

Letters to the Church: Pt 6. Letter to Pergamum

April 6, 2025

Speaker: Stefan Duerksen, Lead Pastor

John Funk, from our church, passed away this past week at age 81. He is at home with Jesus after a short bout of cancer. He leaves behind his wife Anne, one daughter, two sons and their families. Their daughter Sharon Rempel and husband Jeff (and family) attend our church as well as John's brothers: Peter (& Betty) Funk and Jim (& Lorna Funk). Our hearts go out to this family as they grieve the loss of their husband, dad, grandpa and brother.

Church-Wide Prayer: 4. Church Renewal: Double funding, mentors & CRI Churches in Canada

- Myanmar earthquake: 25 CRI pastors in Mandalay area need of God's help & boldness
- Prayer: Increased Funding: global expansion
- Things to Come Conference: Thunder Bay April 25-27
- Pray for Canada – for holiness, prayer, boldness, discipleship, urgency, to grip the Church
- Praise: God provided 4 excellent CRI co-ordinators for India!
- Praise: P. Ray & Fran were just speaking at Ignite! Pray that seeds planted would grow!

Intro: TOLERANCE – what does that word mean to you? How is it used today? Tolerance today means we tolerate people that think like us. This is NOT tolerance. You don't need to tolerate someone/something you agree with.

Did you know that TOLERANCE is not a biblical virtue? We are going to look at this and more!

Sermon: Letter to the Church at Pergamum

RECAP: Letters to the Church

- **(MAP)** John is writing these from prison on Patmos. Jesus gave him the words.
- He is writing to Seven Churches in Asia Minor – Modern day Türkiye
- **(list)** The apocalypse of Jesus – the revealing of Jesus points us back to First Love.
- To reveal things as they really are – “big picture”. E.g. spiritual reality Eph 6

- To show us what's to come – Prevent deception, help us persevere & give hope!
- **(JESUS ON CLOUDS)** To keep our lives focused – are we living in light of Christ's return?

A. Pergamum's Report Card – Encouragement! (Rev 2:12-13)

Map: Per – Modern day Bergama (PICTURES BEFORE/AFTER)

- Located 65 miles north of Smyrna
- It was built on a towering rock! That overlooked the countryside!
- Being HIGH up meant something – they were closer to the gods!
- Center for Pagan worship & Emperor worship!
- **Dominus et Deus – immense structure**
- **Temples to Zeus, Athena, Apollo, Demetra, Dionysus, and Aphrodite**
- **One temple to Asklepios** – people flocked to for healing. They would touch a serpent to be healed! Symbol of HEALING.
 - **CONTRAST:** the Bible portrays the serpent as the symbol of EVIL.
- **200,000 volume library – rivaled the Library in Alexandria!**
 - **The word parchment is derived from Pergamum!**
- **Satans Throne** – could very well have been the Temple of Zeus which towered about.

Letter v. Rev 2:12-17

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

- Jesus says, “Do not worry about their sword – I am fighting for you.”
- ¹⁶ Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.
- **PAUSE: We LOVE the idea of Jesus fighting FOR US – what about fighting AGAINST US?**
- **EXPECTATION:** Biblically – you see there are often conditions on Jesus fighting FOR! He asks us to DO the impossible – but EXPECTS us to step out in faith!

- **Perhaps its:** sharing your faith, taking on a new job, turning from sin, forgiving abuse, choosing to worship during sickness.... POINT. It feels IMPOSSIBLE.
- **For example:** when David faced Goliath... he was a shepherd boy... his kings armor did not fit! He brought a sling and a staff to a sword fight against a GIANT who was trained for war.
 - What would have happened if David did not step on that battlefield?
 - What would have happened had Esther not gone to the King?
 - What would have happened if Moses simply refused to approach Pharaoh because, as he said, he struggled with speech!
 - What if Gideon stayed hidden within the caves!

MY POINT: this reminder is for ALL of us – JESUS – has the double edged sword! He is in the midst of us! BUT – we have to follow Him by FAITH!

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.

- **Satan’s throne 1:** Temple of Zues located here on top of the amphitheatre.
- **Satan’s throne 2:** Emperor worship – their coins point to this. Either way. BAD PLACE TO LIVE!
- **Antipas my faithful witness...**
 - *PICTURE: <https://anastpaul.com/2021/04/11/saint-of-the-day-11-april-st-antipas-of-pergamum-died-c-92-spiritual-student-of-saint-john-the-apostle-and-evangelist/>*
 - Antipas – Jesus calls him the faithful witness! He had ONE KAIROS (LORD)!
 - **They heated an iron bull** –placed him inside – burning him alive. Church tradition says they kept the temperature down so that his suffering would be prolonged, and the message would be sent to ALL other CHRISTIANS.
- **“you hold fast My Name, and you did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas”**
- **Reflect:** “YES” to Jesus → Are we willing to die for Jesus? To live for Jesus? The need for acceptance. The desire for a comfortable/easy life. Face our fears/failures.

B. Pergamum's Report Card – The fatal flaw → TOLERANCE

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.

CAVEAT: We should tolerate PEOPLE. We should NOT tolerate unbiblical IDEAS.

