



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Revelation 2: 8-11

Fall 2025

"Suffering Saints"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Chris...and *it is* a privilege to be able to read and listen to the Word of God.

I hope all of you had a wonderful Thanksgiving, for we have much to be thankful for in this land in which we live. And this is one of the greatest blessings that we have—to gather together freely as saints and read the Scriptures, study them together, and in doing that, worship together. So, we continue this morning our studies in the Book of Revelation, and we're in chapter 2, and we're going to look at verses 8 through 11 this morning, the letter to the second of “the seven churches”;

⁸“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this:

⁹‘I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. ¹⁰Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. ¹¹He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.’ “

Revelation 2: 8-11

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word, and bless our time of study in it together. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, we bow together in prayer because we are totally dependent upon You to expound this text and to receive the exposition to understand it, and to apply it to our lives. What was said to an ancient church applies to this church today, and we pray that by the Spirit's help You will guide us into the understanding of that. Help us understand what we've read...and help us to understand how it applies to us.

LORD, may we be a people like that church of Smyrna—may we have courage, may we have steadfastness in the faith to face whatever trials come. We don't know what's coming tomorrow, we don't know what's coming this afternoon, it may be a great trial for each and every one of us, but in the power of Spirit we can stand fast, and so we pray that we will.

We know trials come; that it is part of the Christian life and they come in various ways. We suffer physically, we suffer spiritually...we struggle in so many ways. We live in a material and immaterial world—a material and a spiritual world; and the spiritual realm is very much responsible for the trials that we go through. So we pray that You give us strength, LORD, to be a witness for You before people and to be faithful to You in all that we do. So LORD, build us up in the faith.

And bless us now, LORD, as we turn to our next hymn and use that to prepare our hearts for a time of study and a time of worship together. Make this, LORD, not only a time of learning, (as important and essential as that is), but may the things we learn, lift our hearts to You in gratitude and worship.

We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

(Message) Two of the greatest words the Lord ever spoke are, "Fear not." He said them throughout the Gospels. He spoke them to His apostle John in chapter 1 of this book. He says them again in the second letter to the seven churches, to the church of Smyrna. It needed the encouragement because it was about to suffer.

That's what this second letter is about...it's about encouragement for the suffering church. Christ forewarns the Christians of persecution, and He encourages them to remain faithful.

It has been said that one of the marks of a true and living church is suffering. If love is the mark of a Christian, if it's the mark of a genuine church, then suffering is the second mark of that, the one that naturally follows from the other, "If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." (Jn 15:20). If we love the Lord, the world is going to hate us...it is a natural consequence of being joined to Jesus Christ.

And the church in Smyrna had not left the love that it had originally for Christ and His people, (as the first church of the seven had, the church of Ephesus). They were joined faithfully to the Lord, and so they could expect the difficulties that would come. And its devotion to Him would occasion that hostility...and it will occasion it for us. If we're devoted to Him and walking with Him, we can expect that, we can expect difficulty.

Smyrna would have been a nice place to live materially. It was a very prosperous city, 35 miles north of Ephesus—and like Ephesus, it was a port city. It was a center of trade.

The two cities were rivals. They competed for the title, 'First City of Asia', which Smyrna claimed for itself, (and it had that stamped on the coins that it issued). It had reason to boast about being first. It claimed to be the birthplace of the Greek poet, Homer, and was praised by 'The Ancients' for the beauty of its public buildings.

Overlooking the city of Smyrna was Mount Pagos, covered on top by magnificent temples. It was called the 'Crown of Smyrna'. Around the mountain and through the city was the famous avenue called the 'Street of Gold'. At either end of this great thoroughfare, this great street, were two temples: the Temple to Cybele and the Temple to Zeus. It was a beautiful city, and a city famous for its loyalty to Rome. (Even before Rome was great, Cicero called Smyrna the most faithful of our allies.)

Because of that, Smyrna was given the right to build a temple to Caesar, (which was considered a great honor at that time), where the citizens were expected to offer a pinch of incense and confess that, 'Caesar is Lord'...it was a kind of *loyalty oath* that was given.

Of course, Christians could not do that and that would be a source of problems for them. And as a result, there was opposition to the church from the pagans—but also from the Jews. Smyrna had a large Jewish population, and it was actually hostile to the Christians. (I say '*actually*'...but that was true of so many places.)

So, Smyrna was a place where the pagans were prominent, a place where prosperity was great—but also a place where persecution was very rampant in that city. And so the Lord says to them, with encouraging words, 'Fear not, I am with you', that's what they needed to hear. And it was a healthy church...in spite of all of this, it was a healthy church.

