

Smyrna ~ A Sweet Aroma - Revelation 2:8-11

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Date: 20 November 2024

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[0 : 00] I think there's a handout, the same one we used last time as we go through the seven churches, just if you want to use it to just kind of fill out, you know, for each church as we go through it.

We did Ephesus, and tonight we're going to take a stab at Smyrna, four verses, see what happens. So, Revelation chapter 2, Ephesus was the first, what, seven verses, and if you remember, the issue with Ephesus was that they were prioritizing duty over devotion.

They had lost focus, they'd lost their primary focus, their first love that they needed to return to. They needed to remember, repent, and do, and it lines up perfectly with Jesus being that which is, which was, and which is to come, past, present, and future.

Tonight we're going to look at Smyrna, and the word Smyrna comes from the word myrrh, and myrrh should stand out to you, especially this time of year as we approach Christmas. Gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Good job, you passed the course.

[1 : 11] Myrrh was used, it was a perfume, it was used for its fragrance, but it was used in embalming, it was used for burial, and we're going to kind of see why when we look at what myrrh is a little more.

I always thought that myrrh had to do with something like, it was crushed, like a flower, like a plant, and that's not quite true, myrrh actually comes from a tree, there's like three species, very few species of this tree, and to get the myrrh, it's actually a resin, which makes sense for embalming, so like if you're going to wrap somebody, and then you're going to melt down this resin, and you're going to cover the body in resin, well that's going to preserve it for a long time.

But to get it from the tree, you have to wound the tree, you have to make slits in the tree, and then out from the tree bleeds forth this myrrh, and it's like, what a picture, you know, of Jesus, the gold, frankincense, and the myrrh, Jesus, by his stripes we are healed.

But there's three, I believe, types of these trees. There are camophora tree, I might have pronounced that wrong, but anyway, there's the true myrrh, the sweet myrrh, and the bitter myrrh. Man, is that a picture of Jesus? The bitterness that he took when he went upon the cross, Jesus was sweet and true, and yet by his stripes we are healed. So that's what myrrh is.

[2 : 35] So we're going to be looking at the city of Smyrna, whose name kind of comes from myrrh, and the church that is there. It's a church that is under a lot of pressure. There's a lot of suffering there.

There's a lot of wounds. Our theme scripture for the church of Smyrna is 2 Corinthians 4, verses 8-11. Paul writes, Why do we have to go through all of this suffering?

That the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our bodies. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

Resurrection only comes after death. After death. All right? We'll read those four verses and we'll go home. That was pretty much the lesson. No. No. But very much so.

This scripture very much encapsulates the whole idea of what the church in Smyrna is going through. 2 Corinthians 2.15 says, For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ.

[3 : 46] What is the smell that comes out? For the myrrh, the only way to get the myrrh out of the myrrh tree was to slit the tree. Right? You think of grapes. The only way to get the wine out, the juice out, is to crush them.

We are a sweet savor unto God. We are a sweet savor of Christ. So if you remember our outline for the book of Revelation was in Revelation chapter 1, at the end of chapter 1, verse 20.

I'm sorry, verse 19. Jesus says to John, Write the things which thou hast seen, which are, and which shall be hereafter. And so we have seen the things which you have seen.

That was where he saw the vision of Jesus. And these are in the things which are, as we're going through the church. All through chapter 4, this is very much speaking to us. So last time it was the church of Ephesus.

We want to be a church that doesn't put duty before desire. It doesn't mean we don't do our duty, but we do it out of desire. We want to be a church that is focused on the primary thing, upon Jesus. And so now as we look at the church here in Smyrna, we will begin to see here what the message is for us.

[4 : 55] Let's read those four verses, beginning in verse 8. And unto the angel of the church of Smyrna write, These things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive.

I know your works and tribulation and poverty, but you are rich. And I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer.

Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried, and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life.

He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches. He that overcomes shall not be heard of the second death. If you notice, there's three times in there he speaks of death.

He says, Jesus, the picture we get of Jesus, so on your little sheet there, the, I don't remember what the title I put the heading is. But anyway, the title for Jesus or the characteristics of Jesus is from chapter one, those seven things.

[6 : 02] The one he picks out for Smyrna is, these things says the first and the last, which was dead and is alive. We see that in verse 10, it says, be thou faithful unto death.

And verse 11 says, he that overcomes shall not be heard of the second death. And Smyrna is very much on the mind of the church. Smyrna, let me see, there we go.

There's the city. Well, a rendering of what it would have looked like. It was also a port town. This was our map. We use to show where John was on Patmos.

And then we did Ephesus, which was on a harbor. And then just north of there was Smyrna. This is the only other of the seven churches that also had a harbor. It's a very rich city, very wealthy.

