

# Encouragement to the Churches in Revelation, Part 2

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Preacher: James Biesiadecki

[0:00] And so for those of you who know that, it is coming for Christmas. If you have not got your shopping done, those kinds of things, be sure to get that.

If you need to know what I'm wanting for Christmas, you should ask me. I'll be happy to tell you. But otherwise, it is coming. But it is obviously so much more than just those gifts that we're celebrating. And especially if you're a follower of Christ, this is our holiday. This is Easter's too, of course. But this is ours. We should be celebrating more than anybody in the world as we contemplate what we have in Christ.

And the birth of Christ being so significant for us because it was so anticipated. The prophets were looking for this day, great anticipation.

The scripture says the angels long to look into these things. They came and heralded the moment just with great expectation being experienced.

[1:07] All in that moment coming. Christ was born of a virgin to symbolize for us just the word of God to bring salvation. We have something that is worth celebrating.

Celebrating. I was thinking of this hymn written by Philip Bliss. It said, Man of sorrows, what a name for the Son of God who came. Ruined sinners to reclaim.

Hallelujah, what a Savior. And when he comes, our glorious King. To his kingdom us to bring. Then anew this song we will sing.

Hallelujah, what a Savior. It is the birth of Christ that came with great anticipation. But now we are living in great anticipation of the second coming of Christ.

The second advent with great anticipation. It's how we live our life. We remember that this book of Revelation is a preparation guide for these churches.

[2:13] Seven churches that this was written to specifically. And in these churches we have just a small picture of a message to all of us about how to prepare for the coming of Christ.

There is something in it for all of us. He who has an ear, let him hear. It's for all of us. And as he writes to these churches, he ends this letter saying those very words.

Come quickly, Lord Jesus. It is the message for those believers in Christ and for us as believers in Christ. That we would live in anticipation of his coming.

So every Christmas we get to celebrate the advent of Christ as it was. And as we anticipate him coming again. He left.

He's coming again. And the disciples were left looking up into the clouds. And Jesus, as he leaves, the angel says to them, why are you standing gazing into the heavens?

[3:16] This Jesus who left is coming again like men. And the anticipation of his coming is what we are to live for. And as we read through these messages to these churches, I really think it's encouragement for us.

You think of all the crazy stuff going on in the world right now. And we are described as the fearful generation because we live in just a constant state of fear about everything.

But the reality is for us as believers in Christ, we have every reason to be living fearlessly and faithfully until he comes.

For us, there is a message. An encouragement. And so let's stand together. We are going to read this. Revelation chapter 2, beginning in verse 8.

Revelation chapter 2, beginning in verse 8. This is the letter. The message to the second church in the list of seven. Revelation chapter 2, verse 8.

[4:21] Revelation chapter 2, verse 9.

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Revelation chapter 2, verse 9.

Every anxiety that we face is nothing in comparison to what we have in Jesus. And so this morning, God, I just pray that in light of what we have in Christ, that you would enable us with supernatural power to live fearlessly and faithfully until the end.

No matter what we have in Christ. No matter what we have in Christ. I pray, Father, that you would just give us great strength. That we would walk through the trials and the tribulations that we face with joy and anticipation in spite of the difficulties.

[6:32] Because of what we have in Christ. Because of what we have in Christ. So, Lord, I just pray this morning that you would encourage all of us. We all have different things that we're going through. Our families face so many different things.

There are so many anxieties in our heart that Satan uses to keep us happy. There are things that he uses in our life to keep us from doing the things that you call us to do. But this morning, I pray that your Holy Spirit would take your word, plant it in our heart, and that you'd fill us, Lord, for the days that we live in.

You'd fill us with great strength and great power that we might need to be conquerors and overcomers that you've called us to be in Jesus. We just love you, Lord.

We praise you. And we thank you for this time. We get to look into your word together and be encouraged by it. Bless us now. We pray this all in Jesus' name. Amen.

We don't know when this church was founded, this church of Smyrna. But it is pretty reasonable to suspect that Paul was instrumental in planting this church as it's only 35 miles or so from the city of Ephesus.

[7:51] So it is reasonable to assume that the work that took place in Ephesus, which was spreading throughout the region, is either a direct result of the apostle Paul's work there, or it's the subsequent work of him making disciples in people like Timothy and others who saw the faith in him.

And we're taking the things, as he said in the second Timothy and others who saw the things that you've seen of me among many witnesses. You are to commit to faithful men who will teach others also.

And in that he gives us a direct result of the people who saw the discipleship, our life as a disciple of Jesus is supposed to look like. A generational kind of faith.

That's one of our core values as a church. We want to have a generational kind of faith that lives out not only in my children, but in my grandchildren and beyond. But it's not just my family that I want to see that in, but there is a spiritual legacy that I want to build in people that I get to lead to Jesus.

Get to encourage the faith. I get to disciple them in such a way that they replicate the faith. I want my kids to do that. I want my grandkids to do that. But I want people that I disciple to do that.

[9:11] That's what the faith is supposed to look like. A generational kind of faith that lives on. We want our kids in our worship service for this reason. We want to train worshipers of Jesus.

We want to multiply the faith. We want them to see us worshipping. We want them to see us grow up under the conviction of the Holy Spirit so that they see when we weep over our sins.

