

EP30: Revelation 2:8-11 (part 2)

The Church at Smyrna

Overall Theme: I Will Perfect You!

Let's pick back up with this very short letter to Smyrna.

Revelation 2:8-11

And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who had chosen to be dead, and has come to life, now says this: 'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are now rich), and the blasphemy by those who are now saying they are now Jews and are now not, but now are a synagogue of Satan. Do not now be caused to fear what you are now about to now suffer. Behold, the devil is now about to now cast some of you into prison, so that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Now choose to be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who is now having an ear, let him hear what the Spirit now says to the churches. He who is now overcoming will not be hurt by the second death.'

In **Part 1**, we dug in deep in terms of facing our **10-days** of suffering and closed discussing the fear that keeps us from resting in God's love. **Yahweh** commands us to let Him remove our fear—to be **willing**. As we have learned, **it is always our choice to be willing to allow God to act, and it is God's responsibility to act**. But take note, even our ability to choose to let God act in our lives comes from Him. *"For God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey Him and the power to do what pleases Him."*¹

With that said, God is always purposed to act and to remove our fear, but the reality is that we are **NOT** always willing to let Him into the deepest recesses of our soul to do such foundational reconstruction of our lives. After all, most of us hate suffering. We do not understand why it is necessary (we can read the words, but our heart disagrees), and we simply do not trust **Yahweh**. He has hurt us enough in the past, and we do not want to be hurt again in the future.

Yet, it is our choice to trust Him or not. It is our choice to be **willing**. He never takes that choice away from us. And it is for this reason (our unwillingness to trust Him), that the **Substitution Principle** is so often ignored and exchanged for good old-fashioned religion. After all, the **Design Point** is great in theory, but who really wants to let God crucify their *flesh* and slowly bleed from their lives everything that He does not like?

Who really wants to exchange all that they are for all that He is? Again, the theory is nice, but few are fans of the process. Just the thought of it brings up the fear of pain and prolonged times of intense suffering. Ugh! Haven't we suffered enough already?

That is a question most of us have asked.

¹ **Philippians 2:13**

Intention and Purpose in Suffering

The problem is that most of us have not accepted God's intention or purpose in our suffering, especially when much of it came early on in our lives at the hands of those who were responsible to love us and care for us. And it is my belief that regardless of one's logical and emotional reasoning about the sovereignty of God, or even His existence, everyone at the deepest unconscious regions of their soul knows that **Yahweh** is responsible. I always joke that I have never met a true atheist, just people who have good reasons to be very mad at God.

Accordingly, at the core of our being is a deep festering wound of **betrayal**.² Right or wrong, most people feel betrayed by the people who should have loved and accepted them (both in the past and in our present). Likewise, they feel betrayed by God for not protecting them and for not delivering them from evil. After all, isn't that what a "good" God is supposed to do.

For some individuals, this sense of betrayal has risen to a cognitive level, but for most it is buried deep within, never to be seen or understood, but always impairing the quality of their relationships both with people and with God.

The Chicken & the Egg

This creates quite a conundrum. How will we ever trust God to remove our fear if we do not trust Him to remove our fear? As He says, *"unless your faith is firm, I cannot make you stand firm."*³ Or said another way, "without firm faith, you will not be firmly established." It is the chicken and the egg conundrum. Which comes first?

Let us consider a few facts that will help us wrap our head around this issue of suffering, as well as the chicken and the egg.

1. God is perfect; therefore, His standard for all things is perfection.⁴
2. All have sinned and therefore fall short of the glory of God—from His perfection. There is none righteous, not even one. There is none who understands, there is no one who seeks for God.⁵
3. We are by nature children of God's wrath.⁶
4. From before the foundations of the world were laid, He chose us to belong to Him that we would be holy and blameless before Him.⁷
5. We are to allow God to cause us to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect.⁸
6. Since Christ suffered in the flesh, we are to arm ourselves with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh

² It took me a while to put a title or a name to this pain, but "betrayal" is spot-on.

