



“Returning to our First Love”

FMCIC WEEK OF PRAYER & FASTING 2025

REVELATION 2:8-11

Church of Smyrna: Faithfully Endure

JAN 26 – FEB 2, 2025

“And 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. ”I know your tribulation and your poverty - but you are rich! I know about 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 in 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.” (ESV)

Today's devotional centers on the words of Jesus, the Alpha and Omega, who knows our suffering, our struggles, and the trials we face. He sees and understands the challenges we endure, just as He knew the pain of the church in Smyrna. Despite their difficulties—slander, poverty, and looming tests—He calls them to remain faithful and endure, even to the point of death. In return, He promises them the crown of life! This encourages us to fix our eyes on Him and trust that our trials are not without purpose.

James 1:2-4 reminds us to consider it a great joy as we experience trials of various kinds, because we know that the testing of our faith produces endurance. The trials we face can be an opportunity for our faith to grow, strengthening our love for God and one another. They build endurance that helps us persevere through the toughest of times.

In verse 9, Jesus reminds the Church in Smyrna: "(But you are rich)." Despite their poverty in the world, they are rich in eternal things like faith, hope, and the promise of eternal life. Jesus sees their suffering through an eternal lens. He knows that when we focus on the Father's plans and purposes, we can endure all things with the help of the Holy Spirit.

In verse 10, we see that the trials in the Church in Smyrna had an endpoint—ten days. While we may not know how long trials will last, we can trust that they won't last forever – although it may feel that way. If anxiety creeps in about our present circumstances, we are encouraged to pray with thanksgiving, presenting our requests to God, knowing our good and loving Father works all things together for our good and His glory.

So, as we focus on "Returning to Our First Love" through prayer and fasting, I'm reminded that true renewal comes from fixing our eyes on Christ alone—not on personal plans, church mission statements, or denominational goals, but on Jesus! When we rediscover our wonder for Jesus and His great love for us, we can experience a profound renewal, both personally and as a community. Imagine the transformation if churches became a force of Christlike love, awakening society to God's wonderful plans and purposes for His creation!?!)

John 10:10 reminds us that the enemy seeks to steal, kill, and destroy, but Jesus came to bring us life: life in abundance! As we consider Jesus today, ask yourself: Do I share *His* eternal perspective on the current struggles me, my church, or my community is facing? Do I have *His* hope for the nations, and how do I demonstrate *my* dependence on Him through prayer and petitions made in Jesus' name? Am I willing to ask God to renew a childlike curiosity for Jesus in me, and all that He has done beyond me? Do I need to admit and confess the ways in which I have presumed upon his grace, and could God use my confessing of these things within my community to spark a revival and a deeper awareness of God's presence and purposes amongst us all? What a witness that would be to the world around me!