

**Dear Church - Persecution vs. Prosperity**

***You have forsaken the love you had at first. 5 Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. Revelation 2:4-5***

**When we are not intentional about spiritual growth, we will stop growing.**

**Central Theme to the Church in Smyrna- "You got this!"**

***8 "To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. 9 I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know about the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown.***

***11 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death. Revelation 2:8-11***

**Nominal Christianity disappears in the presence of extreme difficulty.**

***each of us will give an account of ourselves to God. Romans 14:12***

**Satan will use both a lack of pressure and extreme pressure to attack the church.**

***2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. James 1:2-4***

**Persecution has a way of deepening the commitment of those who endure it.**

***"My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." Matthew 26:39***

**Jesus equates richness with spiritual purity not earthly prosperity.**

***"Christians in China are praying for our Christian brothers and sisters in America. We believe we are handling our persecution better than you are handling your prosperity." -A Christian Leader in China***

**The lack of tribulation and persecution should be of greater concern to us than the presence of it.**

**We have to learn to live faithfully in Jesus despite our prosperity and not because of it.**