



## Going Deeper - Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide

### The Church in Pergamum - Revelation 2:12-17

3/11/2021

*"Truth without love is brutality, and love without truth is hypocrisy."*

*-Warren Wiersbe*

If you have been around the Western Christian Church for any length of time you have heard it said that the Church should be distinct from the world; that there should be a marked and noticeable difference between those who are followers of Jesus and those who are not. This is true, and this is precisely what is being held against the Pergamum church in Revelation 2. In loving the city around them, they had become indistinct from it, including entertaining teachings and practices hated (Rev 2:6) by Jesus. But what to do? This is the first question. In Pergamum's case it seems pretty obvious. Get rid of the bad teachings and practices. Yes, but why? This is perhaps the real question.

If Pergamum didn't understand why it needed to do away with the teachings of Balaam and the Nicolaitans, it may have removed them for doctrinal reasons alone. Initially this probably would have been a good thing. If a body can't see very well, best to just get some glasses, avoid injury and worry about things like sunsets and fine art later. However, if a church uses doctrine as the sole means of distinction from the world, sooner or later it will probably become short on love and grace. That is, it will become so concerned with teaching people correctly that it will forget to teach them personally, and we were no more made for misdirected truth than we were for misdirected love. But, by understanding the why of sound doctrine we can (admittedly with imperfections along the way) have both sound doctrine and well directed love, and this because the doctrine points to love and the love uses doctrine as a mooring line.

So, why was Pergamum directed to remove the practice of eating meat sacrificed to idols? Jesus taught us that we should not be dismissive of one another, that we shouldn't disregard one another's current perceptions and convictions just because we find them foolish (Matt 5:22). For some believers at the time of the church in Pergamum, they abstained from eating meat sacrificed to idols because they, probably having just come out of idol worship, felt a strong connection between eating the sacrificed meat and idolatry. Other believers did not, and though they were perhaps technically correct (1 Cor 8:4-13), they were not doctrinally correct because sound doctrine always takes us to Jesus, and Jesus taught us to respect one another. Any why the removal of sexual immorality? Jesus taught that we should not consciously entertain the activity of lusting over one another, because to do so leads to much physical, emotional and spiritual harm (Matt 5:28). We do not have to look very far or very hard to see evidence of this. So the church in Pergamum would have been doctrinally correct to remove the teachings and practices of Balaam and the Nicolaitans from its community, but it would have been right because sound doctrine leads us to love, and it is well and powerfully directed love, not just sound doctrine which rightly distinguishes the Church from the world.

#### **So, Consider:**

1. Do you naturally attend more to doctrine or love? How do you know?
2. Can you think of a time you've experienced the balance of love and truth? If so, describe it.
3. What are some things you can do to live more fully in both truth and love?

#### **Take Action:**

This week, read the Sermon on the Mount. As you study, meditate on the "whys" of the teachings. May the Lord bless you and keep you! Ben Scott