It was not known who established the church, it's not stated. We know Paul was the one that established the church in Ephesus, and he probably had the influence there, as well, (*in Smyrna*), because we know from Acts chapter 19, verse 10, that Paul's influence was throughout that region, "...all who lived in Asia heard the Word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks." So, the ministry that Paul had in Ephesus spread throughout the whole area of Asia. His ministry touched people significantly, with the results that the temples and the synagogues began to empty, and the churches began to fill.

But it was the work of the Spirit altogether—revival always is. In fact, in Acts chapter 19, verse 21, Luke wrote, 'Now after these things were finished, Paul proceeded to go to other places and then to Jerusalem.' And so what God begins, God also ends. 'The Spirit is like the wind', as Jesus said to Nicodemus, (*Jhn3:8*), and just like we cannot understand the wind and how it blows, we can't understand the movement of the Spirit. He moves here, He moves there...and when He's finished, He moves on; and that was the case with that great revival in that part of the world.

Paul left, and he went on to another ministry, but the Spirit continued with the churches. And under the work of the Spirit, the church developed and continued to mature, continued to grow—but with that also came challenges and difficulties.

The church in Smyrna met those challenges better than most. It was 'spiritually more prosperous', as we've said, than the church to the south, the church of Ephesus, that great church. The Lord had no complaint against this second church, as He did with the others.

So, the letter, "to the church in Smyrna" was given as a warning, for there were problems coming. Not problems they had because of sin, but because of their righteousness. And so He alerts them...He says, "The first and the last, who was dead and has come to life, says this:..." (vs2).

Now, that was an appropriate and hopeful greeting to the people who were to suffer the difficulties that He will speak of...suffer even martyrdom. "The first and the last", is a description God gives of Himself in Isaiah 44, verse 6. He said,

"I am the first and I am the last..."

"...And there is no God beside Me."

That is what Christ is, He is the God of the Old Testament as well as the New. He is the second Person of the Trinity. He is God the Son. So, the One who greets them is none other than God Himself; God the Son...which is an encouragement to stay faithful to Him. The LORD alone is Lord. Not Caesar...but Christ—and He has passed through the great trial that they would face; He has been there, and He was triumphant through it. He "...was dead and has come to life." (vs8b).

Seven hundred years earlier, the city of Smyrna was destroyed. In fact, it lay in ruins for 400 years—and then was rebuilt on a magnificent scale. So, in a sense, it is an illustration of *resurrection*...it's like a 'resurrected city'. So from their own history, these people had an appreciation for 'a return to life'...and that is what the encouragement is here that the Lord gives to them. He had been through, as someone put it, 'a Smyrna

experience.' He had conquered death and He would bring them through their difficulties, their trials, victoriously. That's the promise that He gives...that's the promise that He gave to them—and it's the promise that applies to us.

In Isaiah 43, verses 1-2, the LORD assured Israel:

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you;

...When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;

And through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you.

When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned...

For I the LORD am your God..."

Well, that's the assurance that lies behind this description,

"The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life." (vs8b)

And they needed such assurance...we all do.

But they lived in a very difficult and dangerous place, and the Lord told them, (in verse 9), that He was aware of their condition; He was aware of their circumstance. He, (*remember*), "...walks among the seven golden lampstands". (vs1b). He is always with us; He is always patrolling the churches. He knows our situation, and He knew what the Christians in Smyrna faced.

Four trials are listed here: The trials of *poverty*, of *slander*, the trial of *prison*, and of *death*. He spoke first of their poverty in verse 9. He said that He knows of it, He is very much aware of their economic situation, "I know your tribulation and your poverty..." , then He added, "... (but you are rich)..."

Now, what a contrast that is to the last church of Asia, the church of Laodicea that we'll study in chapter 3, (vs3). That church boasted of itself. It said, "I am rich..." , but Jesus said to them, 'No, you are poor.' John Stott quoted Archbishop Trench, who said, "There are poor rich men, and rich poor men—and these saints in Smyrna, were rich poor men."

Why were they *poor* in a rich city? Well, it seems on the one hand that many of the converts in the early church, (and perhaps throughout history), came out of the poorer classes of society. It is true of many of them; and Paul makes that point in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 27. He describes them, the people in Corinth as, "God has chosen...the weak things of the world to shame the things that are strong."