Smyrna was a great trade city. It stood at the end of the road, which served the valley of the river Hermes. And all the trade of that valley flowed into those markets and found an outlet through its harbor.

[7 : 00] It had a specially rich trade in wine. Smyrna, like Ephesus, was a great city of wealth and commercial greatness. One of the interesting characteristics about Smyrna is we know from history it was a city deeply committed to idolatry, but more specifically, the worship of the Roman emperor.

The emperor worship had begun as a spontaneous demonstration of gratitude to Rome. But toward the end of the first century, in the days of Domitian, which is what we're in right now, that's who sent John to the Isle of Patmos here, the final step was taken and Caesar worship became compulsory.

The Roman emperor Domitian was the first to demand worship under the title of Lord from the people of the Roman Empire as a test of political loyalty. According to ancient church history, it was under the reign of Domitian that John was banished to the Isle of Patmos, where he received this vision.

So once a year as a Roman citizen, you would be required as your civic duty to take a pinch of incense and burn it upon the altar to the Godhead of Caesar.

And having done so, you were given a certificate that was guaranteed that you had performed your civic duty. Just take a pinch. Caesar is Lord. You're your certificate. Go worship who you want.

[8 : 15] It doesn't matter. It's just a symbolism. It doesn't really mean anything. Well, all the Christians, all that they had to do is just burn that incense and receive their certificate and then worship as they pleased, but it was precisely that which the Christians would not do.

They would give no man the name of Lord. That name they would keep for Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone. And they would not even formally conform.

Now, there were those that did. This is a very interesting time. It was actually one of the reasons you had the first, one of the first councils, the church councils, because you had this big split that under persecution, many Christians caved and said, okay, okay, okay.

But then they wanted to come back into the church. And there were those within the church who said, no, no, no, no. We got to keep this pure. No way. Are we bringing you back in? And there was, they had to have one of their church councils to decide what to do about this.

The church in Smyrna had become, had become a thorn in the side of the Romans. Smyrna was pride. They were prideful over the fact.

[9 : 21] They took pride in the fact that they were the first ones to erect a temple to Caesar, to codify this idea that we are going to worship Caesar as a civic duty. Ecclesiastes 10.1 says, dead flies caused the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savor.

Gotta love the King James. In other words, it doesn't matter how nice the smell may be, put a bunch of dead things in it, it's going to stink. You're not going to cover up that smell. And the church had become a fly, the ointment of Smyrna. For Smyrna, the church was causing what they thought their city to stink.

So Jesus now, knowing the condition of the church, as we read there in verse 10, I'm sorry, in verse nine, that he knows their tribulation and their poverty. This was a very difficult time for the church. What is the picture that he gives them? If you remember, we said this was the first place that they were calling Caesar Lord and worshipping Caesar. And so the first thing Jesus does, he says, hey, I have a title.

I have a title that will outlast all kingdoms and Caesars and Lords. Don't worry about this world trying to tell you that you have to bow to them, that their title is the one that needs to be worshiped.

[10 : 29] I have a title that will outlast all kingdoms, Caesars and Lords. We will eventually get to Revelation 19, 16. And we'll see that written on Jesus's side that he has on his vesture and on his thigh, a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Jesus has got a tattoo. And I'll get a tattoo when Jesus gives me one. And he has on his vesture and on his thigh, a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

His is a name, his is a title that will outlast all kingdoms, Caesars and Lords. And as this church in Smyrna is being pressured, pressed, that's the word tribulation we see it means. It means to be pressed, to have pressure. They're being pressured to conform to a world that says, hey, it's no big deal.

Jesus says, it is a big deal. I have a title that will outlast all Lords, Kings and Caesars. Our hope in tribulation and persecution and suffering is not the end of that persecution, tribulation and suffering. we think that. Like, man, if I could just get this to end. I'm sure the church in Smyrna was like, you know, if this would just end, everything would be great. But what does he say next? In verse eight, these things says, the first and the last, which was dead and is alive.

[11 : 47] Death is the end of all suffering in this life, but it is not the end of all suffering because we're also going to read here that there's a second death. Death is the end of all suffering in this life, but it's not the end of all suffering.

The end is not, or the goal in suffering is not to get to the end, but it is to overcome and we do that through life. Smyrna needed to be reminded that Jesus also knew what it was to die, but then also to live again.

And no Caesar could ever boast of that. Caesar is Lord. Oh yeah. My Lord has gone into death and have risen again. And then Jesus says three things, well actually four, three specifically about the church.

These are the commendations of the church. We're going to notice in Smyrna that there's going to be something missing of those seven characteristics of each letter. There is the, the name of the church, the opening description of Jesus, the commendation, and then we're going to see something that's missing.