That they see us when we rejoice over the victories that we have because of Jesus. When we share testimonies about what Christ has done in our life. It's that kind of generational faith that we want to have.

This is what you see in Paul. It's the gospel is spreading. And so it is consistent with those kinds of principles of scripture to see that Smyrna being right next to Ephesus would be to such a work.

And so the apostle John now on the Isle of Patmos is probably looking off the shore. I can only imagine that.

[10:14] It doesn't tell us that. But in the direction of Asia Minor he is going to see in his mind those cities. The closest of which in proximity is going to be Ephesus.

Which is why it's listed first in the seven churches. And then the next nearest city is going to be the one just northwest of that. And that's going to be the city of Smyrna.

And then he's going to go up the Roman road and travel all the way across Asia Minor. From one church to the next all the way across Asia Minor. As he goes from church to church.

And all the churches that apparently John has influence on. And a relationship with. This church is a strong church in Smyrna.

We know from church fathers like Ignatius that this was a well organized church. With, as he reported in church history, elders and deacons.

[11:16] Plural elders and plural deacons. In this one church. As we talk about Wednesday night. The plurality of elders in churches.

There is no other example in the New Testament but to have a plurality of elders in a local church. We know it was well organized.

They've been disciplined. And what we find here is that as one of the churches represented on the lamp stand. The golden lamp stand we described last week.

The seven part stand that held up each of these oil lamps in the temple. Hammered out of 75 pounds of solid gold.

Now representing the only source of light in the temple. And this is one of those lights. The church is to be light. And that church in the temple is illuminating something for John.

[12:13] In the vision. And in this vision it is that he is illuminating Christ walking among the churches. As John sees it. He sees the lamp stands and the lamps burning.

And then it says. And then I saw Christ walking among the lamp stands. It's indicating that here these lamps have a responsibility to illuminate Christ.

It's the work of the church. It's what we do. The world is to see Jesus because of the work of the church. And what we find in Smyrna, unlike Ephesus, there is no threat at this point that this light is diminishing.

As Ephesus found in the rebuke from Jesus. That they had fallen from where they were.

That they were not where they once were. They lost their first love. And the danger was that they would be removed from the lamp stand. As a church, their influence lost.

[13:19] Here, Smyrna gets no such condemnation. There is no condemnation for them in Smyrna. Their lamp stand is not threatened.

Their lamp is not threatened. This city, in fact, is the only of the seven that still has Christian presence in it today.

It's amazing. This is in modern day Turkey. This city is known by the Muslims as infidel Smyrna.

They have withstood over generations more persecution in this region than any other recorded area that we have over the long period of history since the time of Christ.

The persecution there has been unbelievable. And yet, there is still Christian presence in Smyrna.

[14:22] Which is interesting when you find that this is the only one that doesn't have, besides Philadelphia, Philadelphia, the church of Philadelphia doesn't have condemnation. But this one is identified specifically by the persecution that they have endured and that they're going to endure.

Interesting. Interesting. And I think in this, every church and every believer ought to be emboldened. That we can stand against any adversary. Against any hardship. And against any challenge. As we learn to elevate the fear of God over any other human fear.

Amen. And when we do that, what it does, it enables us to endure anything.

When God has the right place in our life, the right place in our hearts, it enables us to endure anything in this world.

And this is the picture that we have. It is the message that we have consistently through strong Christian leaders in times past. Even good Baptist leaders in times past.

[15:39] Like William Bernal. Who said, we fear men so much. Because we fear God so good. Amen. Or even as John Murray said.

The fear of God is the soul of Godliness. It's the heart of it. We're going to be godly. We're going to live godly lives in Christ Jesus.

It begins with a right perspective of the fear of God. Because if I fear God above anything, then I won't fear anything else. The book of Revelation is telling us how to prepare for what's to come. How are we going to endure and persevere to the end? Live with that kind of anticipation and say, come quickly, Lord Jesus. Because we know how difficult it is.

We want the Lord to come. And yet, until He does, we're going to live with great perseverance. We're going to live fearlessly, faithfully, until He does. And He does joyfully, even in the middle of our suffering, until He comes.

[16:43] And so in this, I think there's a few things to look at. I wasn't quite sure how to organize this. So I just asked a few questions of the text. And I'm just going to approach it that way this morning.

I started out just looking at the two commands that He gives in here. There's two commands. What are the two commands that we're to observe? It's what He's doing with every church.

He's giving them some instruction. And in turn, this is the instruction, not just for that church, but for every church. And it's in turn, not only for every church, but it's for every believer.

He who has an ear. If your spiritual ear has been enlightened by the Lord, and the Holy Spirit lives inside of you, then this is for you.

One of the two commands to observe. One in verse 10, He says very clearly, do not fear. This is the command.

[17:39] So He's saying two things in an imperative form. So these are the two commands in the text. One in verse 10, do not fear. He says do not fear what you're about to suffer.

And in the same verse, we're in the old devil's about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested for ten days, and you will have tribulation. And then the second command, be faithful.

So do not fear, be fearless, and be faithful. Be fearless, be faithful. How are you going to prepare for the coming of Christ?

Fearlessly and faithful. First word is phobeo. It is where we get the word phobe. If you're afraid of things, you understand this word.

