

Faithful unto Death: Rich in Christ †■ | Revelation 2:8-11 ■

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[0 : 00] Welcome to Ontario Community Church, where we are encouraging, equipping, and engaging lives for Christ. I'm Pastor Patrick Daly and each week I balance the grace and love of Jesus Christ with the truth of the Word of God.

Today, you'll be hearing week 5 of our sermon series through the book of Revelation. We are looking at Revelation 2, verses 8-11, which is Christ's letter to the church in Smyrna.

Now, here's something powerful to note before you listen. This is one of only two churches in Revelation that receives no correction or rebuke from Christ, only commendation and encouragement.

Smyrna was the suffering church. It was facing persecution. It was the struggling church. They were physically poor. They were facing slander and that persecution, yet Jesus calls them spiritually rich.

What a reminder for us or for even if we're in a church that is facing a trial. Our struggles are not wasted. For in Christ, we are seen, we are sustained, and we are loved by Christ.

[1 : 14] As you listen today, I want you to pay attention to how Christ is identifying himself. He is calling himself the first and the last, which is the Alpha and the Omega, who died and came to life.

This is speaking of the resurrection. Christ is showing his authority over time, life, and death. I also want you to take note that trials have a limit, just like the ten days that are mentioned to the church in Smyrna, but also in Daniel chapter 1.

Let us trust in the Lord Jesus Christ who conquered death. Let us stand firm during the spiritual battle, and let us endure to the end, where we will receive the crown of life.

Let us now listen together to today's message, Faithful unto death, rich in Christ. Well, good morning, everyone. It's great to be here as we are continuing through our series through the book of Revelation.

This last week, we began, we started with these seven churches that are in Revelation. And what's important as we're going through these seven churches is that not only are these historical churches, but these are situations that, well, for many of us, we may identify.

[2 : 36] We may have been through in a church setting, maybe not the bad ones, but maybe a good one, or maybe you have been in a situation. Every church is different. Every church has its strengths and its weaknesses.

And what's important for all of us is to realize that as the body of Christ, as a church, an imperfect church at that, that we seek the living God. We learn to love like Jesus has, how he has loved us.

And we search the scriptures. We learn about the truth of the word of God. And as we're going to go through, we learned this last week about this situation where this church had lost its first love.

What a tragedy that must be to be so focused in the pursuit of truth and losing the love of Christ. And I pray that that's never the case for this church or really any church in that.

And should that ever happen, I pray that we may change our mind, that we may repent and come back to the love of Christ, loving God and loving others.

[3 : 51] This week, we're going over the church in Smyrna. I'd like for us to turn our Bibles into Revelation chapter two, verses eight through 11. And there's something as we're turning into there in your ESVP Bibles.

It's going to be in page 1219 or your Bible of choice, Revelation two, verses eight through 11. And as we're turning there, I want you to pay attention to see that there's not a lot of verses on this church.

There's not a lot about it. And in fact, here is a scenario where this is known as the struggling or the suffering church, a church that is going through tribulation.

And we can think about how in our own lives, our own personal and individual lives, we go through trials and we go through tribulation. Well, in churches, unfortunately, there are times where there is persecution or pressure, a trial or a situation that a church may go through.

And we'll see here. What does Christ say to this church in Smyrna? Are we all there, church? So let's read to the church in Smyrna.

[5 : 17] Let's read this together. Verse eight. And to the angel of the church in Smyrna, write the words of the first and the last who died and came to life.

Verse nine. I know your tribulation and your poverty, but you are rich and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a what church?

A synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison that you may be tested.

And for how many days? Ten days. You will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death. And I will give you the crown of life.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.

[6 : 18] Now, last week when we looked at Ephesus, we had all these good things and we had the famous, but, or yet I have this against you.

And do we see that in here? We don't. We don't. So this is one of the few times here that we see that there is no correction or rebuking as it were.

In fact, here we are seeing that, you know, Christ is identifying himself as the first and the last. The one who died and came to life, right?

Christ is establishing his authority. We think of Jesus Christ being the Alpha and the Omega. We can think of the triune God being everlasting to everlasting.

