

CHRIST'S COMFORT WHEN CRUSHED

Revelation 2:8-11

Christ's Message To The Church Of Smyrna

I. When Facing Troubles Even To Death, Our Hope Is In Our Resurrected Christ (8)

- A. The _____ Of Christ Reminds Us That He Is Superior To Our Circumstances
– ^{8a} "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: 'The words of the first and the last
- B. The _____ Of Christ Supplies Our Ultimate Hope – ^{8b} who died and came to life.

II. When We Think No One Knows Our Pain, Our Comfort Is In Our All-Knowing Christ (9)

- A. Christ Knows Our Difficult _____ – ^{9a} "I know your tribulation
- B. Christ Knows Our _____ Struggles – ^{9b} and your poverty (but you are rich)
- C. Christ Knows Our Spiritual _____ – ^{9c} and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

III. When We Battle Fear In Trials, Our Confidence Is In Our Future Reward (10)

- A. Be _____ – ^{10a} Do not fear what you are about to suffer.
- B. Be _____ – ^{10b} 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. Be faithful unto death,
- C. Be _____ – ^{10c} and I will give you the crown of life.

IV. When This Life Gets Us Down, Our Victory Is Our Eternal Life (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."

Conclusion:

1. Christ's Knowledge of our Suffering is our Present Comfort
2. Christ's Resurrection is our Future Hope
3. Christ's Salvation is our Eternal Victory

CHRIST'S COMFORT WHEN CRUSHED

Revelation 2:8-11

Christ's Message To The Church Of Smyrna

I. When Facing Troubles Even To Death, Our Hope Is In Our Resurrected Christ (8)

- A. **The Eternity Of Christ Reminds Us That He Is Superior To Our Circumstances** –
^{8a} "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: 'The words of the first and the last
- B. **The Resurrection Of Christ Supplies Our Ultimate Hope** – *^{8b} who died and came to life.*

II. When We Think No One Knows Our Pain, Our Comfort Is In Our All-Knowing Christ (9)

- A. **Christ Knows Our Difficult Circumstances** – *^{9a} "I know your tribulation*
- B. **Christ Knows Our Financial Struggles** – *^{9b} and your poverty (but you are rich)*
- C. **Christ Knows Our Spiritual Persecution** – *^{9c} and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.*

III. When We Battle Fear In Trials, Our Confidence Is In Our Future Reward (10)

- A. **Be Fearless** – *^{10a} Do not fear what you are about to suffer.*
- B. **Be Faithful** – *^{10b} 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. Be faithful unto death,*
- C. **Be Rewarded** – *^{10c} and I will give you the crown of life.*

IV. When This Life Gets Us Down, Our Victory Is Our Eternal Life (11)

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.'

Conclusion:

1. Christ's Knowledge of our Suffering is our Present Comfort
2. Christ's Resurrection is our Future Hope
3. Christ's Salvation is our Eternal Victory