If you're afraid of the dark, I remember being a kid. Sometimes being afraid of the dark. And even as an adult, sometimes I wake up and it gets really dark. And I hear a noise, I'm like, ooh, it's going, you know, something's out there.

[18:42] And in my mind, sometimes I can be convinced. I remember going hunting one time, standing out in the field. And I was coming out to the deer stand. And you go out in the dark, right? So you're trying to get out there before the deer.

And I go out to the deer stand. And I remember in the field so vividly, I said, there's another guy. There's another guy out there. And so I stop through my tracks.

And I'm like, I see you out there. I'm in the middle of the field. I see you out there. And he's not responding.

At which point I'm pulling out my pistol. I don't know what's going on. I mean, I'm ready for anything at this point. And I see him moving a little bit. And I'm like, man, this is about to go bad.

I don't know what's about to happen. My man is running a million places. And he's still not moving. And I yell something. And he's not responding. And so I start moving a little closer.

[19:40] And it's just a push. You may say you don't get afraid. But you do. Febado.

Fears. All kinds of fears. Our generation is being identified as the generation of fear. And it's not just arachnophobia and fear of confined spaces.

We're afraid of everything. We are the generation of anxieties. Fears. Fear of crowds. Social anxieties of all kinds.

There's so many things that paralyze us. Trickle us. We are afraid of everything. And yet the reality of those that are in Christ Jesus. You are called by God.

To live fearlessly. Fearlessly. It is not just a sickness. It is a sin. The reality of this is that some of these anxieties that we face are nothing more than misplaced fear.

[20:45] God is what should be feared above everything in our heart and mind. The scripture gives us the idea that there are many anxieties that come into our life.

And yet the command to us as believers is be anxious for nothing. But in everything. By prayer and supplication. Let the requests be made known to God.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding. Will guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus. Commandment. And there's incentive with that.

If we obey the commandment. We get the accompanying peace that comes with that. That is the peace that only Christ can bring to our hearts and minds. Great message for a generation of fear. Now they had a reason to fear. And it was not just psychological issues that they were fearing. They were fearing literal people that wanted them dead.

[21:49] Yet they were called to be fearless. Called to be faithful. And Solomon tells us in Proverbs 9 verse 10.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. The fear of the Lord. God putting his right place in our heart and mind.

Begins a process in our heart and mind. To align all of our other fears under that. The psalmist tells us. Tells us that there's an empowering effect of fearing the Lord.

In Psalm 110 or 111 verse 10. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. As he says the very same thing. And all those who practice it have good understanding.

For his praise endures forever. Jesus made it very clear for us. In Luke chapter 12 verse 3. When he said. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark.

[22:51] Shall be heard in the light. And whatever you have whispered in private rooms. Shall be proclaimed on the housetops. And giving an incentive about.

About doing the right thing. And living in right ways. And even when nobody else sees it. Or hears it. God hears it. And his response to this is. I tell you my friends.

Do not fear those who kill the body. And after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you. Jesus said. I will warn you of whom you should fear.

Fear him. Who after he has killed. Has authority to cast into hell. Yes I tell you. Fear him. Whatever other anxiety you may face in your life.

Whatever other pressures you may feel in your life. If you'll feel them more acutely. If Christ is not good in his proper place. And if you don't fear him first.

[23:51] The reality is. He has control over your life. He has control over your soul. The transformation in Christ.

The reprogramming of your value system. It changes you. And now you are no longer to fear the things that you used to fear.

Scripture tells us in 2 Timothy 1.7. Just a great encouragement in this. Paul is talking to Timothy. A young man in the ministry. Who probably suffers from many anxieties.

His father figure is not a strong figure in his life. He is a minority in this culture. As a mixed relationship.

Where his mother is a Jew. And his father is Greek. Probably suffers in a lot of ways. May not have a lot of confidence in ministry.

[24:50] Yet here is what Paul tells him. For God has given us a spirit not of fear. But of power. And of love. And of self-control.

Amen. God has not given you a spirit of fear. In fact it is to the contrary. If you fear God first. Then you have power.

You have love. You have self-control. The result of you putting Christ first. And fearing him appropriately. Lines up every other fear in your life.

So the writer of Hebrews. In Hebrews 13.6 would say. So we can say confidently. The Lord is my helper. I will not fear.

For what can man do to me? Carries the weight of Old Testament prophets like Isaiah. In Isaiah 41.10.

[25:52] He said fear not. And he is speaking to people who are facing incredible hardships. Fear not. For I am weakly. The Lord says. Do not be dismayed.

For I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Cowardness is not characteristic of God's people.

Hebrews 12.1. Therefore since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses. Let us lay aside every weight.

And sin was cleaned so closely. Let us run with endurance. The race that is set before us. Looking to Jesus. Founder and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that was set before him.

In your cross. Despising shame. Seated at the right hand of the throne of God. That's why that song.

[26:48] That hymn. And I mentioned the first man of sorrows. What a name for the son of God who came. Ruined sinners to reclaim. That's why that resonates with us. We hear that. It's like yes.

Ruined sinners. That's me. And he reclaimed me. I belong to him. He's mine. And I'm his. And when he comes. Our glorious king. To his kingdom.

Us to bring. Then anew this song we'll sing. Hallelujah. What a savior. Hallelujah. What a savior. That's going to be our song. And so for me.