Being the same yesterday, today, and forever. It's just one of the many words to describe the essence of our Lord and our God. God. It's not only is it describing our triune God and describing Jesus Christ as the first and the last talking about time, but also talking about the one who died and came to life.

[7 : 33] Speaking of the resurrection. Speaking of the power that our Lord and our God has over death. And that is just that verse in of itself should give us comfort that God is there with us in all of time and is the one who has conquered death.

The one who can provide everlasting life. And so you'll notice that. Very similar as it is mentioned, as it mentions in the church of Ephesus.

And so. Again, this is a struggling and suffering church, and we see why here. That the words of Christ is saying, I know your tribulation.

And your poverty. But yet you are rich. Isn't that interesting? We find that this church was one that was facing pressure.

One that was facing attacks. Not just spiritual attacks, but also slanderous words. So much so that it was affecting.

[8 : 47] Thinking about a church that is physically poor, but yet spiritually rich. You know, years ago, I knew of a.

My. You can ask my wife as well. I knew of a church that. When my wife and I, when we lived in California, sometimes we'd go visit some churches. We'd go travel and we found this one church that was such a, a small congregation.

And they were talking about in their announcements how they were really struggling to pay the bills. And they were saying how the roof was leaking and the air conditioning was, was going out.

And mind you, it was summer. It was pretty hot in there. But yet they were so faithful. They were kind of saying, you know, we don't have all the money, but we're going to keep showing up. And that's what we're going to do.

And the heart in that is something that's really wonderful to see. That regardless of this specific church or even in the, what we're talking about with Smyrna.

[9 : 56] A church that is struggling. But yet, despite that struggle. They are blessed. They are rich in Christ.

And not only can we see that within churches, but we can even think of that for our, us as individuals. You may know of someone, or you may identify with someone who struggles.

It doesn't have to necessarily be finances. They may be struggling by spiritual warfare or spiritual attacks or slander. But yet, despite that kind of pressure, that kind of trial or tribulation.

It's talking about being rich in Christ. And what a comforting reminder we can think of. That when we face pressure. When we face any sort of accusations, slander, attack, whatever.

I mean, the list of the evil things that people can do is endless, right? But yet, despite that. Knowing that God is there with us. And he's not going to abandon us.

[11 : 02] And that all of that suffering and struggling. It's not for nothing. It's going to count in the eyes of God. And that's something that is really remarkable.

So, tribulation, this pressure. And we find in scripture, we're not going to turn there, but this pattern actually shows up in 2 Corinthians 8, verses 2 and verse 9.

This idea of a church. It talks about the Macedonian churches that were physically poor or they were struggling. And yet, they were spiritually rich.

And that's something that is, we can see as an ongoing pattern in here. And so, going back to the verse here. And the slander of those that say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

Now, that is some harsh language here, right? We'll get to there. So, what's happening here. You have slander.

[12 : 07] Words that are being spoken. People that are opposing this church to the point that they are struggling. And that is a reality.

Unfortunately, that can happen. Where people rise up against you personally or even the local church. What a heartbreak that is when that happens.

When it does happen, we lean into our faith in Christ. Knowing that a time of testing or a time of trial, it will be limited.

It won't be forever. And so, the slander of those and the synagogue of Satan. You read that and you think, well, what in the world is going on? Is there a literal synagogue that's happening and there's these Satanists that are coming together and worshipping the devil?

Not necessarily. What it's talking about is an assembly. A group of people that are gathering together and they are plotting and scheming against this church.

[13 : 17] You want to talk about spiritual warfare or the attacks of the enemy? That is a very real description of people that rise up and try to see to it that they can destroy the church or destroy people.

It's ungodly. And what we see in here is that it's being recognized. It's being recognized. And only twice is this language used in all of Scripture.

This time it's being used and Christ is saying, look, this is happening and it's not going to happen forever. Later on, if you turn your Bibles into real briefly, the church in Philadelphia.

Same thing that's happening, but I don't want to go too far ahead. We'll get into that in a couple weeks time here. And so, only twice that happens.

An assembly of people who were against this church and or against the church in Smyrna. We can think of that. And these people were aligned with the devil.