Pergamum's tolerance: Teachings of Balaam (Heb) & Nicolaitans (Gre): Greek & Hebrew – BOTH mean “conqueror” “the people”

The Battle for the Mind (discipleship of the edge) “conquer the people”. TWO MAIN AREAS:

1. Idolatry – Worshipping anything/anyone other than Jesus

- **Acts 15:20 (NIV)** Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood.
- **Romans 1:25 (NIV)** They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.
- **FALSE IDEAS & TEACHING direct our worship at something other than JESUS.**

2. Sexual immorality – ANY sex/sexual activity outside of marriage between a man & a woman

- They had bought into the lie that sex outside of marriage was OK – it's just your body!
- **1 Corinthians 6:16–20 (NIV)** 16 Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.” 17 But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit. 18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. 19 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

- **Colossians 3:5 (NIV)** Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

C. Pergamum's Report Card – The Warning → REPENT

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.

REPENTANCE is the opposite of TOLERANCE

Matthew 4:17 (NIV) ¹⁷ From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

IMPORTANT: Culture says tolerance is acceptance of the person, belief, and actions!

IMPORTANT: Jesus says, “REPENT, turn away from false beliefs, actions, self and TURN TO GOD!”

JESUS' warning was UNLESS THEY REPENT – He would WAR AGAINST THEM.

¹⁷ 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.'

Tolerating sinful ideologies & actions can place you in opposition to Jesus

Repentance from sinful ideologies & actions places you beside Jesus

2 Corinthians 10:4–5 (ESV) For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, **(NOT PASSIVE)**

Jesus promises those who turn to Him will receive “hidden manna’ nourishment & strength! And a “white stone” with a “new name” written on it. SALVATION & RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM!

D. FALSE Ideologies in the Western Church

LOVE & TOLERANCE – agreeing with peoples beliefs & actions.

HATE & BIGOTRY = Disagreement with peoples beliefs & actions.

Matthew 5:44–45 (NIV) ⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Matthew 22:39 (NIV) ³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’

LOVE does what is BEST for people. LOVE is not permissive. LOVE does not tolerate sinful ideas and actions. LOVE calls people to REPENTANCE.

Ephesians 4:15 (NIV) ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

For example: If I told you I could fly and then climbed to the top of this church to demonstrate to you my abilities – would it be loving to encourage me to be who I want to be? To accept my beliefs? NO!!

Ephesians 4:23–25 (NIV) to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

FALSE Ideologies that we TOLERATE:

- **Sexual immorality** – pornography, lust, sex outside marriage, LGBTQ, “love is love”
 - **John 3:3 (NIV)** Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”
- **Abortion** – killing an innocent human being “women’s rights”
- **Transgenderism** – you were born in the wrong body “live your truth”
- **White - heterosexuals** – ALL racist and responsible for suffering within minorities
- **Self-worship** – do whatever makes you happy! “you only live once”
- **Universalism** – a loving God wouldn’t send people to hell “All religions lead to Heaven” “**just be a good person**” – that’s what matters! (defined by tolerance)
- **Prosperity** – God wants you to be healthy & wealthy
- **Worldliness is not a big deal!** (Jms 4 – friendship with the world is enmity with God)
- **Family is #1! – Family above everything else is idolatry.**
 - **Honor your father & mother - YES**

- Obey your parents - YES
- Raise godly kids - YES
- Sacrificially love your spouse - YES

LOVING GOD is #1!! The Great Commandment! LOVING PEOPLE #2!

- For example: Muslims often LOSE their families for following Jesus.

We are called to be INTOLERANT of these ideas & beliefs within our own lives and to speak the truth (in love) to those around us who are trapped by them!

Two Steps to be INTOLERANT to FALSE IDEOLOGIES:

- **Set Free! – ages 16 & up. LEVEL 1: dealing with sinful habits, actions, beliefs, breaking free from lie-based thinking, forgiving those who hurt you, deliverance.**
- **Colson Fellows – learn how to: love those you disagree with, stand firm in truth, respond to the false ideologies in our culture, and more.**
 - a. E.g. abortion – science – LGBTQ – and more! How would you respond?
 - b. E.g. what if you were invited to a gay wedding. How would you respond?
 - c. E.g. how do you handle pronouns?
 - d. Learn how to BE loving while STANDING firm on truth.

IMPORTANT: INACTION is TOLERANCE. LOVING people requires us to SPEAK TRUTH.

AFTER SERVICE PRAYER – PRAYER ROOM – 9AM and 11AM

MARANATHA!! Come soon Lord!

Care@mysouthland.com

SC CHURCH WIDE PRAYER REQUESTS 2024

Cruise ship → → → → Battleship

- 1. Life on Mission:** Churchwide commitment to "Each One, Reach One"
- 2. Heart of Southland:** 500 people - Prayer Summit, Set Free! & Bible in a year
- 3. Next Gen:** ❤️ Passion for Jesus, memorization & find identity in Christ
- 4. Church Renewal:** Double funding, mentors & CRI Churches in Canada
- 5. Persecuted Church & Israel:** Salvation, hope & perseverance - MARANATHA