***THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA***

**Rev 2.8-11**

**EFC Canon City 2-26-17**

MAIN IDEA: By keeping our eyes on the exalted Lord, we recognize that today’s suffering are limited,

While the life He gives is eternal.

SUPPORTING IDEAS:

At some times and in some places, the Church suffers deeply

Rev 1.9 – we are ‘companions in suffering’

This was true during the 1st C; it is true today in the 21st C, in many parts of the world

The exalted Lord speaks to His church in its suffering

A VITAL GLIMPSE OF OUR LORD:

* 1st & last
* died, but came to life again
* knows what they face: affliction; poverty; slander, risk of prison, even death

A VITAL PERSPECTIVE ON SUFFERING

* It’s real, but limited: “some”, not all; “10 days” compared eternity
  + The Lord is saying, your suffering is real, but limited, and it will end
* We cannot let our suffering define us, or consume us; more to who we are
* cannot let suffering be the final word – we’re MORE than that & He has more

A SIMPLE COMMAND: *DO NOT BE AFRAID . . . BE FAITHFUL*

* An impossible command, unless we believe what our Lord is saying (“*hear”*)
* Suffering is real, but limited Our Lord and the life He gives, is more real & lasts for eternity
* Jesus’ words should shape our prayers for them
* Hope because of who He is & what He has prepared
* Hope because of what He knows is true about today
  + As severe as it is, it is limited
  + Suffering is real; but not the end of the story; but not all there is; but not final

CONCLUSION / APPLICATION

This week we’ve focused on the persecuted church around the world. It might be good to begin your time in prayer, thanking God for the comfort, freedom and safety we enjoy here as believers. If we experience persecution, it is modest compared to many believers around the world. So let’s give thanks.

The church in Smyrna was enduring blatant persecution. What does Jesus tell them about their suffering? How does that compare to what they have in Him? How does believing Jesus’ perspective on our own suffering change how we live? How are we tempted to let today’s suffering define/consume us? What empowers us to “not be afraid”, v.10 & “be faithful, v.11?

Take time to pray for brothers and sisters around the world, with these verses shaping your prayers.