³ *Isaiah 7:9*

⁴ *Romans 3:23*

⁵ *Romans 3:10-11*

⁶ *Ephesians 2:3*

⁷ *Ephesians 1:4*

⁸ *Matthew 5:48*

no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.⁹

In sum, from the beginning of our lives we are a total mess with hearts turned far from God, and we are destined for wrath because we did not want Him and lived separate from Him. This describes our basic spiritual existence. Therefore, since He chose His bondservants to stand before Him holy and blameless, He must start the work early-and-often to turn them away from trusting themselves, away from their *flesh*, and towards Him (the only one who is holy).

And it is ***“by means of their suffering that He rescues those who suffer, for He gets their attention through adversity.”***¹⁰ In fact, it is through our suffering that He brings our soul back from the pit that He may enlighten us with the light of life.¹¹ And, it is through crushing that we begin to emit a beautiful and marvelous fragrance of life.

Ironically, it is through our suffering (caused by **Yahweh**) that we learn how to trust ourselves to **Yahweh** and to no longer live for the lusts of men, whether that lust is expressed in anger, rebellion, hate, murder, idolatry, sensuality, or the lusts of the flesh (**Cain**), the lusts of the eyes (**Balaam**), and the boastful pride of life (**Korah**).¹² He utilizes suffering to convince us that we are not the **I AM** and can never be our **I AM**; He must be. Accordingly, suffering is intended to convince us, over time, of the futility of relying upon ourselves and **WHY** it is always better to bet our lives on His name and not our own.

And since we are birthed with a “sin” condition, and it seems to mutate and grow exponentially as it is passed down to each generation that has not been enlightened with the light of life, He must start His work of redeeming our soul from the pit from our earliest days in the womb.

It is not intuitive at all, but what has felt like **betrayal** is God working a pathway for our redemption that we might be with Him. And what has felt like **betrayal** from people, well, they were just the tools that **Yahweh** used to bring the necessary adversity in our lives such that we would one day turn to Him to find the life He has promised. Sucks for them for sure; but truth be told, we have all been that tool in someone’s life far more often than we would like to admit.

So even when we do not understand the **WHY** of all our suffering, there is intention and purpose, and it is love; it is for our freedom. Yes, all He does in the lives of those He has chosen is an expression of His great love that they might learn to walk in **unrestrained freedom**.

Believe me, I know it does not feel like love, but without His aggressive and terrible intervention, we would either remain children of wrath (never having come to Jesus), or we would quit and walk away (apostatize) in unbelief betting our lives on all that we do for ourselves and all that we do for God.

And because of the arrogance and pride within our humanity, it takes a while (some longer than others) for us to be convinced that the sinful nature within our being, our *flesh*, is so vile and hateful, that it always fights against God’s love and is always operating out of deceit purposing to delude us from our true condition. Yes, our heart is more deceitful than **ALL ELSE**, and is desperately sick.¹³ Therefore, if we are not trained, through being tested, to choose to now be found believing in His love, our *flesh* just might

⁹ **1 Peter 4:1-3**

¹⁰ **Job 36:15**

¹¹ **Job 33:29-10**

¹² **Jude 11**

¹³ **Jeremiah 17:9**

win the fight.

Sadly, given the great apostasy of which Jesus spoke about coming from those who said the “sinner’s prayer” and once claimed they believe, the *flesh* wins more often than we “Christians” would like to admit.¹⁴ “For the gate is small and the way is narrow (or filled with tribulation) that leads to life, **and there are few who find it.**”¹⁵ Therefore, strive to enter through the narrow (pressure) door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter **and will not be able.**”¹⁶

Those words are chilling: **there are few who find it!** That tends to not fit into our view of God, His mercy, His grace, His love and so on. But those feelings are misguided feelings which stem from our deceitful heart (which, if you can imagine, is even more deceitful than Satan himself, for it is more deceitful than all else).

God has provided a way to live, the path is open, but few want to take His designated path because it is filled with pressure or tribulation.

**OUR SUFFERING IS NECESSARY: WE HAVE TO DIE TO LIVE AND WE HAVE TO LIVE TO
KNOW AND EXPERIENCE AGAPE LOVE!**

Colossians 1:21-23

And although you are now being alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—if **indeed you now continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not now caused to be moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard,** which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven.

