



Sermon Discussion Guide¹

Revelation 6:9-11 | Kevin DeYoung

“Souls Under the Altar”

Sunday Morning, September 24th, 2023

Big Idea: Are we willing to die to ourselves every day for the sake of Christ?

1. **Hills:** Rev 6:9 offers two “hills” that the early Christians were willing to die on. Consider what is meant by “the Word of God” and “the witness” for the Church in our current cultural moment in history. What might each mean for you personally?
2. **Culture:** Real Christianity will always be at odds with the culture in some way. What are some common accusations against the Church our day?
3. **Persecution:** How have you thought about persecution prior to considering this passage? In what way should 2 Timothy 3:12 inform your thinking?
4. **Prayer:** Read Rev 6:10 and Acts 7:60. One prayer calls for justice against enemies,² the other calls for mercy. How are both good prayers? How does this inform your own prayer life?³
5. **Motives:** There’s a big difference between being motivated by personal grievance and being motivated by the honor of Christ. What happens when we mix up the two? When a church mixes up the two?
6. **Courage:** Read Rev 21:8. In the list of those outside of the New Jerusalem, the first category is the *cowardly*. What does courage look like for Christians today? What does it look like for you in this season of life?
7. **Imitation:** Who in your life is a good example of Christian courage?
8. **Death:** Christianity is a religion about death.⁴ Why is dying to ourselves the way of blessing for the Christian? What has dying-to-self looked like for you over the past year?

¹ SDGs from the Sunday morning sermon are available on the [small groups page](#) of the church website.

² Consider the numerous imprecatory Psalms calling for God’s judgment (e.g., Psalms 7, 35, 55, 58, 59, 69, 79, 83, 109 and 137).

³ Considering the supreme desire of these prayers helps answer this question: the honor of Christ. Kevin said, “This [prayer in v. 10] is not just a cry for their personal vindication. Tied up with *their* vindication is the honor and vindication of *Christ himself*.”

⁴ Kevin said, “You die now, so you don’t have to die the second death in hell. You die every day to yourself so that you can truly live. We worship a dying Christ so that we don’t have to be afraid of death. (...) This is calling us as Christians: to love so lavishly, and witness so boldly, and hold to the truth so tenaciously that if all of that requires us to be in this number so be it.”

Outline

- I. Introduction
 - a. Pliny the Younger's letter to Emperor Trajan: what to do with the Christians.
 - b. Persecution in the early Church
 - i. 1st century: local
 - ii. 2nd century: reactive
 - iii. 3rd century: aggressive
 - c. *Real* Christianity will always be hated by some people, some of the time.
- II. Three Questions
 - a. *Are there any hills that you are willing to die on?*
 - i. Common accusations against Christians in the early Church:
 - 1. Called atheists (!).
 - 2. Called unpatriotic.
 - 3. Accused of secret, sinister meetings.
 - 4. Accused of immorality.
 - 5. Threat to Roman power & way of life.
 - ii. Christianity has always been at odds with the culture.
 - b. *Are you willing to face injustice now for justice later?*
 - i. We're not good at living with injustice.
 - ii. Do we pray for justice or mercy for the wicked?
 - iii. The cry for justice as it relates to the honor of Christ.
 - c. *Am I willing to be in that number?*
 - i. Christianity is a religion about death.
 - ii. Three kinds of religions:
 - 1. Nothing is really a matter of life and death.
 - 2. Are you willing to *kill* for your beliefs?
 - 3. Are you willing to *be* killed for your beliefs?
- III. Conclusion
 - a. Are you willing to die *every day* for the sake of Christ?