

SMALL GROUP LEADERS RETREAT 2024



Community that endures & ease pain together

SMALL GROUP LEADERS RETREAT

Mourn with those who mourn – Romans 12:15

2024. 11. 3. Bothell Campus Main Sanctuary 2-7pm



시애틀형제교회
COMMUNITY CHURCH OF SEATTLE

Community that endures & ease pain together

This year, God has gifted our brotherhood community with special moments. The entire community has engaged in a campaign centered around missions, embracing God's heart for the nations. With this heart, many ministry teams have gone out to serve through outreach in the U.S. and around the world. I express my gratitude to the brothers who are walking the beautiful path of sharing the gospel together. I also extend my deep appreciation to the shepherd leaders who have served our members with love, embodying the heart of a shepherd.

We are now entering a season of gratitude. When we reflect on our lives, we discover countless reasons to be thankful. We are grateful for being called as God's children despite our shortcomings and weaknesses. We thank Him for guiding us through the challenging life of immigrants and for entrusting us with the precious role of serving a single soul as shepherd leaders. In November, I pray that God will provide even more reasons for gratitude over our homes, ministries, and workplaces.

The theme for this small group leader retreat is "A community of comfort that endures pain together." There are church families around us experiencing unexpected pains. When we face suffering alone, we may fail and give up. In fact, what is more important than overcoming pain is enduring the extremely difficult times together. What we cannot do alone, we can withstand and overcome together. During this retreat, we will share our hearts and wisdom to comfort the brother families who are experiencing various pains within our community. I hope that through this retreat, we become a community of comfort that rejoices with those who rejoice and weeps with those who weep.

Servant in Christ, **James Kwon**



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Lecture 1

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Pastor Joshua Nam

Two Aspects of Suffering

- 1 Suffering that arises from my own mistakes
- 2 Suffering that occurs despite not being my fault

Why does suffering exist in our lives?

- 1 Is God not loving?
- 2 Is God not all-powerful?

The God to be proclaimed to those in suffering

- 1 God on the cross (Matthew 27:46) vs. the absolute God
- 2 God who weeps with us (Isaiah 53:4, Psalm 56:8) vs. the distant God
- 3 The God of creation (Job 38:4-7) vs. the God of retribution

Discussion Question

When I experienced suffering, what words from someone brought me comfort, and what words discouraged me? Why did I feel that way?



Lecture 2



Small group that comfort each other; breathe slowly and deeply

Professor Chun Hee Sun

At the center of pain, there is often some kind of loss.

Write down 5 types of loss

Responses to loss occur comprehensively. Write down five responses to loss.

Grief [] is a very natural response to [], which manifests in [] and can appear in extremely [] ways.

The response of grief following the loss of a loved one is a deeply [] reaction, and such responses do not mean that you are [].

The process of grief

Initial shock → Struggling with painful reality → [] → Accepting the loss as reality and adapting to the new environment → [] the relationship with the deceased and continuing life.

The process of grief is not a process that progresses according to [] stages and timelines, and it can have complex tendencies.

At the center of enduring the pain of loss together is [redacted].

Compassion means [redacted] the heart of the one in pain and wishing to share the burden of that pain. In other words, it can be defined as empathetic understanding that recognizes [redacted].

The reason why comforting is difficult: Because it may trigger uncomfortable and negative emotions/experiences/memories within me. In such cases, we tend to become impatient to deal with these negative/uncomfortable emotions and seek [redacted] or [redacted].

How to operate compassion as a positive function

- 1 With empathy, focus on the other person's grieving process and feelings, reducing [redacted] and providing [redacted].
- 2 Through the [redacted] given by God, recognize your own state and regain stability.
- 3 Avoid hasty judgments.
- 4 If possible, share interest not only during the grieving [redacted] but also in [redacted].
- 5 Cultivate the ability to show interest in your own grief and share compassion with yourself, allowing you to request comfort as needed [redacted].

Conclusion

Practice [redacted] for fellow members in pain.

