

Smyrna: Faithfulness to the End

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[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! Revelation chapter 2, the last book of the Bible. Revelation chapter 2, I'm going to begin reading in verse 8.

And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write the words of the first and the last who died and came to life.

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 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 ten days you will have tribulation.

[1 : 11] Be fruitful 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. May God bless the preaching and the hearing of his word this morning.

Well, do you ever wonder what secret ingredients make up Chick-fil-A's delicious homemade sauce? Do you ever question what untold delights and disciplines make up a marriage that lives happily for 20, 30, even 50 years?

Do you ever ask what unknown routines and regimens set apart championship teams from all the others? Because, I'm sure you do. Legend has it, the thing that separated the 2007 and 2008 world champion Boston Celtics from everyone else was PB&J.;

Before a game in December of that year, one player said, Man, I could really go for a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Kevin Garnett, the team's leader, jumped in and said, Yeah, let's get on that.

[2 : 42] The next night, the team ate PB&J sandwiches before the game and played well. Very well. So well that Mr. Garnett said after the game, We're going to need PB&Js; up in here before every game now.

And the championship sandwich was born. Of course, we know that already. Each night, Brian Dew, the Celtics strength and conditioning coach, found himself slapping together 20 PB&Js; before every tip-off.

The finished products were placed in bags and labeled in a Sharpie and secret code. S for strawberry. G for grape. C for crunchy.

The players were committed to their routine. If their sandwiches weren't just right in the secret code, not done, just right in the game, the whole season could have been thrown off. But the PB&Js; kept coming, and the Celtics go on to win the NBA finals with the big three of Garnett, Ray Allen, and Paul Pierce.

Or should it be the big four? Garnett, Allen, Pierce, and the PB&J.; Sometimes when I'm reading the New Testament, I wonder, what is that secret ingredient, though, in a more serious way of the early church?

[4 : 10] What were the convictions that caused them to face down so much? We know the vast majority of our forefathers in the faith were martyred.

This morning, we have the privilege of learning firsthand. We're studying the exalted Lord's letter to the church in Smyrna. Now, Smyrna was a beautiful, prosperous city about 35 miles north of Ephesus on the coast of the Aegean Sea.

In the first century, it would have contained just under what Ephesus did at 200,000 people. It was second only to Ephesus in the region for export.

So it was a commercial and business center. It had overcome much in its history. It had been crumbled by an earthquake before and burned by a foreign king 300 years before the birth of Christ. But the church would still have much to overcome. In this letter to the church in Smyrna, the Lord warns that tribulation is coming. He doesn't merely warn them about it coming.

[5 : 19] He equips them to face it. He gives them the special sauce. We want to put it that way. The secret ingredient. He gives them all they need to stand up against the opposition and the persecution that's coming.

But the Lord is speaking to us as well. As we talked about last week, it's written to seven churches because seven is the number for completion. And so the seven churches in Revelation are meant to represent all churches across the world and across time.

So the Lord is speaking to us. If you've been reading the news lately, the storms have been gathering a bit for the church. The culture is becoming increasingly uncomfortable and opposed to the things we believe.

And all that we need to face it is right here. The only church in a word where we're going that matters is marked by costly faithfulness to Jesus Christ.

The only church that matters in the end is marked by costly faithfulness to Jesus Christ. We're going to break this out in three kind of paradoxical statements.

[6 : 21] The first is the riches of poverty. Three paradoxical attributes of the church. The riches of poverty. The body of the letter begins in the same way that the body of the letter began to the Ephesians.

It begins with the Lord saying what he sees at work in their midst. He says, look in verse 9, I know. I know what's going on. I know the tribulation and poverty and the slander you're enduring.

D.A. Carson famously said, all you have to do is live long enough and you will suffer. Some of us know that painfully well this morning, but the tribulation that Jesus is talking about here is not old age or cancer or grief.

The tribulation and suffering Jesus is talking about here is the opposition and persecution to the people of God just because they are the people of God.

It's the opposition and persecution coming to them just because they call themselves the people of God. They follow Jesus Christ. Indeed, 2 Timothy 3 says, I doubt that's hanging over anyone's mantle or in anyone's bathroom.

[7 : 41] But all who desire to follow Him will be persecuted. And so this church has been persecuted. It has resulted in several hardships. We see just tribulation.

