

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[13 : 19] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[15 : 49] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[18 : 19] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[20 : 49] And I will give you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[23 : 19] Thank you.

I will watch and I'll see you.

Thank you.

Well, let's pray.

Thank you.

[25 : 49] And when you're in the world.

We thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

We ask you.

[28 : 19] And I ask you.

We pray.

that you would bless you.

and we pray.

And I'll see you.

[30 : 49] I'll see you.

And I'll see you.

And I'll see you.

And I'll see you.

It was just perfect.

[33 : 19] And I'll see you.

And I'll see you.

And I'll see you.

And I'll see you.

And I'll see you.

[35 : 49] And I'll see you.

And I'll see you.

And I'll see you.

And I'll see you.

So the Christians they were experiencing tribulation they were under pressure from the Romans and they were under pressure from the Jews. So even as we think about the passage that we were in this morning just as the religious leaders the Jewish leaders persecuted Jesus and targeted Jesus they targeted the followers of Jesus they spread rumors about them they called them cannibals they took the idea of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper the bread and the wine and they said these people are actually eating flesh they're drinking blood they're cannibals and they called them anti-government rebels revolutionaries because they won't bow to Caesar they're trying to throw the government over and none of that was true but that was the slander that they they spread and as a consequence they were persecuted and Jesus says

I know the slander I've heard all about the rumors that they're spreading about you and these slanderers they claim to be God's people says Jesus but they belong to Satan which would have been a shocking thing for them to read back in that day but Jesus is very clear and very bold and John is very clear and bold in the record that he makes of this he calls them those who belong to Satan so the Christians in Smyrna experienced tribulation but that tribulation it didn't disable them it didn't silence them it didn't make them ineffective actually the tribulation had the opposite effect one commentator

Matt Chandler in his book writes Smyrna and Philadelphia where the smallest church is mentioned in Revelation yet they were powerfully used by God to make much of Jesus big Ephesus they make much of their own reputation but they're not bringing much in the way of glory to Jesus little Smyrna they're used to make much of Jesus and they made much of Jesus when they were suffering when they were under pressure Sam Gordon in his commentary writes Smyrna actually means myrrh which is a fragrant spice it was obtained when the flowering myrrh tree was pierced or crushed in an amazing way writes Gordon the church lives up to that name there was a rare scent a beautiful aroma emitted from the suffering saints within her walls so just even as we think about herbs that we might use today think about a mint leaf just looks like a leaf off a bush out there when you start to pressurize it when you start to crush it you get the fragrance you know immediately what it is and as this church in Smyrna came under pressure the fragrance of Jesus the fragrance of grace came from them and they were used to glorify

[50 : 44] Jesus and in our lives when we come under pressure as we will at times Jesus said in John 16 33 in this world you will have trouble if we are going to follow Jesus there will be pressure there will be struggles and when we experience it when we experience tribulation if we keep looking to Jesus through it if we keep listening to Jesus if we keep loving if we keep trusting Jesus through the hard times the fragrance of Jesus will come from us and we can actually be used through the hardest of times to make much of Jesus that's the lesson and that's happened over the years

I can look around even in this room and I can see people and think of people in this congregation who have gone through and are still going through some of them hard times tribulation but through the hardest of times they have been used and are being used to make much of Jesus to point people to Jesus because the world notices and says what makes them like that when they're going through all this stuff the answer is Christ the fragrance of Christ comes through as the pressure is applied a vision of Jesus tribulation for Jesus the third point is the exhortation from Jesus so what does Jesus say to the church in Smyrna well he says to them in verse 10 do not fear do not be scared don't worry about the future now people often say that kind of thing to us don't be don't worry especially when we look worried especially when we're feeling worried people will often say to us you know just don't worry but we find it really difficult not to worry because we can't see the future we're worried about what's in that future now

Jesus can see the future he's the alpha and he's the omega he can see from the beginning to the end and in the same breath as he says to the church in Smyrna do not fear he then goes on to tell them about their future he says in verse 10 do not fear what you are about to suffer he doesn't say don't fear it's all going to be fine life is going to be smooth and peaceful he actually says 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 it's not a literal ten days it means basically for a limited period you will have tribulation more pressure be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life now does this sound like an easy future it doesn't sound like an easy future to me and yet this is what happened in

