

# A Sneak Attack (Part 3)

by Jim Cymbala

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*Jim Cymbala's sermon emphasizes the importance of remaining faithful to Christ amidst cultural pressures and spiritual challenges, as exemplified by the church in Pergamum.*

**Duration:** 24:47

**Scripture:** Numbers 22:5-7, Matthew 5:13, Matthew 6:12, John 14:2-3, 1 Corinthians 10:13-15, Revelation 2:14

**Topics:** "Spiritual Warfare"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of standing for Jesus and not giving in to temptation, even when others may mock or ridicule. The speaker encourages the audience to be strong and committed to Jesus, reminding them that there is no middle ground when it comes to serving Him. The speaker also shares personal experiences and examples of Christians around the world who are standing firm in their faith. The sermon concludes with a reminder that God knows and understands the challenges faced by believers and that their reward awaits them in heaven.

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## Transcript

In the book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, we've been talking about seven different churches that Jesus wrote a letter to. And one of the churches that he wrote a letter to is a church that was in a city called Pergamum. Now, there was a very spooky thing that happened in that city, because that city was part of the Roman Empire and it was a place full of idols, false gods that people bowed down to and worshipped.

But it was the home of a certain god called Ascleptos, who was the snake god. And they had a temple that said, this god will heal you if you come and sit in the dark at night and let the snakes crawl over you. And if the snake crawls over you, that will be your sign that you will be healed.

It was a horrible thing. But somebody came and preached the gospel in that city of Pergamum, and a church was founded. But they were surrounded by people who did not like Christians.

In fact, they worshipped the emperor of the Roman Empire there. They said, he's not a man, he's a god. So some people were worshipping the emperor, Caesar.

Remember, other people worshipping the snake god. Other people were worshipping Zeus and all these other false gods. There were temples everywhere.

And here, there's this little group of Christians. And Jesus writes a letter to these Christians, and it's two of the things that we wanna pray, all of you, this is on many levels. Adults and older young people will take it.

Seniors will have to have their heart open. So here's what the letter said that Jesus wrote. It was a letter just like you would get in the mail.

And the letter said this. Write this letter to the angel of the church in Pergamum. This is the message from the one with the sharp two-edged sword.

That means judgment, Jesus has the final judgment. He makes the final decision about everyone on the earth. He says to the church, I know that you live in the city where Satan has his throne.

There's no other church written in the whole Bible that it says this about. I know where you live, in the city where Satan has his throne, yet you have remained loyal to me. You refuse to deny me even when Antipas, my faithful witness, was martyred, that means killed, among you there, in Satan's city.

Or, one translation has, where Satan lives. Imagine to live in a city where Jesus says, I know where you live, Satan lives there. Now, what does that mean to us? They're not sure, the commentators are not sure.

Satan can only be in one place and at one time. Was he there in some special presence or was this some special satanic stronghold of idolatry? Whatever the case was, it was a very hard place to live if you were a Christian. And he goes on to say, but I have a few complaints against you, even though you've been faithful.

You tolerate, not you practice, but the leaders in your church, you tolerate some among you whose teaching is like that of Balaam, who showed Balak how to trip up the people of Israel. He taught them to sin by eating food offered to idols and by committing sexual sin. In a similar way, you have some Nicolaitans among you who follow the same teaching.

And finally, repent of your sin or I will come to you suddenly and fight against them with the sword of my mouth. Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the church. What he is saying to the churches.

So imagine living in a city where somehow Satan had his throne. We don't know exactly what that meant. Satan doesn't sit on a throne, but throne speaks of authority and power.

And in the city of Pergamum, this place was so wicked that Jesus Christ said, I know what you're going through. I know how difficult it is because you're living for me and you're standing for me in the city where Satan has his throne. And I appreciate and I am complimenting you and I am praising you for the fact that you still keep holding on to me though everyone around you is against me.

Everyone around you is worshiping these hideous idols, but I know what you're going through and I commend you for that. And I commend you for this, Jesus said, you kept your faith in me, you wouldn't deny me. Even when this servant that we don't know about, this minister or leader, Antipas, he was killed, he was arrested and killed because he was a Christian.

And that happens still around the world sometimes in different parts of the world. People are killed for being a Christian. It's not like it is here in America where we can worship freely for now.

