

Seven Pillars of a FAITHFUL CHURCH

Revelation 2 & 3

PART TWO

Review: To the church in **Ephesus**: (Revelation 2:4-7)

3-Step Process to Restoration:

1. *Remember*
2. *Repent*
3. *Return/Repeat*

D.A. Carson

"If I allow my work to get between my heart and the Master, it will be little worth. We can only effectually serve Christ as we are enjoying Him. It is while the heart dwells upon His powerful attractions that the hands perform the most acceptable service to His name.... The man who will present Christ to others must be occupied with Christ for himself." C.H. Mackintosh

I. *Courageous Endurance in Times of Trouble: The Church at Smyrna 2:8-11*

"And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: 'The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life. "'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that 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, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.' (Revelation 2:8-11).

Exhortation only: *endure tribulation, hardship, and slander, remain faithful without fear in suffering and persecution.*

Introduction

John Piper

"To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things" (1 Corinthians 4:11-13).

"but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well

known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything” (2 Corinthians 6:4-10).

“If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer” (2 Corinthians 1:6).

Why is it important to patiently endure suffering? Because suffering produces greater endurance.

“More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Romans 5:3-5).

We know from Scripture that one of the sure marks of faithfulness to Christ in life is enduring to the end -- even through extremely difficult times.

Matthew 24:13, *But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved.*

“You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. You will be hated by all for my name's sake. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives” (Luke 21:16-19).

“The higher the tone of Christian life in the church, the more likely it is to attract dislike and, if circumstances permit, hostility” (Maclaren).

ENDURANCE = ‘the power of bearing pain, hardship or trial; the ability or strength to continue or last, despite fatigue, stress or any other adverse condition; stamina; lasting quality; duration.’

...you have need of endurance... (Hebrews 10:36).

John Piper

We are to follow the example of those who have *endured in faith* before us:

“Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful” (James 5:7-11).

Wm. Wilberforce (1759-1833)

“Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?” (James 2:5).

“(but you are rich)” What a wonderfully encouraging reminder from our Lord.

“as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything” (2 Corinthians 6:10).

Polycarp (bishop of Smyrna; c. 155-160)

"He who grants me to endure the fire will enable me also to remain on the pyre unmoved, without the security you desire from nails." Polycarp

We must always be mindful of the divine purpose in our suffering:

“And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you” (1 Peter 5:10).

“The purest Christian graces are those forged in the furnace of adversity” (MacArthur).

“Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction” (Isaiah 48:10).

God uses adversity to purify His church.

“Trials and persecution strengthen and refine genuine saving faith, but uncover and destroy false faith.”

“For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

“Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him” (James 1:12).

We must remember that the Lord recognizes and rewards *faithfulness* and *diligent ministry* in His name:

“For God is not so unjust as to overlook your work and the love that you showed for his sake in serving the saints, as you still do. And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Hebrews 6:10-12).

“let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near....”

‘Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.’ But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls” (Hebrews 10:22-25; 37-39).