

Study Through the Bible

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PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

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We are to be faithful to Christ, even unto death.

The church at Smyrna was one of only two churches that Jesus did not reprimand in his seven letters. Evidently they did things right. We can learn from their faithfulness by figuring out how we can be equally faithful to Christ.

Scripture:

Revelation 2:8–11

Based on:

"The Patmos Papers" by Tom Cowan

PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

If you were a Christian, Smyrna was a dangerous place, because it made emperor worship mandatory. Once a year, each Roman citizen was required to burn a piece of incense on the altar of Caesar, and having done so, was then given a religious certificate saying that he had performed his religious duty.

The second problem facing the Christians in Smyrna was that the city had a large Jewish population. It was often the Jews who informed on the Christians and incited the local authorities to persecute them.

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: Jesus made it clear that persecution was a normal part of the Christian life.

Teaching point two: Jesus encouraged us to be faithful, even to the point of death.

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

Lest you think that remaining faithful until death is a thing of the past, consider this account:

Following Sunday worship services on January 8, 2006, five young men attacked and threatened to kill a Protestant church leader in Turkey's fourth-largest city. Kamil Kiroglu, 29, had just left his church in Adana when he was ambushed and beaten so severely that he fell unconscious twice.

"They were trying to force me to deny Jesus," Kiroglu said. "But each time they asked me to deny Jesus and become a Muslim, I was saying, 'Jesus is Lord.' The more I said, 'Jesus is Lord,' the more they beat me." One of the attackers pulled out a long butcher knife and threatened to kill Kiroglu if he did not deny his Christian faith and return to Islam. Kiroglu refused.

After the incident, he said, "I am praising God—not because he saved me from death, but because he helped me not to deny him in the shadow of death." (*Compass Direct*, January 2006)

—Study by Dr. Tom Cowan