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## Revelation

### Chapter 2 - Revealing the Secrets to Overcoming Darkness

#### Fear Not the Darkness (vs. 8-11)

**Revelation 2:8-11:** “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this: ‘I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say 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 cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for 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 will not be hurt by the second death.’”

Well, we come to the Book of Revelation and God begins to unveil to us not only what the world is like, but He begins to unveil to us what we should be, and His desire for us.

One of the great passages in Scripture is found in Ephesians 1, and there's kind of a parallel text to it in Ephesians 3 in which Paul says, God has let us know what the administration is all about. And you go, "What is he talking about?" Well, actually, the word that he uses there is not as much administration as it is household, and when he begins to describe it, what he's basically saying is that God has a plan for this household and He's letting us know what it is. What a wonderful thing that God is not trying to keep these things secret, as we've said repeatedly, whether it's in the Book of Amos or whether it's in John 15. God is very clear; whether it's God proclaiming to Abraham what He's about to do in Sodom and Gomorrah. The things that are revealed to us are really a sign of closeness to God; that God reveals secrets to people that love Him. He's not going to tell everybody, and the world's going to be shocked when the end time

comes because they're not going to see the signs and they have no idea of what He's been talking about. But to you, it's been revealed because you love Him and what a wonderful thing to know that those that are close to Him and those that do love Him are privy to the things that He's going to do. Just like in your own family, those that are close to you, you'll tell them the things that you're about to do. You may not tell the whole world, but you're going to tell the ones that you love. So, the same thing is true in the Book of Revelation, and it is John who God ordains through the Spirit of God to write this book and to write this letter, and more specifically, a man who leaned himself against Jesus and said, "I'm the disciple whom Jesus loved." Now, it doesn't mean that Jesus didn't love the other disciples, but what it does mean is that he saw that as the pinnacle of his relationship with God and because of that, God is going to reveal and use him to reveal the greatest and deepest secrets of the end times, or we oftentimes use the word "eschatology," making reference to "*eschatos*," which means "the end or the last days". So, it is the end times that He begins to reveal to us.

Now, before He reveals those to us, He gives us an interesting picture and the picture is of Christ in all of His glory, eyes flaming fire, with hair white as wool, and there He is standing, feet burnished bronze and all the power coming from Him. He's got the seven stars in His right hand. He's walking among seven candlesticks, and as He tells us in Chapter 1, the seven candlesticks are the seven churches in Asia Minor. So, we know who they are, and the seven stars are the messengers that He has placed, and He will give them light for God has called us to be light. It says in the text that the face of Jesus is like the sun at noonday. So, His face was shining bright. All of these are telling us light, and the Gospel of John starts off by saying that He was the Light of the world; that He came into darkness, but He is the Light of the world.

The same thing is being proclaimed in Matthew 5 and when you look specifically at verses 14 through 16, Jesus turns to the church, and He says, "You are the light of the world. I'm going to make you lights." So, you have the seven candlesticks, right? I mean, why are they candlesticks? Well, obviously they're there to hold light.

That's their job. It's within the power of Christ. Right hand, right? Right hand is always the power. So, in the right hand of power, He has these seven stars, and He says, "It's within My power to make you light. So, your trust has to be in Me. Your focus has to be in Me."

Because if the church's focus is not on Christ and He's not the source of power, there is no light. But as the church begins to put all of their trust in Him and listen to what He says, He begins to direct them, and His word literally begins to light up our path. It's a lamp unto our feet; it's a light onto our path. It brings us in the right direction. So, the truth begins to put us there. We're in a world of darkness and this is the stark contrast that we continue to see, and this is what Scripture wants you to see, that the church has been called to be light. Now, what's very interesting about this is that the greatest force of light is not as much in what the church says, but how they shine. If you think about it. I mean, light doesn't do a whole lot of talking. But that which causes light to be so intense and really effective is that it's real and it's genuine. So, the text says in Matthew 5, let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify God in