But to begin with, there's this commendation. He says, I know your works, your tribulation and poverty, and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews. Three things about the church.

[12 : 59] Jesus fully understands. It's the word know. Jesus knows. He says, I fully understand your work, which means your labor, your tribulation. The word tribulation means to have pressured or to press against.

And your poverty, poverty, that doesn't just mean I don't have much. That means completely destitute of resources. Jesus says, I know. And how does Jesus know? Remember what we saw in chapter one? Where is Jesus?

In this, in the book. Where is he walking? He's in the midst of, he's in the midst of the candlesticks. He's in the midst of the lampstands. He knows because he's there. He's like, it's not just he knows from a distance.

He knows because he says, I've been there and I am there. I'm there with you. And then the fourth thing, which isn't so much a commendation, it's just an acknowledgement, but I also think it's a little bit of a commendation. And he says, and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

And I think part of the pressure that the church in Smyrna was feeling at that time was from this source. Jesus fully understood their labor, their pressure, their condition of being destitute, and he was completely aware of the slanderous and false words that are being spoken, I believe, against them.

[14:11] Jesus knows the conditions that they had to work under and the work that they had accomplished in his name, though. He said, I recognize those conditions, but man, I also see that there is work you've accomplished in my name.

He said, tribulation means pressure or pressing. And as we talked about in the beginning, when we're pressed, we find out what we're made of, don't we? You press someone too hard, you're going to find out what they're made of.

You're going to find out how they react and what comes out. But we also find out whose we are. When we're pressed really hard, who do we run to?

Who do we look to as a source of strength? We find out whose we really are. What are we made of? Luke 24, 44 tells us that Jesus, when he was pressed, we saw what came out of him.

We saw what he was made of. And being in agony, he prayed more earnestly. And what did he pray? He said, Father, take this cup from me. But then what came out? A humility and a willingness to be surrendered.

[15:14] Not my will, but your will be done. And his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground. When Jesus was pressed, what came out? Redemption. New life. Mercy. Mercy. 1 Corinthians 10, 13 tells us there is no temptation or trial or testing taking you, but as such as is common to man.

So like whatever we're going through, each one of us is no different than has been going on for the last 2,000 plus years for the church. But God is faithful. He will not suffer you to be tested.

Above that, you are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape. What's that next line? God, that you may be able to bear it. Bear it. He will make a way for you to escape that you may be able to bear it.

What's the focus on? Escaping. Get me out of here. No, it's not. It's upon your response to the suffering. God is faithful. He will not allow you to be pressed above what you can bear, but he wants to do what?

He wants us to know what we can bear. He doesn't want to know. He's not like, well, let's see what Jared can bear. I think it's going to, oh, well, that didn't go too well. Next. You know? No. He knows what we can bear, but we don't know what we can bear.

[16:27] We don't know what we can bear with him. And so when he puts us in a place where there's that pressure or where there's those wounds, we find out, Lord, you're able to bear through this.

We find out what we are made of and we find out whose we are. Second Timothy 3.12 says, Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. All that will live godly.

What's it mean to be godly? Any thoughts? Any ideas? What's it mean to be godly? Well, if I said you were Christ-like.

So essentially, to be godlike. To be godly is to be like God. To be godlike. Yea, and all that will be godlike, all that would reflect God, all that would be of God, in Christ Jesus, there's no other way to be godly, but in Christ Jesus, you shall suffer.

We shall suffer persecution. Whose are we though? We're in Christ Jesus. Philippians 1.28-29 says, And in nothing terrified by your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, the enemy sees that they, the truth about their end is valid because you're proving out the truth about your end, that you're not terrified by your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation and that of God, for unto you it is given on the behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.

[18:00] Suffering for his sake. Whose are we? Man, it's for Christ. It's on his behalf. Peter would say, and we may come to this verse, I'm not sure, but I'd write it down.

You know, you do well if you suffer for righteousness sake, but man, if you suffer as an evildoer, you know, or a lawbreaker, that's not the same type of suffering. And Jesus says to them, I know your works, your tribulation, I know the pressure you're under, I know the suffering you're under, but there's a purpose to show what we're made of and whose we are.

And then he says, and I know your poverty, I know that you are destitute of resources, I know it looks like you've got nothing. And then in parentheses there, but you are rich.

Jesus is giving us a picture of this church from heaven's perspective. From the earth, from our perspective, man, they're suffering, they've got nothing, this is not going well. There's a synagogue of Satan there, like the church of Satan is overtaking, but from heaven's perspective, Jesus says, no, you're rich.