That's kind of a bucket term to refer to the opposition they're enduring. The pressure. They're living in the Roman Empire where Christianity is illegal. Where they're pressured to conform.

Pressured to worship Caesar. Pressured to offer sacrifices to pagan gods. He says, I know also of your poverty.

See, their unwillingness to conform has resulted in poverty. It has resulted in lost jobs. Lost clients. Lost opportunities because they confess the name of Jesus Christ.

He also says, I know of your slander. Their unwillingness to conform has resulted in slander by Jews.

[8 : 38] Now, when I read that, you probably were taken aback by the Lord's statement that the Jews in Smyrna are a synagogue of Satan. Now, that doesn't sound so gentle and lowly, Jesus.

Sounds a bit anti-Semitic. But we need to understand what's going on to understand the sharpness of Jesus' language. See, the Jews in the Roman Empire kind of had a deal with Rome.

Rome made a deal to let them live in the empire and not offer sacrifices and call Caesar a god.

They could just honor him and offer sacrifice in that way, but not worship him in a god.

And so they had this arrangement. And for many decades, the Christians had that arrangement too.

They were viewed as a subset of the Jewish religion. And so they didn't have to offer sacrifices to the Roman gods and to Caesar, just like the Jews didn't.

But then the Jews began saying, they're not Jews. They're not real Jews. So they should offer sacrifice.

[9 : 47] The Romans then began opposing them and persecuting them for failing to worship Caesar at the encouragement of Jews. And Jesus says that it's slander. And slander is just spreading a false report.

And so Jesus is saying, the true Jews are not those born of Abraham who hold his name, but those born of the Spirit. True Jews are not those who hold fast to the promises of Israel and are circumcised.

True Jews are those who hold fast to the gospel and Jesus Christ. And so Jesus says, all those who oppose those who follow Christ are a synagogue of Satan.

They may confess the God of Israel, but they are of their father, the devil. Just like Jesus said in John 9, doing his will.

And so Jesus begins, the same way he began with Ephesus, I know what you're facing. Tribulation, your poverty, and your slander. Your hands down right now, our family's favorite show is the PBS show, All Creatures Great and Small.

[10:58] It's based on the 1930s veterinarian named James Harriet, who lived in Yorkshire, England. I never thought I would be cheering for a breached cow to be born, but I am doing it now, because I love this show.

And in a recent episode, the senior veterinarian, Siegfried, in the office is troubled. Siegfried is remembering his time in the Great War, in World War II, and doing things he never thought would be unimaginable.

And he's troubled by what he remembers, troubled by what he did in that war. He grows more and more frustrated, and as he grows more and more frustrated, he grows irritable and annoyed with everyone in the office.

Finally, one of the employees asked him, Siegfried, I hope you don't mind me asking, but are you all right? Siegfried said, that's a stupid, bloody question.

Of course I'm not. None of us are, nor should we be, state of the world. There'd be something wrong with us if we were all right.

[12:07] The employee adds, right. Only thing is, I kind of am. All right. Siegfried says, ignorance is bliss.

In a lot of ways, what Jesus is saying here is he's shunning ignorance. The Lord knows the state of the world. He knows what it's like to be a Christian today.

The Lord is speaking to a church suffering under Roman rule, an empire where Christians are out of power and forced to continually face opposition because of what they believe.

We live in a democracy that for many years was more or less aligned with the Christian worldview. Things are beginning to change. It's beginning to cost you something to be a Christian in America. It may cost you a promotion. We've all read people, police officers who refuse to go along with the corruption and so were cost of promotion. An employee who wouldn't go along with cheating customers.

[13:11] A teacher who wouldn't turn a blind eye to abuse. It may cost you a job to refuse to attend racial sensitivity training. It may cost you the favor of your peers to go along with the culture, to not affirm the things they do, to not laugh at the jokes they do or play the same game.

It may cost you the respect of your parents to make priorities for following Christ and committing to the people of God when it takes away from them.

My guess is the pressure will only increase. But Jesus warned, following Christ is costly.

Remember, he said, take up your cross.

Lose your life. Die. I mean, can a Christianity that doesn't cost us anything still be regarded as Christianity? All this, I believe, right now should change the way we parent.

