

“The Courage To Continue!”
The Letter To Smyrna
Revelation 2:8-11

Introduction:

1. Smyrna - A Proud City - A Persecuted Church!
 - What Did Smyrna Have To Be Proud Of?
 - A First City!
 - “First In Asia In Beauty And Size!” - Coin Inscription!
 - “Doorkeeper To The World!”
 - Good Harbor - Trading Center - “Convenient Starting Point For A Land-Road To The East!”
 - Only City Of The Seven Still In Existence - Modern Izmir, Turkey! (3rd Largest / 2nd Largest Port)
 - Mt. Pagos - “The Crown Of Smyrna!” - Walls & Castles Visible From Below, With A “Street Of Gold” Like A Necklace Adorning The Hill! With Temples As Jewels On Either End!
 - A Faithful City!
 - To Rome! Even Before Rome Became A Power!
 - First Asian City To Build A Temple For The Roman Emperors! (195 BC)
 - First Asian City To Be Rewarded With A Temple For The Roman Emperor Tiberias! (26 AD)
 - Why Was The Church Of Smyrna Persecuted?
 - Because They Could Not Be As Faithful To Rome As The City Was! Also, The Jewish Element!
 - “Caesar Is Lord” vs. “Jesus Is Lord!”
 - Key Person - Polycarp! Possibly The “Angel” Or Messenger Written To Here!
2. To This Persecuted Church, There Is No Condemnation!
 - Only Commendation & Encouragement To Continue!
 - How Could They Continue?
 - Even Under The Greatest Pressures, In Jesus Christ, We Don’t Need To Be Fearful, But We Can Be Faithful!
 - **IE:** Pressure Can “Crack” A Person - John McCain - But Reinforced / Rather Replaced, We Can Persevere!
 - How Can This Apply?
 - Not Everyone In Smyrna Would Face The “Ultimate” Persecution – But The “Pressures” Would Vary, As They Do Today!
 - And If This Can Apply To The Greatest Pressure A Christian Can Face In This Life – Death – It Can Apply To All The “Lesser Pressures” As Well!
 - How Can We Continue?

1. *We Need To Take Courage In Christ!*

- 2:8-10a - “And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; / 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. / 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!”
 - 2:10 - Message To The Church Under Pressure: Don’t Be Fearful! Don’t Be Afraid! How? Take Courage In Your Lord & Savior, Jesus Christ!
- Because Of His Great Character!
 - He Is “The First And The Last!”
 - From 1:17!
 - When The “End” Seems Near To Us, There Is Someone Who Will Outlast Everything – Jesus Christ!
 - “All Good Things Must Come To An End!”
 - “This Too Shall Pass!” (Bad)

- Not So For The Lord! Through Him, There Is More – Much More! Don't Be Fearful!
- He "Was Dead, And Is Alive!"
 - From 1:18!
 - Jesus Faced What They & We Face – And Died!
 - He's Been There! He's Done That!
 - John 11:25 - "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live!" Don't Be Fearful! Take Courage In Christ!
- Because Of His Great Comprehension!
 - "I Know!"
 - A Clear Perception! Nothing Hazy Or Foggy! So, Look To Him When Things Get Hazy Or Foggy To You! **IE:** Like Peter On The Water - "Look To Me!" - Like Being Blindfolded!
 - He Knows: Everything About The Persecuted!
 - Your Pursuits! For Him! "Thy Works!"
 - After All, They Are Why You Are Experiencing So Much Pressure!
 - Your Pressure! "Tribulation" - "Affliction!"
 - Comforts Us In Jon 16:33 - "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world!"
 - Your Poverty! Destitution! Lost It All! What Must This Have Felt Like? But In Reality, They Were & We Are Rich! 1 Peter 1:4 - "An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you!"
 - So, Don't Be Fearful!
 - He Knows: Everything About The Persecutors!
 - What They Really Do! "Blaspheme!"
 - Who They Really Are! "Synagogue Of Satan!"
 - So, Don't Be Fearful! Take Courage In Christ!
- Because Of His Great Control!
 - He Then Describes What They Will Face In The Future! How Does He Know? He Is In Complete Control!
 - Of The Person Who Will Persecute Them! "Devil!"
 - Of The Place Of Their Persecution! "Prison!"
 - Not Like Ours! A "Holding Tank" For Future Punishment! "Imprisonment Was Not Recognized By The Law As A Punishment For Crime In The Greek Or Roman Procedure. The State Would Not Burden Itself With Criminals, Except As A Preliminary Stage For Their Trial, Or In The Interval Between Trial And Execution. Fine, Exile, And Death Constituted The Usual Range Of Penalties; And In Many Cases, Where A Crime Would In Modern Times Be Punished By Imprisonment, It Was Visited With Death In Roman Law!" (William Ramsay)
 - Of The Purpose Of Persecution! "Tried!"
 - Real Reason! When Some Suffer, All Are Tested! To Teach Us To Rely More Upon Him – In Bad Times & In Good! To Refine & Conform Us!
 - Of The Period Of Persecution! "Ten Days!"
 - It Will Be Intense! It Will Be Limited! Psalm 30:5 Reminds Us - "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning!"
 - So, Don't Be Fearful! Take Courage In Christ!

