

Church in Smyrna - Persevere

Sunday, March 6, 2022

Revelation 2:8-11

LINKS:

- [Sermon Page](#) (link to be inserted soon, including video)
- [Revelation 2 - GracePoint Bible Reader](#) (QR code →)



SMALL GROUP / FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

1. **Follow-up to last week:** Share how you followed up to this question from last week... if you remembered. :-)
 - a. "What one step will you take this week to guard against personally 'losing your first love' (i.e. Jesus)?"
2. **Read Revelation 2:8-11.** Share how you are rich, not by the world's standards but rather rich in Christ.
3. Though John did not have any words of rebuke for the church in Smyrna, he did mention "the slander of those" he called "a synagogue of Satan" (v. 9). How do we as Christ-followers sometimes put on an appearance of piety or holiness but our words or actions do not reflect a heart belonging to Christ?
4. What kinds of habits help us to cultivate a heart that truly belongs to Christ?
5. Which of those habits do you find easiest to keep? Which of those do you find more difficult?
6. Describe your reaction to the quote from John MacArthur: "Like myrrh, produced by crushing a fragrant plant, the church at Smyrna, crushed by persecution, gave off a fragrant aroma of faithfulness to God."
7. How can being "pressed and crushed" produce Christ-followers with "the aroma of Christ" (cf. 2 Cor. 2:15)?
8. Close in prayer. Remember to continue to pray for each other this week.

SERMON NOTES

Revelation 2:8-11 "Church in Smyrna: Persevere"

Smyrna—35 miles north of Ephesus **Roman Empire**—considered one of Asia Minor's great/important cities (100,000 pop.), trade, commerce, natural resources, considered most beautiful city, well-protected harbor, well-designed, center for science/medicine.

Destroyed (600BC)—laid in ruins until **rebuilt** (290BC). **Smyrna**—strong ally to Roman Empire, Central for emperor worship in Asia Minor, **In 26AD Emperor Tiberius** awarded Smyrna the chance to build Temple for Emperor worship.

Christians in Smyrna faced persecution: (1) They did not worship the emperor (2) They did not worship Greek/Roman gods (atheists) (3) Jews reported Christians to Roman Empire. (**Cannibals**—Lord's Supper/ **Sexual immorality**—greeted each other with Holy Kiss/ **Broke up families**—Jesus said to leave father/mother/sister/brother).

Revelation 2:8-11

⁸ "Write to the angel of the church in **Smyrna** (one of two churches (of the seven) Jesus did not rebuke): Thus says the First and the Last, the one who was dead and came to life: ("**First and last**"—OT title for God (always existed) given to Jesus. **Encouraged** those who would be martyred—follow Jesus/rose from dead, had victory)

⁹ I know your **affliction** (suffering) and **poverty** (poor—non-believers didn't hire Christians or do business with them/people stole from them—took advantage of Christianity being illegal), but you are **rich** (in Christ). I know the **slander** (false accusations) of those who **say they are Jews and are not** (opposed Jesus/belonging to God is more than race/religious practice but the heart), but are a **synagogue of Satan** (appear to worship God but influenced by Satan/schemed to eliminate/attack Christians).

¹⁰ Don't be afraid of what you are about to **suffer** (hunger/loss/beaten/ prison/executed). Look, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison to **test you** (faith/strengthen), and you will experience affliction for **ten days** (Complete

period/suffering will end/God is sovereign). Be faithful to the **point of death** (Jesus is greater/suffering is temporary), and I will give you the **crown of life** (wreath given to winner. **DA Carson**: “There is a choice to be made between the life that the world gives and the life that God gives”).

¹¹ “Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. **The one who conquers will never be harmed by the second death (1) Everyone will die once—physical. Second death is spiritual. (2) Although we cannot work to be saved or lose our salvation, perseverance is evidence of our salvation).**

CHURCH IN SMYRNA

Located in present-day IZMIR (third most populated city in Turkey—3 million, US Air Force). **City** probably got name from Myrrh trees that grew there. **Myrrh** (expensive perfume used for living & dead, city’s chief export in ancient times,)—bark from tree was crushed/beaten so that gum and resin came out—produced good-smelling, expensive perfume. **Symbolic of persecution of Church in Smyrna.**

John McArthur: “Like myrrh, produced by crushing a fragrant plant, the church at Smyrna, crushed by persecution, gave off a fragrant aroma of faithfulness to God.”

Persecution purified the Church in Smyrna—was small/but loved Jesus. Jesus carried them thru **persecution**—reveals genuine believers /those who are false could not endure the persecution.

Jesus said (Matthew 24:6): “See that you are not alarmed, because these things must take place, but the end is not yet.”

John 15:20: If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.

Christianity is growing fastest where persecution is most intense—China, Asia, Europe, Middle East/ **Recent UK Commissioned Report**: “Persecution of Christians, sometimes amounting to genocide, is ongoing in parts of the Middle East... Millions of Christians have been uprooted, and many have been killed, kidnapped, imprisoned and discriminated against.”

Iran: **Illegal to leave Islam/Grown from under 10,000 to 1 million in 20 years/Fastest growing.** Christians can go to prison for gathering, carrying a Bible and telling people about Jesus. Many still meet secretly, carry Bibles, tell people about Jesus. **Persecution**: Losing jobs, difficulty finding jobs/rent a home, beaten, jailed, executed.

Russia—**The U.S. Commission** for International Religious Freedom renewed its recommendation for Russia to be listed as a Country of Particular Concern for its significant religious freedom violations. **Former Soviet Union**—atheist, saw religion as threat, tried to eliminate (beat, prison, execute)/According to James Nelson’s “Psychology, Religion, and Spirituality”—12 million Christians executed. **Russia** may be moving back to this. **Invading Ukraine**

American Christianity—opposite of what most Christians around world go through...Caters to us/our needs, **options**—locations, kind of churches, ministries, pastors, in person or on-line, podcasts, books, conferences, access to resources. **What if those were taken away?**

What COVID revealed about Christianity in America. (1) Our heart condition—push forward/shrink back, grew, others did not, We are not as passionate for Jesus like we want to be, some slipped into bad spiritual habits during **(2)** Worshipping together is God’s plan—Many who are able to worship together but haven’t—affects relationship with God **(Heb. 10:24-25) (3)** We need Jesus

Christians can’t avoid persecution. It’s not about trying to avoid persecution... but how will we persevere in Christ when it happens.

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