Who knows what the future will hold. But right now, thank God we can worship. Let's thank God for freedom to be able to worship.

So, I just want to stop there and say this to you. This is what I feel in my heart the Lord wants to say to all of you. God knows how hard it is to live for Jesus Christ here in New York City.

This is not like any other city. Now I'm not saying it's the wickedness, I'm not saying Satan has his throne here, although I must say that two of the strongholds that Satan has in our culture is the media, which is centered here in New York. The media is very anti-God, very anti-Christian.

Television, the media, newspapers, magazines, parents, watch what your children are watching at all times because the media is very antagonistic toward Christianity. And then also the whole fashion industry, the theater, movies, entertainment, this is very, very ungodly and New York reeks of it. So, I want to just say to all of you that are finding it difficult at times, it is difficult at times.

No one ever promised us a walk in the park. Jesus said, the one who suffers with me will also reign with me. The one who suffers rejection, and young people, I want to say this to you, if you really love Jesus and are going to live for Jesus, people are not going to like the fact that you love Jesus.

I got to tell you that now. Not everyone's going to pat you on your back and say, oh, that's great, you're a Christian, oh, I'm so happy for you. No, they're going to make fun of you, they're going to mock you, some will dislike you, some might even turn away and not be your friend.

But you don't worry about that. Jesus is going to be your best friend. Come on, do we all say amen to that? Jesus is going to be your friend.

And you'll always have friends in this church, and there are Christians around the world just like you. Don't think you're just a few lonely people, there's Christians all over the world. I was speaking in Korea this past few days, whatever days it was, at the third largest church in the world, and spoke five times for them, and the last time they had me speak was in an Olympic-style gymnasium to 10,000 young adults that they asked me to charge to go out and serve the Lord with vigor and with the power of the Holy Spirit.

There are Christians, millions and millions of Christians all over the world. Never feel backed up, never feel lonely, never feel like there's nobody else but you. We got a great big body of Christ.

We have brothers and sisters, amen, all over the world. Now, so I wanna tell you all here, God knows what you go through, and your crown is waiting for you. You just hold on to Jesus.

Don't deny him, and don't be pulled away because things get antagonistic, and because people act ugly. And when it comes to that, whether it's the government or the Board of Education or anything else, I have my eyes on none of those people. My eyes are focused on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Can we say one more, amen? Keep your eyes on the Lord. But look what this one's doing, and look what they're doing here, and look what they're legalizing here. I don't care what they do or legalize or whatever.

My eyes are on Jesus Christ. He's gonna bring us over the finish line, amen? And God knows it. So when you feel like crying, cry.

When you feel you can't go on and you have to cry out to God, cry out to God. But he knows everything we're going through. Don't feel you're alone because he says to the church, I know where you live.

Now, I don't know what that meant back there. I don't wanna know. But there must have been some satanic presence in that city.

I've been in some places. I asked Rabbi Zacharias the other day when he was here. I said, of all the places you've been in the world, where have you sensed the power of Satan? We began to talk about that because there's different environments every place you go.

Now, let me just say this. God, help me to have wisdom how to say this so that you understand this. So there's a word of commendation, great word of commendation for that church, but there's a problem that Jesus has with that church.

The leadership, notice, not you do this, but you tolerate. See, it's not just what we do, especially as leaders, it's what we tolerate. If Pastor Todd or Pastor Brian Petri or myself or Pastor Johnson, the other pastors, if we tolerate something that is wrong, that is against Jesus, then the Lord has a word of correction for us.

He says, now, you're a great church and you're strong for me and even though you've faced frontal attacks, here's what you have been blind to. You permit people in your church to hold to the teaching of Balaam who was an Old Testament person. Let me tell you about Balaam and then we'll pray.

Balaam was a prophet, a mysterious prophet. He was kind of like a Gentile prophet. When you read about his story in the book of Numbers, it takes up a few chapters.

It's very hard to understand all of who Balaam was because the spirit of God did come upon him at times and he has some of the most wonderful prophecies in the whole Old Testament. And the people who were fighting against Israel as Israel was moving into the promised land, they knew that every place Israel fought, you couldn't defeat them, you couldn't beat them. If you ran straight into Israel, Israel was gonna defeat you.

