



Worthy Series – Part 4: Christ in Our Trials

Brian Coles

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WORSHIP

Begin your group with a time of worship. If someone in your group can lead worship, invite them to lead two or three songs. Alternatively, consider using one or more of these songs from our Sunday morning worship time:

- **Faithful and True** (*New Life Worship*)
- **Endless Praise** (*Charity Gayle*)
- **Who Else** (*Gateway Worship*)

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

- Revelation 2:8-11
- Revelation 7:9-17
- Acts 16:16-40

OPENING PRAYER

Begin by praying together for a fresh revelation of God's holiness and worthiness.

OVERVIEW

This week Pastor Brian walked us through the reality of trials and persecution in the Christian life, using the letter to the church at Smyrna in Revelation 2:8-11 as a foundation. The church at Smyrna faced intense pressure from the Roman Empire and local opposition, yet Christ called them to remain faithful. Whether we face persecution for our faith or the ordinary hardships of life, Scripture gives us a clear path forward: seek God's presence, lean on community, follow Christ's example, trust God's purposes, and hold tightly to the hope of eternity.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Christ identifies himself to the suffering church at Smyrna as the one "who died and came to life again" — a reminder that he understands suffering firsthand and has overcome it.
2. Persecution is not a sign that something has gone wrong in your faith. It is a reality that followers of Jesus have faced throughout all of church history.
3. The word "persecution" means to follow, pursue, and hunt down. Trials — whether from outside opposition or the ordinary pressures of life — are not random. They have a context, and Christ is present in them.
4. Paul and Silas responded to unjust imprisonment not with despair but with prayer and worship, and God used their faithfulness to bring an entire household to salvation.
5. Revelation 7:9-17 gives us a vision of the end of the story — every tear wiped away, every hunger satisfied, every wound healed. That promise is meant to sustain us in the middle of our hardest days.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (35-40 min)

Opening

Take a few minutes to check in with one another. Without going into too much detail yet, would anyone be willing to share one word that describes a season of difficulty they have walked through?

Getting into the Sermon

1. Pastor Brian listed several types of persecution found in Scripture — social rejection, false accusations, economic hardship, imprisonment, physical violence, and others. Which of these surprised you most as a form of persecution? Have you personally experienced any of these because of your faith?
2. The historical background of Revelation — emperors like Caligula, Nero, and Domitian demanding to be worshipped as gods — gives us a picture of what the early church was navigating daily. How does knowing that context change the way you read the letters to the seven churches?

3. Revelation 2:9 records Christ saying to the church at Smyrna that he knows their afflictions and their poverty, yet calls them rich. What do you think it means to be spiritually rich in the middle of material or physical suffering? Is that easy or difficult for you to believe about your own life?
4. Paul and Silas were beaten, falsely accused, and thrown into the innermost cell of a prison. Yet Acts 16:25 tells us they were praying and singing hymns at midnight. What do you think made that response possible? What would it take for you to respond to hardship that way?
5. The jailer who witnessed Paul and Silas's response to suffering asked, "What must I do to be saved?" How does the way we handle trials serve as a witness to people around us who are watching?
6. Pastor Brian made a distinction between persecution and general life trials. He listed things like grief, mental health struggles, financial hardship, seasons of waiting, and personal failure. Do you tend to feel that God is present with you in those kinds of trials, or does it feel harder to connect with him in the "ordinary" hardships of life? Why?
7. Revelation 7:14 describes a great multitude who "have come out of the great tribulation" and whose robes have been made white in the blood of the Lamb. What does it mean to you that suffering is not the end of the story for those who belong to Christ?

Going Deeper

8. Of the five points Pastor Brian gave, which one is the most difficult for you to practice when you are in the middle of a hard season?
 - a. Seeking God through Scripture, worship, and prayer
 - b. Surrounding yourself with godly people and community
 - c. Remembering Jesus's example and teaching
 - d. Discovering what God is doing in the trial
 - e. Holding onto the promise of eternity
9. Is there a current trial in your life that you have been carrying largely on your own? What would it look like to invite this group into that with you?

PRACTICAL APPLICATION (10 Mins)

This week, choose at least one of the following to put into practice:

- Seek God's presence. Identify one specific time in your week to sit with Scripture, worship, or prayer that is dedicated to bringing your current trial before God. Be specific — pick the day, the time, and the place.
- Invite community in. Share a struggle with at least one person in your small group this week that you have not shared before. Ask them to pray with you and check in on you.
- Study Jesus in the trial. Read through one of the Gospel accounts of Jesus in Gethsemane or on the cross. Notice how he faced suffering. Write down one thing his example teaches you about your own situation.
- Ask the question. Spend time this week in prayer asking God specifically: "What are you leading me toward, teaching me, or preparing me for through this?" Journal what comes to mind.
- Anchor yourself in eternity. Read Revelation 7:9-17 slowly and out loud this week. Let the vision of what is coming reset your perspective on what you are walking through right now.

Closing Prayer

Close your time together in prayer. Consider praying through these areas as a group:

- Thank God that he is the First and the Last — present at the beginning of every trial and at the end of it.
- Ask for courage for anyone in the group facing a specific hardship right now.
- Pray for persecuted believers around the world who are facing what the church at Smyrna faced.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help each person hold the promise of eternity close in the week ahead.