***Session 3*** ***Jesus’ Message to the Church of Smyrna (Rev. 2:8-11)***

1. The primary message: Faithfulness in Suffering (Rev. 2:8-11)
	1. The church of Smyrna suffered persecution. Jesus called them to walk in the grace of fearlessness and faithfulness that would result in some being martyred—and then greatly rewarded by Jesus.

*Tonight we are looking at Jesus’ message to the church at Smyrna, Revelation 2:8-11. It is a very short message, but it is very power-packed. Almost every phrase is significant and filled with meaning. The church in Smyrna was well-known because it was the church that suffered persecution and were faithful even under martyrdom. Jesus boldly, and I’m sure tenderly—I would have loved to have seen the way He said and the tone of which He said it, but I think I know Him enough to know how He said it—called them to walk in what I call the grace of fearlessness: to be free from fear in the face of trouble, but also to walk in faithfulness. Faithfulness and fearlessness with a result that He told them clearly “Some of you will be martyred; you will be killed. But I will reward you more than you can imagine.” And that is the thing that Jesus knows that we do not know. He said, as it were, “There is no martyr that will ever regret their martyrdom when they see how the Lord responds to them on that day.”*

8“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: 9“I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews…but are a synagogue of Satan.
10Do 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. 11He who has an ear, let him hear …He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.”’” (Rev. 2:8-11)

*Let’s read it. Revelation 2:8, “Now to the angel” or messenger; remember the word, messenger, can be a heavenly messenger—an angel—or a human messenger, which I believe here it is the human messenger, the primary apostolic leader of the church in that city. All seven churches are churches in Asia Minor which today is modern-day Turkey. All seven of the churches are there. The church is almost extinct in Turkey today, but I believe there is going to be a great resurgence of God’s Word over this geographic area and what He did in the early days, even right here in Revelation, and He is going to cause a recovery in Turkey. I am expecting a tremendous revival in the churches of Turkey before the Lord returns.*

*Well, the Lord says these things, so when He is talking to a persecuted church He is going to highlight aspects of His character and His titles that He revealed back in chapter 1. Remember, in all seven of the churches He highlights aspects of His personality and His ministry that are particularly relevant to the issue they are struggling with or are challenged with. To the persecuted church He says these very few but very powerful phrases, “I am the First and the Last.” That is, “It is important that you know, if you are going to face persecution, that I am the First and the Last. Not only that, I want you to know that I was dead and I came to life.” In other words, “I experienced the worst that a human can experience, and I broke the power of it and triumphed over it. So, you are in My hands, and so you are good because I know what you are going through and I know the way to victory, power, and eternal glory in what you are facing.” Anyway, we will get to that in a few moments.*

*Then He gives an affirmation of four things that He knows about them. He says in verse 9, “I know your works”—that is, your ministry. I know how hard you work. I do see it—“I know your tribulation”—the persecution that is facing you now. I see it, and I see everything that comes against you—“I know your poverty.” Now, they were not poor because it was a poor city, as it was actually a very wealthy city. They were poor because of the persecution. They suffered the seizure of their property, their possessions, and things like that. They were poor because of their obedience in persecution. He said, in effect, “Understand that I see it clearly, and what you do not fully understand is how rich you are in My sight. I am going to show it to you one day, and you are going to be satisfied beyond anything you can imagine how rich you actually are.”*

*Now we are rich in the Lord the day we are born again. However, He is talking about in contrast to the possessions and what they lost because they were faithful to the Lord, in terms of jobs, money, and opportunities. He said, basically, “I am going to make it all up to you, and I promise you that you will not be disappointed. I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews… but are a synagogue of Satan.” He said, in other words, “I know what they say about you, some of the religious guys and those who claim to have biblical insight and loyalty to the Bible. They are the ones talking against you, and I get that. Now here is what I want to exhort you with.”*

*He gives them two exhortations, “I do not want you to be afraid.” Now everybody would naturally be tempted with fear and have to work through it, but He does not want you to camp out and give in and just yield to fear. He wants you to resist it because He will give you the ability to resist it. “Do not just give in to fear, and I do not want you to fear any of the things.” Now this is going to be a prophecy I am sure they did not appreciate in the immediacy, “I do not want you to fear the things that are about to come on you, that you have not suffered yet, but are coming in the future.” I mean, how would you like to have the Lord appear in His resurrected glory and the prophecy He gives you is, “Do not draw back in the things you are about to suffer that are greater than the things you are suffering right now.”*

*You might say, “Lord, do You have another word? Do I get a couple of prophecies?”*

*Of course, He gave them a few things. He said, “You are about to suffer in the days to come in ways beyond what you have suffered up to now.” He said, as it were, “Indeed, let Me just give it to you clearly. The devil is the one behind this. He is going to inspire people to come against you, and I am going to allow the devil a certain amount of room to come against you. And, he is going to throw some of you in prison.”*

*Now the words, “some of you,” you might think, “Some of us? Well, who? Which ones? And for how long? Will we die in prison? Or will we be supernaturally freed from prison by an angel like Peter was a couple of times?”*

*The Lord’s answer is “Yes. Some will be a long time; some will be a short time. Some will avoid prison; some will have supernatural deliverance from prison.”*

*“Well, Lord, could You give me a little more insight?”*

*“No, no, no, just know it is going to happen, and I am in control. I am going to work this out for your good. In the age to come when you see all of the story and how I view it and what you gained because of it, you will be very, very happy. You will not be disappointed. However, I am going to let some of you be martyred. I am not going to tell you who, but I want the whole community to be alert to the fact that it might cost you your life to be loyal to Me.”*

*The reason the Lord allows this to happen is because, though the majority do not go to prison, and though the majority are not martyred at the end of the age, though there will be more persecution in the generation the Lord returns than in any other time in history, though I do not believe it will be the majority, but it will be enough for everybody to think about the possibility and realign their heart to say, “I am in all the way. I am in this for love!” or they will say, “No, no, I am not in!” And so the possibility of it makes everybody recalibrate their spiritual life: “I am going all the way,” or “I am getting out of this thing!”*

*The Lord says, as it were, “I am going to put it in front of you, and it is going to strengthen you. Even the possibility of it will strengthen and purify you.” He says, “The devil is about to throw some of you into prison,” verse 10, “and the reason is that you would be tested, that your lives would be realigned to My leadership, to My heart, and recalibrated.”*

