

The 2nd Church: Smyrna

It is known as the suffering church. This church is one of two of the seven churches to which Christ said nothing negative. The city's name means Myrrh, an aromatic fragrance used in anointing specifically bodies prepared for burial. Like the aromatic oil released by the crushing of a local plant, the believers in Smyrna were releasing the fragrant aroma of Christ in spite of their suffering.

Why they were persecuted? (Revelation 2:9)

Remember from past teachings: Rome allowed you to worship whoever you wanted as long as you worshipped the Emperor/government above all others!

Jesus would summarize their suffering in three ways:

- 1) _____: Christ wrote to the Smyrna church, "I know your...tribulation." The Greek word for tribulation literally means pressure-like placing a boulder on a person's chest until it crushes them to death.
- 2) _____: the second thing Christ said He knew about them was their "poverty". The Greek word used here means "absolute destitution". It referred to a person who had nothing. Their poverty was due to their faith because they were likely banned from the city to earn a living and robbed of what they had. In other words, it likely meant starving possibly to death for one's faith.
- 3) _____: they were getting it from all sides including a group of so-called Jews "who say they are Jews and are not but are a synagogue of Satan." These Jews were only so in name and they attacked Christian believers for their worship of Jesus. (Romans 2:28-29)

Christ's Counsel to the Church: (Revelation 2:10)

- 1) _____: First something not to do: "Do not fear those things which you are about to suffer." Time and again the Bible gives us this command: Do not Fear! It's the most repeated command in scripture to believers. We are not required to be fearful in scary situations. Yes, it is a natural response but we live supernaturally through the power of the Spirit.
- 2) _____: Next we are told to be faithful unto death. Instead of being fearful Jesus says be faithful even to the point of dying.

2 Promises Jesus makes:

- 1) He promises the _____: Everyone in Smyrna knew about a prominent hill known as the "The Crown of Smyrna". But Christ promised a better crown as he closed out this letter to the church there. He said in verse 10, "Be faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life." This is the same crown described in James 1:12, "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love him."
- 2) He promises they would not be hurt by the _____: there are 2 deaths in scripture: 1) the first being our physical bodies death at the end of our earthly life. 2) the second death is for those who are judged when Christ returns and are consigned to an eternity apart from God. Believers in Christ will not experience the second death. (Revelation 20:5-6) Everyone in the world knows of the first death and many live in fear of it. But it is the second death that is more critical.

Romans 8:35-39 says,

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution of famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

The believers at Smyrna had nothing to fear from martyrdom. No matter how cruel the torture, the Romans could never separate them from God. Every believer in Christ today should take comfort in that same truth: Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.