2. ***We Need To Then Continue In Christ!***

- 2:10b-11 - "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. / 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!"
 - The Challenge To The Church Under Pressure: Don't Be Fearful – But Do Be Faithful! No Matter How Difficult It Appears & Feels! "Be Thou Faithful!"
 - Why? Because You Do Have A Future!
- You Will Be Relieved From Your Trials!
 - "Unto Death!"
 - Death Is The Absolute Worst They Can Do To You!

- They May Be Able To “Kill The Body”, But, As Jesus Reminds Us, They Are Unable To “Kill The Soul!” (Matthew 10:28)
- To The Christian, Death Becomes The END Of Their Suffering!
 - In More Ways Than One! There Will Never Be Any Suffering Ever Again For Them!
- So, “Be Thou Faithful Unto Death!”
 - It’s Not Really The End, Except Of Your Suffering!
- You Will Be Rewarded For Your Trials!
 - “Crown Of Life!”
 - God’s Personal Reward For Faithfulness! Good Reason To Be Faithful!
 - **IE:** Olympians Train & Try For Years Just To Have The Chance To Win The Gold Medal – Which May Not Even Last! Even If They Get It!
 - This Reward Is A “Sure Reward!” (Proverbs 11:18 - “The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward!”
 - Greater Than Even The “Crown Of Smyrna!”
 - This Crown Will Last Forever! Their’s Is In Ruins! The Crown Is Life Itself!
- James 1:12 - “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him!”
 - So, “Be Thou Faithful Unto Death!”
- You Will Be Rejoicing Over Your Trials!
 - “He That Overcometh Shall Not Be Hurt Of The Second Death!”
 - The Truth Is, Every True Christian WILL Overcome All Of These Circumstances! But Not Because Of Their Own Efforts – Again, It Comes Down To Our Reliance Upon Christ!
 - 1 John 5:4-5 - “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. / Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”
 - Who Is Our Faith In?
 - 1 John 4:4 - “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world!”
 - John 16:33 - “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world!”
 - And There Will Be No Chance Of Any Destruction / Damage / Or Even Danger From The “Second Death!”
 - **IE:** Like The Hebrews In The Fiery Furnace! “Upon Whose Bodies The Fire Had No Power, Nor Was An Hair Of Their Head Singed, Neither Were Their Coats Changed, Nor The Smell Of Fire Had Passed On Them!” (Daniel 3:27)
 - So, “Be Thou Faithful Unto Death!”

Conclusion:

1. What Personal Pressures Are You Facing?
 - Probably Nothing Like The Ancient & Modern Persecuted Christians!
 - But, How Will You Overcome Them?
 - The Same Way They Did & Do!
2. You Can Have The Courage To Continue!
 - Take Courage In Christ! Don’t Be Fearful / Afraid!
 - Then Continue In Christ! Do Be Faithful!
 - Our Greatest Example Is Jesus!
 - Hebrews 12:2 - “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God!”
3. Later On, Polycarp, Taught By The Apostle John Himself, Was Led To His Death!
 - “What Harm Is There In Saying: Caesar Is Lord?
 - “I Shall Not Do As You Advise Me!”
 - “Reproach Christ!”
 - “86 Years Have I Served Him & He Never Did Me Any Injury: How Then Can I Blaspheme My King & My Savior?”

- "I Have Wild Beasts At Hand!"
 - "Call Them Then! For We Are Not Accustomed To Repent Of What Is Good In Order To Adopt That Which Is Evil!"
 - "I Will Cause Thee To Be Consumed By Fire!"
 - "Thou Threatenest Me With Fire Which Burneth For An Hour, And After A Little Is Extinguished, But Art Ignorant Of The Fire Of Coming Judgment And Of Eternal Punishment, Reserved For The Ungodly! But Why Tarriest Thou? Bring Forth What Thou Wilt!"
 - Went To Secure Him To Be Burned:
 - "Leave Me As I Am – For He That Giveth Me Strength To Endure The Fire, Will Also Enable Me, Without Your Securing Me By Nails, To Remain Without Moving In The Pile!"
4. This Is The Courage To Continue That Comes From Christ! "He That Hath An Ear, Let Him Hear What The Sprit Saith Unto The Churches!"

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