[14 : 30] They were aligned with the adversary or the accuser. Banning together and doing everything within their power to go against the church.

It's some easy reading, isn't it? This is heavier stuff. And it's something that we can see not only historically, but some churches that have gone through such kind of pressure.

We go into verse 10 then. And what does Christ say here? He says the three words that have such weight and are such throughout Scripture.

Do not fear. Much like many times in the Bible, it says to do not be afraid. Well, that's easier said than done, isn't it? Especially when you're in that situation. But he's saying, do not fear what you are about to suffer.

You mean there's more to this? That's hard. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison.

[15 : 38] That you may be tested for 10 days. You will have tribulation. So we know the devil as in the adversary. Now, when we read this, are we talking literally the devil is coming?

Not necessarily. We know that when we talk about the spiritual guidance, you can be led by the Holy Spirit. You can be led by the demonic.

Led by the devil. Led by those that have hardened hearts. Evil intent to go against. See, we think of this constant battle between good and evil.

And the beautiful thing for us as Christians is to recognize we're on the winning team. It's for us to recognize that there is victory in Jesus. That we were once all in darkness and we come to the light of Christ, the love of Christ, the truth of Christ.

Knowing that even though here on this earth, there may very well be situations, trials and tribulations that you go through. But the Lord's going to be there with you every step of the way.

[16 : 46] And so we find I want us to turn real quick. You'll see on there's a slide there for Daniel.

This is the last time you turn to Daniel in Scripture. Don't answer that. Let's turn to the book of Daniel. I want to show you something here because it's connected about why in Revelation it's talking about being in prison for 10 days.

What in the world's going on there? We actually see that there's significance and another time in Scripture where this happens. So just Daniel chapter one.

We won't go through the whole thing, but just verses eight through. They'll just be bits and pieces here. Right. So Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food. Right.

So he's talking about that. Verse nine. God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs. Right. So it's going on. Verse 10. The chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, I fear the Lord.

[17 : 51] And he's talking about the food. And then in verse 11, Daniel said to the steward. We go into verse 12. Test your servants for 10 days.

Let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food will be observed by you. So it's talking about a testing that's happened.

Very similar language in here. So verse 14. He listened to them in this matter and tested them for 10 days. And at the end of the 10 days, they were better in appearance. Right. And it's going on about just this evaluation that's happening.

Very similar. When we're talking about the testing. Trials and in tribulation. And so. Going back to Revelation.

When we see this significance of 10 days, it's interesting to see where this has happened before. A testing such as that. For 10 days, you will have some.

[18 : 52] I'm going back to Revelation now. You will have tribulation. You'll have that pressure. And what's important for us to note is. Does it say the tribulation will be forever?

It doesn't. It's saying that there's going to be a cap, as it were. Right. There's going to be a limit to such tribulation. And so. Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life.

We see that there's this 10 day limit. And then being faithful to the Lord. Until the end. Receiving that crown of life.

Now, what's. Powerful about this is. Knowing that. In every situation where. We are going through.

Those trials that pressure. We're going through sickness or in health. Understanding that. The Lord sees that. And recognizes it. Stay true.

[19 : 55] To the Lord. Stay rooted in him. Remain faithful to him. And know that at the end of it all. There is blessing that comes from that.

It's important for us to know that. In these kind of situations. That God is there. That crown of life is the representation of.

A sense of honor. Right. It's the call to remain true. To Christ. And let us remember in Christ. We are secure. Until the end.

But we don't give up hope in him. We keep that hope in Christ. It's kind of like. If you remember. I gave this message about the parable of the tower.

And the warring king. Which was talking about the idea of. Calculating or considering the cost to follow Christ. In the same way, we have got to consider and calculate if you're not a believer in Christ, there is so much benefit. You receive salvation, you receive protection, and knowing that God's with you in every season of life is powerful.

[21 : 13] And so, in that verse 11, he who has an ear, let him hear. Hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.

Now, that's an interesting one. We think of how we have this physical body, and a lot of you may think of that saying where you're not getting any younger, right? It's a reality.