*Because, when the potential of trouble comes, even before the trouble touches your life, the fact that it touches someone that you loved—I am talking about persecution now. I am not talking about a tragic event in your life. I am talking about people coming against you because you are faithful to Jesus—when that happens to people we love, it grabs our heart because we love them, and we become all engaged in it and then we also ask, “What if this happens to me? What would I do?”*

*And the Lord wants this whole scenario to go before the minds of His people. He asks, “What would you do? What am I worth to you? What do you believe about Me?” because persecution makes us ask all of these questions. That is what it means by “tested.”*

*It makes us work the muscle over and over again. It makes us recalibrate and realign our heart, and it makes us ask ourselves deep questions, “Is He worth it? Is He really who we sing about? Do I really believe in the age to come? Do I think this age is really temporary and not lasting?” That, as the famous missionary C.T. Studd said, “Only one life, ‘twill soon be passed; only what is done for Christ will last.” Do we really believe that or is it just a cool poster?*

*Well, persecution makes us ask and answer deep questions of the heart, and it realigns us if we answer it rightly. Or, it exposes that our faith is not grounded and rooted in reality but is just a kind of sentimental, public “I grew up in the church so that is kind of what I do–faith,” which is not the kind of faith that holds people steady under pressure.*

*He says, “Be faithful unto death.” That is the second exhortation. The first one is, “Do not cave into fear. Fear is going to tempt you, but I am going to help you to get through it. Do not cave into fear. Do not settle in on fear. Resist it, and I will help you.” And the second exhortation is a step beyond. He said, “I want you to more than just resist fear. I want you to be faithful, even if you die. I want you to be faithful. And what I will give you is the crown of life.”*

*Now the “crown of life” is not synonymous with the gift of eternal life. This is in addition to it. This is not something given to everybody whether they are faithful or stand steady or not. This is a specific reward given for people who face persecution and will not back away from their loyalty to Jesus. And the persecution can be verbal reproach, insults, or stigma. Those are real, and they really get us. They can be financial or they can be physical, which would be prison, martyrdom, and things like that. However, reproaches are very, very painful, as are insults and penalties of rejection from people that we love and honor. He says in verse 11, “He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying,” and remember when Jesus says, “He that has an ear, let him hear,” He is saying, “I want you to know that what I am saying right now is not immediately obvious to you; there is more than that meets the eye.” That is what the exhortation means. He means that “This truth I am telling you is especially important to Me, and it is not immediately obvious to you. There is more than what is on the surface.” That is what that exhortation means. It means to ask the Holy Spirit to bring you deeper in this truth. He said, “Let me say it again: he that overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.” That is the second promise. The first promise was “He will receive the crown of life.”*

* 1. In the *command* to be faithful and fearless is the *promise* of the enabling to obey. There are no super saints but only weak and broken people who are strengthened by the Spirit of glory.

*I want to mention this right from the beginning. Folks, when you hear of persecution, know that we are approaching a time in history where, in the generation the Lord returns, it will be the greatest and most fierce persecution of the Church ever in history, but it will also be the greatest revival. In the Church worldwide, I am talking like a billion or more, though no one knows the number because there is a great harvest coming in. A billion or two people will walk in purity, unity, and love, and they will do it in the presence of the great outpouring but also in the presence of the great persecution.*

*Now I would love just to say, “Lord, give us the outpouring.” I have told the Lord this over the years, “Lord, I am different than those other guys. Just give me the outpouring, and I will just be so humble and pure,” and He responds with “No, no, you are just like them. I am going to give you the outpouring, but I am going to let some trouble come too. Because a combination of an increase of the Spirit, you in growing revelation of the Word, and pressure really causes you to realign with Me, that combination, in a very dramatic way.” I always tell the Lord, “No, I am different from those other guys. I don’t need all of the troubles. I will just say yes all of the way!” So far He has not taken me at my word.*

14If you are reproached…blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory…rests on you. (1 Pet. 4:14)

*1 Peter 4:14, I love this verse. It says, “If you are reproached”—insulted—“because of your faithfulness to Christ,” and, by the way, you are insulted more by people who claim biblical knowledge and a biblical heritage. I mean, unbelievers will insult you, but there is as much insult among the people who claim to be loyal to the Bible, who have a biblical heritage and background. That makes it a little more difficult because we imagine just the evil people with horns on would come against us, but the persecution throughout history says much of it comes within those who confess to have some kind of involvement with the faith, which makes it more challenging than ever.*

*He says, “If you are reproached…blessed are you,” and I thought, “Well, reproach hurts.” When somebody you care about insults and degrades you, and you bear a stigma because of the way you walk with Jesus, Peter says, in effect, “You are blessed because the Spirit of glory will rest on you in an increased measure” which is the Holy Spirit. There will be more of the presence of the Spirit touching your heart when you are bearing this.*

*I remember talking to Brother Yun several years ago, the man who wrote the book called “The Heavenly Man.” He was persecuted severely in the underground church in China. His bones were broken, the most horrible things done to him, and it went on for years. He said, “And then the doors opened,” and he was supernaturally delivered. He tells the story, and he said, “The Spirit of glory!” not all day everyday but he said, “I had moments of nearness to God that I have never known since I got out of prison, not like I knew in prison.” Not every day all day, and not like all the pain left. That is not what he meant. He said. “No, it still hurt, and I still had really tough moments, but I had moments in that jail cell like never before or after my time in prison.” This is the verse he would use, saying that the Spirit of glory literally rests on you when that happens.*

*There are no super saints. They do not exist. The only kind of people there are—I am talking about people in their fleshly, human make-up and abilities—are weak and broken people. However, we are strengthened by the Spirit of glory. As I look at what is coming and what is happening in the underground church in China and a number of other places in Islamic nations where they are persecuting the Church heavily, but it is going to increase far beyond that, and it will come to America. Some folks think, “Well, at least we are here.” No, it will come to America. It is obvious to me because of the way things are going and it is also clearly stated in the Bible. It will be in every single nation of the world. Not because of “Oh no!” It is because the Lord says, “I am going to purify, and I am going to release My power in an unprecedented way in every nation of the earth.” And persecution and the outpouring of power do go together. I mean we can believe for power before persecution but the greater measures of power in history go hand in hand with persecution. That is what the testimony in the book of Acts makes really clear.*

* 1. Smyrna was a port city on the Aegean Sea (west coast of Turkey) with over 100,000 residents.
	It was a beautiful city referred to in the ancient world as “the Flower of Asia. It was a prosperous harbor that had roads connecting it to many cities in Asia. Today, it is the city of *Izmir* with about 200,000 people. This is the only city of the seven cities in Revelation 2-3 that still exists today.