We shouldn't try to keep our children safe and secure. We shouldn't keep them in a bubble. We shouldn't protect them. We should prepare them to embrace the cost.

[14:23] I love what D.A. Carson said when he said, I look at my children, he has two kids, a boy and a girl, he says, I wish for them enough opposition to make them strong. Enough insults to make them choose.

Moms, don't go running. Stop that insult. Enough hard decisions to make them see that following Christ brings with it a cost. A cost eminently worth it, but still a cost.

I'm so thankful that 21 years ago when I was presented the gospel and was told wonderfully that if I confess my sin that God is faithful and just will cleanse me of my sin and forgive me, but I'm thankful that I was also given the cost and being warned of what it will cost me to follow Jesus Christ.

So wonderfully, I offer you Jesus this morning, but I also offer you the cost because following Jesus Christ is very demanding.

It will cost you everything indeed. It will cost you your life because a Christianity without a cross and without a cost is no Christianity at all, but did you notice though that Jesus said you are rich?

[15:41] Look in verse 9. He said, I know your tribulation and your poverty, but you are rich. Now he's just said you've lost comfort and ease, you've lost jobs and income, you've lost your reputation and freedom, some of you have lost your life, but you are rich.

What in the world does that mean? I think the idea is that if you're suffering just because you are of the people of God, you are rich because you belong to God. You're suffering just because you are the people of God, you're rich because it means that you belong to God.

It reminds me of the teaching of John 15 when Jesus said, if the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. But because you're not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Remember the word that I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. a servant is not greater than his master. If they love you, then something's wrong.

Like if everything in your life is completely swallowable by those around you, then something's wrong. Oddly enough, isn't it precisely this that encouraged the apostles in Acts 5?

[17:10] I love this. The first persecution that came from these apostles in Jerusalem, what did they say? They walked away. They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name. Heck yeah!

In so many ways, that's what's wonderful. I hope to see this church. Church always does better with the wind in its face. Always. Let it be here.

To the riches of poverty. The riches of a costly, a falling and costly Savior. Second, the comfort of suffering.

The comfort of suffering. After Jesus tells them what he knows about them, he doesn't correct them. So, unlike the letter to the Ephesians, the letter to Smyrna includes no correction.

Jesus tells them he knows what's going on and then he begins to comfort them. Look in verse 10. He says, do not fear what you're about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison that you may be tested and for 10 days you will have tribulation.

[18:19] Jesus warns them that things are going to get worse before they get better. They're going to be thrown into prison. They're going to be delivered over, hated, put to death.

But Jesus says, do not fear. It's exactly what he said in Matthew 24. There are at least two things going on in this encouragement that we need to see.

First, Jesus alerts them that the opposition and persecution they will face is the work of the devil.

He alerts them that opposition and persecution you'll face is the work of the devil.

He says, the devil, look in there, the devil, the subject, the devil is about to throw some of you in prison. It's alerting them that spiritual warfare is at work, that opposition and persecution is at work. Now, the Jews are slandering and the Romans are arresting them, but Jesus says the devil is throwing them into prison. Opposition and persecution is the work of the devil.

[19:22] I don't know what you think about the devil, what you think about spiritual warfare, but Jesus is concerned that we not think too little of it. that we be aware that we have an enemy, J.I. Packer says, who's probably not known for his spiritual warfare teaching.

He says, by becoming Christians, you have walked into a war. That's part of the cost of following Christ, becoming Christians, you've walked into a war.

Satan's war against the triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. There's different ways we could talk about the story of the Bible, but one way of talking about it is this war that has been happening between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent from the beginning.

Some are of their father, the devil, and they're warring it out. And so, do you live aware of the war? Now, they say some people, they see a devil behind every bush.

Some people never see one. If you don't ever see one, it's not the religion of Jesus Christ. Do you have a place for the devil behind the massive pornography industry?

[20:44] You have a place for the devil behind the progressive pro-choice movement. You have a place for the devil behind the itching ears and gossiping lips that destroy so many churches.

Do you have a place for the devil behind the bitterness and anger that shreds many marriages? Paul said, we don't wrestle against flesh and blood but against the rulers and authorities, cosmic forces of this present darkness, spiritual forces at work in this age.

We have to be alert. Wonderfully, though, Jesus continues and he comforts them and says, the opposition and persecution they will face is under God's sovereign rule. Jesus is concerned that we not think too little of spiritual warfare but he's also concerned that we not think too much of it.