But we think of the physical, the delicacy of our bodies, and the first death. But you don't have to die twice, and that's talking about where you are going eternally.

That's why it's so important for us to believe in Jesus Christ, the way, the truth, and the life. To only die once, but to live forever.

However, that's powerful. In this, I want us to go to the interpretation. And, you know, here at Ontario Community Church, we use the OIA method, observation, interpretation, and application.

[22 : 24] We went through the verses. Scripture being our source, we have to think of now, what are the lessons that we can learn from this? The first thing is that Christ is with us in our trials and in our tribulations, that God is present with us.

I think of that famous song. And even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.

And it goes on talking about, for you, God, are with me. And we have to think, and that's just one time in Scripture. There's many other times where it talks about the Lord being present with us in our everyday lives.

In the highs and in the lows, right? The hills and the valleys. Or in the times we may not even see how God is working in our lives, right? How many of you know that famous saying that hindsight is 20-20, right?

We can raise our hands on that one, right? I didn't understand, God, what you were doing, but now I sure do. And you were protecting me from danger. Or I didn't like what you were doing, God, but you had a much greater plan.

[23 : 36] We can think about rejections. It could be college. It could be being rejected for a date. You can think of colleges or job opportunities or even just plans that you've had in your life.

How many of you had a change of plans because of the Lord? Amen? Right? There's that famous saying that if you want to give God a good laugh, give Him your plans. Right?

Because God's got a good sense of humor here. But we think that, let us remember that, again, Christ is with us in those trials and in those tribulations.

Just as it was mentioning in verse 8. Right? That Christ is the first and the last. The Alpha and the Omega. And that He died on the cross and He rose again, showing His rule and His reign over time, over life, and over death as well.

And we have to think that when we as Christians, we may face slander. We may face times of poverty.

[24 : 41] We may face times where we are enduring pressure, as it were. Just know you are rich in Christ. Just know that Christ is there with you.

And our struggles are not wasted. In Christ, they are seen. They are held. And you are loved. The mention of a synagogue of Satan and the devil, it reminds us, or it should remind us, it should let us know that there is an underlying battle that exists between good and evil.

I know for some of us, we may not like that kind of language. But the reality is, we can see it manifest in the physical world. We can see just by, I'm not going to recommend going on social media or turning on the TV anymore, but you turn it on.

You see the kind of division that happens locally, nationally, even globally. All the things that are happening, it can be very overwhelming for us. We have got to remember that there is the physical space, but also the spiritual sense.

The battle between good and evil. And let us be reminded again, that our victory is in Jesus Christ. That's why it's so important for us to share in the gospel message with other people.

[26 : 11] Letting them know there is a better way than the confusion of the world, the division, the hatred, the misunderstanding, the nastiness, as it were, of the world.

That there is safety, real safety, real security, peace and comfort and joy that come from the Lord. That there is simplicity and consistency in God.

And so, may your identity be rooted in Christ. May it not be rooted in the world. May you come to the Lord.

Let us also be reminded that the day will come when the war will be over. Right now, we're just in the middle of it.

And we may not even think for a moment that battle, that war is going to be over. And that should give us comfort. And as us being sheep and Christ being the shepherd, well, our shepherd's going to be with us until the end.

[27 : 20] That Christ sustains us and will lead us to green pastures, as it were. What beautiful language in that. The second one is the devil's tactics and Christ's victory.

There's opposition that happens in this life. Jesus speaking ahead of what is going to happen. Don't be afraid what you're about to suffer.

And it's important for us to set our hearts on him. I mean, if I got a warning about what is about to happen, I'd probably, we should take notice of that, right? It's very important for us.

It's also important for us to know the devil, the enemy, the demonic, spiritual forces, whatever, evil will try to win over you.

I've told a couple people this before that. I remember growing up with my mother being a very good woman of God.

[28 : 33] But always tell me, if the devil cannot get you by sending you to hell, he'll use your story to send other people there.

And I hated that. I hated hearing that, right? Thinking, well, I'm saved. But what is my actions and my words and who I am as a person going to do?

I want my testimony to be reflecting of God's love, his mercy. And even though I couldn't stand those words as a kid, I still think of that now.