Rich means to abound in resources, amply supplied. When the kids were little, I don't know, something would come up and, you know, and we'd need funds for it or whatever it was.

[19:21] And be like, oh man, we can do that. We got, we're loaded. They're like, really? I'm like, oh yeah, limitless resources. Really? Oh yeah. And I'd say, my father has limitless resources. We've got this, you know?

And that one of them said, boy, I wish you would give us a little more of those resources. But it's like, you don't got to worry about it. The Lord's got limitless resources and he'll give them when we need them and he always has. We've yet to be homeless and we've yet to be without food.

God is abundantly blessed. Limitless resources. But he's the one who gets to decide when and where they're given. Second Corinthians 9, 8, and then 11. We quote this one all the time.

And God is able to make all grace abound towards you. That you always having all sufficiency in all things may abound to every good work. It's just a great scripture. But we know what it's specifically talking about is actually the fact that God will supply resources for us to use for his purposes.

To give away. He says, hey, I'll give them to you. You give them away. Being enriched in everything to all bountifulness which causes through us thanksgiving to God.

[20:24] So God will make all sufficiency to abound towards us. all grace abounding towards us. We have limitless resources. Ephesians verse 1, I mean chapter 1 verses 7 through 9.

It tells us we have redemption through his blood. The forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace. Boy, I was hoping for a couple dollars. This isn't exactly the riches I was expecting.

Wherein he has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence having made known unto us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure which he has purposed in himself. Those are the riches that we have. As Jesus looks at this church and the world would say, you are destitute.

You've got nothing. And Jesus said, oh no, you are so rich. You have so many resources that you don't even know about. Ephesians chapter 3 verses 19 and 20. That we are to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge that you might be filled with all the fullness of God.

God doesn't withhold anything of himself. We have all the fullness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us.

[21:31] God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we can ask or think whether we're pressured, whether we're destitute, and whether we're wounded. Philippians 4 19. But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Man, I read a verse like that. It's like, which kind of riches do you want? Do you want the world's riches? Or do you want the riches in glory by Christ Jesus? I'll take those. I'll take those any day. That currency, that lasts.

It doesn't devalue. Colossians 1 27. To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles. And what is the riches of the glory of the mystery among the Gentiles?

Christ in you. The hope of glory. You can't, you can't buy that. You can't exchange that for anything this world has. And yet, Timothy, Paul would write and say, hey, be careful.

Don't get caught up in the riches of this world. Don't get caught up in the supply that God does give. He says, charge them that are rich in this world that they'd be not high-minded nor trust in uncertain riches but in the living God who gives us richly all things to enjoy.

[22:43] That they do good. That they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come that

they may lay hold on eternal life.

You know, that's a currency that we always have that they may do good. You can be as destitute as destitute can be and you have the capacity to do good. Paul says, hey, don't put your trust in uncertain riches.

Trust in the living God. He gives us richly everything to enjoy and then go distribute. Go distribute what he's given you. Be generous with what you have. Because, Proverbs 23, 5, will thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?

For riches certainly make themselves wings. They fly away as an eagle toward heaven. Mine never last. It's been, it's just been a theme for our life. Whenever it's like, oh wow, there's a surplus.

Soon I'll say to each other, well I wonder what's going to come next we got to pay for. And sure enough, it's like, oh here's a house or here's braces or here's something else. The Lord is so good because everything he's put in front of us to do.

[23 : 47] I mean, would I rather have those riches or the thing we're able to accomplish? Man, I'm so glad for all the things that we've been able to do with what God's given us to be a blessing. Heaven's perspective is very different from what is being experienced, isn't it, by this church.

Man, reading through those scriptures, do you feel destitute? Do you feel poor? I feel excited, especially after that worship session and that last song and I love songs that like crescendo. It's just like, just waiting for their trumpet and then we can just finish that up and go.

Man, we're so rich. Jesus looks at them and he says, I know your works. I know the pressure you're under. I know how destitute you are, but you are abounding in limitless supplies.

You have resources at your disposal that this world can't touch. And then he says, and I know them. I know about this, guys.

I understand what you're going through, but there are those which say they are Jews and are not. I know the blasphemy. Blasphemy means slander, detraction, impious speech, injurious to another's good name.

[24 : 53] So when you slander, when you use a detracting speech, that's primarily, that's impious. So it usually has to do with God, but we can blaspheme, you can blaspheme someone else by speaking slanderous, by speaking in a way that detracts from them, that's injurious to their good name.

He says, I know those that blaspheme. There's a, what is the blasphemy that they are doing? What is it that's so wrong with what they're doing? Well, they're saying they're Jews and they're not.

