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**Revelation 2:8–11 NKJV**

“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write,

‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: “I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and *I know* the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw *some* of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until 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. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.” ’

## Intro

**Acts 5:14–42 NASB 2020**

And increasingly believers in the Lord, large numbers of men and women, were being added to *their number*, to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any of them. The people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together as well, bringing people who were sick or tormented with unclean spirits, and they were all being healed.

But the high priest stood up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy. They laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public prison. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the gates of the prison, and leading them out, he said, “Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple *area* the whole message of this Life.” Upon hearing *this*, they entered into the temple *area* about daybreak and *began* to teach.

Now when the high priest and his associates came, they called the Council

together, that is, all the Senate of the sons of Israel, and sent *orders* to the prison for them to be brought. But the officers who came did not find them in the prison; and they returned and reported, saying, "We found the prison locked quite securely and the guards standing at the doors; but when we opened *them*, we found no one inside." Now when the captain of the temple *guard* and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them as to what would come of this. But someone came and reported to them, "The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple *area* and teaching the people!" Then the captain went along with the officers and *proceeded* to bring them *back* without violence (for they were afraid of the people, that they might be stoned).

When they had brought them, they had them stand before the Council. The high priest interrogated them, saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this Man's blood upon us." But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you put to death by hanging Him on a cross. He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things; and *so is* the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him."

But when they heard *this*, they became infuriated and *nearly* decided to execute them. But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people, stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the men outside for a short time. And he said to them, "Men of Israel, be careful as to what you are about to do with these men. For, some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and a group of about four hundred men joined him. But he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. After this man, Judas of Galilee appeared in the days of the census and drew away *some* people after him; he also perished, and all those who followed him were scattered. And *so* in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and leave them alone, for if the source of this plan or movement is men, it will be overthrown; but if the source is God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God."

They followed his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and *then* released them. So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for *His* name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not stop teaching and preaching the good news of Jesus *as* the Christ.

# Truth

## **I. We take comfort in knowing that Jesus knows us. (8-9)**

### **1. *Christ knows our works.***

- a. You may think your faithfulness to walk in the Christian principles goes unnoticed, but this text tells us that every good deed you do in Jesus' name is very well noticed by the only One who really matters.
- b. You could be alone on an island somewhere and even there your good character and Christian works would be seen by the only One who really matters.
  - i. Take heart if you feel unseen Christian. Remember that Jesus sees you always and no good thing you have done in His name has gone unnoticed.

### **2. *Christ knows our struggles.***

- a. He sees how we wrestle with sin and with men for the sake of the gospel growing within ourselves and within the world around us.
- b. He sees how we endure when persecuted for His name.
- c. He sees our financial difficulties, our health issues, our sorrows... and He cares.

#### **1 Peter 5:7 NKJV**

casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

### **3. *Christ lived through worldly struggles just as we do and persevered***

***through them.***

- a. Christ does not send us down a narrow road which He has not Himself been willing to travel first.
- b. 61. How do Jesus' sufferings help you?
  - i. Jesus has experienced our sufferings, understands our sorrows, and is able to sympathize with our weakness. Therefore, I should bear my sufferings with perseverance and hope, for my Savior is with me in them, and through them I will come to know him more fully. ( Job 9:32–35; Psalm 22:22–26; Isaiah 53:4–7; Luke 4:1–13; Hebrews 4:14–5:10)

**4. *Christ knows of our enemies.***

- a. Not only does He know who our enemies are, but He clearly knows the good guys from the bad guys.
  - i. The synagogue of Satan was a group of Jewish people who rejected Christ as Messiah. They were actively opposing this church.
  - ii. Today there are many churches of Satan who claim to be churches of God.
    - 1. Those who deny the basic truths of the Gospel set out in Scripture and summarized in the early church creeds are anti-Christ even while claiming to represent Him. They oppose the true Church of Christ and always have.
    - 2. The so called progressive Christian movement of today, and the destruction movement, and the liberal movement within the church are all examples of Trojan horses of Satan within the true movement of God. We must be clear about what they are because I know that Christ is clear.
- b. Because Christ knows these things, we can trust that one day true justice will be served, even if we don't see it in our times.

## **II. We take comfort in knowing that our perseverence**

## **will be rewarded with the crown of life. (10)**

### **1. *There are many false crowns the world offers us for our obedience to them, but only Christ offers us the true crown.***

- a. "Smyrna's goddess Cybele is pictured in coins with a crown patterned after a city battlement. The buildings on Smyrna's Mount Pagos were said to look like a crown. Over against these claims, Jesus offers to give the true crown." -R. C. Sproul
- b. Satan offered Jesus all manner of worldly rewards to bow to him, but Christ knew that every treasure this world could offer combined had nothing on the riches which belong to those who are faithful to God.

### **2. *Scripture and thus the church throughout the ages has taught the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints.***

- a. The following is from the Philadelphia Confession of Faith (1742) which is itself based off of the London Baptist Confession, or being based on the Westminster Confession, it being based in the writings of Luther and Calvin which were attempting to get the church back to the older and more ancient ways of the faith.
- b. Of The Perseverance of the Saints
  - i. 1. Those whom God hath accepted in the beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, and given the precious faith of his elect unto, can neither totally nor finally fall from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved, seeing the gifts and callings of God are without repentance, whence he still begets and nourisheth in them faith, repentance, love, joy, hope, and all the graces of the Spirit unto immortality; and though many storms and floods arise and beat against them, yet they shall never be able to take them off that foundation and rock which by faith they are fastened upon; notwithstanding, through unbelief and the temptations of Satan, the sensible sight of the light and love of God may for a time be clouded and obscured from them, yet he is still the same, and they shall be sure to be kept by the power of God unto salvation, where they shall enjoy their purchased possession, they being engraven upon the palm of his hands, and their names having been written

in the book of life from all eternity. (John 10:28, 29; Phil. 1:6; 2 Tim. 2:19; 1 John 2:19; Ps. 89:31, 32; 1 Cor. 11:32; Mal. 3:6)

### **III. We take comfort in knowing that the second death cannot touch us. (11)**

#### **1 Corinthians 15:50–58 NASB 2020**

Now I say this, brothers *and sisters*, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I am telling you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. But when this perishable puts on the imperishable, and this mortal puts on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written: "DEATH HAS BEEN SWALLOWED UP in victory. WHERE, O DEATH, IS YOUR VICTORY? WHERE, O DEATH, IS YOUR STING?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brothers *and sisters*, be firm, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not *in vain* in the Lord.

- 1. *The resurrection of Jesus has taken all of the sting out of natural death for us.***
- 2. *For the Christian, natural death only brings us right into our greatest joy.***

#### **Philippians 1:22–24 NASB 2020**

But if *I am* to live *on* in the flesh, this *will mean* fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that* is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sakes.

#### **2 Corinthians 5:8 NASB 2020**

but we are of good courage and prefer rather to be absent from the

body and to be at home with the Lord.

3. ***Everyone who overcomes this world by our faith in Christ has nothing to fear in death but only anticipation for the glory that is to come.***

## Gospel

Who is God? He is the glorious one, the First and the Last, who died and is risen from the dead.

What has He done? He has known us, our works, and our sufferings. He walked through His own sufferings in our place and now He walks with us in ours.

Who are we? We are those who are offered the crown of life in Him if we persevere in our faith until the end.

What will we do? We will let nothing stop us from following after Christ. We will keep Christ and His crown of life central in our lives.

## Challenge

### **Philippians 3:7–11 NASB 2020**

But whatever things were gain to me, these things I have counted as loss because of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them *mere* rubbish, so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; if somehow I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

May we follow Paul's sample in truth!