But I think the context here would suggest that their poverty was due to something else. —It was persecution that was the cause for these difficulties; persecution that resulted in pillage. I say that in part because we have that in the Book of Hebrews. The church in Rome, this small house church that the letter was written to, was facing the same kind of situation...they were going through poverty because their property had been seized by the pagans. Poverty is sometimes the cost of discipleship, it certainly was in the 1st century, as well as being an honest person today is sometimes the cost for us. (I'm sure all of us have opportunities to do things that are not quite honest—but if we're honest, we may lose something...and if we do lose something, the Lord will make it up. He takes care of us.)

But there are different reasons, and it seems that this was the cost of discipleship for the saints of Smyrna. They lost much of their possessions, and they were experiencing some poverty. Still, Christ told them, "You are rich"...and He means by that 'really rich!' —what Paul in 1 Timothy 6, verse 18 described as, "rich in good works." They loved the saints—and they helped one another in their privation and pain.

Now, I can imagine that someone resists, and might scoff and think, 'Well, better to be 'a poor rich man' than 'a rich poor man'. I'll take Laodicea over Smyrna.' Well, that is the appeal of materialism and that's the great temptation of it. We're all touched by that, I know we are...particularly living in a wealthy society.

But there is a richness in spiritual things that is satisfying beyond anything that the world can offer: *peace and joy* that transcends trials; *courage* to stand for *truth and righteousness*; *purpose in life* in the here and now...and better, reward *forever* that the Laodiceans wouldn't have, for they had traded eternal wealth for temporal wealth,

traded 'the best' for 'the good'. It's not wrong to be wealthy—but when we make that the end of our life, we are sacrificing the best.

Poverty though, is still a great trial in life—and that's the way it's considered here. God doesn't consider poverty a good thing; it's a trial. But it wasn't the only hardship the Christians of Smyrna experienced, and not even the worst.

They were also slandered. The Lord said that He, "...knows of the blasphemy by *which* those who say they are Jews and are not, but a synagogue of Satan." (9b). That word "blasphemy" is a literal translation of the Greek word *blasphémia*...but more likely it means *slander*. That's the basic idea of it; or, 'railing at someone', (and it probably has that meaning here). It's not so much that the Jews there in Smyrna, slandered Christ as they slandered the Christians. They made all kinds of unjust accusations against them—and then spread them as untrue rumors.

And there is a history of that. In the next generation, one of the rumors that was spread was regarding the Lord's Supper and the Christians referring to it as, 'a love feast'. The pagans didn't quite understand that...and they took that to mean, 'It was an orgy'.

And then the Christians spoke of, 'eating and drinking Christ's blood and flesh', ...so they heard that and they thought that, 'They were cannibals'. So these are the rumors that were spread and that produced persecution— particularly in the northern part of Asia Minor.

And Paul was attacked with slander in Thessalonica, where the men of the synagogue accused him and Silas of opposing Roman law. It's kind of ironic that that's the accusation they used, but they wanted to be known as 'good Roman citizens', who had been given privileges, (by the emperor), to not have to worship him...and they wanted to keep that privilege that they had. So they attacked Paul as being, 'against the law of the Romans.'

Now, the reason they did that is, (as Luke explains in Acts 17:5), they were "jealous". They were jealous of Paul and Silas, and the ministry that they had...and that was likely the reason for the slander that came from the synagogue in Smyrna. The

rabbis had lost some of their congregation to Christ and, out of jealousy, they attacked the church. That too, is sometimes the cost of discipleship.

But the Lord said, "I know..." (*vs9*). He walks among the lampstands, He moves among the churches and is fully aware of everything that is happening, everything that's happening *around* us, everything that's happening *to* us, everything that's happening *within* us.

He is all-knowing...and He is all-caring. He is not distant, He is not some far-away person. He is always with us. Right now, He is with us. He knows our burdens, He knows the afflictions we have, He carries them with Him, carries those with Him in all that He does. He is aware of everything, He has been there Himself; He has experienced what we go through. That's what makes Him a Great High Priest, as the author of Hebrews will explain.

Well, that's the assurance that He is giving here. 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 23, states, He was reviled, "... but did not revile in return...He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;" He kept entrusting Himself to His Father—and that's how we must respond to the experiences that we may undergo, the difficulties we may face, the injustice we may experience. Lies hurt.—We can answer them with the truth; we can't answer them with insults. We can't answer them with the same that they have given to us.

Ultimately, we have to leave these things to the Lord. We have to trust Him to be our defender, and He will do that. He understands what we go through, and He will exonerate us, in His way, in His time. —That's the life of faith.