heaven. So, you are the light of the world, and he begins to explain how that takes place. Now, as we looked last week specifically, he starts with the Church at Ephesus, which is really right there on the coast of the Mediterranean and there in Asia Minor, and we're going to go through the different churches that are right in this particular area, the seven churches. We're actually going to go 40 miles to the north, and we're going to see the Church of Smyrna. So, none of the cities are more than 40 miles apart from each other. But some are like 25, but we're going to go around the circuit and basically that's what we understand. It was the mail circuit in which a letter was given, which starts at Ephesus, and it will circulate all the way around. So, this Book of Revelation will start in Ephesus and then it'll circulate around. So, God will begin by saying, "Ok, to the church at Ephesus, these things I write." Now, as we talked last week, what was clear about the church at Ephesus is that they knew doctrine. They knew the right thing to say. They knew what the truth was, but something was missing and what was missing he makes very clear, this is the light. So, though you and I can have truth, not unlike the Pharisees,

I mean the Pharisees knew what the Old Testament was, but they were in darkness, and the truth is what? Love of God. Because the truth is really centered on Christ, which is literally quintessential of the gospel. More specifically, God loves you. You can't look at Christ and know what He did and think that God hates you. So, that which is center of the message is the love of God, and as Paul will say, "It's the love of God that constrains me to do the things that I do." If a church is acting with an impetus or a motivation in any other way besides love, it's not light. Churches can be oppressive, they can be demanding, but there's no light in that. There's nothing that allures people to come out of darkness with that. I mean, that's what the world does. The world steps on people. The world points their finger. The world accuses you. So, they do that well. Where we're different is we proclaim the light of God's love. So, that's the power. What's interesting is with every church, the ultimate conclusion is, "I want you to overcome. I want you to overcome" in every case. So, He's going to say it seven times, "overcome". Now, once again the focus of overcome is to be victorious. "I want you to be victorious over this." The question you want to

ask yourself is what is it that church has to overcome?  
And I'm going to give you the answer. So, you can always remember this, and you don't have to do a whole lot of extra study, although that doesn't mean I don't want you to study, but God wants you to overcome darkness. That's pretty simple, isn't it?

If you look with me, there's a passage I want you to look at before we actually get started in the text, but in Colossians 1, it says in verse 12 that you and I should give thanks. Now, we have a lot to give thanks for, but this is why you really should give thanks.

It says this,

(Colossians 1:12) “giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.”

Now wait. We're not finished. Watch this. Verse 13. Mark it well in your Bibles.

(Colossians 1:13) “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.”



which He loves so much. We've been taken out of the realm of, as Ephesians 4 would say, a callous world, and we've been placed into a place in which people actually care for each other, and that's pretty powerful. I mean, you can talk all day long about religion and you can be pretty astute in theology, but if you're not acting like God acts, in love, because everything that He does, He does because He loves you. For God so loved the world. This, therefore, is the light. So, how is it that we keep darkness from overcoming us? See, that's the question, and with the Church of Ephesus, He's very clear in this. You have to keep yourself in love. In other words, the Church's motivation, as Paul will write to the church at Ephesus as he writes to Timothy because Timothy is the pastor of the church at Ephesus at that time, and he writes, "Ok, just remember the goal of our instruction is love." So, you're teaching people how to love the way God loves, which is really sacrificial. It's obviously pointing them to righteousness and not to debauchery. But all these things God has pointed to us, and He's saying, "This is how you defeat darkness." Let me just say this, darkness is everything that brings depression. I mean, who doesn't

think of depression as being darkness? A sorrow, grief. So, what are we trying to defeat? Depression, sorrow, grief, regret and all those things that bring darkness or an overshadowing upon us. How do we do that? As you begin to walk in the love of Christ, it defeats all those things.

I'll give you a quick example and then we'll move on, but if you're having problems with depression, I'm going to tell you what the problem is, and I'm not even going to charge you. The problem is you're being selfish. For the most part, almost all depression is rooted in selfishness. You become introspective. You begin to think, and before long that's a dark place. I mean, the more I think about myself, the darker my world becomes. So, what is one of the greatest ways to fight depression? Think of others. Well, that's love. Love builds others up, not self. So, as you begin to walk in love, and you begin to shine the light of love, then depression just leaves. You wake up, you go, "I'm not even depressed anymore." Why? Because the love of Christ is moving within me, and I'm now thinking of others instead of myself. As Christ was on the cross, He