The facing of anxiety. Is. Seen in these two commands. To live. Fearlessly.

To live. Faithfully. To endure. Make it to the end. Faithfully. And how will I endure? What are the fears then that I'm to overcome? And then he lists.

[27:46] Some fears. In the lives of this church at Smyrna. That they are actually experiencing. So that we can see the extreme examples. That even in this case. They are to live fearlessly and faithfully.

Which implies to me. Whatever little problem is in my life. Whatever little thing that I'm enduring. Or faced with right now. I can face it.

Fearlessly. And faithfully. And they become a great example for us. So what are the things. That you see. In their life. Well he spells it out here. In verse.

Beginning in the first part. Verse 8. And to the angels of the church at Smyrna. Write. The words of the first and the last. Who died and came to life. I know your tribulation.

I know your tribulation. So when he comes to verse 10. Do not fear what you're about to suffer. The tribulation is what they're about to suffer. I know the tribulation you're in.

[28:48] And I know the tribulation that's coming. I know the suffering that you're enduring right now. And I know the suffering that's coming. I know. Suffering.

Tribulation. This word that it uses here. In the original language means. Distress. Trouble that inflicts distress. Trouble that inflicts distress.

Oppression. Oppression. Or affliction. Translates here many times as tribulation. Troubles that have been inflicted from the outside. Distress that's come upon you.

Oppression that's coming from the outside. And he's saying. This is something that you are fearful of. It's something that's coming. That you're going to be afraid of.

The possibility is. That you're going to be afraid of it. But you are in Christ. You are in the first and the last. He who died and came to life. You're in him.

[29:47] And because you're in him. You can be fearless and faithful. Even in the face of suffering. Whatever it is. Whatever it is you're anticipating. Now John is writing this from the Isle of Patmos.

He is experiencing suffering himself. He is imprisoned by the Roman government. And in fact according to historians.

What we find about John. Is that the emperor of Dominion. Ordered him to be burnt in or boiled in oil. So he is boiled in oil. First he survives this.

And then he is exiled to the Isle of Patmos. So if you think for one second. That John is not writing from a place. Where he understands the extreme.

Of possibilities of suffering. You do not know John. John is writing from a very painful place. I can only imagine the results of being put in oil.

[30:49] And the nerve damage that that does all over your body. And the excruciating pain that you live in. But to be exiled on a Roman.

Basically a prison island.

Treated terribly. No medical help. I can only imagine that the apostle John. Is writing. From a place of real experience.

He is saying. I know what you are suffering. And immediately you are saying.

What is John doing? And I know what suffering is coming. I'm glad that John can see it. Trials were coming to Smyrna.

And it's really an interesting city. When you look at it. It's the first city to make. A temple to Rome itself. To worship Rome.

[32:00] A very patriotic city. They won the privilege. And a contest. So that they could build a temple. To the emperor Tiberius. And this shows.

Kind of the political heart. Of the city. They are very loyal to Rome. They are also. Very loyal. Very loyal. To the pagan gods.

Like Zeus. And Sibyl. On the two sides. Around the mountain. There in the city. There are two temples. On the other side. One to Zeus. One to the goddess.

Sibyl. And all of the. Unspeakable acts. That go on. In these temples. Of sacrifice. Of all kinds. And. Lewdness. Of all kinds.

Since this is a famous show. We won't go into all those things. But just a picture. Of. Pagan religiosity. There. Is really strong.

[32:57] Connecting those two temples. As a street. Referred to. As the golden street. Isn't that interesting. When you start thinking. Of all that. Rome.

Has to offer. All the pagan. Deities. Have to offer. And in the vision. Of John. There is something. Greater. In heaven. Where the streets. Are paved. With gold.

They're not just. Named. As gold. There's something. Greater. For us. And the patriotism. In this city.

Leads to persecution. It's in this city. Where. The declaration. Of Caesar. Is Lord. Is demanded. Of citizens. And well. The question is. Who are the only ones. That are not going to say it. Right. Well. It's those pesky.

[33:51] Christians. They won't say it. Why won't they say it? Because there is one Lord. And you're not him. It's like that scene. In the Avengers.

Where. Hulk is. Taking Loki. Is any of you remember that movie? And. Loki says something. Because the fact is. You can't hurt me.

I'm a god. And Hulk says. You're not God. And then pumbles him. Across the bridge. And he's laying there days. I'm just saying. Government. You're not God.

We believe in the separation of church and state. Church is not going to take orders from the state. Tell us not to meet.

And I'm telling you. We're going to meet. If it means we're going to meet in jail. We're going to meet. But for John. The warning to these Christians.

[34:46] Is because they're made face with this question. Are you going to be willing to suffer? Are you going to fear the government. More than you fear God? Are you going to fear suffering. More from the hands of men.

Than you are. From the hands of God. Don't be afraid of suffering. This picture here. Is just one of. Just intense suffering.

That's going to happen. The persecution is coming. And spreading. This is why John is in jail. It was for the word. He said. It was for the preaching of the word. And the testimony of the Lord. That's why I'm here on Patmos.

That's why Jesus said. Do not fear those who can kill the body. Do not kill the soul. Throw the soul into hell.

Virgin said. It would be a very sharp. And experience. To me. To think that I have an affliction. Which God never sent me. It would be a very sharp. And experience.

