

<b>Series</b>	Gamma 16 – Study 3
<b>Topic</b>	Ephesus and Smyrna
<b>Reference</b>	Revelations 2:1-11
<b>Date</b>	14 October 2020
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Good evening brothers and sisters in Christ. This evening, we're going to be doing study 3 in our study of Revelations. We're going to be looking at the seven churches and in particular Ephesus and Smyrna, looking at the first 11 verses of chapter 2. I trust that all of you have read that chapter. It would be very hard to understand without actually reading the chapter. Let's start with a word of prayer. Lord, we ask this evening that you'll be with us, help us understand your words to these churches because your words to these churches are your words to us tonight. We ask that you grant that we perceive spiritually, we have ears to hear and hearts to respond. We ask for Jesus sake. Amen.

Now let's look at seven churches, looking at the spiritual challenges to the church. The first church we look at:

- Ephesians church, one of the largest churches there. They had a problem of losing their first love.
- Then after that the church in Smyrna, persecuted and small, suffering.
- Church in Pergamos, probably with compromised beliefs.
- Church of Thyatira had false prophets.
- The church in Sardis considered spiritually dead.
- The Philadelphian church, small, patiently enduring despite weaknesses
- The Laodicean church are basically lukewarm.

So these are the spiritual challenges to the church, and they're no different from this spiritual challenges that face our church even today. So we're going to go one round in a circle to look at all these seven churches.

So the letters to seven churches specifically; Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamon and all the rest. But then the letter is also to all of the churches at the same time, because in verse seven it says,

**Rev 2: 7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches**

So he actually addressed each particular church and the message for each particular church also applies to all seven churches, which therefore applies to all of us as well. Now, not only that, it also applies to individuals. If you look...

**7b To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'**

So after every church, admonition to each church, Jesus always ends, to the one who conquers. So therefore this message is not only to the seven churches, to the church at large, it is also to individuals. Here you have each of the churches. It always ends with, to the one, personally. So it's a message to each personally.

Let's look at the seven churches. We have got the Ephesian church and the Laodicean church, two of

the largest churches. And they're the ones that are most endangered and lost their first love. And the Laodicean are so bad that Jesus would compare them to awful water. You're neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of mouth and then you've got the two most faithful but beleaguered churches, which is Smyrnan church and the Philadelphian church, they are small, they are faithful, Jesus commends them. That's no real criticism of them, but they are suffering under persecution. Jesus gives them encouragement to hang on.

So therefore these are the most faithful. Then you've got the tree churches in the middle, Pergamon, Thyatira and Saudis. These are the compromised churches. These are churches tottering on the verge of compromising with the culture and losing their faith as it were.

Remember the description of Jesus in Revelations chapter 1. And you can actually see the description of Jesus it's taken apart. There's one part of the description, Jesus applied to a particular church as you go around to the seven churches and you will find that for every church that has a problem, a spiritual problem, there is a part of Jesus' character that actually addresses that spiritual problem.

So, if you look at the Ephesians church, they have lost their first love. And there's a description of Jesus when he addresses the Ephesian church. And it is the one who holds seven stars and walks around lampstands. Which means the loss of first love has to do with their witness. And that's the part of Jesus that ministers to them.

Smyrna church persecuted and Jesus says,

**The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.**

So this is a church seriously in danger of losing their life and Jesus says, I'm the one who died but came back from life and that ministers to them. The Pergamon church are the ones who compromise and Jesus says

**The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.**

Which means judgment if they compromise their faith. Thyatira, these are the ones that dealing with false prophet and Jesus describes himself as the

**who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.**

Again, symbols that Jesus knows what's happening. What falsehood are being spread there. And Jesus will judge them. Then the ones like Sardis, spiritually dead. And it describes

**the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.**

Which means God will give them the spirit to basically resuscitate this dead church. The Philadelphian church beleaguered, enduring, despite weaknesses. Jesus described themselves as

**the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.**

So therefore, what opportunities they witness, even though they are small, Jesus holds the key. Nobody else holds the key. The Romans don't hold the key. Jesus will open up for them. And lastly, the Laodicean, Jesus describes them as,

the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.

Which implies that Jesus is all you need, whatever problems you have, whether you are suffering and under persecution, Jesus is all you need. Whether you're in danger of being compromised in your faith, spiritually dead, lukewarm, have lost your first love, Jesus is all you need because in Revelation 1:9

Revelation 1:9 (ESV) I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus.

The tribulation and patient endurance, the secret to patient endurance is being in Jesus.