was even concerned for our souls so that He would say, "Father, forgive them. They don't even know what they're doing." I mean, at a time where He should be so depressed, He couldn't even talk or a time where He should be so angry He should be spitting nails, what He's doing is forgiving and saving. So, God and His great strength and His great power moves us beyond the realm. If the church ever forgets the power of that love, they become ineffective, and they can't help people. You've got to love God with all your heart, and you've got to love those that you're serving with all your heart, and if you're not doing that, you're not going to be able to serve. We've all been in churches and we've all ourselves been in conditions in which we're trying to help somebody, but then we start getting frustrated. We start getting angry. We started getting upset. Before long, we wanted to wring their neck. You see, what happened was love went out the window. Then, once you start wanting to wring their neck, how effective are you? You stopped being effective. So, the light goes away. In the beginning he starts off and he says, "You want to overcome the darkness of this world? You've got to remain in love."

That's one of the fundamental principles of the Book of Jude, which is actually right before Revelation. He says you're going to have all kinds of people sneaking in and doing all the wrong things, and it's going to be easy for you to become not only cynical and skeptical, but it's going to be easy for you to become critical and hateful and try to fight them in their battlefield. He says, “But I'll tell you what I want you to do. Keep yourself in the love of Christ.” Now, if the church will do that, it will be effective, and you'll overcome the darkness.

The second text that we're going to be looking at is dealing with the church at Smyrna. By the way, the first one was the Church of Ephesus. As you look in Revelation 2 and you look at 1-5 and then it goes on and of course, He warns them of the Nicolaitans, and then you look at verse 7, he ends with the Church at Ephesus,

(Revelation 2:7) “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes...”

So, obviously this is what He wants us to do.

“... I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.”

Why does He give this particular reward? Because the tree of life is that which brings sustaining power. It's an interesting picture, "I'm going to give you a tree of life, and so, you'll always be exuberant, effective, lively, zealous. You see, the problem is when you and I stop loving, we take ourselves out of the source, the power source of God, because God is love. So, once you stop loving, you take yourselves out of the power source. Now, here's what's going to happen. You'll start getting frustrated and angry and upset, and you'll draw lines because up to this point, ok, you were very loving, but now you've pulled yourself out of the love of God. Now, you're doing it in your own power, and you're just going to get irritated. But if you put yourself in the power of God, then He gives you a source that will sustain you. That's sustaining power. You'll eat of this tree of life, and you'll never stop. The love of God never fails. So, you'll be able to sustain, and it's an interesting picture. It's like you're in paradise, and the picture is somehow, it's a wonderful day, even when people aren't responding right to you; somehow, it's just like the presence of God is with you and, "It's ok. I understand you're upset at me." You

can keep on. It's an amazing thing how you can keep loving in the midst of the difficulty. It's as if the paradise of God surrounds you, and He says, "I'm going to sustain you with this, but I'll only sustain you if you'll hold to the love of Christ. If you won't move yourself away from Me." So, an interesting picture.

We now pick up in verse 8 in which He talks to the church in Smyrna. Once again, Smyrna is a real place. At that time, it was a fairly big metropolis as well. It was kind of competing with Ephesus at this time. So, you have these cities that are port cities, and Smyrna is just to the north, but it's also kind of a port city and also kind of has a river that goes through it and goes into Lydia. So, it's kind of a big trade city. There's kind of vying for this. What's interesting is, about 600 years before this time, before this is written, this particular city was established. Smyrna actually comes from a word which means "myrrh" - *aromas* or something that was made that would almost kind of be a bomb in some cases, but it was it was popular for at least shipping that in, if not even having it, but Smyrna became its name. It's interesting that myrrh is

used oftentimes when they would embalm people, and it was often used in death as well. So, we're going to talk about that as we go, but the name is Smyrna. About 600 years before this, it was a great metropolis and there's a large influx of Greeks, and the Ionians or Greeks at this time were pretty much ruling the place. Within about 100, maybe 150 years, they had become vulnerable and the reason why the ancient historians of that day, which we actually have some documents making reference to the city of Smyrna and that particular time, it seems like they started going into real loose living, and even the historians were warning, "Your sense of loose living is going to make you vulnerable to attacks." And it did. So, they were literally ransacked, and the city was almost completely leveled at that particular time. So, now we're looking at about 400 and something B.C. Then, about 100 years later, a guy by the name Alexander the Great comes and he has a request that this city be rebuilt. So, he comes, and it doesn't seem like he's the one that actually does it, and Alexander dies. He doesn't live to be very old, but somebody else carries it on, and the city is rebuilt. When it's rebuilt, it's actually rebuilt, greater and more

