

In Days of End-Times Persecution, Let's Ask Ourselves These Key Questions

We see that difficult times are upon us and that persecution against us is ramping up. Many fear what might happen, and others question if they have what it takes to endure persecution. Let's examine our hearts and ask ourselves the hard question, "Can I endure these difficult times?"

How does our Lord Jesus respond to the church in Smyrna? Let's read this portion of Scripture to find out.

"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:

'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the slander by those who say they are Jews, and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw 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. The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death" (Rev. 2:8-11, NASB).

They do not hear a rebuke, but only words of encouragement. Who are they? They are the persecuted church. He encourages them to not fear their imminent sufferings, but to be faithful to the end.

Therefore, the question to ask ourselves is, "Do I have the level of faithfulness it takes to endure persecution?"

What else do we read about fear in God's Word that will help us to remain fearless? We read in 2 Timothy 1:7 (KJV), " For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." Fear is beyond just an emotion; it is a spirit, and it is not a spirit that comes from God. And instead of fear He gives to us power.

In Zechariah 4:6 (BSB) we are told, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the Lord of hosts."

Our Lord knows what we are about to face, and He understands what it will take for us to overcome this spirit of fear. Where does this power come from? And what will we do with this power? Acts 1:8 makes it plain, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

According to 2 Timothy 1:7, we not only receive power, but also love. There is power in love, and without love, we are powerless. First John 4:16 (NIV) tells us, "And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them." Just as supernatural power is found in Him, so too is love. He doesn't just love, He is love. And it will take His power fueled by His love to overcome persecution. Our love for Him will keep us on the straight and narrow, even during times of tribulation, difficult times.

We are also told in 2 Timothy 1:7 that instead of fear, God gives us a sound mind. During these intense times we see how our enemy, Satan, is attacking our mind and emotions to wear us out so that we give up the fight. Let's not give up this good fight of faith but take the enemy head-on, bring him down and walk in the victory we have been given. As we see in His holy Word, we have been given the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16). His Word is sharper than any two-edged sword, and it

pierces us to our innermost being (Heb. 4:12).

This message may be simple, but it's filled with reassurance, that even in times of persecution for our faith, He will be with us. And He has equipped us with powerful weapons of faith such as power, love and a sound mind to endure even in times of persecution.

Let's pray.

"Father God, You tell us not to be afraid, and I need to confess that sometimes I struggle with fear about being persecuted. I am not filled with fear because I think You are weak, but that I know my own frailties spiritually. And sometimes I am unfaithful to trust You to protect me. I know this is not right, and I desire to get to the place where I know that I know, I trust You. I trust You no matter what they say to me or how they act out against me. I choose to rely upon Your strength, and I thank You that You are faithful to me. In Jesus' name, amen." {eo}

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