Now, let us start. Looking at the Ephesian church

Revelation 2:1 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: 'The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

Here is a map of Ephesus, right at the edge of Asia Minor, about 80 kilometers south of the city of Izmir in modern Turkey today. You can look at some of the ruins of Ephesus, which have been discovered. These are some of the graffiti, and this is the library of Celsius. This is a great amphitheater, which is Greek style where they actually have plays and entertainment. They are the one of the first few cities that actually have the Imperial cult where they actually worship the emperor. Here is the temple to Emperor Hadrian, temple to Emperor Domitian, which has a big statue of him there. Then it is also a city made famous because of its worship of the goddess Artemis.

Now this is the mother church. Paul spent a total two years and three months there. It was a center for evangelization of the rest of Asia Minor. So it is a very important church.

2 I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. 3 I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary

Take a look at the words, they are committed and hardworking. **I know your works, your toils and your patient endurance.** You see it is a church where everybody seems to be involved in all their programs. They are not a church, a slack that nobody comes for the worship services, nobody participate in their programs, they are there. So, Jesus commends them for that. And then they are righteous at doctrinally pure because it says, **and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, who have tested those who call themselves apostles.**

So therefore they are pure. They haven't been misled like other churches and this is important because Jesus warns of this in Matthew 7. He says,

Matthew 7:15-20 (ESV) Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. 18 A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

So there will be false prophets and the Ephesian leaders recognized them because of the way they live. In 2 Peter 2:1-3 gives you three characteristics are what false teachers are like. And this is important

because we apply this to today.

2 Peter 2:1-3 (ESV) But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. 3 And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep

So there are three features of which you can see in false teachers. One, they will deny the Lord Jesus Christ or his deity or his character. Then their focus is sensuality, sexuality and also there will be greed. So it is money, sex and power as it were. Jude 1:4 says,

Jude 1:4 (ESV) For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ

Again false teachers have similar characteristics. If you look in the US. There are plenty of false teachers there. TD Jakes, this is a quotation from his website and he says,

*God – There is one God, Creator of all things, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in three manifestations: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*

Again this is really off the rails because he is talking about one God and there's no separate Jesus Christ, the Holy spirit and the Father. They're not separate, they are actually three manifestations. It's like water appearing as ice, steam and water itself, which is again against what we believe. And then if you look at his lifestyle, he's worth many, many millions of dollars with Rolls Royce and private jets as well.

Look at Benny Hinn, he has been a famous evangelist for years. And this is what he writes in his theology.

- It is wrong to pray “Lord, Thy will be done” (**again it is his will when he does miraculous healing, it is not the Lord’s will**)
- God always intends for believers to be healed,
- Faith on the part of the sick person is essential to healing, (**no faith and you cannot be healed. But then how was Lazarus healed when he was dead**)
- Christians should not be sick if they are really faithful in the Lord

On March 24, 2015 Benny Hinn himself preacher of this great prosperity gospel was brought to the emergency room in Orange County with atrial fibrillation. So later on he actually apologize. He says,

*We get attacked for preaching prosperity, well it’s in the Bible,” he continued, “But I think some have gone to the extreme with it sadly, and it’s not God’s word what is taught, and I think I’m as guilty as others. Sometimes you go a little farther than you really need to go and then God brings you back to normality and reality.”*

So I am glad he has repented. Now how do they operate? So in the US a lot of this is in big megachurches, and this is how they operate.

*But their real power lies in their innovative approach to selling faith. They’ve combined multi-level marketing, Pentecostal signs and wonders, and post-millennial optimism to connect directly with millions of spiritual customers. That allows them to reap millions in donations, conference fees, and book and DVD sales. And because these INC*

*apostles claim to get direction straight from God, they operate with almost no oversight.*

So this is something that the modern church needs to recognize, because it is happening all over the world. Just like it happened in Ephesian church, but in different form.

So the other people that they have been very carefully fighting against is the Nicolaitans. Verse 6 says,

**6 Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.**

We don't really have very much information about the Nicolaitans. Verse 3,

**3 I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary**

So here is a church that is faithful under persecution. They are holding on but it is a bit odd. This is a church in verse 4,

**4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.**

Now you can have a church that actually is enduring persecution and yet have abandoned their love. How does this happen? Well, perhaps, if you look at the Island of Ambon in Indonesia. The clashes between Muslim and Christians, they fight all the time. They're almost about 5,000 people killed during these clashes throughout the years. And sometimes you can see people faithful under persecution, but because they're faithful to an idea or occupation or designation as Christian and Muslims will actually engage fighting with Christians. I don't necessarily believe that these are all born again believers, so they can be faithful but maybe not necessarily having their first love.