powerful than it had ever been built before and the fortifications were stronger, and they had this cliff that jettisons up about 1,250 feet, and they call it "Pagus," which was a place where there was worship, and everything done. They perceived this to be one of the glorious places of the city. So, they began to actually construct their roads around this place, and it almost looks like a garland that goes around this place in which they called this the place of the garland or the crown of Smyrna. It's actually what they called it, the crown of Smyrna, which they used the word "*stephanos*," which is where we get the word "victory crown," or more specifically, it's like an Olympic person wins a medal and they crown them. Of course, sometimes you see those kinds of garlands on them as well, but it's that picture of you won; victory. So, the city actually had as an epithet the phrase, "The city that once was dead but has come back to life." The wreaths and all those things were actually put on their coins and things that they had, which was a symbol of "We're back, stronger than ever." And that was kind of their mantra; the thing that they're doing. Now, the reason I'm telling you these things is once



again, the picture in Revelation 1 is Jesus, and He's standing around the seven candlesticks, and one of the phrases that you'll see in every case when He begins to talk with the church is, He'll say something like, "I know where you are. I know what you're doing. I know what's happening." And it's always in the perfect tense, which means "I completely understand what's going on." As you look in Revelation 1, it shows the different pictures, eyes are flaming, His feet are burnished bronze. These are all pictures that will equate in some way to each of the seven churches. For instance, if you knew that I like cars, and you came into my house and you had a car shirt on, I'd say, "Somebody told you." So, Christ, in the first chapter, is dressed in such a way that He says, "Look, I know you." So, everything that you're going to see in each of the seven churches are going to be from Chapter 1, and He's going to come back and say, "See, I'm wearing this T-shirt," type thing.

So, as we come to Smyrna, they're going through a difficult time, but He's also going to let them know, "I know exactly what's going on." Because sometimes we go

through difficulties and problems and the feeling is, “Does God really know what's going on?” So, wouldn't it be interesting if you heard our message was given to you from God, “Oh, here's a message. God wanted me to give you this message,” and on the message, it was something like, “God says, ‘I feel bad about your dog dying.’” You would go, “You're actually worried about my dog dying?” See, every detail is God saying, “I'm intimately acquainted with all your ways, and I'm very interested in you.” So, God is saying, “I'm very interested in the church.” Seven candlesticks. “I'm very interested in the church, and I'm going to tell you how intricately involved I am with you.” So, He'll get pretty detailed.

So, as we pick up in Revelation 2, just to kind of set a little bit of history down.

(Revelation 2:8) “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life...”

“Does that sound familiar? Just like your city.” What He's doing is He's identifying because what's very important to them is that they came back. That's very important to

them. So, how is He going to relate to them? “Ok, I really came back. It's not like we just kind of rebuilt because Smyrna will have more tax and actually have an earthquake and there are other problems coming, but I really came back and I'm here.” Now, the interesting ways that He phrases this, “the first and the last,” of course, obviously making reference to the fact that He's the source and the cause of everything which is focusing on the fact that He's in control.

“*Prōtos*” is making reference to the fact, “I'm before all things, I'm the One that makes things happen.”

“The last” is, “I write the ending.” So, man thinks we're basically victims to the things that are happening. God says, “No. I control the end. So I know what happens.”

So, He starts off this way, and then He says this,

“... who was dead, and has come to life...”

Now, I want you to understand the reading of this, and look, I'm going to admit, there are things about the Divine that I'll never comprehend because it's God; if I could comprehend God then I'd be God, but I can't. But I can tell

you this, that the way that this is worded in the fundamental Greek is not as much that Christ is saying, "I was dead." When He uses the word "dead," it's in what is called the nominative case. Now, the nominate case in the Greek is the naming case, but more specifically, it would be like, "I'm calling you dead. So, I'm saying you're a dead man, and I'm saying you're dead."

