

A Warning About Opposition | Warning Signs #3

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The church in Smyrna was facing persecution because they refused to acknowledge the Roman emperor as divine Lord.

Revelation 2:9-10 *I know about your suffering and your poverty – but you are rich! I know the blasphemy of those opposing you.... Don't be afraid of what you are about to suffer. The devil will throw some of you into prison to test you.*

Jesus' message to them encouraged them to stay faithful no matter what – and how.

Opposition Is Part of the Christian Life

Where you live, you may not face serious persecution like Christians in many places. But everyone who follows Jesus will face opposition for their faith in one way or another. Jesus promised as much.

John 15:18-20 *If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first. The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you. Do you remember what I told you? 'A slave is not greater than the master.' Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you."*

History gives us plenty of examples of Jesus' warning. Christians in Egypt and Sudan are under attack. A generation ago, Christians suffered greatly under Communism. The same story is repeated in every century.

Even if you never suffer out-right persecution, you will probably face opposition for your faith in one or more of these situations.

- When you publicly identify as a Christian.
- When you start inviting others to follow Jesus.
- When your primary loyalty changes from anything else to Jesus.
- When you speak up for biblical truth on controversial issues.

Those situations expose you to possible ridicule, antagonism and rejection. With that in mind, be prepared when opposition comes!

In the Face of Opposition, Stay Faithful

Jesus' message to the church at Smyrna urges them to stay faithful. And he helps them understand how they can.

Revelation 2:10 *Don't be afraid of what you are about to suffer. The devil will throw some of you into prison to test you. You will suffer for ten days. But if you remain faithful even when facing death, I will give you the crown of life.*

First, Jesus says, “Don’t be afraid.” Opposition is a test of our loyalty to Jesus. But there are reasons to face the test with courage. So Jesus also says, “Remain faithful.” For the Christians in Smyrna, that meant not cave in and deny the unique Lordship of Jesus. Today it means not to back down and hide your identity when people mock or antagonize you for your faith.

Jesus’ message also gives important reasons why we can and should stay faithful to him. The first reason is because of who Jesus is.

Revelation 2:8 *Write this to the angel of the church in Smyrna. This is the message from the one who is the First and the Last, who was dead but is now alive:*

Jesus is the Lord of all Creation. He rules everything. He will win in the end over any antagonist. Jesus is also the Lord of life and death.

The second reason we can stay faithful is because of Jesus’ promises. In verse 10, he promises “the crown of life.” This is some special recognition or affirmation for those who stay true.

Revelation 2:11 *Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. Whoever is victorious will not be harmed by the second death.*

Those who overcome opposition have no need to fear death. The second death is eternal separation from God, but that cannot touch Jesus’ followers. So why worry about physical death – which is only temporary – when your eternal life is secure?

We will all face opposition at some level for our faith in Christ. Be prepared, not by hiding out, but by standing up in the knowledge of who Jesus is and what he promises.

Discussion Questions:

1. *Watch the video together or invite someone to summarize the topic.*
2. *Do you believe Christians where you live are being persecuted? Why or why not?*
3. *Read [Revelation 2:9-10](#). How would you describe the situation Christians in Smyrna were facing?*
4. *How is their situation like or unlike the situations Christians face where you live?*
5. *Review the four situations (above) that lead to opposition. In which situations have you experienced opposition for your faith? What happened?*
6. *Read [John 15:18-20](#). Why do you think there will always be opposition against Christians?*
7. *Read [Revelation 2:8](#). How does Jesus identify himself? How is this significant for people facing opposition?*
8. *Read [Revelation 2:11](#). How does an eternal perspective help us face opposition in this world?*
9. *Write a personal action step based on this conversation.*