



# REALITY

## **Discipleship & Suffering**

Revelation 2:8-11

01.17.2021

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### **Revelation 2:8-11**

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 afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know about the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death.

*Don't be afraid of suffering – expect it.*

### **Luke 9:22**

The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

### **Luke 9:23**

Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”

### **Revelation 2:10**

Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days.

### **Revelation 2:10**

Behold the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, so that you will be tested...

“to allow evils upon one in order to prove his character and the steadfastness of his faith”

### **James 1:2-4**

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

*Jesus knows our suffering and invites us into intimacy.*

“I tend to write as a means of confronting my own doubts. My book titles—*Where Is God When It Hurts*, *Disappointment with God*—betray me. I return again and again to the same questions, as if fingering an old wound that never quite heals. Does God care about the misery down here? Do we really matter to God? I went through it slowly, page by page. In the Old Testament, I found myself identifying with those who

boldly stood up to God: Moses, Job, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, the psalmists. As I read, I felt I was watching a play with human characters who acted out their lives of small triumph and large tragedy onstage, while periodically calling to an unseen Stage Manager, 'You don't know what it's like out here!' Job was most brazen, flinging to God this accusation: 'Do you have eyes of flesh? Do you see as a mortal sees?' Every so often I could hear the echo of a booming voice from far offstage, behind the curtain. 'Yeah, and you don't know what it's like back here either!' it said, to Moses, to the prophets, most loudly to Job. When I got to the Gospels, however, the accusing voices stilled. God, if I may use such language, 'found out' what life is like in the confines of planet earth. Jesus got acquainted with grief in person, in a brief, troubled life not far from the dusty plains where Job had travailed. Of the many reasons for Incarnation, surely one was to answer Job's accusation: Do you have eyes of flesh? For a time, God did."

- Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew*

### **Isaiah 44:6**

This is what the Lord says—  
Israel's King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty:  
I am the first and I am the last;  
apart from me there is no God.

*Be faithful and persevere.*

### **James 1:12**

Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.