*Let’s go to the historical context of Smyrna. It was a port city. It was a very beautiful city right there on the Aegean Sea. It was a prosperous city that was connected to many, many cities in Asia Minor and the Roman Empire because the ships would come in and merchants would flow through that city. It is the only city of the seven cities that still exists today in Turkey—Izmir—and it has three million people who live in that city today. Of the seven churches, like Ephesus, Thyatira, Philadelphia, etc., this is the only one that still exists today. The great challenge of this prosperous city, a very wealthy city, was that the poverty of their experience was not because they were at the bottom of the scale of the social order on the world level. They were in poverty because they were obedient to the Lord, and therefore they lost their positions and economic gains up to this point in time.*

* 1. Emperor worship was a unifying factor in the Roman Empire. Forcing people to declare their loyalty to Rome publicly through emperor worship enhanced national security. Thus, the Christians who refused to participate in this were sentenced to death as criminals of the state.

*Here is a little bit of insight into one of the great challenges of Smyrna and actually throughout all of Asia Minor and throughout even the Roman Empire. It was emperor worship. Emperor worship was not just emphasized, but it was mandatory. You had to worship the emperor as god, and the reason was not because they all believed he was god; it was actually a unifying factor in the Roman Empire. Because, if you would bow your knee and call Caesar, “God,” you were possibly going to be loyal if an invading nation came in, but if you refused to do that, you were suspect. They would say, “You would betray us if we have a military invasion.” And, of course, in the ancient world military invasion were very common. So this was really a security issue much more than a spiritual one.*

*I do not think anyone actually believed Nero was god. I do not think they really believed it, but it was a public statement of allegiance, and they had to do it. However, the believers would not do it, and the Roman government asked, “Why? I mean you did it before, and so now Paul the apostle comes through Asia and now you won’t do it because of some Jewish guy in Israel who died? Are you kidding? Can we trust you as a loyal citizen? Is our city secure with people like you?” Of course these on-fire, born-again believers were reliable and faithful citizens, but the Roman government said, “No, we do not get this thing that you will not bow your knee anymore because you used to, before you heard this strange new message of Jesus of Nazareth.” The Christians refused to participate in it, and it was very obvious to know who said no, as they were mandated and the Romans had public ways to force you to do it. And when they refused, they were sentenced to death because they were identified as criminals of the State. They were identified as people who might turn on the city if there was a military coup of any kind or an invasion of any kind.*

1. Jesus’ revelation of Himself: the First and the last
	1. ***The First and the Last***: Jesus is the source of all blessing, and He has authority over how all things end. As the First, He existed before all things and is the first source and reason for all blessing.
	He can multiply all that His people lose due to persecution. Jesus as the First and Last is mentioned seven times (Isa. 41:4; 44:6; 48:12; Rev. 1:8, 17; 2:8; 22:13)—in Isaiah (3x) and in Revelation (4x).

*Jesus reveals Himself in a very specific way as “the First and the Last” and “He who was dead but came to life.” So there are four different facets to this revelation of Jesus. He is: the First; and the Last; He who died; and He who came to life. This is not merely a historic revelation of Jesus, because He never changes, but the Holy Spirit is going to emphasize this facet of Jesus’ personality, His nature, and His ministry to His people. So this is not just an academic exercise of “Okay, we have the titles in chapter 2, and they came from the revelation of Jesus in chapter 1.” The truth related to these four phrases will be very empowering.*

*Of course, we are only going to look at them ever so briefly, but be alerted that these thirty descriptions of Jesus in Revelation 1, 2 and 3 that I mentioned in our first session are the kind of phrases that indicate His character, His ministry to us, His personality, and His titles. We want to understand these thirty descriptions by the Holy Spirit. I am not content just to casually glance at them because the Lord’s statement would say, “This will be very, very relevant to you in the days to come.”*

*So as the “First,” He is saying, “I existed before all things.” In other words, “The plan that is going to unfold, Smyrna, for from before the ages I knew about Smyrna, I knew about you, and I knew about this hour. Nothing is surprising Me. I was here first. I am the uncreated God.”*

*Now, He is not only eternal, being the First, but He is the source of all things. He could have said, “You know that money they took from you because you would not be disloyal to Me? I am the source of that money. I gave that money to you on the front end, and you did not even know it. I can return it all back to you again in this age, but even much more in the age to come because I am the Source, I am the Fountain, I am the First Source, but I am also the First Reason why that money was given to you. It was given to you so that you would acknowledge Me. I am the First. I am the Source. I am the Reason. I am Eternal.” We can go on and on, and one of these days we will do a series, which I have done in the past, on these thirty descriptions, and we will break them down with detail more than just really quickly running by them.*

*I will say this again: He is the Last. He sees and determines the final outcome. Beloved, the devil does not determine the final outcome. The devil does not have the last word. The persecutor does not have the last word. The CEO over the company that you may work for does not have the final word on your career. The bishop over the churches does not have the final word on someone’s ministry. Jesus would say, “I have the last word! I am the Last. I see the end from the beginning, and I determine, and I see it, and I have the last word on everything! So do not be fearful and think the Roman government has the last word on your life, or upon your economics, or upon your honor. I do. You are in good hands even if they kill you because I have the last word for you.”*

* 1. ***Jesus was dead, and came to life***: Death is the ultimate physical loss in this age. It is what people fear most (Heb. 2:15). Jesus revealed Himself as one who “was dead”—He experienced the pain of being killed in a cruel way. Thus, He fully understands what His people go through when facing martyrdom. He came to life and, thus, showed forth His power over death. He knows the way to victory. He experienced the worst that men can do to us, yet triumphed over it.