Now, that truth has given hope to suffering saints down through the ages. The Christian slaves in America found great comfort in that...in one of their old spirituals, they would sing, "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen; nobody knows but Jesus..." and that's true. And that's a great truth, a comforting truth that helps sustain us in difficulties. It is what the Lord was assuring these people of here as they faced great trials and suffering.

Sir William Ramsay, in his book, *The Letters of the Seven Churches*, comments that, "This second letter is different from the others in its tone." Again, there is no complaint here about failure on their part; the Lord is in complete sympathy with this church. He is filled with warm affection for these people. 'He knows their trials'; as I said, He has passed through them Himself. And He has special sympathy and concern for you as you go through the difficulties of life—through emotional and physical struggles in life. He knows your trouble, and He knows how best to help and strengthen you. He would do that for the Christians of Smyrna.

He also knew the source of their troubles. It wasn't the Gentiles, it wasn't the Jews, it was Satan. He says of their adversaries that they, "...say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan." (vs9b). It doesn't mean that, 'they weren't really Jews', (they were physically Jews), but that, 'they're not spiritually His people'. They were, as Jesus told His antagonist in John chapter 8, verse 44, that they were, "...of their father, the devil...he was a murderer from the beginning...and the father of lies...", and, 'they were behaving like him.'

The men of the synagogue here, were doing the same, engaging in slander that would lead to harm, and even death for the Christians—many of whom were Jewish believers saved out of the synagogue. The Lord forewarned them of that in verse 10b, "...Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison."

But first, He encouraged them, "Do not fear what you are about to suffer..." (vs1a). That's the message of this second letter: 'Courage in the face of danger!' ...which meant, 'prison for some', (a place the apostles were very familiar with).

There's not much 'prosperity theology' in this letter. Now I would say this: 'There is a true prosperity theology' ...and they had it in Smyrna. It is, *prosperity spiritually through poverty, through prison, through affliction*.

God blesses us through the difficulties of life. He uses them in our lives spiritually...and that's the Christian life. Now, I don't say that lightly, but it is true

according to the apostles, according to 2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 12, where Paul wrote, "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

That's kind of convicting, isn't it? It is for me...If we don't experience a lot of persecution, (and I don't), it makes me wonder, 'Am I living that kind of life—a godly life for Christ?'

If we do, we can expect it. That's what happened in this church of Smyrna; they lived for the Lord and, 'If they persecute Me, they'll persecute you.' (*Jhn 15:20*). 'If you're of the world, the world would love you...but you're not, and so it doesn't.'

Again, behind it all is "the evil one", (*Jhn 17:15*)...the *devil*, (that's a word that means *slander*). The devil is a slanderer. *Satan* means *adversary*. Both words define him...he is our great enemy. There is no compassion in him, no fairness in him...none at all. There is nothing redeemable in the devil. He is fully evil.

Human governments and persecutors are his pawns...but they're not the real enemy—and they can be, by the grace of God, won to the Gospel. The Philippian jailer threw Paul and Silas into prison, and not just into the jail, but into the deepest, darkest dungeon in the jail...but he became a believer, as did his family with him. (*Acts 16:25f*).

Our response is important. Still, it is hard—and this persecution that the Lord is referring to here would be very hard...it would involve prison, and even death. In fact, in the ancient world, prison was not so much a place of punishment as a place where the accused and the convicted were held while awaiting execution.

But the Lord said, "Do not fear." (*vs10a*). Literally, it means, "Fear nothing." That's hard to do when you're facing prison and you're facing death, and you've already been impoverished because of the witness you've given...but He says, "Fear nothing."

And the Lord has two assurances behind that. *First*, the trial was temporary, He said it would last "for ten days", (there is no reason not to take those ten days literally).

Ten days, though, might seem like an eternity while they lasted, and while one is in prison wondering what the result is going to be. But He says, 'It's going to be temporary.'

And that's true of all the trials that we face. Paul called them, in 2 Corinthians 4:17, "momentary, light afflictions"...and they have a wonderful result, he says, a great blessing that comes from them. But they are 'light afflictions' only in light of *the reward that we receive for them. (ibid. 17b)*. So they're difficult, they're great, they are hardships.

But when you compare them with what is to come and what is the result, Paul could say, 'They are light afflictions', and what will come would be something far better than anything we could have here...and that is a "crown". (*vs10d*).