They trusted in this invisible God they had and if you fought them, they would beat you. So the king of Moab by the name of Balak, this leader of this country against Israel, he, very superstitious, he said, I've gotta get somebody to give a curse, put a curse on Israel because they're blessed. I gotta get their blessing off and put a curse on them.

So Balaam was famous. He called Balaam in and he said, listen, Balaam, I got some serious money here. I want you to put a curse on Israel.

So Balaam says, hold your money and this is what's mysterious about Balaam. I can only do what God shows me to say. I can't say anything more.

So he goes off and he goes to a mountain and he looks down on Israel and on the camp and he begins to prophesy over them. Oh, people of God, you are blessed when you wake up in the morning. You are blessed at night.

Nothing that ever comes against you will be able to overcome you and he prophesies a blessing on the people. Well, the king goes totally ballistic and he said, what's wrong with you? I brought you all this way to curse them. You're blessing them.

I'll give you more money. Keep your money. I can only say what God gives me and he goes back another time and he blesses them even greater.

So now King Balak is thinking, who thought of bringing this crazy prophet here? He's working against me. He's blessing the people. So now he ups the ante and he says, I'll give you a lot of money if you'll just go curse them.

So Balaam goes and then he makes his final prophecy, the greatest of all, where he prophesies that out of Israel is gonna come a morning star and he begins to speak about the coming of Christ way back in the book of Numbers. But there's something funny about Balaam because it's like God was testing him. God told him don't even go on that trip but then permitted him to because he saw something in Balaam's heart.

So the king said, get out of here. And that's all that the record has is he went three times and he blessed but as you read through the Bible, the end of Exodus, you find out that Balaam wanted that money way too much. So what he did was this.

He went back to the king in a way we're not told about and said, I can't curse them because they're blessed. They trust in their God. And as long as they're trusting in their God, I can't touch them.

You won't be able to beat them. Nobody can beat them. But if you share some of that bread with me here, I have a plan.

If you can just pull them away from their God, if you can get them not devoted to their God, if you can seduce them, if you can pull them away, then you have a shot. So later on, in the book of Numbers goes on, Balaam, chapters later, is killed, punished by God and the Bible says, and God punished Balaam because he was the one who taught Balak how to seduce the people of Israel. You know how he did it? He couldn't curse them, so he tempted them.

And here's how he tempted them. He sent pretty women. He sent women to go and the Israelite men saw them and said, mm, mm, mm, mm, mm, mm.

And they went with the women and the women said, come with me. Where are we going? We're going to the temple or we're going to this place where the idol is. I'm gonna worship my idol.

What idol? There's only one true God. No, that's what you feel, but we believe a little different where we are here in Moab. And man after man after man began to go and marry women who didn't love God.

And then they were brought to worship the idols and what Balaam couldn't do by cursing them, he weakened them by temptation. I want to tell you two things today. Nobody can curse a Christian.

When we are walking with Jesus Christ, come on, we are uncursable, uncursable. Someone can say, I'm gonna put a spell on you. I'm gonna do voodoo on you.

I'm gonna stick a, they can do that all they want. The blood of Jesus Christ covers us from every kind of curse and spell. Greater is he that's in us than the one that's in the world.

But here's the other side of that and I close. If the enemy can get us to be compromised and be practicing sin, even while we're going to church, ooh, now that's another story. Even though we're Protestants, even though we go to the Brooklyn Tabernacle, even though we were baptized, when you're walking in dark and you've given a place to the enemy, lot of bad things can happen.

So the way Satan gets us, it's not tries to run us over with a truck. He might try that, get us real afraid and just overwhelm us. But most time, he finds out where we're weak and he plans something that will just pull us away and it works like this.

You just go, look, I'm walking with the Lord. Well, look, what's one step away from the Lord? It's not a big thing. I know this is wrong what I'm doing or watching or who I'm with, but then, uh-oh, there's just another little step.

And she says, it's all right, or he says, but all my friends watch it, all my friends do that. Everyone talks like that. And the next thing you know, there's a huge gap between you and Jesus Christ.

And then Satan waits for that moment where we're away and weak, and then he comes in like just a storm to try to knock us down. So today, what I want you all to know as we pray for you is that God's not only gonna give you a safe summer, he's gonna give you a Jesus summer. He's gonna give you a summer, listen, where number one, you're going to stand for Jesus.