God tests our faith, or prepares us through trials and tribulations, it is how He crucifies our *flesh* and puts down everything that stands in opposition to His rule in our souls—everything that opposes Him being our **I AM**. But as with all things, His grace has provisioned us to be able to endure each-and-every test and trial. After all He promises that He has given us everything we need for life and godliness.¹⁷ We just need to now be choosing to rely on His grace, fully assured of His love, and reject that tendency to run to our lusts (especially our religious lusts) to deal with the pain and uncertainty of life.

Here is the truth, if we are **willing**, we will be able to take advantage of the abundant grace which He supplies for every terrible circumstance of our lives. After all He wants us to confidently say, “*The Lord is my helper, so I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me.*”¹⁸ The implication is that they can do nothing as He is the one in control, He is the one who initiated this time of crushing, and if we are **willing**, it will accomplish His beautiful purpose of releasing a fragrance that will impact the spiritual climate in the

¹⁴ ***Galatians 5:17; Romans 8:6-8***

¹⁵ ***Matthew 7:14***

¹⁶ ***Luke 13:24***

¹⁷ ***2 Peter 1:3***

¹⁸ ***Hebrews 13:6***

unseen world, as well as in our community.

ALTHOUGH THE ENEMY THOUGHT OUR CRUSHING WOULD BE OUR SHAMEFUL DEFEAT, THE FRAGRANCE BECOMES A BOLD DECLARATION OF OUR GLORIOUS VICTORY IN ALL THE HEAVENLY REALMS.

Endurance: The Key to Faithfulness

However, the one thing we all need during our appointed **10-days** of suffering is endurance. And this will never be so true than during the tribulations associated with the **End Times**, when things get very, very personal. Jesus warns us, *“But you will be **betrayed** (argh, there is that **betrayal** again) even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, and you will be hated by all because of My name. Yet not a hair of your head will perish {in other words, you will be living ones}. **By your endurance you will gain your lives.**”¹⁹*

Betrayal is a big deal to the human soul, it pierces like few other wounds because it undermines the foundation of trust upon which all relationships are established, especially when it comes at the hands of those whom we have trusted to love us and care for us. It is so hard to imagine that mom’s, dad’s, brothers, sisters, children, relatives, husbands, wives, and even friends, best friends, will treacherously work against those who are bondservants of Jesus, and come to hate them. Some of us have experienced this in our now, almost as a prequel to the main event; and it is beyond terrible and heart-breaking and ridiculously hard to get over.

One thing I have discovered is that it is hard to get a grasp of the emotion that results from betrayal. Because it is so painful, we normally just stuff it, put up walls, and try to survive. But Jesus brings about this betrayal into our lives to teach us that He is the only one to whom we can trust our identity, security, and personhood. It seems upside down and inside out and backwards all at the same time. He hurts us to get us to trust Him. How does that make any sense?

HOW IS HE NOT JUST ANOTHER BETRAYER?

Remember the Prelude from **1 John 5:19**. If we are not found in Christ, now trusting Him, we have given ourselves over to the rule and control of the evil one, whether we realize it or not. **There is no middle ground!** Our religion, our Christianity, works to deceive us to believe that we are “in Christ” because we said the “sinners’ prayer” and do all manner of Christian activity, when, in truth, we still trust ourselves and our own means of protection to survive this life.

Understanding this dynamic, God goes to work to break our trust and dependence upon things of this world, including our own self-protective mechanisms, and especially our religion, or else we will always be deceived thinking we are “in Christ” when we are in the world.

¹⁹ **Luke 21:16-19**

Anti-Betrayal

Therefore, **He must hurt us in a loving act of anti-betrayal.** I know this is hard, but we must be trained to see things from the spiritual perspective and not our human perspective—we must see things from His top-down heavenly perspective. Betrayal can be anti-betrayal. It is all about intent and motives.

If He did not hurt us, we would never choose to dig down deep in our soul and look to Him to be our protector, our security, or our comfort, and we would remain complacent in our religious delusion. The result being that we will always be unprotected, vulnerable to the enemy and to his craft of deception and destruction.

But God is our **Yahweh Yasha**, the one who saves us from the enemy by freeing us from ourselves—from our insolent *flesh*. And as painful as the process may be, in His love and mercy, He also sets a limit, a specified number of days for our suffering (our “**10-days**”). In addition, He provides everything we need to choose to not fear. He will do the work and we will be rescued if we are faithful to look to Him and only to Him.

