



"DEAR CHURCH"

A SERIES ON THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

"DEAR CHURCH", PART 3 SMYRNA: PERSEVERANCE IN THE FACE OF PERSECUTION

July 30, 2019

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BIBLICAL TEXT(S)

"Suffering is not a pre-condition to share in the glory of Jesus but it is often a natural outgrowth of the Gospel. Often, we've been taught that wealth and power are signs of God's blessing but more often the sign of that is suffering."

–Pastor Randy

MAIN TEXT:

"To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know about the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death." (Revelation 2:8-11)

ADDITIONAL TEXTS:

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5)

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted... (2 Timothy 3:12)

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. (2 Corinthians 4:8-9)

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. (Revelation 22:13)

I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the Lord sustains me. I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up against me on every side. (Psalm 3:5-6)

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? (Romans 8:35)

But the Lord is faithful and will give you strength and will protect you from the Evil One. (2 Thessalonians 3:3)

Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. (Hebrews 13:3)

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. (1 Peter 5:8-9)

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear

that name. For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? (1 Peter 4:12-17)

Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. (Matthew 10:32)

MESSAGE SUMMARY

In the main passage, Revelation 2:8-11, there is no missing the fact that the church of Smyrna is going to suffer persecution. There are also scriptures that make it clear that following Jesus Christ will not be an easy life. Whether we live in a place of physical danger or not we will have trouble here on earth.

We are not alone in suffering for the gospel. Jesus has gone before us, is with us, and is coming behind us. He has prepared us for whatever type of persecution, suffering, and sacrifice we encounter for his kingdom. Our faith is strengthened and refined in the difficult times.

We need to ask "how we are called to sacrifice for the gospel?" When we sacrifice and deal with suffering for the gospel we know we have Jesus and he deeply knows where we are and what we are going through. We know that God has the victory in the end and we need not be afraid. We have the hope and peace that God is the beginning and the end and we are on his side!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you lead your group through

Cont.

a progression of engagement with the Bible passage and the speaker's message, helping

LEAN IN

These are icebreaker/warm up questions, mostly just to get the group talking and start the flow of conversation. Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.

1. What stood out to you in this sermon?
2. What are the benefits to living near a big city and what are the downsides?
3. Have you received a negative reaction to a choice you made following God?
4. How have you reacted to opposition to your faith?

LOOK DOWN

These are questions on the passage and observations about what's been read.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. In Revelation 2:8, what is encouraging about how Jesus is described, also in Revelation 22:13?
2. What is said clearly about life following the gospel in Revelation 2:8-11, John 16:33, 2 Timothy 3:12, and 2 Corinthians 4:8-9?
3. In Revelation 2:9, what does it show about God's relationship with the church (is he far, does he have a close relationship? What words in the verse show this?)
4. How do Revelation 2:10 and Psalm 3:5-6 relate to each other?
5. What happens to those who are victorious in Revelation 2:11-12?

LOOK OUT

These questions help connect the world of the Bible to today.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. The church in Smyrna was going through a time of persecution. There are places now going through similar persecution. Where have you seen persecution in the world?
2. How have you seen different Christian groups handle persecution?
3. What type of persecution or suffering for the gospel do you see in America?
4. How do you see the American church handling persecution, or how do think they would handle persecution?
5. If Jesus were to write our church a letter telling us of future persecution, how would our church react?

**DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS,
CONT.****LOOK IN**

These are questions that help you consider personal application.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. Do you have places of persecution or suffering for the gospel in your personal life?
2. Can you see refining/purifying changes in your life due to past suffering?
3. Where do you see Jesus preparing you to possibly walk through suffering?
Or looking back can you see how Jesus prepared you for suffering?
4. Have you compared your suffering to others' suffering?
How has this affected your walk with Christ?
5. Have you felt like suffering will never stop? Has it stopped or are you still in the middle of it?

LIVE IT OUT

These action steps help apply this week's message to day to day life.

Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.

1. What can you do to prepare for persecution/suffering? What can you do to deal with suffering better or differently?
2. Randy said, "Suffering is a call to solidarity with other believers around the world". What does this mean to you? How can you support those being persecuted around the globe?
3. How are you called to sacrifice for the Gospel? How can you start following that calling this week?

NOTE: On the following page you will find a set of sermon notes created by Charissa Burns, an artist who calls B4 home. We include them purely for your enjoyment and encouragement, courtesy of Charissa. You can follow her on the 'Gram @charissaburnsstudio

DEAR CHURCH

7.28.2019
PART 3
BEAVERTON FOURSQUARE CHURCH

Main objective of Revelation is to point to and show who Jesus is! (Not a crystal ball)

7 lampstands are the seven churches. The second message is to the church at Smyrna.

Revelation 2:8-11
John 16:33
2 Timothy 3:12
2 Corinthians 4:8-9
Revelation 22:13

Smyrna is one of 2 churches that don't get critiqued. They are encouraged. They are about to go through a time of persecution.

Christians were refusing to praise/worship the emperor. It would have been tempting to go back and say they didn't believe anymore.

Jesus isn't about alienating our suffering for the gospel but

Psalms 3:5-6
Romans 8:35

This persecution is still going on today. The dominant culture does not like it when people don't follow in line with them.

Jesus is committed to preparing us to suffer for the gospel.

The Bible is clear that there will be trouble, persecution because of our faith.

- Those who are persecuted understand the privilege of suffering for the gospel. -

There is a correlation, refining element to persecution in church history.

How are we called to sacrifice for the gospel?

We are not to compare ourselves to other believers. We need to seek God and see how we can sacrifice and suffer for the gospel where we are in our culture & country.

WHEN YOU ARE SUFFERING -

- Knowledge is power: YOU KNOW JESUS
 - if we forget Rev. 22:13 that He is the beginning & the end, our prayers won't do anything.
 - JESUS KNOWS YOU He knows all of our suffering & all our victories. He understands. He says "I know, I get it. I can give you what you need to get through this."
- Don't be afraid of being afraid!
 - There will be an end. God will end the suffering he won't let it go on forever.
 - Be faithful because He will give us life & victory!

Being pressed & feeling crushed in this persecution will bring beauty. Christ will strengthen & redeem! He knows the end, nothing is a surprise to God.

Suffering is a call to solidarity with other believers around the world.

"Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven."

Matthew 10:32