To keep to heart the salvation that we have, but also you've got to take note of how you live your life. May it honor and glorify God.

May you get closer in your relationship with God. And may you be able to exhibit that love of Christ with others. Just like how the great commandment says, we're called to love God and love people.

[29 : 38] For some of us, it might be easier to just love God. I don't want to love people, right? But yet we're called to do both. Some of us may just love people. It may be hard to connect with God. But it's both of them.

We love God and we love people. Right? We share in the truth of God's word. We do all of these things in the name of Jesus Christ.

And so, going back, there's a limit. We think of that limit. We think of how that 10 days that's mentioned in in that part, it's a short time.

It's a short time. It may seem like forever. How many of us have gone through a trial and it's like, it seems like it's an eternity. But we know that in every tribulation and trial, there's an end to it.

But let us also remember that the love that God has for us will never end. It will always be there. Just like how we can think of the physical world.

[30 : 49] We think of storms that happen, right? A good rainstorm. Winds blowing everywhere. Lightning and thunder. Every storm will have an end to it. We can see that in the physical world and we can also think of that in the spiritual world.

That every trial and every tribulation, there's an end to that. And we thank God for that. And so, prison, pressure, slander, that's just a few things when we think of the tactics of the devil.

But yet, God is going to use that to show that you have real faith in him. Not to destroy it, but to let it shine.

The third thing then, faithful until the end, crowned with life. We stand firm in Jesus Christ. And even if our faith costs us being thrown in prison or us struggling or even unto death, we have life in Christ and that will never be shaken.

We are secured by the one who conquers death. And that's important for us to share in the good news of the gospel.

[32 : 13] that's why it's so important for us to let others know that there is something much different than what this world has to offer.

That crown of life is symbolizing the victory in Christ and that the battle is already won. We just gotta wait.

We've gotta wait for that battle to end. Also, let us think, some of you may, you think of a crown, you may not think necessarily the crown of life, you may actually think of the crown of thorns that Jesus wore.

Well, let us remember that Christ wore a crown of thorns so that we could have the crown of life in him. And so, we will not be hurt by the second death.

Neither man, nor the demonic, nor government, nor technology, nor movement, association, whatever, nothing can separate us from Christ.

[33 : 21] That is important for us to take to heart. And so, let us think of how us being secure in Christ, how we can share that with other people.

let us go now to the application, right? So, those are the lessons, right? That Christ is with us in our trials and our tribulations. The devil will use his tactics through people, through situations, but we are securing Christ and we remain faithful until the end.

So, how do we respond to this then? The first and foremost, we secure ourselves by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, believing in the death, burial, and resurrection of him.

Place your faith and trust in the one who rules over time, life, and death. Bring your cares to him.

Bring your burdens to him. And like I mentioned about that parable of the tower and the warring king, consider and calculate the cost. In other words, place your full trust or, if you remember that sermon, cast your pebble into him.

[34 : 39] The reward of salvation, the newness of life, far outweighs anything of this world. It's much like how scripture tells us, what profit is it for us to gain the whole world and lose or forfeit our soul?

And so, let us trust in Jesus. May we not seek the things of this world, but let us seek the things of God.

The second thing then is to stand firm in the battle and grow in Christ's strength. God supplies us with peace, with joy, and it's a hard truth, but it's the truth nonetheless, we've got to recognize that there is a battle that's going on between good and evil.

Entering that spiritual war between good and evil, don't be surprised that people may go against you. People will go against you. But our faith is much stronger than slanderous words or what people may do to us.

Let us put on the armor, right? taking up the shield of faith and the sword. Let us resist the enemy's tactics with truth, righteousness, and prayer.

[36 : 01] Consider the armor of God. Also consider the fruit of the Spirit and how important it is for us. Let's fill up heaven by sharing in the gospel message with others.

It's also a call for us to deepen our relationship with the Lord. Deepen that through prayer, reading scripture, being together in the body of Christ.

Practice your faith. Continue to grow in Him. Don't be stagnant in your walk with the Lord. Let God mold you into who He wants you to be.

Grow in holiness. You will be known by your love. You'll be known by your fruit. And then finally, endure to the end.