If you look at Richard Wurmbbrand, he was a Romanian pastor who was persecuted for many years and tortured in concentration camps. And he writes,

**God will judge us not according to how much we endured, but how much we could love”**

Love is the bottom line now.

**4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.**

What is this first love? Is it just feelings? It is a love that's there at the beginning. It is also a kind of love that has priority. What is it? Is it just feelings? If it is feelings as a false teacher by name of Ann Voskamp and she writes this pilgrimage and she writes,

*“I fly to Paris and discover how to make love to God.”*

*“God makes love with grace upon grace, every moment a making of His love for us. [C]ouldn't I make love to God, making every moment love for Him? To know Him the way Adam knew Eve. Spirit skin to spirit skin?”*

Desire isn't it. She thinks that the love she has for God is somewhat sexual, giving up almost orgasmic climax, again false teaching. Now, what kind of love is this first love? It is more than a feeling. Because if you look down here before verse 5,

**4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and**

remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent

So, this is the kind of feeling, kind of priority love, which they had before but now they've lost. They actually produce works. But if you look at them, didn't they have works, didn't Jesus does recommend them to having works. If you look at verse 2,

2 I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil,

They were hard working, but it's not the kind of work which they did at first, which they don't seem to be doing now. What kind of work was this? Well, there is a prophecy, which Jesus talks about by the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 and it gives us a clue of what kind of work this is. Matthew 24.

Matt 24:11 And many **false prophets** will arise and **lead many astray**. 12 And because lawlessness will be increased, the **love of many will grow cold**.

So here we are talking, because false prophets coming in, leading people astray, people start to deteriorate in their character, in the way they act among society, the love of many will grow cold, which mean they would have lost their love and as a result,

13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

So the love of many will grow cold, but those will maintain their love, those who endure will be saved. And his gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed, which means the love that you had at first will result in the proclamation of the gospel. Right? So how do you regain your first love,

The one who endures to the end will be saved and the gospel will be proclaimed.

How do you regain your first love? If you're happy, it's a response. If somebody brings you a present and something nice happens to you which you do not expect is a response responsible. Sadness is a response if you lose your job or you had COVID-19 you find out it's devastating, sadness is the response. But love is also a response and you need to look at verse five. Remember this is a remedy.

5 **Remember** therefore from where you have fallen; **repent**, and do the works you did at first.

So you need to remember in order to respond. What do they have to remember? Well, John 4:10,

John 4: 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins...19 We love because he first loved us

If love is a response, it is a response to his love first. So love is a response. So we need to remember what he did for us in order to respond. So therefore if they've lost their first love, the remedy is to remember. How do we actually remember? We call back to our minds, what Christ has done for us and for the Israelites, for their terms of reference is basically their festivals. Every time they celebrated their festivals, they actually celebrated God's salvation of them when they were slaves in Egypt, how God brought them, parted the Red Sea, brought them to the desert into the promised land. That's what they celebrated. For the church what do we celebrate, what do we remember? Every month for the church, in our church at least. We remember the Lord's Supper, because Lord's Supper brings to mind what God has done for us. And when we actually display what he has done for us in terms of the bread and

the wine, and we take it, we remember and that actually propels us to action because that's the love event that actually causes us to respond.

The other one is not only to remember but also to repent. The beauty of his love is actually magnified when we realize the depth of our sins. You have got the woman who comes to Jesus in a Pharisees house and she is crying and she takes the alabaster jar with expensive perfume worth eight months of pay and pours it on our savior's feet washes it with her tears and dries it with a hair and Jesus said,

**Luke 7: 47" Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little."**

So therefore our response to what the savior has done for us is also immeasurably accentuated by the realization of the depth of our love. If we don't realize the depth of our love then our love will be shallow. So therefore love is a response to our sin. When we look at our sin, there are two ways in which we can look at our sin. Our sin can be an occasion for the devil to assault us. It says how terrible you are at all or our realization of sin and the depth to which he has paid for our sin can be building box for our self-esteem because of what he has done for us in his forgiveness.