CHRIST'S COMFORT WHEN CRUSHED

Revelation 2:8-11

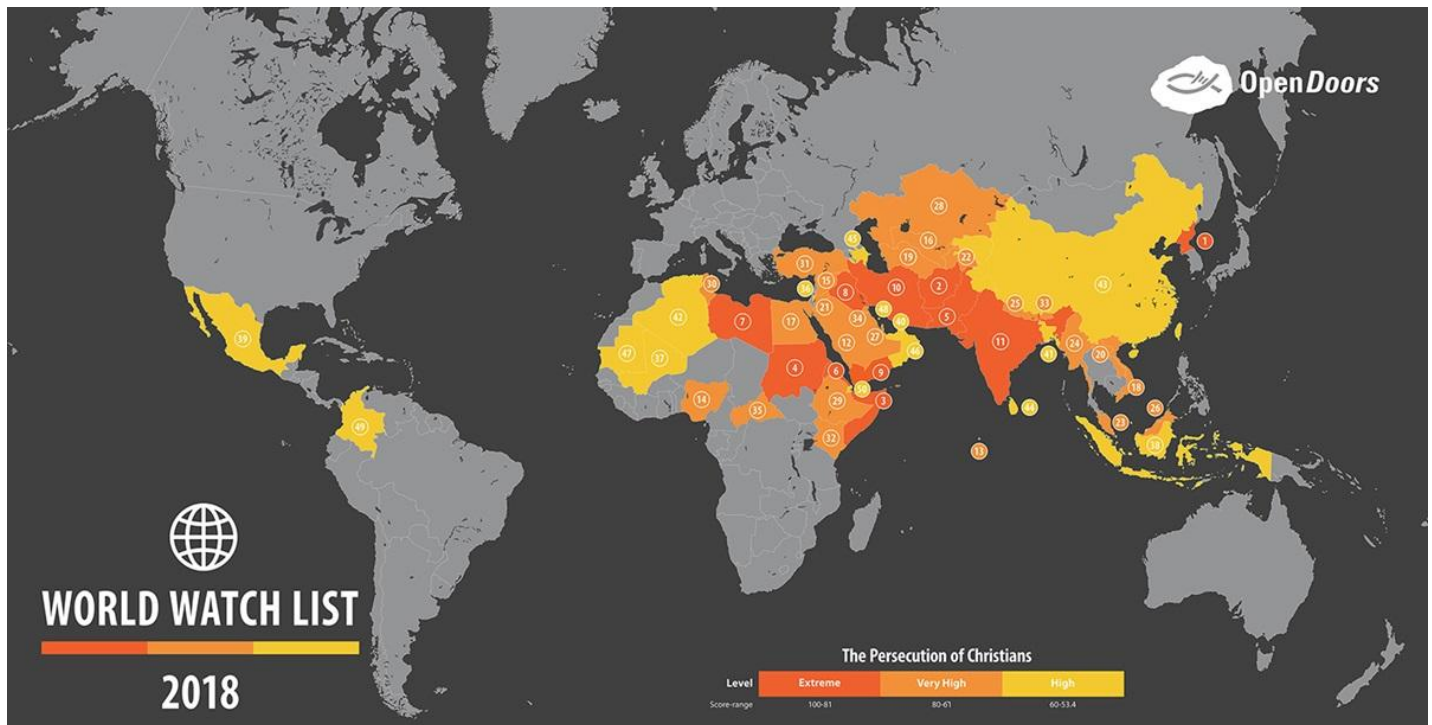
Christ's Message To The Church Of Smyrna

Revelation 2:8-11 ⁸ "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: 'The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life. ⁹ "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. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. 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.'

Introduction:

1. 2018 World Watch List (WWL) – By Open Doors

- 215 million Christians now experience high, very high, or extreme levels of persecution
- 1 in 12 Christians live where Christianity is "illegal, forbidden, or punished," according to Open Doors researchers.
- 100 point scale measuring 1) violence, 2) private life, 3) family life, 4) community life, 5) national life, 6) church life



The 50 countries where it is most dangerous to follow Jesus:

- | | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| 1 North Korea | 11 India | 21 Jordan | 31 Turkey | 41 Bangladesh |
| 2 Afghanistan | 12 Saudi Arabia | 22 Tajikistan | 32 Kenya | 42 Algeria |
| 3 Somalia | 13 Maldives | 23 Malaysia | 33 Bhutan | 43 China |
| 4 Sudan | 14 Nigeria | 24 Myanmar | 34 Kuwait | 44 Sri Lanka |
| 5 Pakistan | 15 Syria | 25 Nepal | 35 Central African Republic | 45 Azerbaijan |
| 6 Eritrea | 16 Uzbekistan | 26 Brunei | 36 Palestinian Territories | 46 Oman |
| 7 Libya | 17 Egypt | 27 Qatar | 37 Mali | 47 Mauritania |
| 8 Iraq | 18 Vietnam | 28 Kazakhstan | 38 Indonesia | 48 Bahrain |
| 9 Yemen | 19 Turkmenistan | 29 Ethiopia | 39 Mexico | 49 Colombia |
| 10 Iran | 20 Laos | 30 Tunisia | 40 United Arab Emirates | 50 Djibouti |