Live for the eternal riches. How many of you have heard that verse where it talks about receiving treasures in heaven? Some of you may know that one, right?

[37 : 06] We stand firm in the truth of God's word and the love of Jesus Christ, and we persevere even when the world opposes us, even when we go through those trials.

We serve as an ambassador knowing that, look, we are not saved by what we do, we are saved by what is done in Jesus Christ, and because of this, that is why we do.

We continue to build up those treasures in heaven, and knowing that when we are suffering or when we're struggling, we are rich in Christ. How wonderful is that for us to know?

So let us live in faith. Let us give and serve the Lord, loving God and loving people. Let us think of these things, and in this, let us, as we close our time here, let us not be afraid of the world, or what the world may do to us.

When we read these verses about what happened with Smyrna, it is hard to read that. Thinking of pressure and tribulations and slander, people rising up against you as this language of the synagogue of Satan and the devil throwing people into prison, that is not easy language.

[38 : 35] But despite all of that, we remain faithful in Christ, knowing that whatever the world may throw at us, we're not going to be shaken. We're going to remain in that truth, in the truth of Christ and the love of him.

When we journey through our spiritual walk in the Lord, the shepherd is there with us, walking with us every step of the way. that doesn't mean we're going to trip and fall sometimes.

It doesn't mean that there's not going to be wolves, but we are journeying together in this life to greener pastures, knowing that we are secure in Christ.

Let us think of Christ being the first and the last, the one who died and was buried and rose again from the dead, and let us know in the same way that the Lord knew the trials and the tribulations that Smyrna was going through.

The Lord knows what you are going through, what you have been through, or what you are about to experience. Be faithful to him, and he will give you that crown of life.

[39 : 53] And as it kind of ends in this section here, let us hear, let us understand the importance of us remaining in Christ, no matter what it is a church goes through, our church goes through, or what we personally go through, we remain committed to Jesus Christ.

Let's pray together. And Father, we thank you for this time for us to go through this, the church in Smyrna that was going through spiritual attack of the enemy.

We pray if any of us are going through trials or tribulation, may you comfort them, may we as the body of Christ care for each other.

And if we're going through anything like that, may we know that that trial is not forever. We pray for churches that are going through that or have been through that, that you are there with them and that they are rich in your son, Jesus Christ.

We thank you for this, what we can learn and how we can implement this in our lives. We recognize this is a very, this is a harder, a harder message nonetheless, but it's the truth of your word.

[41 : 35] And even though it may be hard, may we still learn from it and implement it in our very lives. May we remain faithful to you, knowing that even when people rise up against us, our faith remains in you.

And may we remain in you until the end where we receive the crown of life, where we will dwell with you in the new heaven and in the new earth.

We love you so much and we just, once again, we thank you for your word, even though these kind of messages can be challenging. May they build us up in you. I pray that if there's anyone that doesn't know Jesus, that they may believe in your son Jesus, believing in the death, burial, and resurrection.

Believe in the Lord and be saved. I pray for all of us here in the congregation and those that are watching online, if they are a Christian, we pray that they're growing and that they may learn something, that your spirit may move in them.

If they're going through a trial, may they be comforted. If they're about to go through a trial, may they know that you're with them in those times. And we pray that all of us may be moved to live and love like your son, Jesus Christ.

[43 : 02] It is in the name of Jesus that we pray and we all say together, amen church. Amen. Thank you for tuning in to Ontario Community Church.

If this message encouraged you, I encourage for you to share it with a friend or family member who may be going through a trial or struggling. Remind them that Christ is with them and they are rich in him.

You are welcome to visit Ontario Community Church. For more information about our church, how to connect with us, and how you can get involved. You can also visit our sermon archives, which has a trove of sermons, slides, notes, and Bible studies.

Next week, we will continue in our sermon series through the book of Revelation with the church in Pergamum, found in Revelation 2, verses 12-17.

We will be looking at truth without compromise and standing firm even when the world pressures us. grace and peace to you in our Lord Jesus Christ. May you be faithful unto death, and may you receive the crown of life.

[44 : 12] God bless you. God bless you.