*Then He goes on, saying He was dead and came to life. This is remarkable because being the First and the Last obviously indicates He is eternal and He is God, but He is unique, the only one who is fully God* ***and*** *fully man. Not even the Father, who is fully God, but He is not human. Only Jesus alone is fully God and fully man, the One who is the Beginning and the End but could still die; I can imagine the angels before it all happened, the incarnation, if they heard the story, saying, “Father, how can Your Son die? He cannot die! He created the heavens and the earth!” Well, there was going to be a great mystery as it says in 1 Timothy 3:16, “the great mystery” of the incarnation that God became a man, that God became flesh.*

15…those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (Heb. 2:15)

*Well, death is the ultimate physical loss, and it says here in Hebrews 2:15 that the fear of death holds people in bondage their whole life. The greatest fear people have and the greatest loss they have in the natural is death, yet Jesus could say, “I walked voluntarily into the jaws of death, and I experienced the cruelest death. I was betrayed by My friends, betrayed by My nation, and they arrested Me. For those of you in prison, I was arrested. I know, I was arrested too. I was betrayed by friends and by My nation that I was serving. Then they beat Me all of these different ways.” The guy says, “I was beaten,” and Jesus could say, “Me, too, several different ways, from whips, rods, the slaps on the face, the crown of thorns on My head, to the nails in My hands and feet. In all of these ways I was beaten cruelly, and I died. I faced the most severe treatment that a human can face in the natural.” What He is saying is “I understand, so that when you are in prison and you are trembling and unsure what is going to happen, know I was there, and I knew they would kill Me, but I was there. That is not the end of the story. I did die, so I do know everything you feel. I was betrayed. I was arrested. I was beaten. I know everything you feel. I could have avoided it, but I chose to go through it as your High Priest.”*

15We do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted [tested] as we are…16come boldly to the throne of grace… (Heb. 4:15-16)

*It says here in Hebrews 4:15 that this gave Him the ability to sympathize with us, and that is the point here when He says to Smyrna, “I died.” None of them had been martyred yet. He was saying that, “You have lost possessions, but I have walked through it. I know how your heart will feel and your body will feel. I know what your anticipation is. You cannot imagine what will happen tomorrow when you are in prison. I get that and understand that feeling. I will be with you. However, that is not the end of the story, though I understand and I am with you. I came to life! I know the way through death. I am the only man that has the power over death in My own being. I own the power of death. It is Mine! That is who I am; I am the life! I know the way to freedom. I know the way to triumph over death. Do not worry about it if they kill you.”*

*Like I have said over the years to some people when they think of end-time troubles and think, “I have to store this and store that,” I say “The goal of life in this age is not to make sure that you do not die; that is not the goal of life.” The goal of life is not to make sure this old, beaten-up, tired body lasts forever. That is not the goal. The goal is to be faithful because we believe in a resurrected, perfect body that goes on forever and forever. Or do you believe that? And that is what this persecution brings to the surface. However, I can tell you—I can prophesy it easily—a billion plus will fully believe this, more than a billion. The great end-time harvest of the perfected Church or the prepared Bride will see this and will believe this is real. This is real.*

1. AFfirmation for faithfulness
	1. Jesus knows the sacrifices that His people make, what they endure, and how they feel. He saw how hard they worked, what they accomplished, and how much pressure that they endured.

*Now He gives them an affirmation for their faithfulness and acknowledges what they are going through now, “I know what you are going through now, and it is going to intensify, but I do know what you are going through right now.” Knowing that He knows, knowing that He remembers, knowing that He cares—the idea is that what He knows and cares about He remembers and He rewards forever, and that it moves Him is even bigger. He gives rewards, and, like I have said over the years, eternal rewards are not things that we earn, because you cannot be humble and earn eternal gold because you are humble. However, He gives us such extravagant responses for our small responses of obedience. Our small responses of obedience result in extravagant responses of His generosity. Thus, giving us eternal rewards is Jesus revealing how He feels about the way you loved Him in this age. Eternal rewards are Jesus saying, “I want to openly show you and the folks that love you how I feel about the way you loved Me. I am not doing it so you can strut. I am doing it because the people who love you want to know how much I was moved by the way you lived.”*

*The people being rewarded again will not say, “Aren’t I amazing?” I have no doubt that they will bow down, one by one, in overwhelming gratitude and tender love, saying, “Lord, You gave me too much! You esteemed my love too greatly. It was weak.”*

*I believe He will say, “Yes, but I am very, very generous!” That is what rewards are, and some people get tripped up by rewards, imagining that they should not care about them because they think rewards are about strutting in front of people, but they are not. They are about Jesus declaring how He feels about the way you loved Him. He is so generous, and His evaluation is so kind.*

9I 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. (Rev. 2:9)

*He says this in verse 9, “I know your works.” In other words, “I know how hard you served Me.” Now maybe their impact is not very big, but most people do not individually have a big impact. We have a larger impact together, collectively, but individually we touch ones and twos, typically. He would say, “And I see it! None of it is wasted! Every cup of cold water you have given I have remembered. I know your labor and your hard work. I know how hard you work. I know the sacrifice you make to serve Me when you reach out to people. I know your tribulation (persecution). I know what they are saying about you. I know the poverty. I know how many opportunities you have lost because you stood true to Me.”*

*Beloved, if you stay true to the Lord, the chances of losing economic opportunities is very great. If you will say what God says, many people in the business sector will say, “Well, you know, I do not think I want that in my world here.” If you say what God says, you will lose opportunities in ministry. If you say what Jesus says, you will lose some friendships. He says, “I know the poverty,” and, again, not because the city was poor, but because they made choices of faithfulness. And He said, “I know the blasphemy.” Those were insults. He says, as it were, “I know the really intense, cruel and blasphemous things that they say about you because you love Me.”*

*And the people that were blaspheming them most in Smyrna—because these were Jewish believers that He was talking to, not all Jewish believers by any means but—was the unsaved Jewish people who said, “Hey, we know the Bible as well as you do, and we are as loyal to it as you are, and you are deceived, and you are of the devil!”*

*They still do that to Messianic Jews in Israel, and many of the authorities in Israel have great animosity towards the Messianic Jews because they say, “You are stealing the truth of who we are as a people!” They do not mind Gentiles loving Jesus because they do not really care, but they do not want Jews loving Jesus. That is the ultimate betrayal.*

*However, in the Gentile world, in state churches through history, and I do not want to pick on traditional this and traditional that because some traditional churches are really devout and follow the Lord hard, but much of the persecution throughout history has come by people who claim to be loyal to the Bible. I am talking about Christian leaders for two thousand years persecuting Christians. It is those who claim loyalty and revelation of the Bible, yet who call the fervent believers, “You are of the devil! You are false! You are evil! You are divisive! You are elitist! You are this, you are that…” and it hurts these tender, humble believers, and the Lord says, “I get it! I see it!” It is not going to go away. It is going to intensify.*

* 1. The church in Smyrna was poor as a result of being persecuted. They lost business opportunities and property, leaving many of them in poverty. Jesus would greatly reward them for this.

