



Be Faithful

“Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10b).

These are among the most familiar words in the Bible, written by John to the Christians of the church at Smyrna to encourage them through their “ten days” of tribulation. We hear these words of comfort and encouragement at funerals, at sick bed visits, at confirmations, and at times when life is a struggle. They are, however, words that definitely fall under the category of “easier said than done.” Wouldn’t it be nice if we could just have the crown and skip the suffering and death part? For too many, persecution for being Christian is a reality today, as it was for the early church of the first century.

It is also tempting to conclude that what John is saying has more to do with **our** faithfulness throughout life than anyone else's. “A + B = C.” However, the crown of life is not a prize for us for remaining faithful, but the conclusion of God’s plan of redemption. Giving credit where credit is due, it is God who works faith in us. But more importantly, He is the perfectly faithful One. He is the one whom we trust to open heaven’s doors to all who have run the race, no matter how poorly we finish. For St. Paul says, ... *and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith ...* (Hebrews 12:1b-2).

The fact of the matter is Satan was, and is, defeated by Jesus Christ and will be judged by Him at the Second Coming. We continue to daily fight the powers of evil as long as we are on the earth. Our comfort is in the knowledge and assurance that whatever trials come to us in this life, God is faithful in His promise of life eternal in heaven’s bliss.

Paul also tells us in Hebrews 11:1, *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.* Hmm ... like God and heaven? Definitely like sitting at the throne of God, crowned in His majesty, and in His presence forever. St. Augustine said it this way: “Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of faith is to see what you believe” (<http://www.quotesigma.com/50-powerful-quotes-by-saint-augustine/>, accessed 4/29/2016). The words of Revelation assure us of God’s constant and continual work in our lives especially when it does not seem like God is in control of what is going on around us.

The hymn “Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me” (LSB 715, TLH 649, LW 513) ends with this comforting thought: “Then, while leaning on Thy breast, May I hear Thee say to me, ‘Fear not, I will pilot thee.’” God faithfully leads us. God alone will crown us with life eternal after remaining faithful to His Word. In sharp contrast to the world, we, who are God’s people, live life as an offering to Him. Our witness to His promise stands out as a light in an ever-darkening world. Faithfulness is our calling. And, in the end, we will receive a crown of righteousness from our faithful God. I can only imagine how awesome all the faithful believers will look!

Prayer: Lord God, continue Your faithful leading throughout our lives. Guide us as we run the race You have set before us here on earth. By faith, help us look to Your Word for sufficient strength and assurance for the finish. As we head home to heaven, keep us ever focused on the crown of life in Jesus Christ our Redeemer. For in His name we pray. Amen.

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