario?

2. Read Revelation 2:12 – 17. What is the challenge facing this church? Would you describe this challenge as “persecution by enemies” or as “seduction by culture”? Explain.

3. Jesus commends this church for holding on to his name and not renouncing their faith in him. How do you suppose they could do this considering their situation (living in the city “where Satan has his throne”)?

4. The church is criticized for allowing people to hold onto to teachings contrary to those of Jesus. What must this church do to right this wrong?

5. If Pergamum doesn’t resolve the issue, Jesus lays down a consequence in verse 16. What does this mean?

6. For those who overcome, the promise is given to receive “hidden manna” and a “white stone with a new name written on it”. What do these rewards mean?

7. What disciplines are needed to keep ourselves from falling victim to the challenges faced by the church at Pergamum? Which of these is of most importance to you right now? Explain.

Getting Started (ideas for how to transition to begin this study):

- Consider our Hillside Core Values expressed by the acronym STONE. How does each of these values come into play in making a defense against the spiritual attack experienced by the church at Pergamum?
- We may not be subject to the teachings of “Balaam,” but we are exposed to other “teachings.” List some of the influences and movements that we face today that challenge our faith and can loosen our grasp on Jesus’ name.

Digging Deeper (optional material to consider):

- This letter opens with the use of the phrase “him who has the sharp two-edged sword” as a descriptor of its author. Consider these other passages that use the image of a sword in a spiritual sense and write out a summary statement for the meaning of this metaphor:
 - Matthew 10:34
 - Ephesians 6:17
 - Hebrews 4:12
 - Revelation 1:16

Note: In the time of Jesus, the sword was also a symbol of the Roman proconsul who had the power of life and death over people.

- Do some research into the city of Pergamum at about this time (90 – 95 A.D.). Identify the influences in that culture that would be a challenge to the early church and its development.
- Who is Balaam? Look back at Number 22 through 25 to understand more about this evil influence on Israel. Note how God cleanses Israel as a result of their weakness in turning from God and heeding the call to worship false idols.
- Some consider the reference to the white stone in verse 17 to refer to the use of such rocks as a token of invitation to a banquet – like a card we may receive, inviting us to attend a wedding and a reception. Consider this image in light of the challenges faced by Pergamum. Do you feel that you have received such a personal invitation from Jesus?