



Steadfast in Difficulties

?

WHEN HAVE
YOU HAD
A TRULY
TERRIFYING
EXPERIENCE?

The
POINT ➤

We need not fear because we are rich in
God's grace.

➤ REVELATION 2:8-11

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.’



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

FACT:

Roller coasters and haunted houses can be scary, so why in do we do these things? These staged experiences may be frightening in the moment, but they trigger the brain to produce chemicals that cause excitement that can last for hours.¹



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // SALVATION

God's salvation is eternal, and once we are adopted into God's family, nothing can separate us from Him.

Have you ever been scared? I mean scared to the point that you feared for your life. Several years ago, I was serving alongside others on a mission trip in London. We were prayer walking one afternoon in an area that was full of mosques, and protesters were in the streets. As we walked and prayed for God to move in that area, we began hearing shouts from a group of men across the street: "Kill the Christians! Kill the Christians!" They were pointing at our little group while shouting those words.

Needless to say, that was an incredibly frightening moment for our group. We hurried and left the area immediately. But as we later reflected on what had happened, we realized that, from an eternal perspective, we really had no reason to be afraid. We've been told in the Bible that those who follow Jesus will face times of persecution, and through it all, God is with us.

From the message Jesus gave to the church at Smyrna, we will learn that we can stand strong in the face of fear. We truly are rich in the grace of God.

REVELATION 2:8-9

1 What riches have you experienced because of your relationship with Christ?

2 When have you faced hardship or persecution for following Jesus?

REVELATION 2:10

3 Where do you see religious persecution in our community or around the world?

4 When have you faced a hardship that tempted you to fear?

5 How do hardship and suffering strengthen our faith?



*Hardships will come our way.
We must be faithful to Jesus no
matter the cost. #BSFLtheChurch*



REVELATION 2:11

6 When do you sometimes struggle to listen?

7 What are the consequences of failing to listen to your parents? Teachers? To Jesus?

8 How can God use our living faithfully through hardships to point others to Jesus?



LIVE IT OUT



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // SALVATION

God's salvation is eternal, and once we are adopted into God's family, nothing can separate us from Him.

When we are saved by God's grace, there is nothing that can change that. The church in Smyrna was mistreated in terrible ways, and we will be too. When we are faithful, even through difficult circumstances, we can know that God will reward our faithfulness.

>CHRIST

9 Though we may be poor in this life, if we know Jesus, we are eternally rich. Make a list of all the ways you are rich because of God's grace in your life.

GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

CREATION

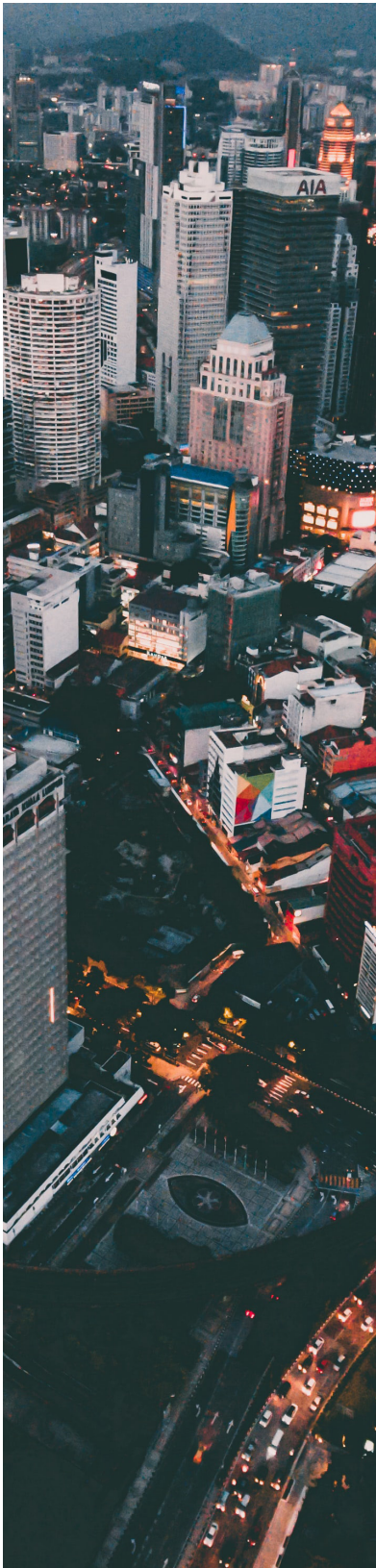
CHURCH

PEOPLE

FAMILY

COMMUNITY
& WORLD

Spend time in prayer thanking God for all the blessings He has given you.



➤ COMMUNITY

When we face difficult circumstances, the encouragement of others can help us to focus on the good things God has given us.

10 Who do you know who may be anxious or afraid?

11 How will you commit to helping them walk through their difficulties this week?

➤ CULTURE

Eternal life is a gift of God given to those willing to hear what the Spirit says. Today, we come to understand who has open ears when we share the gospel and see the ways others respond.