Prayer "Dear Lord, thank you for all the things that are going well in my life and in my relationship. Please continue to protect and guide my partner, providing strength and direction every day. I know you are the source of all good things. Please bring those good things to my partner and make me a blessing in my partner's life. Amen."

Discussion Question

Share how I express when I want comfort and how I respond.



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Small Group Preview

Small Group Usage

| Living Life Weekly Bible Study 3, November 13th Scripture, P182 |

Ice Breakers

Let's talk about the longest tunnel you've ever driven through. Which country or city was it in, and how long was it?

Connector As modern society develops, increasingly longer tunnels are being constructed. One notable characteristic of tunnels is that they always pass through dark points before emerging at the exit. Today, during our gathering, we'll explore how Christians should move forward when encountering these dark tunnel-like periods in their lives.

Examine God's Word

Please read Psalm 70:1-5 together. Circle or underline the repeated words and expressions that carry important meanings.

Understand Setting

Psalm 70 is a plea or lament in which the psalmist earnestly prays to God in a situation of being pursued and threatened by enemies. The content of Psalm 70 reveals that the psalmist is in a very urgent situation. Through this psalm, the psalmist encourages us to look to God, who is our steadfast hope during the dark moments of life. Additionally, it challenges us to have a vision to overcome suffering and give glory to God. The title 'A Song to Be Sung at the Festival' indicates that this psalm was publicly used during worship led by a leader. This title suggests that we can apply this psalm both personally and communally. During our gathering, we will explore the biblical attitude that individuals and communities should have when going through difficult times.

Meditate the Text

1-1 **Observation** How did the psalmist cry out to God in a life-threatening situation? (Verse 1)

1-2 Application When difficulties and crises arise, who is the first person I seek help from?

2-1 Observation What did the psalmist pray would happen to all who seek the Lord and love His salvation? (Verse 4)

2-2 Application Reflecting on the psalmist's prayer for God's glory and will, consider how you pray to God.

Review the Text

Everyone experiences various difficulties and pains in life on this earth, including believers in Jesus. However, believers have a foundation that enables them to overcome these challenges: hope in God. When facing hardships, believers can pray first for God's swift intervention. Moreover, after enduring pain, they can look forward to a vision of gratitude and praise. Those with this vision are not overwhelmed by present difficulties and can wait through the passing trials. The hardships we encounter will surely pass, and afterwards, we will praise the great God.

Pray through the Text

- 1 Ask that You see my painful situation, intervene swiftly, and grant me unwavering faith.
- 2 May the vision of experiencing God, who cares for me and my family in our pain and responds with His power, be fulfilled, and may we give Him glory.



Community that endures & ease pain together

Small Group Preview

Leader Usage

| Living Life Weekly Bible Study 3, November 13th Scripture, P182

Ice Breakers

Let's talk about the longest tunnel you've ever driven through. What country or city was it in, and how long was it?

Connector As modern society develops, increasingly longer tunnels are being constructed. One notable feature of tunnels is that they always pass through dark points before emerging at the exit. Today, during our gathering, we will explore how Christians should move forward when they encounter these dark tunnel-like periods in their lives.

Examine God's Word

Read Psalm 70:1-5 in several translations. Circle or underline the repeated words and expressions that carry important meanings.