Well, what's interesting is that of course, obviously when Christ went to the cross, Pilate is very concerned that he has a dead man, and they're getting ready to break His bones, and they turned to the soldiers, and they go, "Is He dead?" And John 19, specifically in verses 33 and 34 he goes, "He's dead." So, they called Him, or they named it. It's like the doctor in the room, "Ok, you call it. Is he dead?" "He's dead." Now, you might come in there a little bit later on, "He's up! I don't know how that happened."

Anyway, in Matthew 28, the same thing happened. In fact, the Pharisees are very concerned in Matthew 28:11-15. They're so concerned about Him being dead that they're willing to pay money to make sure He's dead. In other words, "Is He dead?" "We think He is." "But where

is He?" "Well, He's gone." "Ok. So, we'll give you money to say He's dead." So, they gave them money to say He's dead. The same thing is true in Mark 15:44. The same thing is true in Luke 24.

What's interesting in Luke 24:20-21, is that you have these two people on the road to Emmaus and they're beginning to talk and they're going, "He was supposed to after the third day, but now it's the third day, and He still hasn't risen." Now, Jesus is walking next to them and talking to them, but they don't recognize Him yet, and they're saying, "He was supposed to beat this dead thing." And Jesus says, "Ok, you didn't understand the Scriptures. I can't be dead. I'm life. Life can't be dead." So, it's interesting the way He words it. "Declared dead," is actually the way it's worded, but if you look at the passage, "and has come to life," actually is in the present continuous. So, it would read this way, "Declared dead, but ever living." That's a great phrase, isn't it? So, I don't know exactly how He pulled all that off. I don't think I'll know all the way through eternity, but He's God. So, I'm not going to understand this, but the point is that "I'm in

control,” and He's setting a stage and the stage that He's setting is that the people in this city have perceived one thing and because they perceived one thing, they're building their life around it and it's by their perceptions that they are literally building lives. So, in their lives they're saying, “This is the way things are. This is the way things are.” So, Jesus is starting off and He goes, “Let me tell you something. I wrote the book. I wrote the beginning. I'm writing the end. I'm the One that really knows what it's like to come back from dead. I have the power over this. You guys don't have the power.” In fact, it was kind of a fluke that Alexander wanted the city rebuilt. It wasn't them. It wasn't by their sheer resolve, although they make this thing like a garland, and they go, “Ok, we're the overcomers” and God goes, “You don't even know what's overcoming what. The guy built the city for you.” But people begin to build on these traditions, and before long, everybody believes them. So, all the way through Jesus is going to be saying, “They say this. It's not true. I say this.” And He's establishing that. So, if you'll read with me, you'll see this.

Now, if you look in verse 9, He begins with that wonderful word, “I completely know where you are. I know what's happening. I know the difficulties that you're going through.” And the word that He used to describe “tribulation” is that which brings in the emotions and feelings. I mean, it's one thing to go through difficult times. It's another thing to go through difficult times and feel it deeply. So, the phrase is not only referring to the difficult times, obviously, affliction and tribulation is a part of it, but they're emotionally tied up in this, and He goes, “I know how you're feeling. I understand.” You go, “Ok. So, where are You?” “I'm standing right there. I'm right next to you.” See, that's the picture in Revelation. (Revelation 2:9) “I know your tribulation and your poverty...”

Now, here again, just turn this around just a little bit. The phrase is more, “I know you're perceived as indigents, impoverished beggars. I know that people see you as that.”

What's the next phrase? “You're not. They're telling you you're poor. You're not. They're telling you they know

how to resurrect. They don't. They tell you that your way is the worst way. It's not. In fact, they're the poor ones. You're the rich ones." See the passage? All the way through, what He's going to be establishing is this thing called truth, that Christ defines truth, "I am the way, the truth and the life." Who is truth? Jesus. Ok. So, you're going through a difficult time. That's the worst day of your life. That's not true. It's not true. "What do you mean?" It could be the best day of your life. It could be. So, how are you going to define the day? Through Jesus. Have I done something for the kingdom of God? That's the greatest day that you ever exist, or as Peter would say, the glory of God rests on you if you actually suffer for doing what's right. That's the most wonderful thing that ever happened to you today. Who's defining your day? Who's defining life to you?