*When I talk about the poverty at Smyrna, again, it was not because the city was poor. It was not like the poorest city in Asia. It was nothing close to that as it was a very, very wealthy city.*

32You endured a great struggle with sufferings: 33partly while you were made a spectacle both
by reproaches and tribulations…34[you] joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better…possession for yourselves in heaven. (Heb. 10:32-34)

*It says in Hebrews 10 describing places like Smyrna, though not only Smyrna, the writer of Hebrews says, “You endured a great struggle, partly you were made a spectacle”—you were made fun of in the marketplace; you were made fun of by the politicians. They laughed at your faith in this Jewish man who “lives forever” and not only were made a spectacle—“you were reproached, rebuked.” That is, you were warned in the marketplace, warned in the Church world, to back away from that stuff.*

*Verse 34, “You even joyfully accepted the seizure of your goods and your properties.”—You lost land and property. They called you a criminal. Of course, in the Roman world you were a criminal of the State if you would not worship Caesar—“and the reason you were joyful and accepting it because you knew you had a better possession. You believed in the resurrection.”*

* 1. The end-time persecution will affect the finances of the saints.

16He causes all, both small and great…to receive a mark…17and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark…of the beast. (Rev. 13:16-17)

*Now we know really simply—everyone knows this verse in Revelation 13—that economic penalties will be a major part of Satan’s strategy against the end-time Church, economic penalties. There will be a literal mark of the Beast, but also those economic penalties before this mark of the Beast is in place. Those economic penalties are already fiercely enforced in various parts of the world. It is not the majority of the earth right now, but it will touch all the nations before it is over.*

* 1. ***You are rich***: Jesus declared that they were spiritually rich and would have treasure in heaven. Jesus taught on the foolishness of neglecting to acquire riches in God and treasure in heaven.

*Jesus says, in effect, “But do you know that you are actually rich? Yes, I know that piece of land and that you wanted that building, O Church, but they took it from you.” You know, we had the thousand Chinese believers here in September, and several of them testified of one lady particularly, how she had a big factory much bigger than our FC building which was very prosperous, and one day the government came with bulldozers, without telling her, and just mowed it all down. When she went the next day, it was all in a heap. They said “None of this in our nation; none of this!” She was reduced to poverty, and her family had really negative responses against her, and she had a very tough time for a couple of years. Then the Lord did all kinds of others things for her, and there were many stories like this.*

*As long as it is far away and does not touch us, it is a glory story, but when it comes close to home, it is like, “Wait! Wait! Wait! Would I really do this? Would I stay true if they burned my house down? Like wow! Do I buy this? Is He really who I say He is and who I sing about?”*

*He would say, “You are really rich. You are richer than you know.” We are rich the day we are born again. We have all spiritual blessings in heavenly places on that day. I mean, we have His presence, we feel inspiration. and there is an element of provision, direction and protection. There are many things He gives us now—favor and many, many things—so that we are rich now. However, the wealth we possess will be openly displayed in the age to come beyond anything we can imagine right now. And though that wealth is ours right now, it will be openly displayed then.*

19And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”  20But God said to him, “Fool! This night your soul will be required of you…” 21So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. (Lk. 12:19-21)

*Jesus in Luke 12 taught this parable on the foolishness—the American church really needs to hear this—the foolishness of neglecting to acquire riches in God because they are focused on acquiring on earth. Riches on earth are not bad, but when we acquire riches on earth at the expense and neglect of acquiring riches in heaven, then those riches on earth make us a fool, if they become number one.*

*There is so much preaching today in the Church, yet not much preaching calling people to repent of sin. Immorality runs pretty rampant in the Church. A lot of things are happening in the Church, and we are finding more and more tolerance and more and more general messages where the gospel has been reduced to: have more friends, have more money, have more comfort, and feel better about your sin because God is so nice. The gospel has been reduced to that in lots of places, and yet the Lord is going to raise up people who will talk about the glory of Jesus and the necessity of holiness. Nobody talks about covetousness. I mean, I have not heard a message on covetousness, probably three of them in forty years. Nobody touches that “golden calf” of money in the American culture. Now there’s a little bit of the “If you give, God will give back to you.” We’ll do that, but Jesus talked about the foolishness of people who pursue money without a goal for riches in God; He said “You are absolutely foolish!” I have rarely ever heard those kinds of things ever mentioned.*

21Sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven… (Mt. 19:21)

*He talked about this in Matthew 19:21, and there are many verses we could put here. He said that if you give to the poor, you will have literal treasure in heaven. There are many different passages on this which say that you will have literal treasure in heaven, not figurative, not symbolic, not poetic, but literal treasure in heaven. A lot of folks think that is neat, but it does not actually enter into their decision-making. Jesus said that you are very, very foolish if it does not because you will be surprised how real riches are in the age to come related to obedience in this age.*

*However, I believe that God is going to raise up messengers in the Church in America who, with tenderness and the revelation of Jesus’ beauty, will magnify the glory of the age to come and will put riches in its proper perspective, but it has not happened for a really long time. Maybe one here or there, one voice, but I am asking the Lord to bring a revival that puts money in its rightful place. I mean that golden calf that the Church of America worships. They will not touch that calf. Again, they give just as long as you are promised to get it back, and actually that is biblical. However, there is more to say about money than just that, for example, if you tithe you will get more this month or more this year, though I have seen it happen many, many times and I like it actually. However, the story is bigger than that.*

* 1. The church at Smyrna was a financially poor yet spiritually rich church in contrast to the Laodiceans who were a financially rich yet spiritually poor church (Rev. 3:17).

*The church at Smyrna was financially poor because of their obedience, but they were spiritually rich. However, the church at Laodicea was opposite: they were financially rich but spiritually poor.*

* 1. Poverty is neither a sure sign of spirituality nor of a lack of faith. However, often the poor are more eager to follow the Lord, and the rich often find it harder to enter into or embrace kingdom values.

5Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith…? (Jas. 2:5)

23…it is hard for a rich man to enter [experience] the kingdom…24It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom… (Mt. 19:23-24)

*We have to have a biblical perspective. Poverty is not a sure sign of spirituality; in some places, if you are poor, you are spiritual. No, no! And, poverty is not a sign that you lack faith either. In some places, if you are poor, you do not have faith, for “if you only had the right faith, then you would not be poor.” Both of those are very exaggerated, non-biblical perspectives.*

*A poverty mentality is not what the Bible calls people to. I want to have a prosperity mentality with a spirit of generosity. I am believing God for a billion dollars, but I do not want to buy a bigger house with it. I want to finance the kingdom. I do not have a spirit of poverty, where I say, “Oh no, just me and mine, with a little cabin on the edge of glory. I do not want to bother anybody.” No, I want a billion dollars! I am believing Him for prosperity, but not so I can multiply my possessions. That is not what I am interested in. I want to multiply intercessory missionaries. I want to multiply other things. I want singers and musicians to fill the earth and the gospel to be preached to the poor.*

*So we do not want a poverty mentality, but we do not want to swing the other way, either. Because mostly, when people strike against the poverty mentality, they just live in a spirit of covetousness and use Bible verses to cover it up. I do not look at them and say, “Bah humbug!” I am not worried about them. I just love Jesus, and I say, “Jesus, You see through everything! I am not trying to win an argument. I am trying to do this thing before You, and I want to train people to do it through Your eyes.” There is a whole lot of talking about money that is covetousness covered up with Bible verses, and Jesus will not buy it. He is so clear about what the truth is.*

*I love the idea of getting a billion dollars and investing it in the kingdom and having Jesus say, “Good! That was good!” I love that kind of stuff. Like I have told people, “I want to be rich forever in the age to come!” I mean, I want to be rich now and give ninety-nine percent of it away, and then in the age to come I really want to be rich. I am into being rich and great, but I just want to do it in the right kingdom and in the right timeframe. I do not want to try to get it here and lose it there. I want to steward it right here and get it there. And I am not into “Oh, poor, little, old me.” No, I want to go all the way. I believe this stuff. I want to get this in the fullness in the age to come.*

* 1. ***I know the blasphemy***: Believers in Smyrna bore the stigma of ridicule by fellow Jews.
	2. ***The synagogue of Satan (***2:9; 3:9): They denied Jesus’ divinity, persecuted believers, and concluded that His miracles were done by the power of Satan. The scribes blasphemed the Spirit by saying that Jesus did miracles by the power of Satan (Mk. 3:22-30; cf. Mt. 12:24-32).

44You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. (Jn. 8:44)

22And the scribes…said… “By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons”… 29he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never as forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation” 30… because they said, “He has an unclean spirit.” (Mk. 3:22-30)

1. Jesus did not Correct them for compromise
	1. Jesus gave no rebuke or correction to this church whose members were faithful even unto death.
	2. The churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia were the only ones in Revelation 2-3 that received no correction. Both were persecuted by demonically energized people in a “synagogue of Satan.”

*Jesus gave no rebuke to Smyrna. It is interesting that He gave no rebuke to two of the seven churches—Smyrna or Philadelphia—and the interesting thing is that both of them were persecuted by a synagogue of Satan. The synagogue of Satan is not a building. However, in those two cities it was seemingly devout, zealous Jews who hated Jewish Christians and came after them. Again, in the Christian world they claim to have Bible loyalty, and it has been Christians persecuting Christians for the two thousand years, not entirely. Many Christians have been persecuted by people who claim to be Christians. The point here is that the only two churches that were not corrected by the Lord had this thorn in their side: they had this constant pressure of people who knew the Bible, who grew up with the Bible, and who used the Bible to curse them. And for both of these cities the Lord said, “I have no correction for you. You are constantly having to realign up to My life and My leadership.” These were the only two cities to which He said that.*

1. exhortation to respond
	1. Jesus exhorted them not to fear “any” of the things they were to suffer such as losing their money, position, freedom, or their lives because in the age to come He would multiply all that they lost.

10“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.” (Rev. 2:10)

*Now He gives to them an exhortation to respond. He said, verse 10, “Do not fear any,” and this word, “any,” is an interesting word to me. There is a whole litany, a number of categories of ways in which we are pressured. He was saying, in effect, “I do not want you to cave in to fear. You might be tempted with fear, and you may struggle with it, but do not just give in to it and camp out there. Resist it. I am not giving you a Spirit of fear, but a Spirit of power and of a sound mind [2 Tim. 1:7]. You are Mine. Resist it, and in whatever command I give you, in that command is a promise of the enabling to obey that command.” When the Lord says, “Do not fear,” He is saying, “I promise to help you not to fear. If you will talk to Me about it, I will help you overcome it.”*

*Again, there are no super saints. Everybody is weak, so He is not looking at some heroic group somewhere in Smyrna. He is saying, basically, “You are as weak as all of the others, and I will help you. I have good news for you, but it might not seem like good news: you are about to (future) suffer more.”*

*“Wait! We have already lost our property. We are being mocked by the people who claim to be loyal to the scriptures. We are made fun of and ridiculed. We have lost opportunities (in ministry; well, I do not know about ministry in that city, but you do in this day and all throughout history).*

*They had lost economic opportunity, and He said, as it were, “Well, I am going to give you a prophecy that you are going to suffer more. Let Me be really specific. The devil is going to have his hand in it, and he is going to inspire people, but I am going to give the devil a little bit of liberty to touch you because it is going to test you, and, as I said earlier, you are going to realign and recalibrate your heart to what you really believe about Me. Do you love Me? Do you think I love you? Am I really in a resurrected body? Will I really give you one? Am I really watching? Does it really matter? Is there really an age to come? Do you really believe I died for you?”*

 *It is like, “Huh.” That is what the testing does. It makes you go through all of these questions and realign and re-sign up. That is what the testing is.*

*He said, “You will have tribulation for ten days.” Exhortation number two: “I want you faithful. I want you faithful even if you die, and the reason I can tell you is that I died. The reason I can tell you to be faithful even if you die is not just because I died and I know what you are going through, but I rose again and I am going to raise you too. I promise you I will. I promise I will raise you, and I want you to believe Me, because if you believe me your heart will be liberated. If you believe Me, that is your pathway to greatness. If you believe Me, I am going to allow you to be tested because you will grow in the way that you believe and trust Me, and then I will give you the crown of life.”*

* + 1. ***Do not fear***: They did not need to fear death because they would live forever. Jesus wanted His disciples to know that some would go to prison and even be killed (Mt. 10:28-33), but that not a hair on their hair would ultimately be lost (Lk. 21:18).

28And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell… (Mt. 10:28)

16…they will put some of you to death…18But not a hair of your head shall be lost.
(Lk. 21:16-18)

*Do not fear. Look at Luke 21:16-18. Isn’t this an interesting verse? Jesus says, “They will put some of you to death, but not a hair on your head will be lost” Huh. So they are going to use the guillotine and cut your head off—you know, Revelation 20 says they will behead people in the end times—So they are going to cut your head off and not one hair will be lost Jesus said? Right. Hmmm, doesn’t your hair die once it is disconnected from your body? “Well, yes, it does in the natural, but I am going to raise you from the dead and every single hair will be restored!”*

*Some of you are saying, “Praise God, every hair!” Well, I am having fun with you about the “every hair,” but I am talking about in the resurrection and martyrdom for real.*

* + 1. Jesus told His disciples in advance that they would be persecuted so that they could interpret it through the lens of love instead of fear and not conclude that He overlooked them (Jn. 16).