[35:47] To think that the bitter cup. Was never filled by his hand. Or that my trials. Were never measured out by him. Nor sent to me. By his arrangement. Of their weight and quantity. There is no attribute.

More comforting. To his children. Than that of God's sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances. The most severe trials. They believe. That sovereignty. Has ordained.

Their afflictions. That sovereignty. Overrules their afflictions. And that in his sovereignty. He will sanctify them. Through their afflictions. I haven't gone through.

A real persecution like that. I've been struggling. Through hard things sometimes.

Maybe. Playing sports. And having three day practices. Or something like that. But we clean out the weak ones. Or in school. Taking a chemistry class. And going through. Going to medical school.

[36:44] And trying to weed out. The weak ones. But life is hard. There is a process. Where God is. Bringing us through.

To persevere. And the one thing. That we have. On our side. Is that God is sovereign. Which is why. If I fear him first. Then I don't have to worry.

About the suffering. Of my life. No matter how bad. It can be. I fear the Lord. More than my enemies. I fear the Lord. More than Hamas. Why Paul told the church.

That's not my life. He said. Therefore we ourselves. Boast about you. In the churches of God. For your steadfastness. And faith. In all your persecutions. And afflictions.

That you are currently enduring. They understood. That they should not fear. The suffering of their life. Because they fear God more. They knew that suffering had purpose.

[37:47] Romans 5. 3. Not only this. But we rejoice in our sufferings. Knowing that suffering produces endurance. For as the toldy Corinthian church. In 2 Corinthians 1.

4. It is Christ who comforts us. In all of our afflictions. So that we may be able to comfort those. Who are in any affliction. With the comfort. With which we ourselves. Are comforted by God.

Meaning. All the suffering. That you're going through. Has a purpose. And we're afflicted in every way. Paul said. In 2 Corinthians 4. 8. And yet we are not crushed.

We are perplexed. But not driven to despair. No. You are not to fear suffering. You're not to be afraid. You're commanded not to be afraid. You are commanded to put Christ first.

And exalt him in your heart. So that the peace of Christ rules in your heart. Makes the determinations. Makes the decisions. Enables you to endure. Well I'm not going to get through this.

[38:44] But I'm going to keep moving. So. Not just suffering. But also notice that he says. You're not to fear poverty. I know your tribulation.

And your poverty. Why are they in poverty? Because of Christ in their life. Because they are being persecuted. For their faith. They're enduring persecution.

And we see the description of that. Even in other places. Like Hebrews 10. 34 describes. The believers who are. As he said. Faithfully and joyfully. Accepting the plundering of your property.

Since you knew. That you yourselves. Had a better possession. And an abiding one. Because of Christ. Believers in Christ. Understanding the fear of God. Understanding the fear of God.

Won't hold on so dearly. To their possessions. That they hold on to. To the point of denying Christ. They won't be so afraid. Of losing what they have.

[39:44] In materialism. That they won't live for Jesus openly. Think of the application of that. In our own lives. In business.

Or in school. Or for popularity. The things that we're willing to sacrifice. So that we can be accepted. So that you can be accepted.

By other businesses in town. Or other friends at school. The things that you'll do. To be accepted. By keeping silent. Sometimes it's.

Poverty becomes. Because you're following Christ. And guess what? That is a bad honor for you. Because for him. For them. He said. Yes you're in poverty. But you're rich.

This is the economy of God. This is God. Looking at your circumstances. And saying yes. From an earthly perspective. Oh you're in abject poverty. Like believers in India today.

[40:45] Who are putting a lower. Cast. And have to work in the sewers. Today. I mean. Suffering. People in modern day Turkey. Living under an Islamic state.

And are taxed extra. Because of their faith in Christ. You proclaim Christ. You lose money. Well. It's coming here. We've got a soft persecution.

Maybe you won't be able to. Post a video on YouTube. And maybe you won't be able to. Make posts on Twitter. It's not so hard for us right now.

But it is coming. And the reality is that groaning persecution. Is coming. It's expected. It's what they were going through. It's what was coming for them. More of it was coming.

They're compared to the church of Laodicea. And it's exactly the opposite. He said. You are poor. And yet you're rich. And the condemnation of the church of Laodicea.

[41:43] Is. You're rich. And yet you're poor. To whom much is given. Much is required.

As believers. Paul described. In 2nd Corinthians. We are. As sorrowful.

Yet always rejoicing. As poor. And yet making many rich. As having nothing. And yet possessing everything.

Can you endure poverty? Suffering. Hardship. And even poverty. Can you be poor. In Jesus name. And live a glorious life.

And power. That's recognized. By the God of heaven. So that he looks at your life. And says. Your life is of great value. Your life is shining brightly. You're rich. Jesus said this.

[42:41] This is the. The principles of the kingdom. Matthew 6. 19. Do not lay up for yourselves. Treasures on the earth. Where moth and rust destroy. Where thieves break in and steal.

But lay up for yourselves. Treasures in heaven. Where neither moth nor rust destroys. Where thieves do not break in and steal. For wherever your treasure is. There your heart will be also. Don't fear poverty. Don't fear slander. Number three. The Jews that are blaspheming you. They're speaking evil of you.