IF I HAVE TO BE FAITHFUL, AGH, ILL NEVER MAKE IT!

God does not demand that we be faithful and then walk away from us expecting us to pull faithfulness out of a hat. No, He trains us in faithfulness. Before those in Smyrna had to face their **10-days of tribulation**, they had previously been tested and trained in faithfulness and endurance. That is what the previous troubles were about (tribulations, poverty, and blasphemy, or slanders against them). Each one of these previous experiences was a step in their training for endurance and all that endurance would bring forth in their lives.²⁰

Romans 5:3-5

And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Again, it is not logical nor is it intuitive to grasp that the testing of our faith produces endurance that results in hope—a hope that does not disappoint.²¹ We would think that trials and testing just wears a person out, makes them angry and annoyed, feeling betrayed, and leaving them with the desire to quit.

Yet, God is always busy behind the scenes during our dark-days and dark-nights (remember, He chooses to now come like a thief in the night). He is building His character into our being such that His love is poured out within our hearts so that endurance may yield its perfect result—that we may be

²⁰ *James 1:3*

²¹ *James 1:3*

perfect, complete, lacking in nothing.²² Can you imagine, lacking in nothing? That is the purpose for the “**10-days of tribulation**” which “Smyrna” must go through.

Testing
Trials
Endurance
Hope
Lacking in Nothing!

In the letter to the *Hebrews*, we learn that those who received the letter had suffered significantly and were betrayed by their community, but the Holy Spirit encouraged them with the following word and exhortation about who they had become, or more accurately, **who they had not become**.

Hebrews 10:32-39

But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. **For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.** “For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. But my righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, my soul had no pleasure in him.” **But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction**, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

Do you get it yet? We can only dig down deep in our soul and now choose to be faithful and not fear if we have been tested, one-step-at-a-time, and have built endurance, otherwise, we might be like those who shrink back to destruction—literally to the destroyer (the Beast).²³

Therefore, Jesus trains us in tribulation and builds us up in endurance until we are ready for the crushing that will release the beautiful fragrance of His love. It is only after our “**10-days of tribulation**” that will we be able to love (with God’s *agape* love) our enemies as well as our most precious loved ones who betray us and choose to hate us. And it is this love (*agape*) that proves that we are “in Christ,” for the one who does not *agape* love does not know God, for God is *agape*.²⁴ This love is the fruit of God’s **anti-betrayal**; and this love is never more vibrant and luminous than in the face of abject betrayal. It is

²² **James 1:4**

²³ The Beast, the demonic spirit who possesses the man we call the Antichrist.

²⁴ **1 John 4:8, 16**

pictured by Jesus on the cross crying out, “*Father forgive them, they don’t know what they are doing.*”²⁵

Each-and-every test is intentional, and it is purposeful, as He desires to train our soul to abide in hope—a hope which preserves our soul through His *agape* love.

The Tool—The Distraction

We must, however, not become distracted by the vehicle which God uses to bring about tribulation. It will come at the hands of the devil, maybe even Lucifer himself, but it will be meted out through real people. That is why we must always have the heavenly perspective. All things start with the **Alpha** in the Heavens, is processed through the agency of the angelic, is played out in the realm of our humanity, and is brought to fruition by the **Omega**.

It is critical that we do not fear the enemy—ever! Yahweh Sabaoth, the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, has sent them to accomplish His purposes, not theirs.²⁶ Sure, the devil intends to do serious damage to “Smyrna,” but God has equipped them for victory. Thus, we are to never fear the evil one or his minions, for in us lives **Yahweh Sabaoth**, to whom the evil one is completely subject.

Yes, the evil one is just a tool in the hands of our Great and Mighty **Yahweh Yasha**²⁷ who is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else in this world or in the world to come. The Father has put all things under the authority of Christ, and He gave Him this authority for the benefit of the church.²⁸ Therefore, we can rest in the things Jesus has carefully prescribed for our lives, regardless of the agent or the instrument through which He accomplishes His will in our lives.