I don't care who laughs at you. I don't care what everyone is doing. They're all cursing.

You're not gonna curse. They're all watching about ugly things and talking about ugly, wrong things that your parents have told you is wrong, you know from the Bible is wrong. You're not gonna give in.

You're not gonna deny Jesus. And if they make fun of you, let them make fun of you. When Jesus Christ comes again, nobody will be making fun of you.

They'll be so jealous of you because Jesus said, I go to prepare a place for you that where I am, you may be also. So that's number one, you're gonna have a Jesus summer. And God is gonna help you to be strong this summer, not to give in to temptation.

Because know this, that church got in trouble because it tolerated in the church people, and that's happening all over America. In a city where I was speaking, walked up to me and said, I read somewhere in your wife's book, is it true that your wife interviews every single person who comes in the choir? Yeah, well why would you do that? Well, she wants to know if they really love Jesus and are living for the Lord. Well, but what if they sing real good? Well, that's not her first question.

Her first question is, do they really love the Lord and wanna walk? You mean your wife would turn down somebody from the choir? You mean you would turn someone down from membership? If you know they were living with someone that wasn't their spouse? Yeah, we would turn them down. Well, come on, brother, wait, wait. But that's being judgmental.

That's, listen, God loves everyone. No one's perfect. Do you know that that teaching is everywhere in the world? That teaching is everywhere.

That teaching is everywhere. But we want our children up to the very oldest adult here to know this summer, we're gonna stand for Jesus, we're gonna live for Jesus. I said we're gonna stand for Jesus and we're gonna live for Jesus.

Say that with me. We're gonna stand for Jesus, we're gonna live for Jesus. Everybody close your eyes.

If you're here today and you're struggling to stand for Jesus, the pressure, the embarrassment, the mocking, listen, it's gonna, I have to tell you, it's not gonna get better. It's gonna get harder, probably. I'm

not a prophet, but every indication around us is what Jesus said, you will be hated by all men for my name's sake.

How could a carpenter's son 2,000 years ago know that? How could he know that people would dislike anyone a follower of his name? If he wasn't the son of God, how could he say that? It's come to pass. It's come to pass. But if you're struggling standing for him because of your family, your pressure group, your friends, I wanna pray for you.

And if you're seeing now how the enemy is not trying to curse you, he can't curse you. Can't, how can he do voodoo on a Christian? No, he's gonna try to pull you away, get you involved in situations that are not right. It's not, it's not right.

That's not right, that's wrong. Getting involved immorally, sexually with anyone who's not your wife or husband is wrong. Pastor, symbol, everyone, I don't care what everyone does, I'm telling you what the word of God says.

That's the teaching of Balaam. You can't curse him, but you can trick him. We're not gonna be tricked.

We're gonna tell Jesus, Jesus, forgive us our debts and our sins as we forgive those sinned against us. And Jesus, keep us strong. Anybody here needing special prayer because of what you're going through, adult or young person, just stand up where you're sitting.

Just stand up right where you're sitting. Stand up. Pastor, I need strength from God to stand for him.

I wanna stand for him. Or, pastor, I need strength from God because, I mean, the enemy's trying to pull me away. He's trying to trick me.

You're either gonna serve Jesus with all your heart, 100%, or you're gonna get in trouble. There's no halfway. You can't, you know, chill out with Jesus.

You gotta be on fire for Jesus, strong for Jesus, committed to Jesus. So now, Lord, you see who's standing, and you know the stories. You know what they're facing.

And I thank you, Lord, that you know what all of us face living here in this cesspool of a city, and how hard it is so many times to serve you. But let our light shine brightly, Lord. Let us be that salt that you call us to be, and not be intimidated by the darkness.

And when it's hard, help us to hold on to you. When a mocking and the ridicule comes, help us not to be embarrassed. And we bless you, Lord, now that you're gonna help those who are standing to be strong against temptation.

Now, you said in your word, repent. That means turn around and go the other way. In the name of Jesus Christ, I ask you to help these people, even tonight, to rip up phone numbers, or get rid of whatever they're involved in, in any way, shape, or form that's not of you.

For you said, otherwise I will come. And we don't want you to come in judgment. We want your mercy just surrounding us, Lord.

So we pray for everyone who's standing, in the name of Christ. And we believe and know you can do it, because you're great. Our God is great.

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