You know, there's a, a wing of the church today that does the same thing. If you remember what Jesus said about, or not Jesus, what God wrote about the Jews in the Old Testament in Jeremiah. Jeremiah 31, 35 through 37 says, thus saith the Lord, which gives the sun for light by day and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for light by night, which divides the sea when the waves thereof roar.

The Lord of hosts is his name. If those ordinances, sun by day, moon by night, and the waves, if those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me forever.

[26 : 00] That should be like every surfer's verse, that the waves will never cease. Thus saith the Lord, if heaven above can be measured and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the Lord.

What is very serious about the nation of Israel? And here, this could mean the Jews that say they are, those that say they are Jews and are not.

If you remember that we know from Paul's writings that he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, but is one of the heart. A true Jew. But it could also be that just like a part of the church, there's a part of the church that says, the church doesn't replace Israel so much as the church is Israel, so they say. The Israel of God. There is only one people of God throughout all history. Under the old covenant, beginning with Exodus, the church was the theocratic nation of Israel. Sounds good.

Sounds kind of theological, but it's absolute blasphemy. God knows who his people are. The people of Israel are God's true people in this world.

[27 : 09] The church is God's people of truth in this world. And there's a distinction. Israel is God's true people chosen in this world. The church is God's people of truth chosen out of this world.

Now, a Jew can become part of the church, but the church never becomes Israel. And Jesus here says, it is blasphemy to say that those are Jews that are not.

No matter how spiritual it sounds, no matter how smart it may sound, no matter how many big names say it, the Bible says otherwise. Fear none of those things which thou might suffer. fear none of those things which it might happen to you. Maybe you're going to suffer. Fear none of those things which you shall suffer. Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison that you may be tried.

The word fear there, if you remember where Jesus when he put his hand upon John and he said fear not. The word fear not, not there meant never. Fear never. Here, this word means where he says fear none of those things.

[28 : 19] It means literally fear nobody and fear nothing. Fear nobody and fear nothing who would do this to you. Fear means to put to flight. Don't be put to flight by anybody or anything that would cause you to suffer.

The word suffer means something that's sensible, experience, affected. So, it's something that is pressing upon you that you are very aware of. It's very sensible to you.

And this isn't like just that you sense it and feel it but in a way that suffering produces, a sensible experience that affects you. in a very strong way. As Jesus says here, do not be put to flight by anybody or anything.

The devil shall cast some of you into prison. Wow! Imagine what that must have looked like. Poof! Satan appears with his red cape and tail. You know, maybe picks him up with his pitchfork and throws him into prison.

Is that what it means? The devil threw him into prison? What are we in this world? We are what? The what of Christ. We are the bride of Christ. We are the body of Christ, right?

[29 : 23] We are the body of Christ. So, as the body of Christ, we are able to reach out and touch and hold and feel. Well, in a sense, Satan also has a body. He has those that work on his behalf.

So, when it says Satan shall throw you into prison, it doesn't specifically mean Satan. It means those who, as we have already read, they would blaspheme. They would reject the truth and believe the lie. And then, as the scripture says, you are of your father, the devil.

Satan shall cast some of you into prison. The word cast there means to throw out without care. It's like just to throw it out without care, not even to care where it goes or what happens to it.

And that's the way that, excuse me, the enemy thinks of us. To suffer as a believer is to experience the unavoidable pressure that a fallen world, a sinful flesh, and a diabolical enemy bring against our reborn souls.

It doesn't say here that suffering will only come from Satan. Fear none of those things. Nobody and nothing. We have this idea, especially in the West, in our country, that, well, we're not really suffering for Jesus unless somebody is threatening my life because of Christ or because of the gospel.

[30 : 35] But the Bible doesn't differentiate from that. It does talk about persecution. But all who would live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. Persecution, yes, means for our faith, it also means to be pressed back upon.

And there's our sinful flesh that we now have a new nature. That sinful flesh is always pressing back upon that nature. It's always pushing in. There's always tribulation now because of the fact that we have two natures.

There's this fallen world that's pressing back upon us. It may not be because we are out loudly proclaiming Christ. It may just be because we no longer do what they do. We no longer act as they act and they see the light of Christ in us and they push.

And they push and they push back. And yes, there is the enemy, the enemy who would come against our reborn souls, the enemy who would stir up those who would come against us and press and press and press.

Jesus said, do not fear suffering. Do not fear its cause. Do not fear its process. Do not fear its pain. And do not fear its effect.

[31 : 37] Suffering is an unavoidable part of our spiritual growth. I just, I just looked at that picture and thought that's my life some days. You just kind of feel like that poor little bear.

Like, what more could happen? Suffering is an unavoidable part of our spiritual growth. There is no way we will make it through this life without experiencing suffering as a child of God.

