

Seven Churches Series
Study #2: Smyra's Story
Revelation Chapter 2:8 - 11
Bible Sermon Study Notes by Cary Rodgers, pastor

Are you totally connected to the POWER?

“In every command and in every promise of the word of God is the power, the very life of God, by which the command may be fulfilled and the promise realized. He who by faith receives the word is receiving the very life and character of God.” Ellen White, Christ Object Lessons p.38

Seven Churches

1-Ephesus, 2-Smyrna, 3-Pergamos, 4-Thyatira, 5-Sardis, 6-Philadelphia, 7-Laodicea

Today, we are going to look at the letter to the second church, Smyrna.

History of Literal Church of Smyrna

The church of Smyrna was located in the city of Smyrna in Asia Minor (now Turkey) which was located on the Aegean sea about 40 miles north of Ephesus. It was an important center of trade with a good harbor. Due to its advantageous port conditions, its ease of defense and its good inland connections, Smyrna rose to prominence.

Smyrna [Greek] = myrrh; a “sweet-smelling savor”; i.e. a “sweet sacrifice.”

Introduction to Church of Smyrna

How Does Jesus begin His message to the Church in Smyrna?

Revelation 2:8

8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

Remember this is exactly what Jesus told John when he fell as dead before Christ in vision in Revelation 1:17,18.

Revelation 1:17,18

17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

What hope does Jesus' introduction to the church of Smyrna of His resurrection give to the church of Smyrna and us today?

1 Corinthians 15:12-23

12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

- 15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.
- 16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:
- 17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.
- 18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.
- 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.
- 20 But now is **Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.**
- 21 For since by **man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.**
- 22 For as in Adam all die, even so **in Christ shall all be made alive.**
- 23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are **Christ's at his coming.**

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

- 13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.
- 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.
- 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.
- 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:
- 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.
- 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Body of message: Church of Smyrna

What are some positive things that Jesus says about the church of Smyrna?

Revelation 2:9

9 I know thy **works**, and **tribulation**, and **poverty**, (but thou art rich) and I know the **blasphemy of them** which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

What does Jesus recognize that was in the church of Smyrna?

- 1) Tribulation
- 2) Poverty, but RICH

Let's take a look at each one and also draw some character building lessons for the people living at the very extreme end of time.

Tribulation

Tribulation (Greek) = thlipsis

Thayer Definition:

- 1) a pressing, pressing together, **pressure**
- 2) metaphorically oppression, affliction, tribulation, distress, straits

Smyrna was a church that was under the pressure of tribulation! God's true remnant people **MUST** be a church under pressure. Are you ready for the pressure? Can you handle it?

What will ALL the faithful remnant people of God who are living by EVERY WORD that proceeds for the mouth of God have to experience? What is the apostle Paul's personal experience and testimony?

2 Timothy 3:11-12

11 Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me (Paul) at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.

12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus **shall suffer persecution.**

What does Jesus say concerning tribulation and persecution in the last days?

Matthew 24:9, 10, 13, 14

9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

At the end of time what message are the faithful remnant giving that causes persecution and tribulation?

What does verse 14 say?

14 And this gospel [EVERLASTING GOSPEL] of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

Must we go through the pressure like Smyrna

Acts 14:22

22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to **continue in the faith**, and that we **must** through **much tribulation** enter into the kingdom of God.

Romans 5:1-4

1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

3 And not only so, but **we glory in tribulations** also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

Why are TRIBULATIONS (THE PRESSURE) a PREREQUISITE for the true remnant of God?

1 Peter 1:6-7

6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be **tried with fire**, might be **found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:**

Tribulation pressure, like fire, purifies the character of the true remnant like gold and shakes out and consumes the fake remnant.

Tribulation NOW prepares our souls for the mark of the beast crisis and the great time of trouble. Now is preparation time, but that time is rapidly coming to an end. If you have NOT made a full surrender to God's truth, NOW NOW NOW, RIGHT NOW is the time. Character is not built overnight.

"It is in a crisis that character is revealed." {Christ Object Lessons Pg. 412}

What gave Smyrna the power and strength to withstand the pressure?

Poverty, BUT rich...

In Revelation 2:9, Jesus says He knows the poverty of Smyrna, but at the same time they were rich! Smyrna's poverty and wealth gave them power to withstand the pressure!

Was Jesus talking about Smyrna's financial portfolio and how much money they had? NO.

Why was Smyrna poor but at the same time RICH? This is what we all must possess.

Matthew 5:3

3 Blessed are the **poor in spirit**: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

To be poor in spirit is having a heart of humility and contrite heart toward God. True humility will make you RICH!

Proverbs 22:4

4 By **humility** and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honour, and life.

How will you become RICH if you are poor in spirit?

