

## **“BE FAITHFUL UNTIL DEATH”**

**Marc Gibson**

The Lord exhorted the church in Smyrna, “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. *Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life*” (Revelation 2:10). We often quote that last phrase – “be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” – to encourage one another to be faithful each day in the face of the constant temptations of Satan. But I believe we may be missing the ultimate point of this exhortation.

When we quote this scripture, we most often think about being consistent and loyal in serving God throughout our lifetime (attending worship services, teaching others, etc.) until we grow old and depart from this life. While this is true, the first century Christians faced a graver application. They endured serious persecution and tribulation. Their lives were threatened, and some were murdered for their faith (cf. 2:13). Death was not something they only expected to deal with when they got old and feeble, but a threat many of them faced daily because they followed Jesus.

This puts a different perspective on being “faithful until death.” Not only would these brethren need to be faithful throughout their lives, but more likely, they would need to be faithful to the point of their execution. They were to remain strong and resolute in the face of persecution, faithful every step of the way as they were led out to be beheaded, crucified, burned, or fed to wild animals. Death is the ultimate threat that man can use against the Christian, but we are not to “fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul” (Matthew 10:28). As the world turns more hostile to God and truth, Christians will face increasing threats of persecution and death. The crown of life awaits those who will face those threats with unshakable faith! Facing these more hostile and dangerous times, will we remain “faithful until death?”

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### **2 TIMOTHY 4:8**

*Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*