These are not real Jews. He says. These. Taken in the sense of Romans 2. 28. A man is not a Jew. If he is one outwardly. But if he is one inwardly. There's a heart change.

It's something about being. A follower of God. In actuality. In reality. This is. These are Jews outwardly.

[43:45] But not inwardly. They're not followers of God. You see that when persecution comes. And you know. On the Sabbath. These Jews are. Helping load the wood.

To build a fire. For the Christians. It's. You know. A little hypocritical. For those that don't work on the Sabbath. These aren't real Jews. He said. They're of the synagogue of Satan.

The synagogue. These are actual. Practicing Jews. In the city of Smyrna. And the persecution. Is coming from them. Toward the Christians. They're blaspheming them. They're speaking evil of them.

Which is giving rise. To a lot of persecution. Synagogue of Satan. Satan. Literally.

Means the slanderer. The false accuser. It's the historical example. That we have. Through scripture. Of his description. Christ is aware.

[44:42] Of the slanderer's accusations. Directed toward these believers. It's going to lead to the martyrdom. Of many of them. Including Polycarp. Who is the successor.

To John. I mean. John is in this area. Of ministering. But John appoints. The successor. In the city of Smyrna. By the name of Polycarp. According to church fathers. This Polycarp.

Is going to be martyred. In the city of Smyrna. After the New Testament. Time. It's because of the Jews. Accusations being brought.

To the government. Turning them in. According to one. Historian. The multitude.

Of he and. And Jews. Living in Smyrna. Fried out. With uncontrollable. Uncontrollable.

Uncontrollable. Wrath. Against the Christians. In this city. So. This. That was happening.

[45:38] Here. In this moment. With John. In this period. Is going to continue. And it. And it continues on. Through history. It's just amazing. When you start reading.

The history of Smyrna. And all the believers. That were martyred. In that city. False accusations.

When people speak. Badly. About you. Have you ever had anybody.

Speak. Badly. About you. Because you're a Christian. Do you fear. Being looked at. Like. You're unacceptable. To the crowd.

Work. School. Your neighbors. Your family. Jesus said. Blessed are you. When others were violent.

You were persecuted. You had uttered. All kinds of evil. Against you.

For all of you. In my account. Rejoice. Rejoice. Be glad in this. For great is. Is. Your reward. In heaven. For so they persecuted.

[46:33] The prophets. That were before you. Don't worry about. Slander. Against you. It's nothing. In comparison. To the glory. That's going to be revealed. In you one day. Endure it.

Gladly. Take it. Suffer. Gloriously. In it. Let it be a strength. Not a weakness. Not to fear this. In fact. You're not even. To fear the devil. And notice. I said this. Do not fear. What you're about to suffer. No. I'm sorry. End of verse 10. Those that slander.

Of who. Of those. Who say. They are accused. Or not. Or of the synagogue. Of Satan. Do not fear. What you're about to suffer. Behold. The devil. Is about to throw you. In the prison.

The devil. Is going to do this. The devil. Is at work. You're not. To be afraid. Of those. That slander you. And you're not. To be afraid. Of the devil. You are not.

[47:30] To fear these things. You belong. To the Lord. Jesus Christ. He. Who was. He who. Is. He who died. He who is.

Alive again. He. Is who you belong to. And because you belong. To him. He has all authority. All authority. Has been given to me. In heaven. And on earth. And beneath the earth.

Every vow. Is going to bow. To Jesus. On earth. And scripture says. And beneath the earth. Hell. Is going to bow. It's knee to Jesus. Fear the devil.

C.S. Lewis said. There are two. Equal and opposite errors. Into which our race. Can fall. About. The demonic. One is to believe. In their. Is to disbelieve.

In their existence. The other. Is to believe. And feel an excessive. And unhealthy. Interest in them. They themselves. The demons. Are equally pleased.

[48:27] By both errors. And hail. A materialist. Or a magician. With the same delight. They hail.

A magician. Or a materialist. With the same delight. One. Denying his existence. At all. And the other. That is a savior. Now remember. As a lost person. This guy.

Sharing the gospel. With me. As a teenager. Contemplating this. I remember. This guy. Did it. Because he looked like Jesus. He had long hair. And beard. Just no problem. But he. He would share the gospel.

With me. All the time. And he's a friend. My brother's. Somehow connected. That way. But he's always. Sharing the gospel. With me. And I remember. Having a discussion. Man. I don't know. Man. I'm just. I'm just. Afraid of all this stuff. And I. Can't remember his name. You know. I'm Scott McDaniel. Is that right? Scott McDaniel. Yeah.

[49:21] So Scott. Would come around. He was always. But he would share with me. And I said. I just don't know. I'm just scared of all this stuff. Every time. I close my eyes at night. I just feel like. The devil is just. Scaring me.

And there was just. This haunting feeling. That I had. Man. I don't know about this stuff. I'm scared to even. Think about it at times. The reality is.

The devil's real. The devil's real. Don't you doubt that for a second. We see the scripture talking about.

Somebody. One of our family members asked us this just recently. You really believe in a talking snake? Sarcastic. And I just said. Well. The prophets believed it.

Jesus believed it. The apostles believed it. So yes. I believe it. Judas. We see it. We're in John. 13. 27. During the last supper. Jesus identifies.