But it's not pointless, is it? There is fruit that comes from it. For the believer, temporal suffering works eternal results. Philippians 3, 9-11, and be found in him not having mine own righteousness,

which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, and that I may know him.

The power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings. Being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

And you can see a process there, right? Fellowship of sufferings, death, and then after that, resurrection. For the believer, temporal suffering works eternal results.

[32 : 46] 1 Peter 2, 20-21, For what glory is it, I knew I had this verse in there somewhere, what glory is it, if when you be buffeted for your faults, you shall take it patiently. You ever felt buffeted? But if you get buffeted because you're a jerk, or because you broke the law, you know, what glory is there in that, if you take that patiently?

You deserve that. But if when you do well, if you don't deserve it, and you suffer for it, and you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. God looks at that and says, good job, you are rich.

For even here unto were you called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should follow his steps. We should follow his steps into suffering, because it works an eternal fruit and an eternal result.

1 Peter 4, 1, For as much then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind, for he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. That doesn't mean that you have a little suffering, you'll never sin again, right?

That was the error in Catholicism. They thought, well, I can kind of beat this sin out of myself. It just means that he who chooses to resist sin and suffer for the sake of resisting sin, well, man, that's just proof that sin has been defeated in your life.

[34 : 01] It's proof that you have now come under the victory of Jesus and the victory he's had over sin. Romans 5, 1-5, Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

And not only so, not only do we just glory in our faith, not only do we glory in where we stand and the hope that we have in God, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that pressure, pressing, works patience, works endurance, and patience, experience, and experience hope, and hope makes us not ashamed.

ashamed. Why? Because we see, hey, God's kept me. Despite all this pressure, despite all of this tribulation, it's proven that I belong to God, because there is no way I could make it through this otherwise.

And hope makes us not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is given unto us. For the believer, temporal suffering works eternal results.

Fear none of those things which you shall suffer. You shall suffer. Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, and you shall have tribulation ten days. What does that mean?

[35 : 23] I don't know. It could mean ten days, ten days of intensive persecution. It could also mean the ten Caesars, that under their reigns, the ten different Caesars, where there was intense persecution.

There's many reasons, many meanings of what it could mean. I read one guy who said, oh, this was just a common Greek phrase, that, oh, you're having, you know, a duration of time. Oh, like, you know, we might say, yeah, I don't know what we say.

We don't say fortnight anymore. They used to say things like that, two weeks, right? Or we might say, you know, it's been a hot minute. You're going to have suffering for a hot minute. Well, maybe they just said ten days.

Either way, it's a definitive period of time. It doesn't last forever, right? It's a time that has a start and an end. Be thou faithful unto death, and I'll give you a crown of life.

This crown is not, like, you think, like a diadem, which would be, like, the golden crown. This is the Stephanos, I think it is, which is, I could have those backwards, which would be what you would get as a victor in, like, the games.

[36 : 26] It would give you a laurel crown. This is the crown for victory. First Peter, wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations.

It is a trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found in a praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

It is needful. If need be, you are in heaviness, you are pressed upon. Why? So that your faith may be tried. True faith is always tried, but the end result is victory, and I will give you a crown of life. Jesus is saying, be faithful unto death, because the other side of death is resurrection. Jesus will personally hand the victorious a crown of life, those who have faithfully passed through death. We all pass through death. Everyone must pass through death, but will we do it faithfully? To do so faithfully is to put our faith in Jesus, because he is faithful.

[37 : 34] First Thessalonians 5.24, faithful is he that calls you, who also will do it. How are we going to be faithful? How are we going to be faithful to the end? Because it's his faithfulness. If we believe not, 2 Timothy 2.13 tells us, yet he abides faithful, he cannot deny himself.

Be faithful unto death. Be faithful through death. How do we do that? Because Jesus overcame death. By putting our faith in him, we have the benefit now of the faithful one, so that we can respond, as Paul says in Galatians 2.20.

He says, I'm crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live. Yet not I, but Christ lives in me. In the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

How am I faithful unto death? Well, it's not even my faith. I live by the faith of the Son of God. I'm crucified with Christ. It's not even my death. It's his death. So then I get the benefit of his life.

So as we end this session on suffering, what do we see about suffering? Suffering was not to be feared. Suffering is unavoidable. Suffering affects us.

[38 : 42] It's something that's sensible to us. It's something we feel. It's something we're not going to ignore. It greatly affects us. Suffering can be unjust. But it's in that moment that we have the opportunity to bear eternal fruit, where Jesus said, if you suffer for the sake of my name, then you do well.

Suffering has many sources. It's not just Satan. You know, it's not just spiritual warfare. But it is always a spiritual thing. Suffering is not pointless.