The passage is saying,

"I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy..."

In the text, injurious insults that are thrown out; slanderous things that are being proclaimed against you.



Well, you know the acrimony that can come into conversations, but more specifically, if somebody just really hates you, they just began to revile you and say hateful and hurtful things. So, you can hear that the tribulation is not merely a physical affliction, but as well, an emotional hurt, and many of these perhaps are relatives or people that are their neighbors.

“I know that you're going through the fact that people are saying injurious, hurtful, evil things against you, by those who say that they are somebody.”

Now watch the phrase,

“... who say they are Jews...”

Now, “Jews” actually comes from the word Judah. Judah actually has in its root understanding, to praise God. So, the purpose that God had raised His people was to give Him praise, and Jews are supposed to point to God. But just because you say you're a Jew doesn't make you one. Just because you say, “Well, I praise God all the time,” doesn't mean you do praise God all the time. So, the fact is, He says, “They say they are Jews.” What's the truth? They are not.

There's an interesting passage if you keep your finger here and turn with me to Romans 2. I'd give you a number of examples of this, but then I wouldn't have time to finish what I'm doing.

(Romans 2:28) "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.

(Romans 2:29) But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise..."

Where we get the word Judah, "Praise Yahweh," right.

"... his praise is not from men, but from God."

God will exalt us if we'll point to Him, and that's what they've been called. In John 8, many were coming up to Jesus, saying, "Our father is Abraham." He goes, "Abraham's not your father." They go, "Oh, no, I got my genealogy right here." And Jesus goes, "If you were the sons of Abraham, you'd be doing the things that Abraham does. But you don't love Me like Abraham does. So, you're not his sons." People are saying to Jesus, "Your brothers and sisters, and your mom want to see you." He

says, "Who are my mothers, brothers and sisters? The one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." We miss define who are the sons of God. "Well, I go to church. I'm a Christian." That's not the way Jesus defines it. "Christian" is defined as a follower of Christ. Are you following Christ? Are you patterning your life after Christ? "No." Ok. Then you're not a Christian. That's pretty easy, isn't it? Because a Christian is somebody that has not only given their life to Christ but wants to follow Him in the things that He does. So, that's why Acts says it was the disciples that were first called Christians in Antioch. They were actually first called disciples, then they were called Christians. So, the disciples are learners, right? "Christian" means follower. So, you become a learner. Then, you decide to follow Christ. So, interesting point that he's making here in Romans 2, what really is a Jew, and this is what Jesus is dealing with. Though they may have the credentials of the fact that the genealogy says they're a Jew, Jesus says that doesn't make you a Jew. You'll see the same thing in the Book of Galatians. He goes, "You are all sons of Abraham, if you'll walk by faith, and you have the promises of Abraham, if you walk by faith." So, the

same thing is being conveyed in this particular passage. Look, there are people that say that they're Jews, but they are not, and what does He say at the end of verse 9? They are actually of the synagogue, and He uses "synagogue," why? Because He's dealing with people that are Jews, and where do they worship? In the synagogue. But what does He call it? A synagogue of Satan. Why does He use "Satan"? Of course, Satan means "adversary". "They're against Me." How do we know that they're against You? "They're against not only Me, they're against you." Remember the love of Christ, for God so loved the world that He gave His Son. So, He came not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. Are the Jews helping save people? No. Then they're the synagogue of Satan, because they're going against what Christ is here for. Christ is here to save. So, He says, "They say this, but that's not true." You see, there are people in our lives that are very intimidating because of their position. I mean, what we understand according to history is that Smyrna had a large colonization of Jews. So, they were pretty much in charge. In fact, what we also understand is that the Jews became so powerful as the

