

## The Church at Smyrna

### Revelation 2:8-11

#### I. Introduction:

##### A. The church at Smyrna

- In 2nd section of the Book of Revelation Jesus spoke to 7 literal churches in Asia Minor.
- Jesus evaluated the ministry of each church and gave His observations & instructions.
  1. – Commendation
    - a. Jesus would commend each church for what they were doing well.
  2. – Condemnation
    - a. Then Jesus addressed issues in the church that were not what they should be.
  3. – A warning
    - a. Next, Jesus warns what would happen if they don't address & correct the wrong.
    - b. Application God's gracious to tell we've gone wrong & give an opportunity to repent
  4. – A promise
    - a. Finally, for the faithful in what Jesus said to do, there was a promise of blessing.

##### B. Smyrna

1. Smyrna was ~ 35 miles north of Ephesus. The two were rival port cities. (3things)
  - a. – Free City
    - i. Smyrna was a Roman free city. That means their loyalty to Rome was absolute.
    - ii. 1st city to build a temple to goddess Roma, female deity of the city of Rome.
  - b. – Thoroughly pagan
    - i. The city had many temples which were magnificent structures for which the city was proud. They're to pagan deities Cybele, Zeus, Apollo, Nemesis, & Aphrodite.
  - c. – Jewish population
    - i. Large Jewish population in Smyrna was particularly hostile to Christian church.
    - ii. They made large financial donations to help make the city beautiful.

#### II. Jesus' message (Revelation 2:8-9)

##### A. Persecution and Suffering

1. Christians in Smyrna were suffering terribly, even martyred, for their faith in Jesus.
2. Many were executed for their dedication to Jesus. They would not call Caesar "lord."
3. Polycarp (155 A.D.): was the pastor of Smyrna. On February 23, 155 A.D. he was burned at the stake. He refused to renounce the name of Jesus.

##### B. Jesus' introduction

1. – The First and the Last
  - a. Jesus identified Himself to these Christians as the First and the Last.
  - b. This title speaks to His deity and eternal nature.
  - c. Jesus wanted these Christians to remember that He was & is greater than anything they would face in this life.
  - d. Application: Do not be afraid of what may come in this life. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. (**Romans 8:31**)
2. – Who was dead and came to life
  - a. These Christians were reminded that Jesus already suffered for them.
  - b. Jesus died on the cross at the hands of wicked men to pay for our sin.

- c. Then Jesus rose again the 3<sup>rd</sup> day in victory over sin, death, and the grave.
- d. They need not fear a martyr's death, Jesus had already won the victory over death.
- e. Application: Jesus walked earth in a body. He knows our sorrow & suffering firsthand
- f. When we pray, what a comfort that Jesus knows exactly how we feel.

### **III. Jesus knows the details. (Revelation 2:9)**

#### **A. Tribulation**

1. The Greek word is *thlipsis* meaning suffering, or being crushed under a heavy weight.
2. These Christians were subject to persecution at any time. Jesus saw their suffering.
3. Application: Jesus knows when we suffer. It's not always His will to deliver us from it
4. Sometimes it's His will we live w/ the pressure, & suffering, & endure it for His glory.

#### **B. Poverty**

1. Two Greek words are used for poverty. *Penia* means a person has to provide for their needs with their own hands. It really refers to those who are not wealthy.
2. *Ptochea* is the word here which means to be completely destitute.
3. These Christians were often deprived of basic human needs like food, water, clothing, & shelter. Their homes & businesses would be raided taking all they had.
4. But You Are Rich: They're poor by this world's standards, but rich beyond measure in God's rewards. We do not need the possessions of this world to be rich.
5. Our Father owns the universe & we are His children. (Joint heirs w/ Jesus Christ)

### **IV. Imprisoned (Revelation 2:9-10)**

#### **A. Synagogue of Satan**

- *The strong concentration of Jews in Smyrna were particularly resistant to the church.*
- *These Jews were known to stir up the civil authorities against the church.*
- *The Christians were often labeled as:*
  1. – Blasphemers
    - a. Christians do not worship a god who can be seen in the form of an image.
    - b. Christians didn't believe in numerous pagan gods of the Romans & the Greeks.
    - c. They were persecuted as blasphemers.
  2. – Anarchist
    - a. Christians were accused of breaking up marriages, homes, and families.
    - b. Christians were charged with bringing discord to the established societal structure.
  3. – Traitors
    - a. Swearing that Caesar was lord was analogous to swearing allegiance to Rome.
    - b. Refusal meant to be marked as a traitor to the empire which carried the death penalty

#### **B. Promise**

1. Jesus said if they're faithful to Him unto physical death, He'll give them crown of life.
2. Jesus is our example. Jesus was faithful unto death on the cross as payment for our sin.
3. We do not need to fear physical death for we have eternal life in Jesus Christ.

### **V. Promise (Revelation 2:11)**

#### **A. He who has an ear**

1. He who hears the truth and responds accordingly. He who hears the warning endures as a faithful soldier of the cross.

#### **B. He who overcomes**

1. Overcomers are those saved by faith in Jesus. By this faith we've overcome the world.
2. For those who are overcomers, the 2<sup>nd</sup> death has no power.
3. 2<sup>nd</sup> death is eternal separation from God in hell. It's eternal punishment for sin.