Jesus underlines the sovereign rule of God in several ways right here. He warns him about what's going to happen before it happens. He says, the devil's going to throw you into prison. The idea, Jesus is alerting them ahead of time to help them see that the one who knows all things knows what the devil's going to do before the devil does.

Do you see he's underlining how he is sovereign over all of this and last week if you remember we talked about how something in the vision from chapter 1 is applied specifically to encourage each church and what we see look in verse 8 he says, I know, or this letter is for the words of him who is the first and the last for him who is the A and the Z the Alpha and the Omega what Jesus is saying is he's the one who's over everything from A to Z from Alpha to Omega and so Tom Schreiner helps us and he says Jesus Christ rules and reigns over all of history the beginning the end and all parts in between.

[22 : 33] The church in Smyrna therefore isn't the victim of fate or hostile forces. So he's helping them to see it by warning them ahead of time what's going to happen.

He also promises a purpose in what will happen. If you look down there with me again in verse 10 he says the devil's about to throw you into prison that you may be tested.

That you may be tested. There's a divine purpose captured in that clause an overruling purpose of God.

If we're not careful when it comes to spiritual warfare warfare we can begin to assume it's somewhat like Star Wars a battle between light and darkness good and evil this power struggle between these things but the Bible does not present spiritual warfare that way it doesn't present it as a power struggle it presents it as all being under the umbrella of the sovereign rule of God. even though it presents the devil as working for evil it presents him as doing so under God's sovereign rule.

[23 : 50] The devil throws them into prison get this but God ensures that prison results in his purpose. You see the devil yeah the devil meant it for evil the devil's at work the devil has a purpose he has a mind after what he wants to do for the Christians but to do to the Christians but God works in his working and ensures that all his working accomplishes God's purpose.

Now that's amazing he ensures that it accomplishes the testing the purifying of faith isn't that what Peter says that your faith might be tested being found to be genuine to be pure as gold like gold that passes through the fire so that it burns out all the impurities so that you know it's really gold.

Therefore Christopher Ashe says Satan is God's Satan God's pet if we dare to put it like this this means that as we suffer we may with absolute confidence bow down to this sovereign God knowing that while evil may be terrible it cannot and will not ever go one tiny fraction beyond the leash on which God has put it.

And it will not go on forever. Now that quote will do work in your soul. I mean Satan is God's Satan. They said Martin Luther would now there's so many things attributed to Martin Luther you don't know so much what is true and what's not but supposedly he would be tormented at night and he would wake up realize it was the devil tormenting you and he'd say oh it's just you I'm gonna roll over and go back to sleep then.

Well in so many ways that's what the Christian can do. Satan is just God's pet and though he does do things in our life he cannot go one tiny fraction beyond the leash on which God has put it.

[25 : 43] and so he also assures them a limit to what is gonna happen.

He says they will be tested for ten days. Ten days? All this build up for ten days? Do anything for ten days.

Numbers are symbolic in Revelation though. Three, four, seven, ten. Go through the one thousand I guess. Ten equals some degree of perfection so the fact that they're persecuted for ten days is a way of saying they'll get the full dose of persecution.

They'll get a full dose and no more. That's what you're supposed to see. There's ten days. Sure, it might be a reference to Daniel where they opposed and they ate their own diet for ten days to prove that they could be good on their diet so maybe get the Daniel diet and start in your life or something.

I don't know. But the ten days is also saying it's a full dose and it's no more. It's saying God is putting a limit to this. That's what you're meant to see. God is sovereign and limiting this for his purposes.

[27 : 10] These verses would have been tremendous in comfort, the comfort of suffering to the church in Smyrna. One author tells the story of his professor loved to share.

The professor spoke at a missionary conference, I guess at some point in his tenure there, and two young women heard the preaching about global missions and decided to devote their lives to becoming missionaries, foreign missionaries.

Both sets of parents were extremely upset with this professor. That's some of the opposition that can come for following Christ. They said, you made our children religious fanatics.

Now they want to throw it away. They said, you know that there's no security in being a missionary. missionary. The pay is low. The living situation may be dangerous.

We've tried talking to our daughters. They need to get a job and a career, maybe a master's degree or something like that so that they have some security before they go off and do this missionary thing.