[50:18] Judas. As the one that's going to betray him. And tells us. The scripture tells us. Satan entered into Judas. Satan was at work. Actually at work.

It's not just the bad apples in the group. You see Satan. Where can Peter's life? In Matthew 16. 23. Peter is basically denying that Jesus is going to have to go through suffering.

And Jesus says. Get deep behind me Satan. Who is it that's at work in Peter's mind on this? Distracting him.

And discouraging him. Even from Jesus. Fulfilling the father's command. We see Satan work in the churches. In Acts chapter 5. Ananias and Sapphira.

As they're talking about. Boasting about their giving from the Lord. And they're actually lying to the church. And to the scriptures. And to the Holy Spirit. And when Peter confronts him.

[51:15] What does he say? From experience. Why has Satan filled your heart? To do this thing. Satan at work. Can Satan be at work?

In the lives of believers? Can Satan be at work? In the world around us? According to Peter. 1 Peter 5. 8. Be sober minded. Peter said. Man I've experienced this.

Be sober minded. Be watchful. Your adversary the devil. Prowls around like a lion. Seeking whom he may devour. He's real. We know from.

The experience with Jesus. That he works in religious opposition. At times. In John 8. 44. You see him. Working in the Pharisees. And the Jews. Jesus said.

They do the desires. Of their father. And the devil. Who was a murderer. And a liar. From the beginning. And so. The reality of Satan. Is no question. The reality of the work.

[52:20] Of Satan. In our lives. Is not a question. It is real. It is serious. It is everywhere. And mainly. We don't see the devil. We see the effects of the devil. But what the scripture tells us.

Because of Jesus. Because of Christ. In our lives. Even with the persecution. The suffering. And the poverty. And the slander. Is coming against you. You are not to fear those things. And you are not even to fear the devil himself.

Just like Paul told the Ephesians. Or James told the church. In James 4. 7. Submit yourself.

Therefore. To God. And resist the devil. And he will flee.

He will literally. Run in terror. Why? Because of you? No. Not because of you. Because of Christ.

Amen. That is the armament. For the church. Ephesians 6. Be strong in the Lord. In the strength of his might.

[53:22] Put on the whole armor of God. So that you may be able to stand. Against the schemes. Of the devil. Yes.

He is the devil. Martin Luther said. He is God's devil. He is the devil. Don't fear death.

Not just the devil. But even death. That can come. And following Jesus. Around the world.

Persecution of believers. Is a reality. Every day. What does he say here?

Do you not fear. What you are about to suffer. Behold the devil is about to throw some of you. Into prison. That has happened. That you may be tested. And for ten days. You will have tribulation.

And that ten days phrase. Is really just. It is not necessarily ten literal days. It could have been. But it seems to be. One of those idioms. That just says. It is for a period. It could be a short period.

[54:21] It could be a long period. It could be. You are going to suffer.

For a week of Sundays. It could be. You are going to suffer. In a twinkling of an eye. It is that kind of phrase. It can just be a period of time.

Idiom. It is going to happen. But it is a controlled time. It is. It has got the beginning. It is an end. It is a controlled time. Under the sovereignty of God. Who is sovereign. Over all the appears of your life. So that you do not have to worry. About the devil. And even if it leads to your death. You do not have to worry. You look through this period.

John is going to die. Everybody is going to die. But John is. This is coming. He knows it. He gets a vision.

From the Lord. That he has seen. Some of the things. That are going to happen. In the days to come. And some of them are going to die. We know from history. That there are many. That died in this city.

[55:18] Like Justin Martyr. In 165 AD. Irenaeus. Church father. In 202 AD. Cyprian. Under the persecution.

Of Trajan. In 258. There is over and over. You just go through. The march of history. You just watch the persecution. In the city. And yet. The believers keep. The faith.

And the fire keeps burning. Even when one historian said. Eusebius. Who describes the. One of the periods. Early in the persecution.

He said. We saw with our own eyes. The houses of prayer. Being thrown down. To their very foundations. And the divine. And sacred scriptures. Committed to the flames. We have observed. Large crowds.

In one day. Some suffering. Decapitation. Others. Tortured by fire. So much so. That the murderous sword. Was dull. And becoming weak.

[56:15] Was broken. And the very executioners. Grew weary. And relieved. One another. From time to time. And you go through history. You read. Of the hundreds of thousands.

Of believers. That were massacred. In one. One short period. Or even. Fast forward. To the beginning. Of the 1900s.

When the Ottomans. The Turks. Or Muslims. Persecuted. The Armenian Christians. That were there. And two million. Of them were massacred. Two million. It's hard to count.

The number. That have died. For the faith. In these places. And yet. The encouragement. Was to them. I see these things. Coming. And yet.

You. Because of Christ. In your life. You are to be. Fearless. And faithful. Even to the point. Of death. Be faithful. Unto death.

[57:10] Fidelis. Ad phim. You are to be faithful. To death. To the grave. To the very end. Polycarp.

Is just a picture. Of this. I mean. I can't imagine. This. The history. That follows. This so closely. And Polycarp. Is the disciple. Of John. And.

We read. In church history. Just this. Historical figure. And him getting. Getting. Martyr. In the city. Of Smyrna. As he's dragging. The arena.

And. He's. Demanded. To deny. Christ. He's 86 years old. At this point. And as an 86 year old man. The.

