

FAITHFUL THROUGH THE FIRE

Smyrna was persecuted and poor, yet spiritually rich. Jesus calls them to remain faithful, even to death, with the promise of the crown of life.



Smyrna (which consisted of about 200,000 people) was deeply aligned with Rome. It was the first city in Asia to build a temple in honor of the goddess of Rome and it was awarded permission to build a temple to the Roman Emperor Tiberius. Also, at both ends of the city were Roman temples – one built for the local female god called Cybele and the other built to Zeus.

This strong allegiance to Rome combined with a large Jewish population that was actively hostile to Christians made it extremely difficult to live as a Christian in Smyrna. The historical evidence from other documents shows that their belongings had been looted, plundered and ransacked. Some of them had been oppressed, beaten, jailed, and even killed. Suffering for Christians in Smyrna was a given.

Take away: Suffer well and hope that God is glorified in our suffering in some way.

SEPTEMBER 14, 2025

Pastor Dave Anderson



LEADER GUIDE

Big Idea

Suffering in this life is inevitable, but it does not have to define or defeat us. Jesus calls us to be faithful in suffering, promising that those who remain steadfast will not be touched by the "second death" but will receive eternal life.

Key Themes

1. **False assumptions about suffering** – Suffering is not a sign of God's disapproval, nor is comfort always a sign of His approval.
2. **Faithfulness in suffering** – Jesus calls us to remain faithful "even to the point of death."
3. **Two lives and two deaths** – Physical vs. spiritual. Physical suffering/death is temporary; spiritual life/death is eternal.
4. **Suffering well** – Choosing to glorify God in our suffering by persevering, allowing God to shape our character, and giving hope to others.
5. **The role of the church** – We don't suffer alone; God gives us the body of Christ to walk with us.

Scripture Reading

- Revelation 2:8-11 (read aloud as a group).

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Leader Notes:

- **Tone:** This is a tender and heavy subject. Allow time for honesty, lament, and prayer.
- **Preparation:** Re-read Revelation 2:8–11, Romans 5:1–5, and Luke 22:42. Be ready to share one personal example of how God met you (or someone you know) in suffering.
- **Group Dynamics:** Some participants may currently be in deep suffering. Be sensitive, avoid simplistic answers, and give space for silence if needed.
- **Action Step:** Encourage participants to identify one way they can “suffer well” this week—whether that's inviting someone into their pain, shifting perspective toward eternity, or bearing faithful witness in the midst of hardship.