Aliens and Strangers

The one thing that comes across in this short letter is that Jesus does not seem to be worried. He gave them the key to victory, and He seems confident they will be **willing** to let Him remove their fear. You may still be shaking your head thinking that the whole thing is awful. But we must remember that for bondservants of Christ, this world is not our home. We are not to live for the purposes, desires, and intentions of this world. We live so that the glory and power of Christ can be shown in these weak frail bodies, accordingly, all will know that Jesus is God and He alone reigns. For in our weakness, He is made or shown to be strong.²⁹ This is so contrary to our normal thought that says it is through our health, wealth, and prosperity that He is shown to be strong. Again, God’s thoughts are not our thoughts, and His ways are not our ways.³⁰

*“Just as it is written, ‘for your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ But in all these things **we overwhelmingly conquer** through Him who loved us.”*³¹ Yes, we are the sacrifice, but we are a pleasing and acceptable sacrifice that has been chosen to live for the

²⁵ **Luke 23:34**

²⁶ **Job 1-2; Isaiah 47:12; 1 Chronicles 21; 2 Chronicles 18:19-22; 1 Kings 22:19-23; 1 Samuel 16:14, 18:10; Hebrews 1:6-7**

²⁷ **Yahweh** Savior, or **Yahweh** who sets us free

²⁸ **Ephesians 1:18-23**

²⁹ **See 2 Corinthians 12:7-10**

³⁰ **See Isaiah 55:8-9**

³¹ **Romans 8:36-38**

kingdom of God and not the kingdom of man.

Revelation 2:10

Now choose to be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Being rendered in the *present middle imperative*, this is a command to dig down deep in our souls and *now* choose to be faithful until, or unto, death. Clearly, this is not the kind of command we want to hear from our “loving” God.

Death—the Better Deal

But wait! Think about it! Those who physically die get the better deal. They no longer must endure slander, blasphemies, vilification, tribulation, imprisonment, or poverty. They are done with this dead and dying world. Never again will they be hungry or thirsty, or shed any tears due to the selfishness, cruelty, and **betrayal** of others. Rather, they get to enjoy the presence of the Lord.³²

This might come across a little twisted, but death is something to which true believers should be looking forward. Of course, we do not want to experience the pain or suffering associated with death, but the instant that we die, we are in the presence of the Lord. To me, that is the best of news! “*Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!*” Yes, says the Spirit, “*so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.*”³³

And they are blessed because He is saving them from the evil to come. “*Good people pass away; the godly often die before their time. But no one seems to care or wonder why. No one seems to understand that God is protecting them from the evil to come. For those who follow godly paths will rest in peace when they die.*”³⁴ How beautiful is that?

This might also have a meaning that is tied not so much to our physical death, but death to our Old Sinful Nature such that the Design Point is realized in our life. As Paul said, “*I have been crucified with Christ and it is not longer I who live but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.*”³⁵ Either way, physically or spiritually, it will be a beautiful death filled with beautiful promises.

The Crown of Life

Jesus then promises that if they are faithful (again this is personal), He will give them a crown of life which is a play on Smyrna being the crown of Asia.

When it came to the best that this life had to offer, you could not get much better than Smyrna. It was rich, beautiful, temperate, and by the sea. Jesus, however, wants us to forget the on-and-off stinky crown of Asia, because all that is in this world is dead and dying and attracting a bunch of flies and maggots, it is

³² **2 Corinthians 5:6-9; Philippians 1:23**

³³ **Revelation 14:13**

³⁴ **Isaiah 57:1-2**

³⁵ **Galatians 2:20**

just a matter of time. Instead, He offers us a crown of life, a crown for all eternity that symbolizes our victory over everything and everyone that wanted us to fail.

Victors

The Greek word translated “*crown*” refers not to a kingly crown, but a crown of victory (“*stephanos*”). This crown of victory, generally a wreath, was given as a symbol of honor to those who were the victors in public games. It would be remarkably like the Olympic stage where the athletes go to be honored for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place, but instead of medals, they were given wreaths.

