



4: Hope to Overcome External Pressure Revelation 2:8-11

We have hope to endure external pressure to disavow our faith because Jesus is sovereign over our adversaries.

KEY TRUTHS ABOUT JESUS TO KNOW AND LIVE

- Jesus Encloses Our Lives in His Love and Power (Revelation 2:8)

The particular descriptions of Jesus, taken from chapter 1, are directly relevant to the people's cultural context. In this case, the words "First and Last" speak directly to the identity of the city of Smyrna (modern Izmir, Turkey).

Smyrna loved the word "first." It rivaled Ephesus as "the first city of Asia." Its coins were stamped "First City of Asia in Size and Beauty." The city lived by the adage "Rome first in all things." The city was sold out to Rome and being politically correct.

This description of Jesus is a direct counterclaim to Smyrna's pride and superiority. Jesus is saying to them and to us – your lives are not bracketed by the decisions and actions of those politically in charge. Our lives are bracketed by Jesus Christ.

- Jesus is Sovereign Over our Spiritual Adversaries (2:9-10).

Jesus says, "I know your 'afflictions.'" The Greek *thlipsis* is a word that means crushing pressure. It is a word that describes the crushing pressure when the Kingdom of God comes up against human beings in rebellion against God.

"All who desire to live godly lives will be persecuted." 2 Timothy 3:12

"For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in Him but also suffer for his sake." Philippians 1:29

- Jesus is Sovereign Over the State's Pressure (Revelation 2:8)

- Jesus is Sovereign Over False Religious Leaders (Revelation 2:9)

- Jesus is Sovereign Over Satan (Revelation 2:10)

- **Jesus Has Defeated Death for Those in Him (Revelation 2:8, 10-11)**

At His resurrection, Jesus was vindicated as the Son of God and our Savior. He has triumphed over death, and He is sovereign over death. He is the only one authorized to give the “crown of life.”

He has authority over the “second death.” There are two deaths. The “first death” is our physical death in this life. The “second death” is the final judgment and expulsion from God’s Presence for all who have not surrendered to Jesus as Lord and Savior (Revelation 20:6, 14; 21:8b).

“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.” Hebrews 2:14-15

Discussion Questions (for small groups or the dinner table):

1. What has been your experience, if any, of growing pressure to compromise, hide, or deny your faith to be accepted? What are you seeing in our culture?
2. Look at the “Key Truths to Know and Live” in the sermon notes. Which of these three most encourages you, and why?
3. How do you process the reality that Jesus has sovereignty over our suffering for his Name?
4. What steps can you take, or are you taking to allow the Spirit to form a more resilient faith in you?

St. Patrick’s Breastplate Prayer

I arise today
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,
Through belief in the Threeness,
Through confession of the Oneness
of the Creator of creation.

Christ with me,
Christ before me,
Christ behind me,
Christ in me,
Christ beneath me,
Christ above me,
Christ on my right,
Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down,
Christ when I sit down,
Christ when I arise,
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.

I arise today
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,
Through belief in the Threeness,
Through confession of the Oneness
of the Creator of creation.

Note: This is the short version.