NIV	GOD'S WORD	ESV
<p>70:1 Hasten, O God, to save me; come quickly, Lord, to help me.</p> <p>2 May those who want to take my life be put to shame and confusion; may all who desire my ruin be turned back in disgrace.</p> <p>3 May those who say to me, "Aha! Aha!" turn back because of their shame.</p> <p>4 But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who long for your saving help always say, "The Lord is great!"</p> <p>5 But as for me, I am poor and needy; come quickly to me, O God. You are my help and my deliverer; Lord, do not delay.</p>	<p>70:1 Come quickly to rescue me, O God!</p> <p>Come quickly to help me, O Lord!</p> <p>2 Let those who seek my life be confused and put to shame. Let those who want my downfall be turned back and disgraced.</p> <p>3 Let those who say, "Aha! Aha!" be turned back because of their own shame.</p> <p>4 Let all who seek you rejoice and be glad because of you. Let those who love your salvation continually say, "God is great!"</p> <p>5 But I am oppressed and needy. O God, come to me quickly. You are my help and my savior. O Lord, do not delay!</p>	<p>70:1 [To the choirmaster. Of David, for the memorial offering.] Make haste, O God, to deliver me! O LORD, make haste to help me!</p> <p>2 Let them be put to shame and confusion who seek my life! Let them be turned back and brought to dishonor who desire my hurt!</p> <p>3 Let them turn back because of their shame who say, "Aha, Aha!"</p> <p>4 May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you! May those who love your salvation say evermore, "God is great!"</p> <p>5 But I am poor and needy; hasten to me, O God! You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay!</p>

Understand Setting

Psalm 70 is a plea or lament in which the psalmist earnestly prays to God in a situation of being pursued and threatened by enemies. The content of Psalm 70 reveals that the psalmist is in a very urgent situation. Through this psalm, the psalmist encourages us to look to God, who is our steadfast hope during the dark moments of life. Additionally, it challenges us to have a vision to overcome suffering and give glory to God. The title 'A Song to Be Sung at the Festival' indicates that this psalm was publicly used during worship led by a leader. This title suggests that we can apply this psalm both personally and communally. During our gathering, we will explore the biblical attitude that individuals and communities should have when going through difficult times.

Meditate the Text

1-1 **Observation** How did the psalmist cry out to God in a life-threatening situation? (Verse 1)

David earnestly pleaded with God to rescue him and to help him swiftly.

Explanation When difficulties arise, who should we look to? Psalm 70 uses the expression 'quickly,' which is not common throughout the psalms. This word appears four times in the psalms, with one instance each in Psalms 70 and 71. This suggests that Psalms 70 and 71 may have been written by the same author or around the same time. It also implies that the situation faced by the psalmist requires urgent help.

1-2 **Application** When difficulties and crises arise, who is the first person I seek help from?

Reflect on how you reacted when you recently faced a difficult situation. The expression 'quickly' suggests the author's urgent circumstances, indicating their deep desire for God to intervene swiftly. Similarly, when we experience sudden hardships that come unexpectedly, we can first turn our faces toward God and plead for His intervention.

2-1 **Observation** What did the psalmist pray would happen to all who seek the Lord and love His salvation? (Verse 4)

The psalmist prayed that all who seek the Lord would experience joy and gladness, and that those who love His salvation would praise God's greatness.

Explanation The psalmist moves toward a vision of restoration based on faith in God. If we rely on God, even in the darkest situations before us, we can look beyond them. Placing our hope in God provides the foundation of patience that we need most during times of suffering.

2-2 **Application** Reflecting on the psalmist's prayer for God's glory and will, consider how you pray to God.

Explanation When we experience difficulties, we can pray for God's swift intervention, following the example of the psalmist. However, the psalmist goes further by presenting a biblical vision to hold onto during suffering: the vision that God is with us in our pain. It also includes the vision that after this pain passes, we will offer thanks and praise to God. Keeping this vision in mind gives us the courage to endure the pain we encounter today a little longer.

Review the Text

Everyone experiences various difficulties and pains in life on this earth, including believers in Jesus. However, believers have a foundation that enables them to overcome these challenges: hope in God. When facing hardships, believers can first pray for God's swift intervention. Moreover, they can look forward to a vision of gratitude and praise after enduring pain. Those with this vision are not overwhelmed by present difficulties and can wait through the trials that will pass. The hardships we encounter will surely pass, and afterwards, we will praise the great God.

Pray through the Text

- 1 Please see my painful situation, intervene swiftly, and grant me unwavering faith.
- 2 May the vision of experiencing God, who cares for me and my family in our pain and responds with His power, be fulfilled, and may we give Him glory.