Smyrna there were many who were thrown into prison for Jesus sake but they did remain faithful and they did not allow fear to cripple him and you know today even there are those that they seem

far away from us but they are going through that hardship at Open Doors the charity report that there are almost 5,000 people that they know of today who are in prison for Jesus sake and they are remaining faithful now we're not in that position here not yet anyway where we're being locked up for being Christians but we may be locked out of some conversations we may be deleted from some group chats we may find ourselves sometimes isolated for

Jesus sake and our calling when we experience that low level persecution is to remain faithful so Jesus says don't fear but he tells them he's honest with them about prison and Jesus also tells them that some would have to be faithful unto death and that again is what happened in Smyrna many Christians in Smyrna were killed for Jesus sake probably the most notable example is the example of a man called Polycarp the Bishop of Smyrna comes from AD 156 and in his old age 86 if we can call 86 old age he was captured and he was charged to recant his faith in Christ and he was dragged into an amphitheater with thousands of people watching and he was addressed by the [56 : 34] Roman proconsul and the Roman proconsul is reported to have said respect your years swear by the genius of Caesar swear and I will release you revile Christ and Polycarp replied for 86 years I have served him and he has done me no wrong how then can I blaspheme my king who saved me the proconsul persists in this huge amphitheater swear by the genius of Caesar I have wild beasts if you will not change your mind I will throw you to them call them Polycarp replied the proconsul comes back since you make light of the beasts I will have you destroyed by fire unless you change your attitude and to cut a long story short Polycarp the old man did not change his attitude he was faithful to the point of death and as he stood at the stake at which he would be burned before the fire was lit he prayed this prayer

O Lord almighty God the father of your beloved son Jesus Christ through whom we have come to know you I thank you for counting me worthy this day and hour of sharing the cup of Christ among the number of your martyrs and that's how he died he was faithful unto death and Jesus promised to him and to all who remain faithful like him was that they that we will receive the crown of life and let's remember as well that all that Jesus asked for from these believers is what he went through himself the apostle Paul reminds us in Philippians 2 8 that Jesus was faithful unto death even death on a cross and he was faithful for our sake for our salvation so that we can have life the exhortation from

Jesus don't be scared don't fear remain faithful and finally very briefly the declaration of Jesus verse 11 the one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death so what's Jesus talking about in this verse well the second death is another way of talking about hell revelation 20 verse 14 says this is the second death the lake of fire hell is a place where if I can put it this way the hurt of death never ends hell is a place of continual tribulation hell is a place of eternal poverty and it's the place that is prepared for those who are not in

Christ who will not believe in him but the declaration of Jesus is that the one who conquers meaning the one who keeps on trusting Jesus or those who are born again Jesus declares they will not be hurt by the second death so the big question is are we born again are we trusting in Jesus because if we are this declaration is for us David Strain who who who who die only once.

And what we learn, even in this declaration, is that death for the Christian is not something that we need fear. Because Jesus promises to be with us in death.

[61 : 53] Jesus promises to lead us through death and give us the crown of life. Smyrna was a place where they were big on Olympic games, sporting events, they were all trying to win this crown.

And Jesus says that those who are in him, those who are faithful to him, those who believe in him, the crown that they will have is the crown of life.

Psalm 23. Yea, though I walk in death's dark veil, I will fear none ill. Why? For thou art with me. And the Christians in Smyrna were safe because Jesus was with them. So is Jesus with you?

Is he with me? Is he our shepherd? If not, he can be.

[63 : 01] We just have to ask him to be. We just have to put our faith in him tonight. And this declaration is not just for them, it's for us.

He who has an ear, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Let's sing now to close the service. And we'll sing from Psalm 23. Psalm 23, the metrical version, we'll sing the whole psalm.

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want. He makes me down to lie in pastures green. He leadeth me the quiet waters by. We'll stand to sing to God's praise. the Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.

He makes me down to lie. In pastures green, He leadeth me, the quiet waters by.
[64 : 30] My soul, He doth restore again, and need to walk.

God may within the paths of righteousness in for His own who fades from the earth.
from the earth. from the earth. My heart fades In death's dark veil Yet will I fear not ill For thou art
with me And thy God Unstop me comfort still My table love has furnished In presence of my foes My
head thou dost

With oil and light And my God overflows Goodness and mercy Of my life Shall surely follow me And
in God's words Forevermore My dwelling place Shall be Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus
Christ The love of God the Father The fellowship of God the Holy Spirit Be with us all now and
forevermore
Amen Amen