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| 1. North Korea
- #1 last 16
years, 50,000
Christians in
prison & labor
camps | 3. Somalia
4. Sudan
5. Pakistan –
most violent
6. Eritrea
7. Libya
8. Iraq | 9. Yemen
10. Iran
11. India
12. Saudi Arabia
14. Nigeria – 2 nd
most violent
15. Syria | 17. Egypt
18. Vietnam
22. Tajikistan
23. Malaysia
28. Kazakstan
43. China |
|--|--|---|--|

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2018/january/top-50-christian-persecution-open-doors-world-watch-list.html>

2. Smyrna – The Persecuted City in Asia Minor

- **Name** –
 - “Smyrna” means “bitter” (relevant to their suffering)
 - “Smyrna” is derived from its trade of the herb “myrrh. It comes from a gummy resin from a bushy tree. It tasted bitter, but was used to make **perfume** (Ps 45:8); **anointing oil** for priests (Ex 30:23), **anesthetic** (Mk 15:23) and **embalming** substance (Jn 19:39).
- Their name be symbolic of the church: **Fragrance through crushing**
- **Location** – From the West coast of Asia on the Aegean Sea extending 35 miles inland.
 - 35 miles from Ephesus
- **Population** – 250,000 – 275,000 in John’s day
 - Large Jewish population
- **Features**
 - Seaport/harbor which became more favorable for trade when the Ephesus harbor increased in silt making it difficult for boats to enter.
 - Surrounded by 7 hills
 - Much like SF – hills & ports
- **Reputation** – Having been called “The Crown of Asia”, “The Ornament of Asia” and “The Flower of Asia”, it was considered the most beautiful of all cities (by Strabo, ancient geographer).
- **History** – Smyrna was a Greek colony dating back to 1000 BC, but was destroyed by the Lydeans in 600 BC. The site was lifeless for 400 years until Alexander the Great, according to legend, was hunting on Mt. Pagus and was told by a goddess in a vision to rebuild Smyrna. Begun by Alexander and succeeded by Lysimachus, the city was rebuilt with great beauty and splendor in 200 BC. It was a city that was dead and came back to life.
- **Commerce** – The city was a popular harbor, commerce and manufacturing city and benefited from being at the end of the road coming westward from Lydia (western Asia Minor) and Phrygia (central Asia Minor)
- **Politics** – As a free city, it was self-governed, exempt from taxation and free of Roman soldiers, yet was considered one of the most loyal and faithful cities to Rome. Cicero wrote that Smyrna was “One of our most faithful and our most ancient allies.”
- **Religion** – Smyrna was a visible shrine to pagan religions.
 - Mt. Pagus was crowned with a pagan acropolis (known as the “Crown of Smyrna) rising 500 feet over the harbor.
 - They erected a temple to the Emperor Tiberius in 26 A.D. – being the first among several competing cities. They were the lead city for Emperor worship.



- Pagan shrines to Cybele (Sibylene Mother, a goddess of nature) and Zeus (chief Greek god) lined their curved "Street of Gold".
- The first city to erect a temple to the goddess Roma (which was a deification of the Roman capital).
- Also having temples to Apollo, Asklepios and Aphrodite, they accredited their city's self-sufficiency and success to their pagan gods.
- **Modern Day** – Smyrna is Izmir, Turkey today.

2. Their Church

- no one knows when or the church started
- perhaps when Paul was at Ephesus and "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the Word of the Lord (Acts 19:10)
- their testimony continued strongly until the Middle Ages
- Smyrna was one of the last cities in Asia Minor to fall to the invading Turks and Muslim religion
- Smyrna & Philadelphia are the only 2 of 7 churches in Rev 2-3 to not be condemned or criticized

I. **When Facing Troubles Even To Death, Our Hope Is In Our Resurrected Christ (8)**

ⁱ "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: 'The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.