Proconsul. There says. Deny Christ. Proclaim. Caesar is Lord. And we'll free you. You're an old man. We'll let you go. Just. Just. Proclaim. Caesar is Lord. Deny.

[58:05] The infidels. He said. So. Polycarp. Looks to the crowd. And says. I deny the infidels. He says.

Deny Christ. And swear to Caesar. And Polycarp. Responds. For 86 years. I have met his servant. And he has never done me wrong.

How can I blaspheme. My king. For savior. Swear by Caesar's fortune. The proconsul. Yells. If you imagine.

That I will swear. By Caesar's fortune. As you have put it. Pretending not to know. Who I am. Then I will tell you. Plainly. I am a Christian. Proconsul. Continues.

I'll have wild beasts. Brought in. I'll throw you to them. If you don't recant. Call them. If you make light of the beast.

[59:05] I'll have you destroyed. By fire. Polycarp responds. The fire you threaten with. Burns for a time. And is soon extinguished. But there is a fire.

You know nothing of. The fire of judgment to come. But why do you hesitate? Do what you will. And as they came to. Nail him to the wood.

So that they could burn him. I guess it was the custom. Because as the fire starts. Often times.

Those that were being burned alive. Would jump off. The flame. So they would try to nail him to it.

Secure him to it. He said. Don't bother. I will leave. The mob calls for his death.

He said flame. According to the historian. And he prays. I bless thee Lord. For counting me worthy. Of this day and hour. That in the number of the martyrs.

[60:03] I may partake. The cup of Christ. To the resurrection. Of body and soul. Don't fear death.

Don't fear death. Don't fear death. Don't fear death. Don't fear death. Don't fear death. Why?

Because Christ was dead. And he's alive. Because Christ is alive.

I have everything. If I put Christ first. And I exalt him above everything. And he has the preeminence in my heart. That it will bring me to a place. Where I can endure anything.

That this world offers. You want to take my wealth away? Take it. You want to take my life? Take it. You want to haunt me with the devil? Haunt me. But know this.

One day the resurrection of the dead is coming. And I'll be among them. And I'll have life forever and ever and ever. And because of Jesus Christ in my heart and mind. I'm going to stand for him until that day.

[61:09] What's the reward? Crown. Crown. Be faithful unto death. And I'll give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear.

It's similar to what Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 4.7. I fought the good fight. I finished the race. I kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness. With which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day.

And not only to me, but all those who have loved his appearing. You have prioritized Christ. You have put him first in your heart. You fear him above all else. This is what it means to follow Jesus. Is that you've put him first. And now because of that, I can endure anything that this world has to offer. Anything that you throw at me. Anything the devil can do in my heart.

I've got a crown coming. This is not a royal crown. This is the victor's crown. And everyone living in the city of Smyrna would have known that from the Colosseum weren't there. To see the victor stand there with the gloral wreath on his head.

[62:20] As the victor. You're defeated right now. You're in prison. You're being tortured. You're being persecuted. All these terrible things are happening for you. You're in prison.

Right? Guess what? You're a victor. A victor. A conqueror. One that overcomes, he says. I remember reading about being, I was going to say, a lamp of lamp, a lamp of the dronia. Those are great words. There's torch relay. There's torch relay. In the Olympic games, we see it. You know, they make the relay of the torch and then light the torch to start the games. This was actually a competition. It would be, in those days, a relay race with a flame. And it wasn't the one that ran the fastest.

It was the winner. There were teams that would compete and they would make this relay across the countryside to get there. It was a light of flame. It wasn't the one that got there the fastest.

[63:28] The winner was the one who finished with his torch still lit. John is saying to the church, it's the same thing he says to us.

The winner is the one that makes it to the end. The torch still lit. The victor. The crown. The overcomer. He doesn't experience second death.

Second death is not finality. It's not the annihilationism that's talked about like as if I died physically about nothing. Well, I wasn't nothing, was I? I actually, it was a transition, an irretrievable transition that was made of death.

I can't go back to being alive again. But that transition now happens by description here as a second death, a spiritual transition from which there's no return.

The lake of fire that burns forever and ever. And those that overcome will not be hurt by the second death. What do you have to hope for?

[64:34] It's all in Christ. It's coming. There's no fear for those that fear the Lord more than anything. There's a reward.

I heard this hymn a couple of weeks ago. It just resonated with you over and over and over again. Be still my soul.

Just what a great hymn it is. Be still my soul. The Lord is on thy side. Bear patiently the cross that pray for pain.

Leave to thy God to order and provide. In every change he faithful will remain. Be still my soul. Thy best thy heavenly friend through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

Be still my soul. Thy God doth undertake to guide the future as he has the past. Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake.

[65:41] All now mysterious shall be bright at last. Be still my soul. The waves and winds still know his voice. Who ruled them what he was below.

All the troubles. All the difficulties. All the trials. All the crises. All the overwhelming oppressions. The evictions. All of the things that you're facing.

Your heart and mind. That are keeping you from the glory of God in your life. Are to be burned up in his presence. Because if you'll fear God more than you fear anything else.

All of those things will fall into line. Until there is nothing that will keep you from obedience. And everything will draw you into his presence.

Be still my soul. His voice still rules. Can I repeat that?