The Lord said to the church, "Be faithful until death...", (*vs10c*), and in a city famous for being faithful to Rome, these saints would have understood the importance and the value of loyalty...and the danger; it would have a cost. "Be faithful unto death."

And the One who said this, is the One who said that, 'He was dead and has come to life'. (*vs8*). He has conquered death, and they would do so too. It would end the temporary trials of this life and be an entrance into far greater life, where Christ says, they will receive, "the crown of life." (*vs10d*). That's not, I think, a special crown for martyrs. It means, 'the crown that is life'...and it is the promise of eternal life that is for all who belong to Christ. This is what awaits us: glory!

This promise would have reminded them of 'the Crown of Smyrna', the circle of colonnade buildings at the top that was called the 'Crown of Smyrna', on Mount Pagos. They had seen that all their lives, and it was part of their thinking—and this would, no doubt, stir up within them the sense of the greatness of the crown that the Lord was promising them; something infinitely greater in glory and blessing than anything we could have and see in this world...and it's what we have in what's to come.

Now, that's the promise *they* had, that's the promise that *we* have: Life that is beautiful, life that is glorious, life that is eternal, world without end. That is the

encouragement, and that is the incentive to be faithful to the very end...to the bitter end.

The Lord reinforces that at the end of the letter with the promise, "He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death." (*vs11b*). The "second death" is *spiritual* death that follows the *first* death, (which is physical death). Later, in chapter 20 of this book, in verse 14, it is called, "the lake of fire". Eternal punishment. Chapter 20, verse 10 describes it as, "being tormented day and night forever and ever."

Believers have been delivered from that....and that puts life in perspective, (it should). They will not be harmed by it. By God's grace, we, (*believers*), overcome...we are victors. That's the idea here—like runners in a race...a long, hard race. Smyrna was famous for its games, like the Olympic games in Greece...and like the athletes who cross the finish line victorious, we will enter eternity victorious—as champions.

Some of them would face death...but then we all do. We're not going to escape that—and "the first death", physical death, may sting; it's not a comfortable experience. You watch people go through their last days and hours, and you realize why Paul would call it "the last enemy", (*1Cor 15:26*), and it is...but it can only hurt for a moment, 'only a moment'. In Psalm 23, (*vs4*), David wrote of his experiences as a young shepherd, and there he writes of passing through "the valley of the shadow of death"...the trials of life, I think, he is describing—but also that applies to death itself. Shadows are dark, shadows can cause fear, that is kind of the idea in that Psalm. But shadows don't hurt, and physical death ultimately cannot hurt us. [Now, don't take it from me, it's what the Lord tells us: Trust Him!]

Many of the Christians of Smyrna were made to suffer prison and death—and they bravely did it. And did it well, as victors, just as Polycarp did a generation later.

Polycarp was a disciple of the Apostle John and lived a long life—and was martyred in Smyrna on February 23, 155 AD. Polycarp was a faithful minister and a very

old man when he was brought before the Roman governor. The mob shouted, "This is the father of the Christians and the puller-down of our gods."

Now, he was given the opportunity to confess that 'Caesar is the lord'—but he refused to do it and he gave a great speech. I won't read it now, but he said, "How can I deny Christ, who has done all good for me all my life?" So he refused, and he died a fiery death. He knew the words of Christ here, "Do not fear...Be faithful unto death." (vs10).

But still, you can't help but wonder how it would be possible to endure such trials—a fiery trial, literally...even with the hope of Heaven, to face that kind of experience, and to go through it. And in our strength, I would say, 'That's impossible; we can't do that.' You read about the martyrs, and you read about modern-day martyrs that suffered under Communism, (and other *'isms'*), and you wonder, "Could I do that?"

Well, I don't think in our own strength we can. But implied in this is the encouragement, 'To not fear'...and in that exhortation is the assurance that, '...because God is going to take care of us! ...and He would see them through these trials. He did for Polycarp, and He would give *them* the strength to make them stand...and He will do that for us as we strengthen our faith in Him.

That's what we do, we walk by faith—and we need to be strengthening our faith through the study of the Word of God and prayer.

So, the Lord exhorts them, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." (vs11). 'He who has spiritual life given by God...' (He is saying,) '...you obey! Understand what I'm saying and be faithful...Trust Me!"

That statement, "He who has an ear, let him hear...", reminds me of an experience, I had many years ago, in the city of İzmir, Turkey, which is ancient Smyrna. (The same city, different name.)