A. **The Eternity Of Christ Reminds Us That He Is Superior To Our Circumstances**

The words of the first and the last,

Q: What's the significance of "first and the last"?

- In contrast to the little pagan gods conceived of depraved human imagination, Christ is the Creator – the beginning and end to everything
- **Nothing happens outside of God's eternal plan!**
- "All the information in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* is written with only twenty-six letters of the alphabet. So Christ is the A to Z, and He contains in Himself everything we need to know about god and His relationship to the world." (Lutzer, *Christ Among Other gods*, pp. 111-112)

B. **The Resurrection Of Christ Supplies Our Ultimate Hope**

who died and came to life.

- "who died and came to life" relates to the historical circumstances of Smyrna
 - the city rose from 400 years of ashes
 - Smyrna related to this identification

Q: How would this give hope to those in persecution?

- No matter what happens to us on earth – even to death, we will be resurrected

- Ie/ My dad was verbally assaulting when he hated seeing his family devoted to Christ. My anger for him turned to pity for him when I realized even if he killed me (and he wouldn't), I'd be in heaven. But he is in judgment of God for his rebellion.

1 Corinthians 15:54-57 ⁵⁴ When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." ⁵⁵ "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. When We Think No One Knows Our Pain, Our Comfort Is In Our All-Knowing Christ (9)

⁹ "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."

A. Christ Knows Our Difficult Circumstances – *⁹ "I know your tribulation"*

- **Q:** "*He knows*" – How does this phrase bring us comfort? How does He know? What does He know that we don't?
- **"Know" = oida – know by experience,** not merely observation
- combination of the pagan and Jewish religions persecuting the Christians
- because Smyrna was a city that worshipped Caesar & Rome, they persecuted anyone not bowing to Caesar & Rome
 - 23 AD Smyrna erected the first temple to honor Tiberius
 - after that, mandatory emperor worship was imposed
 - annually, every person was required to burn incense on the altar of Caesar
- The church at Smyrna suffered religious or political persecution
 - Religiously, because they didn't worship the emperor
 - Politically, because they served a greater Lord first and foremost

Q: How do some of the churches today across the world face religious and political persecution?

Q: How do you get persecuted religiously or politically for being a Christian?

- Taking unpopular stands – the Bible vs. the spirit of a liberal city
- Sanctity of life, biblical marriage
- Supreme court
- **"tribulation" = thlipsis = pressure from without (vs. pressure from within), crushing weight**
- "say they are Jews and are not" = of Jewish descent, but not faithful religiously
 - they were numerous and influential

- ie/ Dick Mayhue, "The Suffering Church", Moody, Nov '86 – gives 6 slanders commonly leveled at the early church:
 - 1) Because they partook of Christ's body & blood, they were cannibals
 - 2) Because they called their common meal a love feast, Christians gathered for orgies of lust
 - 3) Because Christianity at times split families, Christians were anti-family
 - 4) Because Christians worshipped without images, they were atheists
 - 5) Because Christians would not say "Caesar is Lord", they were politically disloyal
 - 6) Because they taught that the world would end in fire, Christians were incendiaries (arsonists; pyromaniacs).

B. Christ Knows Our Financial Struggles – *and your poverty (but you are rich)*

- "poverty" = *ptocheia* = extreme poverty
 - contrast to *penia* = having nothing extra (ie/ woman with the 2 mites)
 - *ptocheia* = absolutely dependent on someone else to get by (ie/ poor in spirit)
 - The city was rich with trade and architecture – in contrast, the church in Smyrna felt really poor
- Though Smyrna was a rich city, the antagonizing Jews focused on persecuting the Christians
- Christians were blocked from hiring which had a huge impact on them
- David Levy: "Economically, they suffered abject poverty as a result of their uncompromising commitment to Christ. They were most likely denied employment. Christian shop owners were boycotted and their homes robbed and vandalized." (

In the Bay Area, \$117,400 is considered 'low income' (KRON staff)

- The annual report says a family of four in San Francisco, San Mateo and Marin counties that earn less than \$117,400 are "low income."
- This means they qualify to live in low-income housing projects.
- \$73,000 is considered "very low income" in those counties.
- In March, the median home price in the Bay Area hit a record high at \$820,000, according to CoreLogic.
- In San Francisco County, [the median home price hit \\$1,087,599](#), making it the most expensive housing market in California.

