

A Call to Faithfulness

When Facing Opposition

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Week 2

Revelation 2:12-17

Bible Reading Plan

[Start the Plan](#)

Click the link above to read the Bible along with your group.

1. When was a time in your life where people made fun of you because of who you were, where you came from, your background, or your beliefs?

Opposition or ridicule usually centers around one of three things:

- Background
- Biology
- Beliefs

And that opposition hurts. Whoever first said, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me,” was giving a nice sentiment that doesn’t actually match up with what many of us have experienced. Opposition often begins subtly. A raised eyebrow. A sarcastic comment. A social distancing—not the pandemic kind, but the relational kind. And sometimes, it escalates into something much more painful.

If you’ve walked with Christ long enough, you know this truth: Faithfulness to Jesus will eventually put you at odds with the world. The question is not if you will face opposition—but how you will respond when it comes. And even if you’re not a Jesus follower but someone exploring faith, the question remains the same: How will you respond when you’re faced with opposition?

Welcome to week two of our series, A Call to Faithfulness. We’re taking a look at the words of Jesus to first-century churches in Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey, found in the book of Revelation. Last week we explored the church in Ephesus. Today, we’re taking a look at the church in Pergamum.

Read Jesus' words in Revelation 2:12-17.

Background on the city of Pergamum:

- Pergamum was the political capital of the Roman province of Asia.
- It was known for its massive library—second only to Alexandria.
- It was known for its deep commitment to pagan worship. Towering above the city was an enormous altar dedicated to Zeus. There were temples to Athena, Dionysus, and Asclepius—the god of healing, symbolized by a serpent.

But perhaps most significantly, Pergamum was a center of emperor worship. Citizens were expected to declare, “Caesar is lord.” For Christians, that was a line they could not cross. To say “Jesus is Lord” in Pergamum was not just a theological statement—it was a political act. It could cost you your job, your reputation, even your life. And it did.

2. If following Jesus came at a significant personal cost—your career, reputation, friendships or family relationships, or financial hardship, where do you think you would struggle most to remain faithful?

Jesus mentions a man named Antipas in verse 13: “My faithful witness, who was put to death in your city.” Church history tells us that Antipas was martyred—possibly burned alive inside a bronze bull—because he refused to renounce Christ. This is the environment the church lived in. And this is the church Jesus addresses.

So, just think about this. The church in Pergamum wasn't just dealing with inconvenience or discomfort—they were living in a city that Jesus Himself described as “where Satan's throne is.” And yet, they were called to stand firm. And there is much here we can learn on how to stand firm when it's SO easy to give up, give in, and take the easy way out.

What can we do when we are facing opposition as follower of Jesus?

Recognize the reality of opposition (v. 12-13). And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: “The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword” (Revelation 2:12, ESV). Right away, Jesus identifies Himself as the One with the sharp two-edged sword. This is a symbol of authority and judgment. In a city where Rome wielded the sword of power, Jesus reminds them: ultimate authority belongs to Him.

“I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is” (Revelation 2:13a, ESV). That’s not metaphorical fluff. Jesus is acknowledging the intense spiritual darkness of their environment. Here’s the first truth: Following Jesus does not remove you from opposition—it often places you right in the middle of it. Sometimes we assume that if we’re facing resistance, we must be doing something wrong.

3. When have you experienced opposition or resistance, while trying to follow Jesus, that made you wonder if you were doing something wrong?

The apostle Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:12, “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12, ESV). Opposition is not a sign of failure. It is often a sign of faithfulness. Jesus commends the church in Pergamum: “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.” (Revelation 2:13b, ESV)

“A faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted” (Charles Spurgeon). Pergamum’s faith had been tested—and in many ways, it had proven genuine. Recognizing that opposition is not the exception; it is the reality of living in a divided world. You will face it. We DO face it. And we have to accept that it will happen and does happen, so that we can be prepared for how to respond when (not if) it comes.

Beware the danger of compromise (v. 14–15). “But I have a few things against you...” (Revelation 2:14a, ESV)

Even in a faithful church, there can be fatal flaws. Jesus points out two compromises: The teaching of Balaam and the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Both involved moral and spiritual compromise—particularly in the areas of idolatry and sexual immorality.