Christians began to have their church that the Jews began to say, "You can't keep us out of your church." And of course, they said, "No, that's not our intent to keep you out of church." So, they started moving in the church and then they started telling the Christian church what they should be doing, and then they told them, "You should be going according to the traditions that we have," and then they said, which is very interesting, "You must meet on the Sabbath." Well, the church began to do a little bucking in this. This made them furious. So, they began to attack them. Within 100 years, the Jewish synagogue begins to push them out. Very interesting. So, as you as you look in this particular page, we see exactly what history has been telling us, that they were having trouble with this force and these people that are saying, "You're not like us and you have to be like us. Of course, the gospel is "whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." "Oh, no. You have to be Jews, and you have to follow the traditions." Look, there are forces of tradition, there's forces of intimidation, there are people that pontificate very powerfully, and they come in and because they have a recognition in society, they're very

powerful. The tendency is to begin to acquiesce; the tendency is to begin to compromise. "Well, we'll let them get their foot in the door." But love says, "No. This message has to remain pure. It has to remain true. It can't be clouded." Because as much a part of love as you embracing somebody is the part of love that says, "We can't tell a lie." See, the world is saying, "I say this," and God says, "That's not true." "Well, I say this," and God says, "Well, that's not true either." You see, part of love is that it rejoices in the truth, as 1 Corinthians 13 defines love. Anytime you tell a lie, that's not loving, that's called deceitful, and that's called mean. Look, there are going to be people upset at you because you say, "Well, that's not true." But if you don't say that's not true, you're not loving them. Do you understand the point?

So, the passage goes, "Look, I know your tribulation. I know that they perceive you as poverty, but you're rich. I know that there's people that are reviling you and hating you and saying bad things about you. They say they're Jews, but they're not. Don't believe them. They are of the synagogue of Satan."

(Revelation 2:10) “Do not fear...”

This is the whole point of the text. You've got to overcome the darkness. What's the darkness saying? Well, the darkness is saying you don't know what you're talking about. It's saying Jesus isn't enough. The darkness is saying that you can't have new life through Him, that you've got to go through the traditions of men. There's a lot of pressures coming in, and you've got to fit into the system. It's not true, it's not true. That's what love says, “It's just not true.” That's light, and light can't stop shining.

Now, the passage reads this way,

(Revelation 2:10) “Do not fear what you are about to suffer...”

Now, the word that he uses for “fear,” “*phobeō*” is a word that oftentimes reflects the fact that you take flight, but more specifically, in this context, it's not as much emphasizing taking flight as it is literally causing you to be so alarmed and overwhelmed by fear. Of course, people are threatening your life. That's pretty alarming, and that's exactly what's going to be happening. But that

begins to shake your world and quite frankly, is it really that important if we say Jesus alone? Really? Is it that important? Couldn't we just bring in everybody? You bring a lie in and before long the lie takes center stage; besides the fact that you blurred the truth. "No man comes to the Father, but by Me." It's very clear.

So, here they are, and it says within the passage, you cannot fear. Well, the word "fear" in this text now, because of its context is telling us and giving us a sign, and another definition of this word is that you hesitate in doing what you know is right. "Do not fear." There are times that we're going to be placed in, and people are going to be intimidated, they're going to say, "Well, I think this. I think this" and it might be that the majority is what's ruling in the room, but you know what? Love will say, "That's not true. It's not true." "Well, why don't you just agree with everybody?" Because it's not true. It's not helping you, and you can't be saved that way.

(Revelation 2:10) "Do not fear what you are about to suffer..."

Ok. So, it's going to cost you something.



Paul writes to Timothy; he says, “Just to let everybody know, everybody that chooses to live godly is going to suffer.” What are they going to suffer?

“... Behold, the devil...”

“*Diabolos*” - the slanderer. It’s interesting, kind of the basic word that parallels with blasphemy. The slanderer, the one who hates you and says bad things against you; the great accuser against you.

“... is about to cast some of you into prison...”

What's going to happen?

“...you will be tested...”

What's going to happen?

“... you will have tribulation for ten days...”

What's going to happen?

“...Be faithful until death...”

“You're going to die, but remember, they said I was dead. Yet I live.”

“... Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

Every time they look in that city, what do they see? That crown that goes around. "See that crown? I want you to look at it. I've got one for you, and it's a crown of life. They're going to say you're dead. Don't you believe them. You're not dead. You've never been more alive than this."

Now, as He comes to the end, He makes reference to the fact that they're not only going to be cast into a prison, but I want you to underline the word, they're going to be tested. Now, that word is always used to signify the testing of the validity of the quality of something. You see, the point of the matter is that the world is telling us that what we have is not true. That's what they're saying.