Now, if you don't realize your sin, you will not be able to respond in love. So therefore in verse 5, remember, therefore you have to repent and do the works. Martin Luther in that famous 95 thesis, which he nailed on the doors of the church of Wittenberg. He writes, the first of this thesis is,

**"Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance."**

Repentance isn't something you do when you first accepted Christ. Repentance of sin and you forget about it and after that you are great. No repentance is the understanding that every single day, the reality and the depth and the misery of our sin, and as you remember that depth then you also remember his forgiveness and that accentuates your response.

Look at the works. What is the works of the first love? I'll take you back to that moment when Jesus was counseling that Samaritan woman he met by the well. Nobody would talk to this Samaritan woman because Rabbis don't talk to women, much less a Samaritan women who are actually hated by the Jews. And then, yeah, I actually talked to her and she realized that this was the Messiah. And then she was so excited about the encounter, how he spiritually touched her in verse 39, says

**John 4:39 Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did."**

Here is a woman transformed by that experience with Jesus Christ, she runs into town and she tells everybody because everybody knows she has five men who were not even there her husband. And he knew that and he forgave all that and it just touched her. This was her response and she is telling everyone. What is the works of the first love? It is being a witness for Jesus Christ. So therefore, go back to doing the things that we used to do at first, our first love, it's a love that we have initiated because of the love of God through Christ Jesus sacrifice. It's accentuated by our realization of our sin and as we grow closer to Christ we realize how deep and how atrocious and how bad are sins are. The more we realize our sins, the more we respond to him. It is our response to his love. And this will result in what, the witness of the gospel.

If you have lost the intensity of your first priority love to God, you will not be witnessing. You will not be excited to share who he is because who he is passe, it is old, it is not new, it's not refreshing. And



that's where we lose our first love. And also the punishment fits the crime. If you look at, if you don't do this,

5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

What is the lampstand? That lampstand is the church and the lampstand has only one function, the light and the light is the witness and if you don't regain your first love and witness, I will remove the lampstand and your witness will be gone.

Let me end with a parable of the talents, Mathew 25 when the master goes away and he actually gives one talent to one servant and then the others to the others. The ones who've got 5 and 10 talents, they actually doubled and multiply their talents and Jesus actually congratulated that and rewarded them. But there was one who received one talent and he didn't even do anything about it, he actually buried it. Verse 24 says.

Matthew 25:24-25 24 He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, 25 so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.'

Can you see that? Master. I knew you to be a hard man. There was no relationship with the master. He never actually used that talent to build. He just buried it in the ground because he has no relationship with the master. He had no love for the master, there was no desire to please the master, there was no gratefulness.

Let me end with a story of a woman who was actually shopping in a Christian shop and she was looking to buy crosses. She actually finally picked out a cross and ask the shopkeeper to take that out for her. And he took one out and she said, no, no, no, not that one. Okay. I want the cross without the Jesus. So, he had two kinds of crosses, you can have the cross with the Jesus or the cross which is empty. And the problem for many of us, if we have lost our first love we will be bearing the cross which is empty because that cross has slowly slipped back from the recesses of our memory. It is the death of Jesus Christ is a distant memory, the cross is just a symbol of all the good works that we have done, of our integrity of our character, of our ability. It's a symbol.

You don't have to fight for it, you don't have to die for it. Christians and Muslims fighting on the Island of Ambon, but the cross has only meaning when it's got a person on it. The cross only has meaning when we look and it points us to the person who actually bled and died for us. Have we lost our first love? That is the most urgent message Jesus brings to us today. The Revelation gives us vision.

The rest of Revelation. If you look at rest of Revelations, you can see

Revelation 5: 9 And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, 10 and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

Revelation 5:12 12 saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"

The centre of worship of worship focuses on Jesus and focuses on what Jesus has done, the lamb who



was slain.

**Revelation 12:11** 11 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

How do we conquer, by the blood of the lamb. So this is a chapter 2 verse 1, the picture of Jesus in the end, it is Jesus holding the seven stars, which has seven angels right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. He is walking and he is tending the lampstands. The lampstands have the flame. The flame is a witness and he is telling the Ephesian church, you have lost that flame. Get back the right flame. The Ephesian church actually responded. In Ignatius, the church father who actually wrote later, actually wrote that the Ephesian church heeded the warning and the church thrived. It is not here today, but at that time the church heeded this particular warning.

