

Revelation: Following Our Victorious King

[Revelation 2:8-11](#)

"A Letter From Jesus on True Riches"—February 4, 2024



Introduction

The Christian life is not a game show, but the show "Let's Make a Deal" illustrates what temptation is like in the world. When someone comes to Christ, they gain something of infinite value. The world doesn't respond that way. The world pushes Jesus away and tempts us to trade something of true, lasting value for that which will not satisfy.

In a fallen world, following Jesus can be dangerous. ([John 15:20](#)) The enemy comes to you and wants you to compromise to relieve the tension that comes with temptation. He tells you that if you do what he says, the world will love you. For 2000 years, the church has faced the temptation to compromise. In this passage, Jesus celebrates a church that was faithful and willing to pay the price.

Jesus doesn't have a correction for the church in Smyrna, but He celebrates their willingness to suffer. Connecting this idea to the message Jesus sent to Ephesus about is important. You will suffer for what you love. If we are going to face hostility and push back, how can we survive?

Sermon Outline

1. Don't fear what you will suffer, step into it.
2. Be faithful by looking to Jesus.

Read & Discuss

1. Don't fear what you will suffer, step into it.

The church in Smyrna was up against tribulation, poverty, slander, prison, and death. Tribulation means trouble that produces pressure. In Smyrna, if one didn't worship the emperor, one was labeled as unpatriotic and thus persecuted. To be a Christian, means Jesus is your King. This means that what God says in scripture is good, true, and authoritative. If you seek to live a godly life, you will be persecuted and face pressure. Do you feel the pressure? This pressure may tempt the church to water down the message of the gospel. If the church conforms to the world, she loses her witness. ([Luke 14:34](#))

To keep the peace in relationships will you compromise what Jesus teaches? ([Matthew 10:16-23](#)) Jesus isn't out to break up families, but if you must decide between a parent or a spouse who is opposed to Jesus and following Jesus, you must follow Jesus. This is not an excuse to be unloving and harsh. Love rejoices with the truth ([1 Corinthians 13:6](#)) You must speak the truth with confidence and in love. Has there been a time when you have had to do this with a friend or family member?

The Christians in Smyrna were in poverty because they didn't worship the emperor. They lost their jobs and their way to make a living. Will you compromise your faith at work if you are up against choosing to do something that is contrary to God's word?

The Christians in Smyrna were also being lied about and slandered. Here, Jesus is reminding us that there are only two ways to live. Before you came to Christ, you followed the prince of the power of the air, ([Ephesians 2:1-2](#)) but you have come out of the kingdom of darkness and into His glorious light. ([2 Peter 2:9](#)) Slander can be swift and cruel, but remember, Jesus was also slandered. If you are to be faithful to Jesus, you must not fear being slandered. You must be faithful. ([Luke 6:22-23](#)) Have you experienced slander because of your faith?

The church in Smyrna was also up against prison and death. Jesus told them not to fear what they would suffer, being put in prison and put to death. We may be tempted to think that times are different now. Of the seventy million martyrs in the last 2000 years, nearly half were killed in the last 100 years. We must pray for the persecuted church - those languishing in prison or awaiting death.

Some of our fears are good and natural. We don't want to suffer. It is appropriate for us to pray that God remove suffering, but sometimes the path of faithfulness requires it. Do you worry about how you might respond to suffering? God will give you the grace you need at the time you need it. How can you keep faith under pressure?

2. Be faithful by looking to Jesus

You don't overcome fear by looking at ourselves. You overcome fear by looking to Jesus and fearing Him. Here Jesus gives five truths about Himself that help us to overcome fear.

- Jesus is sovereign. (vs. 8) Our lives are bracketed by Jesus Who is the first and the last. The trials and tears will not have the final word on your life. Their purpose is that your faith may be proven genuine and to strengthen of your faith. You must also remember that there is an end to your suffering. Evil is on a leash. God's purposes outweigh the pain. What suffering have you faced? How did it prove and strengthen your faith?
- Jesus is victorious. (vs. 8) Jesus died AND came to life. Jesus' death was the instrument, used by God, to destroy the devil. Satan is an accuser, but his accusations of the Christian have no power because of Jesus' whose victory means our victory.
- Jesus is all-knowing. (vs. 9) Jesus knows exactly what is going on in your life and in our heart. God is not cold, indifferent, or distant. He cares. The proof is that He laid down his life for you and me. We don't go through our suffering alone. ([Hebrews 4:15](#)) He sympathizes with us. Cast your burden on Him.
- Jesus is generous. (vs. 9) Jesus knew of the physical poverty of the church of Smyrna, but in other ways, they were rich. When the world sees us, they may consider us poor. Jesus assesses the situation and says we are rich. It all depends on how we measure wealth. The world has one standard by which they measure wealth. Jesus has a different idea about wealth. ([Luke 12:13-21](#)) Poverty is not a laughing matter. It can be demoralizing. Yet some of the happiest and most generous people have little or no possessions. They know the value of Jesus. How do **you** measure wealth? What matters when Jesus returns is not money or friends but whether you consider that Jesus is your king.
- Jesus is faithful. He makes and keeps promises, and you can build your life on that. (vs. 10) The Christian life is a marathon not a sprint. Courageous stories about martyrs can be inspiring, but also unnerving. Do you think you have to be "super-star" Christian? How will you be faithful unto death? The conqueror is one who sees their sin and seeks refuge in Jesus. How can we be faithful under pressure? The answer is knowing Jesus. God uses His word to show fearful saints Who He is. Jesus is greater! ([Isaiah 43:2](#)) Jesus walked through the fires of Hell so the second death will not harm us. Ultimately, we will all die. The first death refers to the death of our bodies. What we do with Jesus will determine whether we will face the second death. Turn from your sin and self-reliance and seek refuge in Jesus. How has Jesus shown His faithful to you? Have you placed your trust in Him?

Prayer of Response

1) After hearing God's Word, what sin do I need to *confess*? From what do I need to *repent*?

2) How should my life be lived this week based on what I have heard? What should I *understand*, *believe*, *desire*, or *do*?

Spend time praying together in response to God's word asking for His help and greater faith to follow Him in the week to come. If you missed the sermon on Sunday or would like to listen again, visit our website at fbcum.org

Next week's sermon text: we turn to Revelation 2:12-17 "A Letter From Jesus on Repentance"