Now, you could sit all day long across the person that says what you have is not real, what you have is not true, and you could go back and say, "It is so." And then they would say, "Not" and you would say, "So." So, it's not going to work, is it? Guess what? God has given you the venue to show it works. He puts you through testing, and you come through it unscathed. You don't deny. You don't hate. You're not bitter. In fact, I think I can hear somebody singing in the flames. Guess what? God's going, "Are too

real.” You can't argue with that. It's unarguable. You win. You have overcome darkness because that which is darkness is that which lies, but truth when it's tested only shines. You can't get me to deny this. It doesn't matter what you say. I can't deny this. Why? Because it's true and the truth lives within me, and you can't argue with that. You can argue with the fact that you might believe one thing, I believe another, but you can't argue the fact that I will gladly go into that fire. You can't argue with that.

There was a guy by the name of Polycarp who was a disciple of John. In fact Jerome, who was the translator of Scripture from Greek and the Hebrew into Latin, they call it Latin Vulgate. So, the first translation of Scripture actually comes from Jerome, which is about 382, somewhere in that neighborhood where he was, and he writes about a guy by the name of Polycarp. He writes this, and just to quote what he says about him, he writes that Polycarp was a disciple of John, who wrote Revelation. He said Polycarp was a disciple of John and was ordained by John to be the pastor of the church at Smyrna. It's pretty interesting, isn't it? So, we actually

have some writings from those that knew Polycarp, and actually sat under many of his sermons in which he would say how he got to talk with John and John was relating that he actually touched God, Jesus in the flesh. It would be an amazing conversation to have with somebody like Polycarp that while he was a young man, he was being actually trained by him. So, there are two others by the name of Irenaeus, who was then a disciple of Polycarp and sat under his teaching, and then Tertullian, and then they write some things about him. Well, they were actually around when Polycarp dies, and they see him die. They record some of the things that he said, and I'll just quote a few of them.

In the martyrdom of Polycarp, it reads, "I have served my Lord these 80 and 6 years. He has done me no wrong." Polycarp goes on to say, "How then can I blaspheme my King and my Savior? You threaten me with fire that burns for a season, and after a little while is quenched, but you are ignorant of the fire of the eternal punishment that is prepared for the wicked." Polycarp was burned at the stake, and he was not burning up. So, they actually had to

take a spear and finish him off. As Polycarp was being burned, he was burned for the reason in which he refused to bow to the Roman emperor. Now, what's interesting about this is that about 195 A.D., this city, Smyrna thought they would get in good with Rome. So, what they did was they declared Ramos, the goddess of Rome, as their God, and they began to have Caesar worship. They actually believe that Caesar worship actually began in Smyrna. But they did this to kind of get in good with them. Of course, they would help them build more buildings and such like that. What's interesting is the Jews have been there in their colonization for now years, have never had a trouble with Caesar worship. Let me put it another way. Jesus, when He was being crucified, Pilate asked, "Isn't this your king?" And the Jews answer back, "This is not our king. Caesar is our king." The Jews have no problem with Caesar worship, but the Christians will not bow. Who do you think is true? Darkness always comes when truth is not held to; when you and I are afraid to stand up for what is right, darkness comes in. Because people go, "I don't know what to believe anymore." You see, Christians are being tested, and the greatest part of

your testimony is, “I'm not moving from here. I know this to be true and I care enough for your soul not to compromise it.” And if you'll live that way and you'll walk that way, then light will follow you, and the church will continue to be a light. But if the church continues to cave and tries to act like the world, the world goes, “We do that.” And they can't see the truth. There are times where we have to say, “That's not true.” And that's where the power comes.

The passage ultimately ends this way,

(Revelation 2:11) “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.”

You'll live forever. Oh, they may kill you and they may say you're dead, but don't you believe it. You'll never be more alive.

## Closing Prayer:

Father, I want to give You thanks for Your lovingkindness to us and the fact that You've called us to be lights in the world. Obviously, darkness has come into the world and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil, but it has brought all kinds of depression and anxiety and hurt and pain and sorrow, and God, You have called us to be agents of light. So, You tell us, "Don't stop loving; don't compromise on the truth."

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed. We're asking you to join the church as we carry that torch of Jesus Christ alone.