It doesn't just come into our lives for no reason. In Christ, suffering produces a wonderful and glorious fruit for eternity. Suffering is worth enduring for that reason.

And suffering has the potential for eternal results. The church in Smyrna, Jesus wrote this letter to them to tell them all that. Say, guys, you are rich.

Because of, not in spite of your suffering, not in spite of the pressure and in spite of the wounds and in spite of the destituteness, but because of that, you are rich. Your faith has been tried.

[39 : 48] You have received the supply that I've given you. You have a wealth in the spirit that you would not have had without this pressure. Never exchange the eternal benefits of suffering for the temporary benefit of relief.

And that is the temptation, isn't it? Man, if I could just get some temporary relief, everything would be okay. And yet, what are we exchanging? An eternal benefit? Now, that doesn't mean we're like, you know what?

I'm suffering. God, keep on the pressure as long as you want to. You know, some fruit for heaven. Not at all. It just means when God brings these things into our lives, we don't look, like we said, we don't look for the suffering to end.

We look to overcome the suffering through Christ. He that has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says unto the churches. He that overcomes shall not be heard of the second death. With spiritual ears, we hear the spiritual truth of heaven's perspective, right?

That's what we're getting from these letters. Heaven's perspective. We have spiritual ears to hear the spiritual truth as Jesus writes a letter from heaven's perspective. Never attempt to understand God in light of your own experiences.

[40 : 48] Never try to use your experiences to understand God. But instead, let God give you understanding for your experience. When you're going through something, don't use that as a, you know, a way to try and decide, is God for me?

Is God against me? But instead, look to God and say, God, what's going on with this experience? Let God define your experience. And he says here, you will not be hurt of the second death.

The word hurt there means injury or wrong. The second death will have no injury upon you, will have no wrong upon you. Suffering hurts, but it doesn't last forever.

For those in Christ, all men die, but not all men have to be hurt by death. Jesus says you don't have to be hurt by the second death. What is the second death? Revelation 20 verse 14 says, and death

in hell, Hades in hell, were cast into the lake of fire.

This is the second death. The lake of fire is suffering that will not end. Revelation 21, seven to eight. He that overcomes shall inherit all things. And again, how do we overcome? Through the one that overcame.

[41 : 52] And I will be his God and he shall be my son. But the fearful and unbelieving and the abominable and murderers and whoremongers and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars shall have their part. The lake, which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

He that overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death. And how do we overcome? Jesus gives us the answer for that test. John 16, 33. These things have I spoken unto you that in me you might have peace.

In the world you shall have tribulation. But be of good cheer. Be of good cheer when the tribulation comes, when the pressure comes, when the wounds come. You're going to have that in the world. But the reason you should have good cheer is, I overcame that.

And I'm going to put every situation that comes into your life is specifically so Jesus can show you, yep, I overcame right here too. God, I can't believe I'm in this situation. I'm destitute. Can you be Lord here?

Yep, I'm Lord there as well. I've overcome there and I've overcome there. Revelation 1, if you remember, when John saw Jesus in verse 17, he says, When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead and he laid his right hand upon me saying, Fear not as dead.

[43 : 01] John was as dead. And Jesus, what was his response? He said, Don't fear. He raises him up. I'm the first and the last. I'm he that lives and was dead. Behold, I am alive forevermore.

Amen. And have the keys of hell and of death. The message to Smyrna was, for a man to enter the church in Smyrna was to literally take his life in his hands.

When it says they were cast into prison, it's not like we think of prison like, oh, it's remedial punishment or just to keep him from society. If you're cast into prison, it's because the next step's execution. It was to literally take your life in your hands.

And yet Jesus would say, I see the church in Smyrna, a place for heroes. I look at heroes when I see Smyrna. All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer.

But suffering ends, doesn't it? There is an end. All will die, but not all need to be hurt by death. And those of us who go through death faithfully by putting faith in the faithful one, by overcoming, and God shall then wipe away all tears from their eyes.

[44 : 12] And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall be any more pain, for the former things are passed away. And I hope that Jesus can look at the church in Charlotte and say, in Charlotte, the church was a place for heroes.

Charlotte, that was where, man, they withstood that pressure. And I heard a guy say, there's no problem I have that the rapture wouldn't take care of. There's no problem we have that the rapture wouldn't take care of.

The resurrection wouldn't solve. This place, this world is not the place for reconciliation. This world is not the place for resurrection. This world is not that place. That's an eternity.

I wanted to read this to you. You would indulge me. I'll put it up there for you. Polycarp was the bishop in Smyrna.