The reference to Balaam goes back to Numbers 22–25, where Balaam couldn’t curse Israel directly, so he enticed them into sin indirectly. He led them to compromise. Here’s the danger: When opposition doesn’t destroy the church from the outside, it often corrupts it from the inside. Instead of standing firm, some in Pergamum began blending in. They may have reasoned: “It’s just one meal at the temple.” “It’s just cultural participation.” “We don’t want to seem extreme.” But compromise always starts small. Maybe you’ve heard it said before, “Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay.”

4. What habits, attitudes, relationships, or priorities have you justified, even when they kept you from standing firm in your faith?

The church in Pergamum stood strong under persecution—but they were weakening under seduction. And sometimes, that’s the greater danger. The temptation for compromise is overwhelmingly strong. So, we recognize the reality of opposition, we need to beware the danger of compromise, and ...

We respond to opposition with repentance and truth (v. 16). “Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth (Revelation 2:16, ESV). This is a sobering warning. Jesus doesn’t just confront the culture—He confronts His church. Before we point fingers at the world, we must examine our own hearts. Healthy, Christ-centered resistance to opposition begins with personal and corporate repentance.

We cannot stand firm externally if we are compromised internally. Martin Luther famously said, “The entire life of believers should be one of repentance” (Martin Luther). Repentance is not weakness—it is strength. It is the courage to realign with truth. And notice how Jesus fights: “with the sword of my mouth.” This is His Word. When facing opposition, we don’t respond with aggression, manipulation, or worldly tactics. We respond with truth. Ephesians 6 reminds us that the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit. Jesus Himself modeled this when He was tempted in the wilderness. Each time, He responded, “It is written...” Truth is our weapon. Not sarcasm. Not outrage. Not cultural conformity. Truth. But truth must be held with grace.

5. As Jesus reveals areas of compromise in your life, what step of repentance is He calling you to take?

Recognize the reality of opposition, beware the danger of compromise, respond with repentance and truth, AND...

Hold fast to Christ’s promises (v. 17). “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” (Revelation 2:17a, ESV). Manna was God’s provision in the wilderness. Hidden manna represents spiritual sustenance that the world cannot offer.

When you stand firm in Christ, even when it costs you, He sustains you in ways nothing else can.

“...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” (Revelation 2:17b, ESV). In the ancient world, a white stone could symbolize: Acquittal in a court of law. Admission to a banquet. A token of favor. And the new name speaks of identity.

Here’s the promise: When the world rejects you for your faithfulness, Christ receives you with honor. You may lose approval here—but you gain eternal acceptance there. C.S. Lewis wrote, “Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you will get neither.” (C. S. Lewis)

Pergamum had to decide: Would they seek the approval of the city—or the approval of Christ? So must we. We may not live in Pergamum, but we live in a culture increasingly resistant to biblical truth. How do we respond?

- Stand firm without becoming harsh. It’s possible to be right and still be wrong in how we communicate. Colossians 4:6 says, Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt (Colossians 4:6, ESV). You don’t need to win every argument—you need to reflect Christ.
- Refuse to compromise, even in small things. Compromise rarely announces itself loudly. It whispers. “No one will notice.” “It’s not a big deal.” “Everyone else is doing it.” But faithfulness is built in the small decisions.
- Stay rooted in the Word. If you are not grounded in truth, you will drift with culture. Make Scripture your daily anchor.
- Remember what’s at stake. This isn’t just about cultural issues—it’s about allegiance to Christ. Jesus didn’t die so we could blend in. He died so we could be redeemed—and live set apart.

6. Here’s the challenge: Where are you facing opposition right now? Where are you tempted to compromise? What would it look like for you to stand firm—with truth and grace?

Jesus is calling you to be faithful. To hold fast. To refuse compromise. To repent when needed. And to trust that His reward is worth it all. Because one day, the voices of opposition will fall silent. And the voice of Christ will speak. And to those who stood firm, He will say: “Well done.” So, stand firm, church. Even when it’s hard. Even when it costs. Even when you stand alone. Because you never truly stand alone. Christ is with you. And He is worth it all.