[28 : 25] The professor responded, you want them to have some security. security. We're on a little ball of rock called earth and we're spinning through space at a million miles an hour.

Someday a trap door is going to open up under every single one of us and we will fall through it. And either there will be millions and millions of miles of nothing or else we'll fall into the hands of the everlasting arms of God.

And you want them to get a master's degree for security. That's the comfort they would have felt in this.

Rome bears a sword. But no sword will strike apart from God's sovereign decree.

These are the truths that put ice in your veins. cause you not to blink. These are truths that make us secure.

[29 : 37] We need this courage. C.S. Lewis in his introduction to an old book by Athanasius, he said, talking about the church in his day, no less true in our day, we cannot point to the high virtue of Christian living sinning.

And the gay, almost mocking courage of Christian martyrdom as a proof for our doctrines. That's what these doctrines produce, an almost mocking courage.

You don't believe me? Go get Fox's book of murders. Go get this book I just bought called After Acts. It tells a story of what happened to all the apostles. An almost mocking, come on, is that all you got?

And so we're going to see more. Thirdly, the reward of faithfulness. The reward of faithfulness. after telling them what is going to happen, the Lord tells them what they must do.

Besides the passive command of do not fear, this is the command of what they must do, what they must take up, what they must observe. Look in verse 10, he says, be faithful unto death.

[30 : 56] So the command, the take away, the take home application point is be faithful unto death. There are few virtues in scripture, more valuable, more elevated than faithfulness.

Many a man proclaims his steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find. Proverbs 26, one who's faithful in little will be set over much. Obviously, well done, good and faithful servant. We see it again and again.

Wonderfully, the last word Jesus says to this church is not be fruitful. You know, in our culture that chases success, Jesus did not say be as fruitful as you can before the sword comes.

He doesn't say get the word out as far as possible. He doesn't say make as many converts as possible. There's something he cares about more. He says, stand your ground.

Do what is right. Be faithful. Faithfulness, therefore, doesn't equal success. It doesn't equal fruit. Faithfulness so often doesn't come with success and fruit.

[32 : 04] After all, he says be faithful unto death. What could be more unfruitful than death? You can be successful and fruitful but still be unfaithful.

The last word though, also, you know, all this talk about spiritual warfare and Jesus doesn't say be strategic in your fight with spiritual warfare. That's not the takeaway. He doesn't say get some spiritual mapping going on, some power encounters, some prayer walks, some prophetic declarations going on in the community to stand up.

He doesn't say that so much as spiritual warfare material and the methods it brings is just flatly unbiblical. He doesn't say that.

He warns him of the devil and spiritual warfare, but the only thing he tells him to do is be faithful. What is faithfulness here?

Faithfulness is continuing to do the right things in allegiance to Jesus regardless of the cost. It's continuing to do the right things in allegiance to Jesus regardless of the cost.

[33 : 17] So faithfulness is loving God, loving your neighbor, honoring your parents, showing hospitality, continuing to stow away your excess so that you can give, not store it up for bigger barns, love mercy, work hard, make the lives of others who work with you better, influence your neighbors for Christ, tell the truth and don't tell lies.

I mean, that is what faithfulness looks like and when someone says you can't believe that, you can't stand on that, you can't live like that, stand your ground and do what's right.

many folks have been talking about the hockey player, Ivan Pravorov, this week, there was a pride night in the NHL.

I mean, when pride night hits the NHL, we're in trouble. These guys bust teeth out for a living. He refused to participate because he's a Roman Orthodox Christian.

We have some differences in beliefs. He said, I'm not wearing anything that supports pride night.

[34 : 25] In his statement, it was carefully crafted and he refused to go beyond. He said, I respect everybody and I respect everybody's choices. My choice is to stay true to myself and my religion.

There's a time for civil disobedience. There's a time to refuse what a government may require, even if it costs your life.

There's a time for that. Sometimes I think the church should love to talk about that. But you know what I want to say? The fight for faithfulness is not often lost there.

Somebody invites me to a pride rally tonight, that's an easy one. That's easy. The fight for faithfulness is not often lost there.

The fight for faithfulness is often lost in failing to persevere in the Christian life. Failing in the high calling of Christian virtue. Like Lewis said, failing very few finish well.