<https://www.kron4.com/news/bay-area/in-the-bay-area-117-400-is-considered-low-income-/1267900142>

Q: What Scriptural comfort could you give to one who is struggling with debt and/or unemployment?

**** Though struggle financially, one must focus on spiritual riches.**

Q: What are our spiritual riches?

Ephesians 3:8 the unsearchable riches of Christ

Matthew 6:20 treasures in heaven

James 2:5 Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?

Q: How was the Laodicean church materially rich and spiritually impoverished?

C. Christ Knows Our Spiritual Persecution – *and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.*

- "Slander," "Blasphemy" = verbal attacks
- Say they are Jews, but not genuinely worship Yahweh (by name only)
- "synagogue of Satan" – religiously carry out the work and plan of the devil

2 Timothy 3:12 Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

Early Instances Of Persecution (later entries are according to tradition)

- Saul of Tarsus led the Jewish persecution of Christians
- The Sanhedrin stoned Stephen to death
- Herod Agrippa I persecutes the Apostles
- James - Killed with a sword. 45 A.D.
- Emperor Nero begins the Roman persecution of the church in A.D. 64
- Peter - Hung on a cross "head downward." A.D. 64
- Andrew - Hung from an olive tree. A.D. 70
- Thomas - Burned alive. A.D. 70
- Phillip - Crucified. A.D. 54
- Matthew - Beheaded. A.D. 65
- Nathanael - Crucified. A.D. 70
- James - Thrown from the temple. A.D. 63
- Simon - Crucified. A.D. 74
- Judas Thaddeus - Beaten with sticks. A.D. 72
- Matthias - Stoned on a cross. A.D. 70
- John - Natural death. A.D. 95
- Paul - Beheaded. A.D. 69

- ie/ Polycarp, bishop of **Smyrna**, was imprisoned for not worshipping those idols (155-156 A.D.) and was told that he could be free if he recanted Christ and worshipped Caesar: "Swear the oath, and I will release you; revile the Christ."
 - Polycarp replied "Eighty and six years have I served him, and he never did me wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King and Savior?"
 - Polycarp again answered the persistent magistrate: "Swear by the genius of Caesar...If you suppose vainly that I will swear by the genius of Caesar, as you say, and feign that you are ignorant of who I am, her plainly, I am a Christian. But if you would learn the doctrine of Christianity, assign a day and give me a hearing."
 - Proconsul: "Prevail upon the people"

- Polycarp: "As for yourself, I should have held you worthy of discourse; for we have been taught to render, as is meet, to princes and authorities appointed by God such honor as does us no harm; but as for these, I do not hold them worthy, that I should defend myself before them."
 - Proconsul: "I have wild beasts here and I will throw you to them, unless you repent."
 - Polycarp: "Call for them: for the repentance from better to worse is a change not permitted to us; but it is a noble thing to change from untowardness to righteousness."
 - Proconsul: "I will cause you to be consumed by fire, if you despise the wild beasts, unless you repent."
 - Polycarp: You threaten that fire which burns for a season and after a little while is quenched: for you are ignorant of the fire of the future judgment and eternal punishment, which is reserved for the ungodly. But what delays you? Come, do what you will." (loose translation from JB Phillips translation of *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*)
- Though it was a Sabbath, the Jews were so eager to have Polycarp killed that they violated their own Sabbath laws, brought wood to the stadium and burned him at the stake.

III. When We Battle Fear In Trials, Our Confidence Is In Our Future Reward (10)

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. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

A. Be Fearless

^{10a} Do not fear what you are about to suffer.

- Lit. fear nothing

Psalm 56:4 "In God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?"