12 Who do you know who is an unbeliever and you will commit to sharing the gospel with?

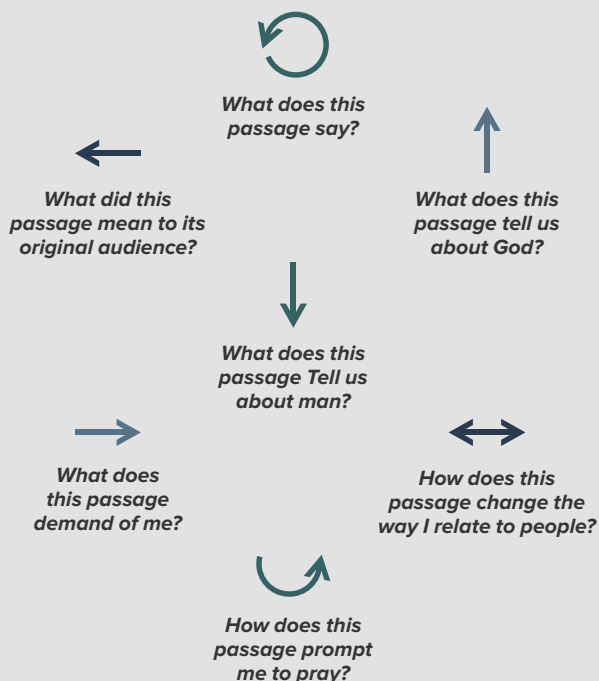
13 Who are you finding is open to believing the gospel and following Christ in faith?

Continue sharing the gospel week by week, and the Spirit will speak through you to draw others to Jesus.

DAILY DEVOTIONS



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Day One HEBREWS 3:12

The author of Hebrews is referring to the generation of Israelites who came out of Egypt and who had seen God's power and love demonstrated in supernatural ways, but who died in the wilderness because they failed to live faithfully in obedience. At times, we are tempted to do these same things. We experience God's power in our lives, but we soon forget and fall back into old patterns of complaining, selfishness, and disobedience. God clearly says that when we disobey, it's because we lack faith and our hearts are evil. Instead, we must continually keep a close watch on our lives and on our hearts, making sure that we choose every day to live in obedience from hearts of faith.

➤ **Why do you sometimes struggle to believe God?**

➤ **Why is unbelief and disobedience so serious? What are the consequences?**

Day Two

HEBREWS 3:13a



Because we are tempted to believe, it is absolutely necessary that we encourage others and receive encouragement in our own lives. The kind of encouragement the author of Hebrews is talking about is not simply helping us to feel good about ourselves, but our being encouraged, or even challenged, to press on in our faith. Culture will continually tempt us to love the things of the world or to walk away from Jesus. But with the encouragement of Christian brothers and sisters, we are more likely to continue faithfully pursuing Jesus.

- **When have you been tempted to give up or walk away from Jesus or from the church?**

- **Why is the encouragement of Christian brothers and sisters so important?**

Day Three

HEBREWS 3:13b

Satan is a liar, and sin works by deceiving us into believing it offers something that will bring us happiness and meaning. Sin is often compared to a snare (James 1:14; Heb. 12:1). Here's the picture—a fish sees a tasty worm and swallows it, only find there's a hook buried inside. Because it can't get off the line, the fish is dragged to shore and loses its life. Sin tempts us to believe it brings happiness, but once we've experienced the initial pleasure, we're trapped, dragged deeper and deeper into pain and misery, ultimately leading to our destruction. Continual accountability and encouragement from Christian friends helps to keep us from falling for sin's lies.

- **When have you felt the pain of sin's deception?**

- **How have others helped to keep you from being deceived?**

Day Four

HEBREWS 3:14a

Jesus calls us to resist sin's lies and, instead, to follow Him faithfully. At times, it can be easy to get excited about specific matters of faith. For instance, new believers are often enthusiastic about sharing their faith. Or maybe your student pastor preached a sermon about how important it is to read our Bibles, and you committed to reading through the Bible in a year. But many times, after we've started well, life gets busy, we get distracted or discouraged, and we don't follow through as well as we'd like. True followers of Jesus don't live by faith for only a little while, but all our lives. The Israelites who came out of Egypt saw God's power, but they got distracted and fell away—and they died in the wilderness. If we are to enter into God's eternal blessings, we must follow Jesus every day of our lives.

- **When have you started well but didn't faithfully follow through?**
- **How can you make sure to follow Jesus every day of your life?**

Day Five

HEBREWS 3:14b



As mentioned before, we often start well, but fail to follow through. The author of Hebrews teaches that it's important to hold on to the reality that we had at the beginning. The Hebrew Christians had grown up as faithful Jews, but when they heard the gospel, they committed their lives to Jesus and began following Him faithfully. If we are to remain steadfastly devoted to Christ, we must continually remind ourselves (and others) of the gospel. Jesus came to earth, lived a perfectly righteous life, and even though He didn't deserve it, He died on the cross to pay the price for our sins. It wasn't easy, and along the way, Jesus was tempted to walk away (Matt. 26:39). But He didn't! He steadfastly walked the path to which the Father had called Him. Jesus was devoted to the Father—and to us. We must devote ourselves steadfastly to Him.

- **How would you briefly outline the gospel?**
- **How does reminding ourselves of Jesus' life and sacrifice help us to remain steadfastly devoted to Him?**