Word Studies

Verse 1a **Quickly** the expression 'quickly' is used in Psalm 70, which is uncommon throughout the psalms. It appears once in both Psalm 70 and Psalm 71. This suggests that Psalms 70 and 71 may have been written by the same author or around the same time. The term 'quickly' indicates the urgent circumstances faced by the author, expressing their deep desire for God to intervene swiftly.

"Both psalms are laments or pleas for delivery from trouble and share specific phrases associated with their pleas. The unusual word *uṣāh* ("hasten, come quickly") appears twice in Psalm 70 (70:1, 5) and once in Psalm 71 (71:12)—twice with a preceding *le'ezrati* (lit., "to my aid/help"; 70:1; 71:12)." _Gerald H. Wilson, Psalm in NIV Application, 638.

Verse 2 **Shame, Humiliation, Disgrace** The psalmist uses similar terms in both Psalms 70 and 71. Through these expressions, the psalmist petitions for the enemies who have done evil to him to receive not only personal punishment but also to be repaid with public shame. In doing so, the psalmist confesses that God is aware of all these situations and is the judge who repays evil. We should not take it upon ourselves to repay evil but rather entrust it to God, who is both the judge and the arbiter.

Verse 3 **Aha! Aha!** This expression is an onomatopoeic term used by the Jews, signifying the act of criticizing and mocking the psalmist who is going through hardship. We should also be cautious about speaking hastily when observing our neighbors who are experiencing difficult times.

"While the psalmist's enemies respond to his situation with the deprecating expression "Aha! Aha!" (something akin to a rather unsympathetic "Isn't it just too bad about..."), he points the way to exaltation of God even in difficult circumstances." _Gerald H. Wilson, Psalm in NIV Application, 639.

Verse 4 **All who seek the Lord** This expression is arranged in parallel structure with 'those who seek my life' mentioned in verse 2. While verse 2 refers to those who did evil to the psalmist, verse 4 shifts the focus to all who seek the Lord. The psalmist prays that they will praise God's greatness. Based on faith in God, the psalmist holds a vision of restoration. Even when the future seems bleak, there is hope in looking to God. Placing our hope in God provides the strongest foundation of patience during times of suffering.

"There is an intentional contrast developed here between "those who seek" his life and ruin (70:2) and "all who seek" God (70:4). The former say "Aha! Aha!" while the latter cry out, "Let God be exalted!" For the former the psalmist desires shame and disgrace (70:2), while the latter will "rejoice and be glad" in God (70:4)." _Gerald H. Wilson, Psalm in NIV Application, 639.

Verse 5 **I am poor and needy** The psalmist is expressing his current situation to God, acknowledging that he does not have the strength to overcome his difficulties on his own. Therefore, he realizes his weakness and relies solely on God. Trusting in God is the most powerful way to overcome suffering. On the path of patience, we discover our own weaknesses while simultaneously experiencing God's power and care.

"Consequently, their only recourse in the face of oppression is to trust in God for deliverance and redress. The psalmist acknowledges his weakness and reliance on God and couples this desperate vulnerability with an expression of confidence ("You are my help and my deliverer") to heighten the final appeal for God's immediate response (70:5)." _Gerald H. Wilson, Psalm in NIV Application, 649.



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Small Group Preview

Small Group Usage

| Living Life Weekly Bible Study 4, November 20th Scripture, P104 |

Ice Breakers

In Yanghwajin, Hapjeong-dong, Seoul, lie missionaries who gave their lives for Joseon. According to statistics, from 1885 to 1945, 1,559 missionaries came to Joseon, and among them, 395 who were martyred while serving in Joseon are buried in Yanghwajin. God used these missionaries, who loved Him and sought to spread the gospel even in the midst of suffering, to shine the light of the gospel upon the land of Joseon. As a result, the grace of the gospel was delivered to me and my family.

Connector After hearing about Yanghwajin, let's share our thoughts and feelings.