Now, the second church we want to be dealing with is a different kind of church, a smaller church, the church of Smyrna. This is actually in the modern Turkish city of Izmir. Bit north from Ephesus, as you're growing up in a clockwise manner. This is a picture of a modern Izmir with the ruins of Smyrna. You can see ruins of their marketplace. Now lets read

(ESV) And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: 'The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.<sup>9</sup> "I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 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 you will have tribulation

So here is a church in Smyrna and here when Jesus described himself, he is the one who had died and came to life again. And if you look at them character of this particular city, there had been successive wave of invasions. In fact, it was entirely destroyed in the sixth century BC and then rebuilt again from the ground up at 2 AD. So this is a city that actually has died and actually rose again, and they are under threat because of the Imperial cult. Julius Caesar was the first Caesar who was actually deified. They made him a God so that he had to be worshiped, and then after that it was Augustus. And what happens with Romans were to capture a particular foreign land. What do they would do? They would actually take the population out to another land and not only that, they will mix up their religions.

You find that when you actually have you take upon yourself, Roman gods and they can keep their local gods, but they also have Roman gods is all mixed up. So therefore the people's loyalty would be to the Roman kingdom. So therefore each Roman emperor will want to be worshiped. You have Caligula, the worse of the lot, who was actually quite mad who was made into a God. He made his horse Incitatus into a senator and you also have to worship the horse as a god as well. And when you had the worship, you find that you have to go and give offerings and you can say, Caesar is Lord and bow before the Lord and if you don't do that you would be considered a traitor. That's how they kept the entire empire together and this was a problem with Christians because they couldn't bow before the emperor.

The persecution started by AD 55 with Emperor Nero when Rome was burnt and he wanted to blame someone. And then that was it, because of local persecution and nothing else broke out until AD 90 that is Emperor Domitian who initiated some more persecution, which did accelerated right after that.

Now Jesus says to them, I know your tribulation, your poverty, but you're rich.

So here poverty and wealth is measured by a different metric. God recognizes they have tribulation. They are poor simply because they are left out of society and marginalized because of their fidelity to

Jesus, but in Jesus' eyes they are rich. So they draw comfort from the fact that when Jesus walks around the lampstand he sees them and he is actually saying, you guys are okay. I know you're suffering, but I recognize it, but in my eyes you are rich.

and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

What is this about? Well, the big prominent issue in Asia Minor is that most of the other religions are allowed to prosper as well as the Jews. The Jews were allowed to prosper, they were allowed to practice their religion, but when you actually worship in synagogue, they would have a roster, they will take your name down, then you're allowed to worship. And the Christians, when they first started gentile Christians coming in, they went into the synagogue and joined the Jews in their worship as well. But when persecution came, what happened was the Christians could no longer hide under the protection of the Jews. Because the Jews started to out them. The Jews started to report them to the authorities, the Jews started to take their name off from the role at the synagogue and this exposed the Christians to severe persecution.

You see the Jews said we are the true Jews, the true synagogue, we are the true Israel. We have all the old Testament heritage, you gentile Christians are not. And so therefore Jesus says, I know your tribulation and your poverty and the slander of those who say they are Jews but they are not, but they are a synagogue of Satan. So this Jews in the synagogue who were throwing the Christians out to the wolves to be persecuted claimed to have a direct Old Testament heritage and all the covenant promises, but in Jesus' eyes they are a synagogue of Satan.

10 **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** you will have tribulation

So prison and persecution for Christians is a time of testing. Not a time, that is indicative that because you are poor, because you are thrown in prison, God isn't pleased with you but in fact the opposite is true. When you are thrown in prison for Christ's sake that you may be tested and for 10 days you will have tribulation. So this words 10 days is a short period of time. You go back to Daniel chapter one,

Daniel 1: 11 Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, 12 "Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink

So it is a full period but it is not a very long period of time. And so therefore we must have God's view to eternity and be faithful unto death. So, whatever it is, it say you will be tested for a short time, you will be thrown in prison but he didn't say you're going to get out of prison. He actually said be faithful unto death, which means for many of them their time in prison will be terminated with their lives being terminated. And I will give you the crown of life.

Why do you have to hold on and be faithful unto death? You know why because verse 11 says

11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.'

The second death is a death in hell. And if you are faithful unto death here you will not be hurt by the second death. The savior will save you and we go back to the description of Jesus when he first talked to the admonish or encouraged the Smyrna church. He says,

The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.

If you have your Lord Jesus a stands over you and says I have died and I come to life. You can die safely and come to life. That is the Smyrnan church.

So persecution comes in all sorts of forms. We must expect it as Christians. We are very thankful in this country. There has been not much of it, but there may come a time in future when this comes upon us, do not be surprised, but Jesus' admonition to us wherever we are be faithful unto death.