This image of the crown of life is a play on the local Greek cultural and is a symbol of great honor before a great crowd, but it also symbolizes for us that there is nothing in this life that compares to what God has prepared for those who love Him.³⁶ But take note, **this crown is only given to victors**, to those who **now** dig down deep in their soul and **now** chose to remain faithful unto death. Hence, the Spirit exhorts us as follows:

Hebrews 12:1-3

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses now surrounding us, let us also choose to lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us now run with endurance the race that is now chosen to be setting before us, now fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy now chosen to be setting before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For choose to consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and now be caused to be losing heart.

Ears to Hear

Revelation 2:11

He who is now having an ear, let him hear what the Spirit now says to the churches. He who is now overcoming will not be hurt by the second death.'

Once again, the only ones who can truly hear or understand are those who are now having (now and continually) an ear tuned to the Spirit of God.³⁷ If that is not you, the words and sentences may make sense, but its depth and power will be lost on you.

However, he who is now overcoming, or having victory (“*nike*”),³⁸ God will not let them be hurt by the

³⁶ **1 Corinthians 2:9**

³⁷ “has an ear” is rendered in the *present active participle*

³⁸ “having victory” is rendered in the *present active participle*

Second Death.³⁹ Being rendered as a *participle*, having victory is not a one-time event, but an ongoing reality in the life of one who is now having ears to hear.

“*Will not be hurt*” is rendered in the *aorist passive subjunctive*. The use of the *subjunctive* makes it seem like they still might be hurt despite God’s best intentions. However, when the *aorist* tense is used with a *subjunctive*, it is to be understood as a purpose clause and as definite (with no uncertainty), though dependent upon another action. In this case, the dependency is to now be overcoming. Again, those who are now overcoming will not be hurt by the **Second Death**. That is a firm promise.

The Second Death

This reference to the “**Second Death**” is addressing the lake of fire. There is coming a day of judgment where all who are **NOT** the Called, Chosen, and Faithful bride of Christ will appear before God’s great white throne of judgment. There they will be judged from the things which were written in books, according to their deeds. And if any one’s name is not found written in the Lamb’s book of life, he or she is thrown in the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the **Second Death**.⁴⁰

Many have asked if there really is a lake of fire or is it another idiom? We do not know, but we know that death and hades (hell) are thrown in the lake of fire, as is Lucifer, the Beast, and the False prophet. We also know that it was specifically prepared for the devil and his angels.⁴¹ So, whatever it is, we are to know that it is a terrible place where the occupants are tormented day and night forever—a place of outer darkness where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth.⁴² So, whether it is an idiom describing a place or an actual lake of fire, we should want no part in it.

To Now Be Overcoming

The key to victory and the key to honor is found in our now, in the present, and not in our past. We must dig deep in our soul and choose to **now** be forgetting what lies behind, the path we have walked, whether that path was for good or evil. Instead, we are to dig deep in our soul and choose to now be stretching forward in faith, and today be willing to bet our lives on **Yahweh**, no matter what it entails, whether prison, slander, torture, or death.⁴³

We must become convinced in our now, today, that any crushing we experience is not only necessary, but is good, pleasing, and perfect, as it is the will of God for our lives.⁴⁴ It is not random and it is not capricious, and **IT IS NOT PUNISHMENT FOR OUR SIN!** Rather, He is busy training us to be faithful and training us to endure, as He prepares us in Smyrna for our “**10-days of tribulation**”. Being effectively trained, when the devil comes, we will know how to abide in HOPE, and we will know how to endure and to embrace victory.

Therefore, to be found in faith, we must endure, today, for then He will make us firm in our faith—perfect, complete, lacking in nothing—and our lives will emit the beautiful fragrance of His *agape* love, a

³⁹ “will not be hurt” is rendered in the *aorist passive subjunctive*

⁴⁰ **Revelation 20:11-15**

⁴¹ **Matthew 25:41**

⁴² **Revelation 20:10; Matthew 8:12, 13:42, 50, 22:13, 24:51, 25:30; Luke 13:28**

⁴³ See **Philippians 3:13**

⁴⁴ **Romans 12:2**

fragrance that will attract those who are sick of the stink of this dead and dying maggot infested world. We will emit a fragrance that will repel the forces of wickedness to whom *agape* love is their kryptonite.

2 Corinthians 2:14-16

But thanks be to God, who is **now always leading us in triumph in Christ and is now manifesting through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place**. For we are now a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are now being saved and among those who are now choosing to be perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life.