Examine God's Word

Read Revelation 2:1-11 in several translations. Circle or underline the repeated words and expressions that carry important meanings.

Understand Setting

Ephesus was one of the wealthy cities of the Roman Empire. It was a port city located in present-day Turkey. At that time, it was a commercial and transportation hub where three major trade routes intersected, and it was also the center of idol worship, home to the Temple of Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Truly, Ephesus was a major city of its time.

Smyrna was a port city located about 37 miles north of Ephesus. Known for its beautiful natural scenery due to the foothills of Mount Pagos, trade was actively conducted through its harbor. It was also the first city in Asia to establish a Roman temple, making it a center of idol worship. Through the messages that Jesus gave to these two churches, we examine biblical principles that modern churches should remember.

Meditate the Text

1-1 **Observation** What was the rebuke the church in Ephesus received from the Lord, despite being praised for their patience? (v.4)

.....

1-2 **Application** Share the joy, passion, and love you experienced when you first believed in the Lord. Also, discuss your commitments and methods to sustain that experience in the future.

.....

2-1 **Observation** What evaluation did the Lord give to the church in Smyrna, which was in tribulation and poverty? (v.9)

.....

2-2 **Application** Share how you endure or overcome when faced with economic difficulties or frustrating situations.

.....

Review the Text

The Lord rebuked the church in Ephesus for abandoning their first love. We must also reflect on whether we have lost our love for God and for our neighbors. Surrounding the church in Smyrna were Jews who persecuted the church members. They reported Christians to the Roman authorities, resulting in Christians being imprisoned and executed. God indicated that this time of suffering was under His governance, and He promised to reward those who endured and kept their faith until the end with heavenly rewards. We must discern the truth correctly, maintain our first love, and uphold our faith even in times of suffering.

Pray through the Text

- 1 I want to restore my deep love and devotion towards God.
- 2 Even amidst the difficulties I am experiencing now, please pour out the strength to endure while looking forward to God's comfort and reward.



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Small Group Preview

Leader Usage

Living Life Weekly Bible Study 4, November 20th Scripture, P104

Ice Breakers

In Yanghwajin, Hapjeong-dong, Seoul, there rest the missionaries who sacrificed their lives for Joseon. According to statistics, from 1885 to 1945, 1,559 missionaries came to Joseon. Among them, it is said that 395 missionaries who were martyred while serving in Joseon are buried in Yanghwajin. God used these missionaries, who loved Him and sought to spread the gospel even in the midst of suffering, to shine the light of the gospel in the land of Joseon. As a result, the gospel of grace has been passed down to me and my family. Hearing about Yanghwajin, let's share our reflections.

Connector Today, we will examine God's rewards and promises given to those who kept their faith to the end for the sake of God's kingdom.

Examine God's Word

Read Revelation 2:1-11 in several translations. Circle or underline repeated words or expressions that carry important meanings.

NIV	GOD'S WORD	ESV
<p>1 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands.</p> <p>2 I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false.</p> <p>3 You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.</p>	<p>1 "To the messenger of the church in Ephesus, write: The one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, the one who walks among the seven gold lamp stands, says: 2 I know what you have done—how hard you have worked and how you have endured. I also know that you cannot tolerate wicked people. You have tested those who call themselves apostles but are not apostles. You have discovered that they are liars.</p> <p>3 You have endured, suffered trouble because of my name, and have not grown weary.</p>	<p>2:1 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: 'The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.</p> <p>2 "'I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false.</p> <p>3 I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary.</p>

4 Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first.

5 Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

6 But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

7 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

8 "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.

9 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.

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. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown.

11 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.

4 However, I have this against you: The love you had at first is gone.

5 Remember how far you have fallen. Return to me and change the way you think and act, and do what you did at first. I will come to you and take your lamp stand from its place if you don't change.

6 But you have this in your favor—you hate what the Nicolaitans are doing. I also hate what they're doing.

7 "Let the person who has ears listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. I will give the privilege of eating from the tree of life, which stands in the paradise of God, to everyone who wins the victory.