He was a disciple of John, who was on the Isle of Patmos, that John. The year after Polycarp returned from Rome, a great persecution came upon the Christians of Smyrna. His congregation urged him to leave the city until the threat blew over.

[45 : 19] So, believing that God wanted him to be around a few more years, Polycarp left the city of Smyrna and hid out on a farm belonging to some Christian friends. One day on the farm, as he prayed in his room, Polycarp had a vision of his pillow engulfed in flames.

He knew what God said to him and calmly told his companions, Meanwhile, the chief of police issued a warrant for his arrest.

And when the soldiers found him, they were embarrassed to see that they had come to arrest such an old, frail man. They reluctantly put him on a donkey and walked him back to the city of Smyrna.

On the way to the city, the chief police and other government officials tried to persuade Polycarp to offer a pinch of incense before a statue of Caesar and simply say, Caesar is Lord. It's just words.

That's all he had to do, and he would be off the hook. They pleaded with him to do so and escape the dreadful penalties. At first, Polycarp was silent, but then he calmly gave them his firm answer.

[46 : 23] No. The chief was now angry. He was annoyed with the old man, and he pushed him out of his carriage and onto the hard ground, and Polycarp, bruised but resolute, got up and walked the rest of the way to the arena.

At the arena, the horrid games had already begun in earnest, and a large, bloodthirsty mob gathered to see Christians tortured and killed. And one Christian named Quintus boldly proclaimed himself a follower of Jesus and said he was willing to be martyred.

But when he saw the vicious animals in the arena, he lost his courage and agreed to burn the pinch of incense to Caesar as Lord. Another young man named Germanicus didn't back down.

He marched out and faced the lions and died an agonizing death for his Lord Jesus. Ten other Christians gave their lives that day, but the mob was unsatisfied. They cried out, When they did not recognize the traditional gods of Rome and Greece, and finally the crowd started chanting, Bring out Polycarp.

When Polycarp brought his tired body into the arena, he and the other Christians heard a voice from heaven. And they said, Be strong, Polycarp. Play the man.

[47 : 42] As he stood before the proconsul, they tried one more time to get him to renounce Jesus. The proconsul told Polycarp to agree with the crowd and shout, Away with the atheists! Polycarp looked sternly at the bloodthirsty mob, waved his hand towards them, and said, Away with those atheists!

The proconsul persisted, Take the oath and revile Christ, and I'll set you free! Polycarp answered, For 86 years I've served Jesus.

How dare I now revile my king? The proconsul finally gave up and announced to the crowd the crime of the accused. Polycarp had confessed that he is a Christian.

The crowd then demanded that Polycarp be burnt. The old man remembered the dream about the burning pillow and took courage in God. He said to his executioners, It is well.

I fear not the fire that burns for a season, and after a while is quenched. Why do you delay? Come, do your will. They then arranged a great pile of wood and set a pole in the middle.

[48 : 45] As they tied Polycarp to the pole, he prayed, I thank you that you have graciously thought me worthy of this day and of this hour, that I may receive a portion in the number of the martyrs in the cup of your Christ.

And after he prayed and gave thanks to God, they set the wood ablaze. A great wall of flame shot up to the sky, but it never touched Polycarp. God set a hedge of protection between him and the fire. Seeing that he would not burn, the executioner, in a furious rage, stabbed the old man with a long spear, and immediately streams of blood gushed from his body and seemed to extinguish the fire.

When this happened, witnesses said that they saw a dove fly up from the smoke into heaven. And so Polycarp, a hero of the church of Smyrna, was set free to victory.

I pray that the Lord would look at our church and see it full of heroes. Lord, we thank you that we do not suffer in vain. And not only is it not in vain, Lord, but Lord, it is for such great and glorious good. It is to bring you glory, it is to reveal you to this world and who we belong to. Lord, it is to prove to us and this world and the enemy that your word is true, that you are a faithful God, that you are a good, good father.

[50 : 06] Lord, we worship you because you have chosen us, Lord. You have chosen us to suffer for your namesake. Lord, help us not to downplay the opportunities you give us. Well, I'm not getting persecuted like they are on the other side of the world.

And Lord, we do pray for those that, like Polycarp and these other Christians, have to stand before an angry mob and say, yes, you can have my life, but you can't have my soul.

Lord, help us not to downplay the suffering that comes into our life, the pressure, Lord, and the wounds, the suffering that comes against us, Lord, and we don't know why. Help us instead to look up and to get heaven's perspective, to see that we are rich, rich in resources in the spirit.

Lord, I pray for my brothers and sisters tonight that they would be heroes in this world. Heroes, not as this world looks at, but heroes of faith because they put their trust in the faithful one.

Thank you, Lord. In Jesus' name, amen.