James 2:5

5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world **rich in faith**, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

Like Smyrna, to make it through the pressure of tribulations you and I MUST be POOR in spirit and RICH in the faith of Jesus Christ!

Remember, what is the only way to GROW RICH in FAITH?

Romans 10:17

17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

What does Jesus say....

Mark 4:24

24 And he said unto them, Take **heed what ye hear**: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear **shall more be given**.

The more you study and take heed to God's truth the more God will make you WEALTHY in FAITH!

Unlike Ephesus, Smyrna as a whole kept their eyes and faith on Christ not themselves.

At the end of Revelation 2:9 Jesus told Smyrna, “I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.”

Jesus is not condemning the church of Smyrna, but in general is revealing to them and us that He knows the true remnant from the fake Christians. He knows those who blaspheme God’s name by pretending to be followers of Jesus Christ but are truly members in the church of Satan.

Romans 9:6

6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:

What reveals the fake people in the last days?

Titus 1:16

16 They **profess** that they know God; but in **works they deny him**, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

Those who say they follow the truth, but by their actions are servants of Satan

The Synagogue of Satan or the church of Jesus Christ

“Christ speaks of the church over which Satan presides as the synagogue of Satan. Its members are the children of disobedience. They are those who choose to sin, who labor to make void the holy law of God. It is Satan's work to mingle evil with good, and to remove the distinction between good and evil. Christ would have a church that labors to separate the evil from the good, whose members will not willingly tolerate wrong-doing, but will expel it from the heart and life.” (Ellen White, Review & Herald, *Church of God*, December 4, 1900).

Ephesians 2:2

2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the **spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience**:

Which church do you really want to be a member - the church of Satan or the true church of Jesus Christ?

“Satan has a church upon the earth, which outnumbers the church of Christ. Christ calls it the ‘Synagogue of Satan,’ because its members are the children of sin and transgression. They have ceased to honor God; they have cast His divine law aside; they have confounded the distinction between good and evil. But the world's Redeemer will have a church in which these essential differences will be made apparent, where the character of God will be represented. In marked contrast to the character of Satan, the beauty of holiness will be exemplified, **the loveliness of truth shine forth in life and practice**. Its members will love, honor, and glorify God, whom the world has despised. These are the fruits by which they are known to the world; these will have the superscription of heaven, by which all men may know that they are Christ's disciples.” Ellen White, Lake Union Herald, December 9, 1908

What encouragement does Jesus give Smyrna as they go through the pressure of tribulation?

Revelation 2:10

10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation **ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.**

God told Smyrna the length of their tribulation, 10 days. Why? Tribulation and persecution will not last always. The time period is for their encouragement to endure until the end especially during intense persecution.

Remember what Jesus says in Luke 12:4,5!

Luke 12:4-5

4 **And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.**

5 **But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.**

On the prophetic outline, what historical period of the Christian church movement does the message of Smyrna represent or symbolize?

Historically, God's New Testament Church went through a period of very intense persecution like Smyrna under the Roman Empire that lasted 10 years, symbolically represented as 10 days, a day for year principle (Ezekiel 4:6)

303 – 313 AD Diocletian or Great Persecution

wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocletianic_Persecution:

“The **Diocletianic** or **Great Persecution** was the last and most severe persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire. In 303, the Emperors Diocletian, Maximian, Galerius, and Constantius issued a series of edicts rescinding Christians' legal rights and demanding that they comply with traditional religious practices. **Later edicts targeted the clergy and demanded universal sacrifice, ordering all inhabitants to sacrifice to the gods.** The persecution varied in intensity across the empire—weakest in Gaul and Britain, where only the first edict was applied, and strongest in the Eastern provinces. Persecutory laws were nullified by different emperors at different times, but Constantine and Licinius's Edict of Milan (313) has traditionally marked the end of the persecution.”

“Diocletian's preference for activist government, combined with his self-image as a restorer of past Roman glory, forebode the most pervasive persecution in Roman history. In the winter of 302, Galerius urged Diocletian to begin a general persecution of the Christians. Diocletian was wary, and asked the oracle of Apollo for guidance. The oracle's reply was read as an endorsement of Galerius's position, and a general persecution was called on February 24, 303.”

What promise does Jesus give the church of Smyrna in the conclusion in which we can place our hope in?

Revelation 2:11

11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that **overcometh** shall **not be hurt of the second death**.

He that overcomes sin through the blood of Jesus WILL NOT suffer the second death.

Revelation 20:6

6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Revelation 20:14-15

14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

The second death is the execution of God's Judgment upon ALL the wicked who rejected God's gift of mercy and grace. They rebelled against God and His Law.

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