My first night in that city I slept very soundly, when just before dawn, I woke to a very strange sound, one that I had never heard before. It was the call to prayer from a mosque on a hillside, (maybe Mount Pagos is where the mosque was)...but I heard this

sound and it woke me up. Later, as I moved through the city and as I traveled in that land, I saw how thoroughly Islamic that Turkey is – mosques everywhere.

Now, this is the land of “the seven churches.” The land of great apostolic activity. The land that received the letters of Paul; to the church at Ephesus, to the church of Colossae—and received 1 Peter; 1, 2, and 3 John...and the land that received this letter we're studying, the Book of Revelation. It was the land of many, great churches and faithful saints...and now, all of that is gone, a thing of the distant past. And as Christians, we have to ask ourselves, ‘Why that is?’

I think the answer is found in this second letter to the seven churches, with the Lord's command, “Be faithful unto death...” (*vs10c*)...There came a time when those churches weren't faithful unto death.

In the 8th century, Muhammad's warriors rode off the desert of Arabia, swept over the Middle East and Asia Minor, and across North Africa with a new god...and message, "Convert or die!" The churches didn't stand...couldn't stand for by then they had grown weak, they had grown nominal, unbelieving...and eventually they all fell under the threat of the Muslim sword.

Today, what had been ‘a land of the cross’ is...‘a land of the crescent’. Instead of ministers proclaiming the Gospel, it is muezzins calling people to prayer. [And I know some of you are thinking, ‘It sounds like Texas.’ We have a lot of that today. In fact, five to ten miles from here is a large mosque.]

Well, we have a sword that is far greater than the one that those ancient warriors had. It is a sword that is “two-edged” and sharper than any sword. It is the Gospel, and we can use that—and should. Whenever the opportunity gives us, we should speak the truth to them, and to everyone, *in love*...and God will bless that.

But perhaps, I think a better application of this, is in our own country—and I'm thinking specifically of New England, where in that area of our country, in fact up and down the Eastern seaboard, there were vibrant churches. The preaching of Whitfield

and Edwards was heard there and brought about 'The Great Awakening'. (1720-1740). But, by the end of the early 19th century, (the early 1800s), *Unitarianism* had swept over that region...and today, few people in that part of the country even know the names of Whitfield and Edwards. They probably don't even know the names of the apostles.

And all of that is to say, 'That is a warning!'

And it can happen here, it can happen at Believers Chapel if we are not, "...faithful until death". (vs10c).

And how do we get that faithfulness?

Well, Peter said, "Make your calling and election sure." (2Pe 1:10). Be serious saints....study and pray. Paul said in Colossians chapter 3, verse 2, "Set your mind on the things above, not the things of earth."

And beware of danger, it's everywhere. Be careful and courageous. Beware of materialism...fill your mind with the things of God.

That's what we're to do.

And we will. We'll do that here....you'll do that by God's grace and the encouragement, that if we suffer, we have the assurance that it is temporary, (and in fact, it is used of God to be a blessing to us, whether we see it at that moment or not), and it is only temporary—and it's followed by blessing...it is followed by, (verse 10), "the crown of life" that awaits us...world without end, and glory unimaginable.

But, do you have that hope?

If not, the words "Do not fear" have no application to you...you have every reason to fear. It's not life, but death...*eternal* death that awaits you. Not eternal sleep—but eternal night and punishment. It is real...and it is just.

But there is a way of escape—and that is through Christ,
'Who was dead but is now alive', (vs8),
who died in the place of sinners,

and whose sacrifice was accepted by His Father,
and He was raised from the dead as proof of that.

He has conquered death—and that will be your future and your hope if you join yourself to Him. —His life, by faith, faith alone, trusting in Him and His sacrifice...it alone frees us from our sins, cleanses us of our guilt, and the judgment to come, “the second death.” (*vs11b*).

May God help you to look to Him and trust in Him.

And help all of us to live by faith.

(Closing prayer) Father, we do glory in our Redeemer. We have nothing to boast in of ourselves; salvation is of the LORD, one hundred percent. We give You all the glory, and we thank You for the great blessing that we have. And someday, we will see His face, and see it for all eternity—and in seeing it, we will be changed and glorified. We have nothing but hope before us.

And so LORD, as we may struggle in life and have difficulties, we pray that You would ever remind us of that—that this is passing and what is coming is eternal. We thank You for that.

Now,

The LORD bless you and keep you;

The LORD make His face shine on you,

And be gracious to you:

The LORD lift up His countenance on you,

And give you peace.

In Christ's name. Amen.

(End of Audio)