[35 : 30] I've been following Christ for 21 years. Very few finish well. Very few continue to love their wife. Very few continue to love and serve their church. Very few continue to love their Bible.

Very few continue to love the loss and the mission. Faithfulness is not just defending the truth when push comes to shove. That's easy. Faithfulness is continuing to pursue and living for what is true until the end.

Faithfulness is standing for something. Not just when you can get a headline, but in the unseen moments every day. It's a present preoccupation.

That's the idea. Faithfulness is not just enduring something when the opposition comes. It's a present preoccupation with pleasing God in all of your life.

Continuing to do the right things now in allegiance to Christ regardless of the cost. And wonderfully, Jesus says, if you're faithful, you receive the crown of life.

[36 : 33] The crown of the faithful person receives the crown. The one who conquers in the end is a faithful one.

It's the last man standing. It's not the most gifted one, most talented one, the most Bible answer guy one. It's the one who's standing in the end.

He's faithful to the end. It's not a crown a king might wear. It's a garland to say, you won. You won life. You won eternal life. Now, if you notice in this little letter, there's repeated references to death and life.

Verse 8, who died and came to life. Be faithful unto death. I'll give you the crown of life. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death. The repeated references to death and life would have been very significant to the church in Smyrna.

It lived in a city that had died and come back to life multiple times. It had crumbled under earthquake and under burning by a Roman ruler. And so Jesus said, you will be faithful and you will receive the crown of life by dying.

[37 : 44] So be faithful unto death and you won't be hurt in the second death. So the only church that matters is marked by costly faithfulness to Jesus Christ.

There's no cost. There's no Christianity. Is it not these convictions that put ice in the vein of the early church?

To face down so much. Apparently the letter to Smyrna had its intended effect.

In AD 155, during a time of festival for Caesar, the Roman officials in Smyrna decided to kill some Christians. So they went searching for the bishop Polycarp.

Polycarp was over 80 years old. He knew the apostle John. Was well known and a long time bishop of Smyrna.

[38 : 53] He knew that trouble was coming to the city and so he withdrew from the city to pray and seek the Lord. Several friends were arrested and one of them gave up his location.

He could have run. He refused to run. He knew they would find him. He stayed put and waited. He placed himself in the hands of God saying, the will of God be done.

The Romans arrived and led him back to the city for a string of trials. They questioned him. What's the harm in saying Lord Caesar?

What's the big deal in saying Lord Caesar, Caesar, in offering incense, in saving yourself? Don't you want to save yourself? They began to threaten him and finally led him into the stadium.

When he entered, a voice from heaven that others reportedly heard said, be strong, Polycarp, and play the man.

[40 : 00] Play the man because he thinks he's winning. They questioned him more and challenged him to turn. He said, swear and I'll release you.

Curse the Christ and I'll let you go. Polycarp responded, 86 years have I served him and he hath done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my king who saved me?

The procouncil threatened to burn him with fire. Listen to what he said. He said, thou threatenedest the fire that burns for an hour and in a little while is quenched. But I knowest not, but you knowest not of the fire of the judgment to come and the fire of eternal punishment reserved for the ungodly. But why delayest thou bring what thou wilt? And they prepared a stake to burn him. When they tried to nail him, he said, he wouldn't let them nail him.

Because he wanted to receive whatever the Lord had for him to be faithful even unto death. So let us follow him.

[41 : 10] And the countless others in England, when Latimer and Ridley were burned at the stake for what they believed, Latimer said these words back to Ridley, play the man, Master Ridley.

So maybe that's the word for us today, play the man. Conquer by being faithful.

Conquer by living for what you believe. Conquer come what may by standing for what is right, by not telling lies until the end. Come what may so that we too might hear and might be among the number that hears.

Well done, good and faithful servant. Father in heaven, cast ourselves completely to you. we want to serve you.

Lord, we want to live for you. We want to stand for what is right. Lord, we want our lives to be marked by a sturdy, steadfast faithfulness that's non-ignorable to the world, that's loud with its quiet trust in God and his sovereign rule.

[42 : 43] Lord, we pray that you would keep us under the shadow of your wings, that we would not fall to fear, but instead be among the number that trusts you and follows you.

It stands for you, it stands for what's right until you return. We thank you, we praise you. In Jesus' name, Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.

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