1These things [of persecution] I have spoken…that you should not be made to stumble… 4that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them… (Jn. 16:1-4)

* + 1. Scripture teaches us to expect persecution (Jn. 16:33; Acts 14:22; 2 Tim. 2:12; 3:12).

12All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. (2 Tim. 3:12)

 *“All who desire to live godly will be persecuted.” Some of the people are saying, “I am going to bind the devil and get free of this!”*

*Jesus said, in effect, “No, I am going to allow the devil to have a little bit of room because it is going to liberate your heart.”*

*It is going to confirm you in the truth as it says in 1 Peter 4:14, and when you have been persecuted and it is past, it will confirm and strengthen your faith because you will realign and you do that like push-ups, and you recommit, “Yes.” Deeper questions, and you get deeper answers to the questions you ask about the reality of Jesus because the Spirit of glory will be touching you and ministering to you.*

* 1. ***You will have tribulation for ten days***: This may refer to a literal ten-day period of persecution that took place possibly in the gladiatorial games which included Christians being killed by wild beasts. There is nothing in the text that leads us to interpret the number ten in a symbolic way.

*He said, “You will have trouble for ten days.” Here I give you several views of the ten days. I think the ten days are literal. I think they were like the ten days of the gladiatorial games where the gladiators came. They would have those for five or ten days at a time, and I am guessing they probably had something like that was literally around the corner where a lot of them were killed by the wild beasts and were slayed, etc. So some see that ten days as figuratively, but I have given you a few different views on that.*

* + 1. Some see this as being fulfilled in ten periods of persecutions under Roman emperors (from Nero to Diocletian) or as referring to ten years—Diocletian’s “Great Persecution” lasted ten years (AD 303-313) and was the longest and most intense persecution in the early church.
		2. Some see this as an idiom speaking of a “short period” but not limited to ten literal days.
	1. ***The devil is about to throw some of you into prison***: This persecution was the work of Satan who inspires men to put believers in prison to tempt them to draw back from their faithfulness to Jesus. Jesus allows “some” to go to prison and die. He delivers some from prison like Peter (Acts 5:19; 12:7-11), yet allows some to die in prison like John the Baptist (Mk. 6:27). Some like Paul were delivered from prison and then imprisoned again (Acts 16:24-27; 22:4; 26:10; 2 Cor.11:23).

*“The devil is about to throw some of you into prison.” This persecution, again, was the work of Satan. Jesus allows “some.” This word is like “Ugh!” We want to know who, because it is the “not knowing” that creates the part of the testing. It is the “not knowing” which creates part of the testing dynamic.*

*Like, for instance, Peter, in Acts 5, goes into prison, and an angel frees him. “Whoa!” Acts 12, he goes into prison again, and an angel frees him. “Whoa! This works!” Later on in life, he goes into prison in Rome, and he gets killed. “Huh, okay, so sometimes the angel comes and sometimes not.”*

*Okay, in Acts 5 Peter goes into prison, and James is probably with him because it says, “the apostles.” James is also freed by the angel apparently in Acts 5 as well. In Acts 12, Herod kills James, but Peter is freed from prison. Why do You let one die and one go free? The Lord would say, “You just do not know what I am doing.”*

*Paul goes to prison, and the government has this big conversation, and they free him. God moves on the government, so He uses natural means. “Huh!” Paul goes to prison again and stays in prison for two years, no angel, no freedom, just okay. Paul goes into prison again in Acts 16, and an earthquake opens the door. Paul goes into prison later in Rome and gets killed. So do you get an earthquake? Do you get an angel? Do you get killed? Are you in prison five days? Do you avoid prison like when the angel blinded the eyes of people? There are many stories of this: … and the guy escapes and so he avoids prison! It is like, “Lord, who? How long? If I am in prison, does an angel come or will there be an earthquake? Is the government going to release me or am I going to be there ten years?”*

*He would say, “I am not telling you. I want you to trust Me and talk to Me day by day.”*

*“Ok, come on, just give me a little bit! Who? How long?” If those ten go into prison, but a thousand of us love them, all one thousand of us are, number one, in anguish for the ten we love, and then we are asking, “Would I do this? How would I?” and everyone gets purified by it.*

*The Lord would say, “I know what I am doing; I know what I am doing.”*

* 1. ***That you may be tested***: Times of testing show forth the depth of one’s love for Jesus and thus openly proves the worthiness of Jesus to them (Acts 5:41). The larger body of Christ is also tested when one of its members is thrown into prison. Will they become fearful, offended, or draw back from their faithfulness to avoid also being put into prison? When a few believers are put in prison, it tests the larger body who knows them—knowing that they too may possibly be imprisoned.

41Rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. (Acts 5:41)

* 1. ***Be faithful until death***: Testing increases our opportunity to receive eternal rewards.

6Now for a little while…you have been grieved by various trials, 7that the genuineness of your faith…though it is tested by fire, may be found to [result in] praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Pet. 1:6-7)

*He says “Be faithful unto death.” In 1 Peter 1:6, “For a little while though, these trials are heavy and you are grieved, they are heavy,” verse 7 “the genuineness of your faith…”*

*In other words, the truth of your faith—you did not even know how true and deep your faith was—the depth of your faith becomes apparent, because in the trial you are thinking, “Do I really believe You? Are You really God?” The Spirit of glory is touching you. “Do I really believe in the resurrection? Am I really into this?” And the depth, it says here, of the genuineness, then the depth of your faith becomes apparent and comes to the surface.*

*Then, though you are tested by fire because that fire makes you ask the questions and the Spirit of glory, the Holy Spirit helps you, and you come out of the fire of this pressure with far deeper convictions. Nobody would pick being persecuted, but the few that I know who have actually walked in it have said that afterwards their lives were radically changed and, “You know, I don’t want to do it again, but I am a very different person in a really good way.”*

*However, look at this: then at the revelation of Jesus in the second coming, there will be praise, honor, and glory given by Jesus to the people that were faithful. You ask, “Praise?”*

*He will not say, “Oh, I praise you!” Not that. He affirms them, and so instead of praise, think that He recalls, “You know that two months, that three years, you know that nine years,” as He calls out that brother or that sister, “I saw the way you loved Me.” That is praise. “I am affirming you.” Then He will honor them in the presence of those who love them, again, not so they can strut, but because the people who love them are so touched by Jesus honoring them.*

*And the Spirit of glory! They will have a greater measure of the Spirit of glory at the coming of the Lord. And so the Lord says, “Not only has the depth of your faith become evident in this life, there is glory and honor at My coming. You will not be disappointed.”*

*We will look at some of these eternal rewards more, and we will put a bunch of them together. I have done that a few times over the years. Again, the crown of life is not synonymous with just the free gift of eternal life. This is given to overcomers who face persecution. It is in addition to the free grace of God that we get the day we are born again.*

* 1. The Antichrist will overcome the saints physically via martyrdom, yet the saints will overcome him spiritually and will be victorious over Satan by standing faithful in their love for Jesus.