Matthew 10:24 -

- ◆ Expectation: If Christ Was Persecuted, So Will His Followers (24-25)
 - When you know something's coming we're better prepared to handle the situation than if we were caught by surprise

IE/ Do you know when I fear mice? When I'm not prepared to see them.

* When you know you're going to get rough treatment from the world, you're better equipped to handle it

* That's what Jesus warns us in vv 24-25

- a student is no better than his instructor

- a servant is no better than his master
- Our Instructor & Master is Jesus Christ - He was persecuted - so we will be persecuted

v.25 - they called Christ Beelzebub - the Lord of flies - a Canaanite God - referring to him as demonic

Remember **Mt 10:22** "And you will be hated by all for **My** name's sake."

ie/ the SF Giants go to Dodger stadium expecting to be booed
ie/ 49'ers know they're hated by the jealous Cowboys & their fans

IE/ John Wesley - ride horse from town to town preach Gospel
- realize went 3 days w/ no persecution - no brick, no egg
- alarmed, stopped horse, prayed "Can it be that I have sinned and even backslidden?" Then he prayed too have his fault shown to Him by the Lord.
- as he prayed, a rough critic on the otherside of the hedge heard his prayer and said "I'll fix that Methodist preacher."
- he threw a brick and missed
- Wesley: "Thank God it's all right, I still have his presence."

- ◆ Vindication: We Can Endure Temporal Persecution Knowing We Will Be Eternally Justified (26-27)

- yet one day **every** knee shall bow and **every** tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord
- our truth will be vindicated

- ◆ Redirection: Fear God Rather Than Men (28)

- it has been stated that 92% of what we worry about never takes place
- same in evangelism
- yet we fear so much what men might do to us

1 Thess 2:4 "On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts."

- ◆ Realization: Find Confidence In The Sovereignty Of God (29-31)

B. Be Faithful

¹⁰⁶ 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. Be faithful unto death,

- Through prison, severe testing, and possibly death
- 10 days – persecution will peak for a short period (esp. in light of eternity)

- **Theories on the 10 days of Tribulation**

- some think it refers to 10 specific persecutions by Roman in the first 250 years of the church
- perhaps 10 year persecution of Emperor Diocletian
- 10 literal days
- some think it is symbolic for a longer time
- some think it's symbolic for a short time that leads to death
- I think it means that it is a short time of suffering (days – short time, but not too brief)

Q: What is Satan's involvement in Christian persecution? For Smyrna? For China today?

Q: If God is Sovereign, why would He permit Satan to do this to believers?

Q: If God is Love, is God unloving to permit suffering?

Q: When a person feels that they are overwhelmed by Satan and have no hope for victory,

C. Be Enduring

^{10c} Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

- The "crown" is not a heavy royal crown, but a victor's wreath
- Crown of Life = surviving persecution

Q: What typical earthly rewards would someone look to receive as a result of suffering?

James 1:12 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

IV. When This Life Gets Us Down, Our Victory Is Our Eternal Life (11)

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.'

- "second death" = sinners removed from God's presence to eternal hell

Revelation 20:14-15 ¹⁴Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 21:8 ⁸But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

Q: Does this teach that only those who overcome trials & temptations will be granted eternal life or freedom from the second death?

- No, this is a reminder to them that though they may die the 1st death, that by being overcomers in Christ, they will not experience the 2nd death
- In other words – the first death will hurt temporarily, the second death won't touch us

- All those who are truly believers will “overcome”
- “perseverance of the saints” = all saints will persevere
- “will not be hurt” – literary device called “litotes” (lie’-tuh-tease) – rhetorical statement used to affirm the positive with a negative statement

Conclusion:

1. Christ’s Knowledge of our Suffering is our Present Comfort
2. Christ’s Resurrection is our Future Hope
3. Christ’s Salvation is our Eternal Victory

Discussion:

1. How have you suffered like Christ?
2. How can you experience being “rich” in Christ? How is this different from being materially rich?
3. What do you look forward to when you’re in dire circumstances?