8 "To the messenger of the church in Smyrna, write: The first and the last, who was dead and became alive, says:

9 I know how you are suffering, how poor you are—but you are rich. I also know that those who claim to be Jews slander you. They are the synagogue of Satan.

10 Don't be afraid of what you are going to suffer. The devil is going to throw some of you into prison so that you may be tested. Your suffering will go on for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

11 Let the person who has ears listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. Everyone who wins the victory will never be hurt by the second death.

4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

6 Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'

8 "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: 'The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.

9 "'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into 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.

11 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.'

Understand Setting

Ephesus was one of the wealthy cities of the Roman Empire, located in what is now Turkey. It was a commercial and transportation hub where three major trade routes passed through, and it was also a center of idolatry, home to the

Temple of Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Truly, Ephesus was a major city of its time.

Smyrna was a port city located about 37 miles north of Ephesus. Known for its beautiful natural scenery, thanks to the slopes of Mount Pagos, it was a city where trade flourished through its harbor. It was also the city where the first Roman temple was established in Asia, a center of idolatry. Through the messages that Jesus gave to these two churches, we can examine the biblical principles that modern churches should remember.

Meditate the Text

1-1 **Observation** The church in Ephesus was praised for their perseverance for the Lord, but what rebuke did they receive from the Lord? (v.4)

Jesus rebuked the church in Ephesus for having abandoned their first love.

Explanation The church in Ephesus received praise from the Lord. The "labor" mentioned in Revelation 2:2 signifies that they worked diligently to the point of exhaustion, putting in all their effort. The word "perseverance" denotes continuous faith and loyalty. This emphasizes that the Lord knows all of this—not just in a superficial way, but that He deeply understands and empathizes with their hearts and actions.

However, while the church in Ephesus was successful in discerning false teachers and distinguishing wrong teachings, they ultimately lost the heart of love for God and for their brothers and sisters. In their focus on discerning right from wrong and adhering to the truth they needed to uphold, they missed the greater call to love that they should have been diligent in keeping.

1-2 **Application** Please share the joy, passion, and love I experienced when I first believed in the Lord. Also, share the commitments and methods to continue that experience moving forward.

Explanation Many believers experience joy and happiness when they first come to faith in Jesus. During times of reading the Word, prayer, and worship, they are filled with joy. However, as time passes, they may lose that love. Today, the Lord's message to the church in Ephesus is to restore that initial heart. The good news is that the church in Ephesus seemed to have listened to Jesus' command to repent and recover their first works. This is supported by the writings of Ignatius, a leader of the early church, which document that the church repented, restored its initial actions, and grew again. Through his letters, we can infer that the church was able to renew its commitment and experience spiritual growth once more.

2-1 Observation **What evaluation did the Lord give to the church in Smyrna, which was in affliction and poverty? (v.9)**

Jesus said that the church in Smyrna, which was in affliction and poverty, was actually rich.

Explanation In verse 9, the Lord mentions that there is a synagogue of Satan in the region where the church in Smyrna was located. This expression can be understood as referring to the Jews in Smyrna at that time. They envied and persecuted Christians and often brought them before Roman courts. In verse 10, it is prophesied that the church in Smyrna will face tribulation for ten days. This expression indicates that the period of suffering may be long, yet it is also a period determined within God's sovereignty. Although the duration may feel extended, it suggests that it will ultimately pass.

2-2 Application **When I find myself in economic difficulties or frustrating situations, share how you endure or overcome them.**

Explanation To endure, I reflect on what is essential for me. Today's passage encourages us to look forward to the rewards that God promises for our perseverance. The region of Smyrna was known for various athletic competitions and had a military presence, so the concept of receiving a crown after victory was well understood by them. The Lord used this familiar metaphor to promise a glorious crown of life to those who faithfully keep their faith.