*In the book of Revelation the Antichrist is going to overcome the saints! You look at Revelation 13, and you think, “Really? Why are You going to let him?” This is also mentioned in Daniel 7:22. The Antichrist is going to overcome the saints, and you ask, “Really?” That means physically. He is going to kill some of them, but in Revelation 12 it says the saints overcome the Antichrist.*

*Well, which is it? The Antichrist will overcome the saints, not all of the saints, by persecution. He will overcome them physically, but the saints will overcome the Antichrist spiritually! They will say, “You can kill me, but I love Him!” and the Antichrist is like, “I cannot defeat these people!” They will overcome Satan and the Antichrist by their victorious love, and their love will be alive in the presence of God forever.*

7It was granted to him [the Antichrist] to make war with the saints and to overcome them [physically through martyrdom]. (Rev. 13:7)

11They [martyred saints] overcame him [Satan via the Antichrist] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. (Rev. 12:11)

2I saw…those who have the victory over the Beast [the Antichrist]… having harps… (Rev. 15:2)

*Here it says in chapter 15 that John saw a vision of all of these saints that had victory over the Beast, the Antichrist. They were killed, but they would not budge. They will say, “We will love Him until the end! It is our glory to love Him with all of our strength! It is our glory to give our life to magnify His superiority in our life; that is who He is!” And the Antichrist is saying, “I cannot win if they live this way before me!”*

1. Two Promises for overcomers
	1. ***Crown of life***: This is not the same as the gift of eternal life that every believer will receive by faith. Two Greek words describe the two different types of crowns. One is the *crown of a ruler* (Gr. *diadem*), and the other is the *crown of a victor* (Gr., *stephanos*) given to those who win in the athletic games. *Stephanos* is used many times (Jas. 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 2:10; 3:11).

10Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. 11He who has an ear, let him hear…He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death. (Rev. 2:10-11)

* 1. This is a “crown of triumph” given specifically to those who endure persecution and temptation. This crown affects one’s honor and place of function in the millennial kingdom.

12Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved [found consistent], he will receive the crown of life…promised to those who love Him. (Jas. 1:12)

* 1. ***Not hurt by the second death***: The first death is the death of our physical body. The second death is synonymous with being cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:6, 14). It is “death” because it is a separation from God forever. It is called the “second” death because it follows physical death.
	2. The most terrifying time in human history will occur when the second death is administered to billions of people at the Great White Throne. The second death is the most intense and severe *hurt* that any can experience. The saints in Smyrna were *hurt* temporarily—physically, relationally, and financially—but, if they stayed faithful to Jesus, they would not be hurt at all by the second death.

*Well, that is where God is bringing the end-time Church, and it is a glorious thing! Amen and amen! Let’s stand before the Lord.*

*Now, come on! I saw some smiles there! I talked on persecution for fifty minutes, but I see smiles in the room! No, it is the Spirit of glory. It is real. And I do not want to get hit with a rod. Ouch! But I want to give my life for Jesus in every way He wants. My dream is not to make sure I do not die. My dream is to make sure that I am faithful in love. That is our dream. That is what we are preparing for our future. We are growing in Him so that we can be faithful no matter what.*

*Some of you are actually being ridiculed right now. You have lost opportunities in ministry or you have lost opportunities in business because you are standing true to what the Word of God says. If you have been ridiculed or you have lost something, I would like you to come up here. I would like to ask for the Spirit of glory to be increased on you tonight. Or you are being ridiculed by your family because you are not backing away. You are not taking the secular narrative about what is happening in the culture. You are saying, “No, I am sticking with what He says.” Undoubtedly there are a number of you saying, “I have lost a number of advantages and opportunities because I am not going to back down by the grace of God, but I am excited by that because the Lord sees that and says, ‘This is good; this is wise!’” Any of you that have been under persecution or ridicule, right now come on up, if you would like prayer. I am going to ask a bunch of others in the room to come and lay hands on them. We are going to ask for the Spirit of glory on them and say, “Lord, I want the Spirit of glory to bounce back on me in the future as well!”*

*Holy Spirit, we invite Your presence right now. We want to be faithful to the end, no matter when You return. It does not matter. We want to be faithful to the end! I ask for the Spirit of glory to increase on the saints right now. Lord, I ask for the Spirit of glory to be released. Lord, release the Spirit of glory. Let the Spirit rest on their minds and on their hearts. increase what You are doing inside of them while they are recalibrating and recommitting to You while in pressure.*

*Lord, I break the spirit of fear off people across this room. I take authority over fear of persecution. Lord, that You will be with us as the First and the Last, as the One who was dead yet came alive. Lord, I ask for a spirit of renewal, a renewing of their inner man tonight. I ask for dreams, visions, revelation, Your presence to increase on their hearts, in their perceptions, in their understanding.*

*Beautiful Lord, You are the Beautiful God. Lord, raise up messengers of Your beauty. Raise up resolute lovers of Jesus in this house, strong, established in the might of the Lord. Grace, grace, I ask for grace to wash this group of people tonight, these beloved ones, all over the room, the Spirit of grace. Beautiful God, Lord, release healing of the hearts, renewing of the Spirit, new confidence, and a new buoyancy in their spirit.*

*Lord, we ask You for the Spirit of revelation of Your beauty, an increase of the revelation of Your beauty, in pressure, in persecution. A Spirit of glory, more and more, Lord, in this room, among this people tonight. Lord, we want to be rich in You. We want to believe this all of the way. I want to be rich in You in the age to come. Unashamedly, Lord, this is what we want.*

*What does it look like? What does it look like to store up treasures in heaven? Lord, let us see what it looks like. Let us lay hold of this. Oh we love You, Jesus! Lord, release the Spirit of glory in this room, we ask. Jesus, the riches, the glory, the treasures, we believe You, Jesus. We believe You.*