
The Church of Persecution (Suffering for Christ's Sake)

Witnessing the Church of Jesus

Pastor Wil Nichols

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Victorious Praise Fellowship Church of God in Christ

2116 Page Rd. Durham NC 27703

WEBSITE: www.VictoriousPraise.org

EMAIL: PastorWil@VictoriousPraise.org, Info@VictoriousPraise.org

PHONE: (919) 957-7500

Sermon: Witnessing the Church of Jesus: The Church of Persecution (Suffering for Christ's Sake)

Current Series Messages:

- Theme Scripture: Matthew 16: ¹⁸And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
- Subject: **The Church of Love**
 - Remembering the Fall from First Love
 - Returning to the Grace of First Love
 - Restoring the Power of First Love

Lesson Text

Revelation 2:8-11 (KJV)⁸And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; ⁹I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and *I know* the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but *are* the synagogue of Satan. ¹⁰Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. ¹¹He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

Matthew 5:10–12 (AV)¹⁰ Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. ¹² Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

John 15:20–21 (AV)²⁰ Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. ²¹ But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

Introduction

In Matthew the 16th Chapter we see the establishment of the Church as a place of power and protection. But by the time we get to Revelation, we see the Church has been compromised.

Last week we looked at the first of seven Churches, Ephesus, that had been compromised. This Church had lost its first love.

Today we want to look at the second Church, Smyrna, which was going through tribulations and suffering.

What are we willing to suffer for; be persecuted, wronged, or mistreated for?

In our lesson text, we see the Church in Smyrna receiving commendation for its willingness to

steadfastly suffer through tribulations and poverty!

It actually was known as the Church of Martyrdom; Suffering for a Cause.

They willingly suffered as the penalty of witnessing or refusing to renounce Christ.

The unique thing about this church is that out of all the seven churches, they were one of only two churches that received no complaints from Christ.

But they weren't just suffering for the sake of suffering; their suffering had a purpose, a cause that directly lined up with the will of God for the Church.

What are we willing to suffer for? How long are we willing to suffer for it?

When a person gets to a point where they feel like they just can't take it anymore, or no longer deserve the suffering they are going through, too tired; the issue is not the depth or length of the suffering, it is the shallowness of the cause.

Romans 8:18 (KJV)¹⁸For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

When you don't have a cause, you won't take the suffering. When there is no purpose for your pain, then you won't continue to take the pain.

One's capacity to take pain and suffering has a direct correlation or relationship to the importance of the purpose or cause that they are fighting for (or not).

- If their cause is important, then their pain tolerance will be high
- If their cause is unimportant, then their pain tolerance will be low
- If they have no cause, then they will have no pain tolerance
- But if their cause is everything, then their pain tolerance will be unlimited.

The reason why people don't take anything anymore is because they don't have, or no longer believe in the cause to take it. They say: "This Ain't Worth it, You Ain't Worth It!"

Because so many Churches and Church-goers are operating without a cause, they are unwilling to suffer.

When our Churches become focused on being Seeker Friendly, Secular and Carnal, or just Prosperity driving; then its people have no reason to suffer through persecution when it happens

Jesus not only knew that the church would be persecuted; but commended and praised those who were willing to suffer through it for his name's sake.

Series and Sermon: Witnessing the Church of Jesus: The Church of Persecution (Suffering for Christ's Sake)

I. Suffering for Righteousness' Sake

Matthew 5:¹⁰**Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

Have you ever heard the saying "It's Just Right to do Right"?

The problem with the church today is that most people see no intrinsic value in doing right because everyone around them appears to be getting ahead doing wrong.

Psalm 73:1-3 (AV)¹ Truly God *is* good to Israel, *even* to such as are of a clean heart. ² But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. ³ For I was envious at the foolish, *when* I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

The truth is people do get ahead doing wrong. They lie and cheat; yet get the promotions. They have crooked pastors and false prophets; yet their churches and ministries still grow.

So how does one continue to do right, when "wrong" appears to be getting ahead?

Or even worse yet, how does one keep doing right when they are getting persecuted for doing right?

To Suffer for Righteousness' Sake, you have to make Righteousness Greater than Persecution.

So how do we do this? By making your Faith Greater than Your Fear.

Revelation 2:¹⁰ **Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.**

By Faith we make the Righteousness of God Greater than the Persecution of the World.

Romans 1:17 (KJV)¹⁷ For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

II. Suffering for the Kingdom's Sake

Matthew 6:33 (KJV)³³ **But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.**

A lot of people read this passage, but they never embrace it or actually do it.

James 1: ²² But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

So how does one do Matthew 6:33? By forsaking what they have for what God will give them.

Matthew 19:29 (AV)²⁹ **And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.**

Too many people have based their Church and Christian experience on how well things are going, how much they have accumulated, how many things they have.

But seeking the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Heaven is not about getting things, it's about giving up things!

To Suffer for the Kingdom's Sake, you have to make the Kingdom Greater than your Things.

Mark 8:36–37 (AV)³⁶ For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? ³⁷ Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

You can't seek the Kingdom if you're not willing to suffer the loss of the World.

You can't advance into the future until you suffer the loss of your past!

Colossians 3:²Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

Philippians 3: ¹³Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, ¹⁴I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

III. Suffering for Christ's Name Sake

John 15:21 (KJV)²¹ But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

Luke 21:17 (KJV)¹⁷ And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake.

Back in the day we use to get into fights when other kids talked about our Momma. Now they didn't hurt our momma, they didn't hit our momma, they didn't fight out momma; but they talked about her name. So we fought and suffered for her name.

To Suffer for the Christ's Name Sake, you have to make His Name Greater than any other Name.

Well there is a name, above all other names; and I'm willing to fight and suffer for this name.

Acts 4:12 (KJV)¹² Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

John 14:6 (KJV)⁶ Jesus saith unto him, **I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**

Mohamed's Name can't do it; Buddha's Name can't do it; Hare Krishna's name can't do it!

Philippians 2:9-11 (KJV)⁹ Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: ¹⁰ That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; ¹¹ And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Matthew 10:22 (KJV)²² And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

Suffer because he's name saves; Suffer because he's name heals; suffer because his name delivers; suffer because his name set's us free.

Midweek Study Lesson Plan (Sermon: The Church of Persecution (Suffering for Christ's Sake))

Lesson Text

Revelation 2:8-11, Matthew 5:10–12, Matthew 6:33, John 15:20–21

Sermon Outline

- I. Suffering for Righteousness' Sake
- II. Suffering for the Kingdom's Sake
- III. Suffering for Christ's Name Sake

Questions

- I. Getting to Know "Me"**
 1. How does it make you feel when you see wicked people prospering? Why?
 2. Have you ever taken a stand for a cause? If so, was it worth using your resources, such as your time, skills, finances, etc.?

- II. Into the Bible**
 1. The name Smyrna is derived from the Greek root word that means "myrrh". What other references to the word myrrh is found in the Gospels and what is its use and significance?
 2. John 1:10-11, says, "He [Jesus] was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He [Jesus] came unto his own, and his own received him not." Describe one way in which Christ suffered for us, with Scripture reference.
 3. In Revelations 2:10, the Smyrna church is told to "be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." What other crowns may a believer receive?

- III. Life Application**
 1. How have you responded personally when you felt that you suffered unjustly for doing what was right (for Righteousness' sake)?
 2. Using the principles in this week's sermon, create one to three sentences that you can use to encourage yourself in the Lord so that you do not quit in the face of suffering.