Review the Text

The Lord rebuked the church in Ephesus for having abandoned their first love. We must also reflect on whether we have lost our love for God and for our neighbors. Surrounding the church in Smyrna were Jews who persecuted the believers. They reported Christians to the Roman government, leading to arrests and even executions. God reminded them that this time of suffering was under His sovereignty and promised heavenly rewards to those who endured and kept their faith until the end. We should discern truth correctly, maintain our first love, and hold on to our faith even amidst suffering.

Pray through the Text

- 1 I want to restore my deep love and devotion towards God.
- 2 Even amidst the difficulties I am experiencing now, please pour out the strength to endure while looking forward to God's comfort and reward.

Word Studies

Verse 1 **The messenger of the church in Ephesus** It generally refers to an angel, but considering the context of the passage, it means the leader or representative of the church.

Verse 2 **I know your works, your toil, and your patience** The church in Ephesus had exemplary acts of faith. The term "toil" signifies that they worked to the point of exhaustion, putting in all their effort both physically and spiritually. The word "patience" denotes continuous faith and loyalty. This emphasizes that the Lord knows all of this—not just in a superficial way, but that He deeply understands and empathizes with their hearts and actions.

"It is used figuratively here for spiritual exhaustion caused by persecution and the battles against false teachers. The Ephesian Christians have not only stood firm for orthodoxy but have both triumphed over the heretics and maintained their spiritual watchfulness." _Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation in Baker Exegetical Commentary*, 80.

Verse 4 **Your First Love** The church in Ephesus succeeded in discerning false teachers and distinguishing wrong teachings, but in doing so, they lost their love for God and for their brothers and sisters. In their focus on discerning right from wrong and upholding the truth, they neglected the love they should have been diligent in maintaining.

"It is clear that the Ephesians loved truth more than they loved God or one another. This does not mean that they were not believers or that they had no love at all, for the commendations of verses 2–3 would be impossible in that case. Rather, their early love had grown cold and been replaced with a harsh zeal for orthodoxy." _Osborne, *Revelation in Baker Exegetical Commentary*, 80.

Verse 5 **Repent and do the works you did at first** Fortunately, the church in Ephesus seems to have listened to Jesus' command to repent and restore their first works. This is evidenced by the writings of Ignatius, a leader of the early church. Through his letters, we can see that the church repented, restored its initial actions, and grew once again.

Fortunately, as Ignatius tells us (Ign. Eph. 1.1; 9.1), the church did heed this warning, repented, and once again became a thriving church." _Osborne, *Revelation in Baker Exegetical Commentary*, 80.

Verse 6 **Nicolaitans** During the early church, false teachers roamed among the churches, spreading erroneous truths, one of which was the Nicolaitans. There are no specific verses directly addressing their heretical beliefs. However, considering the commonalities with other warnings mentioned in Revelation (e.g., Balaam and Jezebel in Revelation 2:14–15, 20–23), it can be inferred that they had elements of idolatry and wickedness in their teachings.

"Apparently, these heretics (for more detailed interaction with their teachings, see 2:6 on "Nicolaitans") acted like wandering missionaries/teachers and went from house church to house church calling themselves "apostles." _Osborne, *Revelation in Baker Exegetical Commentary*, 79.

Verse 7 **The fruit of the tree of life in God's paradise** This fruit refers to the rewards that will be received in the Kingdom of God. The tree of life, mentioned in Genesis 2, was located in the Garden of Eden and its fruit was not permitted to Adam and Eve after they sinned. This fruit symbolizes

wisdom and righteousness and is the tree through which eternal life can be obtained from God (Proverbs 3:18, 11:30, 15:4).

“The promised gift is φαγ εἶν ἐκ τοῦ ξύλου τῆς ζωῆς (phagein ek tou xylou tēs zōēs, to eat from the tree of life). In Gen. 2:9 the tree of life was placed in the garden; but in 3:22–24 Adam and Eve were not allowed to partake of this tree because of their sin, and an angel with a flaming sword guarded the tree, so they could not eat from it and gain immortality.” Osborne, Revelation in Baker Exegetical Commentary, 97.

Verse 9 **The synagogue of Satan** The Lord mentioned that there was a synagogue of Satan in the region where the church in Smyrna was located. This expression can be understood as referring to the Jews who were present in Smyrna at that time. They were envious of the Christians and brought them before the Roman courts to accuse them.

“Yarbro Collins (1986: 313) believes that this slander by the “synagogue of Satan” refers specifically to a group of Jews who instigated legal action in the Roman courts against the Smyrna Christians.” _Osborne, Revelation in Baker Exegetical Commentary, 97.

Verse 10a **Tribulation for ten days** This expression indicates that the period of suffering may be long, yet it is also a time determined within God’s sovereignty. Although the duration may feel extended, it implies that it will ultimately pass. “The main aspect is the limited yet quite severe duration of time symbolized in “for ten days.” God is in control and will make certain the period is not too great, but it will be a terrible time nevertheless.” _Osborne, Revelation in Baker Exegetical Commentary, 103.

Verse 10b **Crown of Life** In the Bible, the crown symbolizes great honor and authority (Revelation 4:4; 9:7). The region of Smyrna was known for various athletic competitions and had a military presence, so they had a good understanding of the concept of receiving a crown after victory. “Smyrna was famed for its games, and so this would be a natural metaphor.” _Osborne, Revelation in Baker Exegetical Commentary, 104.

Verse 11 **Second death** There are other verses in Revelation that express themes related to death (Revelation 20:6, 14; 21:8). The meaning extends beyond simple physical death to signify eternal death, referring to being cast into the lake of fire. “It is the “lake of fire,” the final eternal “death” beyond the mere physical death that ends this life.” _Osborne, Revelation in Baker Exegetical Commentary, 104.

• November Ministry Schedule and Prayer Requests •

Ministry Schedule and Prayer Requests

- May God's kingdom come through the Mission On short-term mission team (Cambodia outreach).
- Grant abundant grace for the SWM outreach and the Turkey Father School taking place in January, and send volunteers to serve.
- Through the home visitations, may each household experience God's comfort and restoration.
- Through the HJI fall semester, may the congregation experience God in their entirety and be strengthened both spiritually and physically.
- Through the first Relationship Skills Training, may the participants grow in God's character and develop mature relationships.
- Pour abundant grace on the 35th Evangelism Explosion, preparing many trainees to share the Gospel.
- May the leaders participating in the 47th One-on-One Discipleship Training be well-trained in the Word and prayer, becoming effective disciple-makers.
- Grant that more congregants in the EW community participate in small group meetings, loving one another and growing spiritually, and moving into positions of service and ministry.

Next Generation Ministry Schedule & Prayer Requests

- May Sonlight focus on gratitude in November as they meditate on the Word, allowing children to reflect on the many blessings they have already received and making it a month of thankfulness.
- For the banquet prepared by Coram Deo on November 23, may it be a celebration where students, teachers, and parents confess their love and gratitude to God and to one another.
- During the Worship Night on November 22 organized by NEXT, may a worship community be established that deeply experiences God in their worship.
- May spiritual leaders be raised up in NEWave, and may new families and students feel welcomed and settle in well.
- Grant abundant grace to the EW College gathering, and may they encounter God deeply in their daily meditations.

2025 Small Group Preview Schedule *

Date	Detail	Note
1/5	2pm, Gym Small Group Leaders	
2/2		
5/4		
6/1		
9/7		
10/5		
11/2	Small Group Leaders Retreat	

- The above schedule is subject to adjustment. Please refer to the announcements that will be published in the bulletin on the 3rd week of each month.



► Small Group Leader Survey



SMALL GROUP LEADERS RETREAT 2024



Publisher | James Kwon

Editor | Pastoral Staff

E-mail | hyungjaecommunity@hyungjae.org

Address | 3727 240th St SE, Bothell, WA 98021

Phone Number | 425-488-1004



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