

Faithful to the End

Smyrna - Revelation 2:8-11

Remember that these brief letters were written to the seven churches in Asia Minor each had a purpose.

A Provincial Purpose:

In other words, it is written to an actual church in John's day. The Lord is using John to address real problems within this local assembly.

A Prognostic Purpose:

It deals with the needs of all churches through-out the ages. We can apply the exhortations and see how we line up spiritually.

Today's lesson asks the question – Is the fear of suffering holding you back from being faithful to the Lord?

Personal Purpose:

It is written to Him "that hath an ear" [v. 11a], and to Him "that over-cometh receives a promise" [v. 11b].

THE PROPHETIC PURPOSE:

The book of Revelation describes seven churches that appeared after Pentecost but before the rapture. Furthermore, Revelation 1:19 tells us that the book is broken up into three periods.

"Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;"

"The things . . . thou hast seen" are found in Rev. 1:1-18. "The things . . . which are" are found in Rev. 2:1-3:22 and "The things . . . which shall be hereafter" are found in Rev. 4:1-22:21.

Therefore, the "church age" includes the items listed in the "things seen" (Rev. 1:1-20) and the "things which are" (Rev. 2:1-3:22) but does not include the final period found in Rev. 4:1f.

The Seven Churches of Asia

We hold to the futurists view of this passage which sees the seven churches of Revelation as representative periods of church history up to the time of the rapture. We contend that chapters 2 to 3 generally describe churches in both John's day and churches through-out the ages, however each church seems to chronologically represent a period of church history until the church is raptured.

Ephesus (AD 30 -100) – name means “desirable” The Apostolic Church - Revelation 2:1-7

Smyrna (AD100 – 313) – name means “Myrrh” The Martyr Church - Revelation 2:8-11

Pergamos (AD 313-600) – name means “marriage.” The Compromising Church - Revelation 2:12-17

Thyatira (AD 600-1517) – name means “continual sacrifice.” The Roman Catholic Church - Revelation 2:18-29

Sardis (AD 1517-1648) – name means “remnant.” The Reformation Church - Revelation 3:1-6

Philadelphia (AD 1648-1900) – name means “brotherly love.” The Revival Church - Revelation 3:7-13

Laodicea (AD 1900 – rapture) – name means “people’s rights.” The Worldly Church - Revelation 3:14-22

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| Ephesus AD 30-100 | Smyrna AD 100-313 | Pergamos AD 313-600 | Thyatira AD 600-1517 | Sardis AD 1517 to 1648 | Philadelphia AD 1648-1900 | Laodicea AD 1900 to Present |
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THE TRAPPINGS OF SMYRNA:

It was a **beautiful city**.

It’s chief product of trade were spices. Myrrh its main product.

The city had bazaar worship practices. Along with the usual pagan worship they built a temple to Tiberius who ruled Rome from AD 14 to AD 17. It was the second such temple built in Asia for emperor worship. From this rose the sinister Caesar-cult which was manifesting under Domitian who demanded to be called master and god. He and others that followed brought years of suffering to the church at Smyrna.

THE TRIALS OF SMYRNA

Smyrna experienced two types of trials

1. **Trials from without** – Rev. 2:10

The pagan cults were well organized, and they caused a great deal of havoc in this church including imprisonment, death and economic havoc.

“I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich)” - Rev. 2:9.

2. Pressures from within –

The inside pressures came from the Judaizers – Rev. 2:9b

“I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.”

THE TRIALS OF THE BELIEVER

Why did God permit the trials to come to this church? Why did they have to suffer years of struggle and death? I can think of six reasons for suffering:

- (1) Suffering eventually comes to all – Romans 5:12.
- (2) Suffering can point the lost to Christ
- (3) Suffering sometimes comes to the believer – for correction (1 Cor. 11:30-32; Heb. 12:3-13).
- (4) Suffering can come to the believer as a preventative measure
2 Cor. 12:7 – Paul’s thorn in the flesh.
2 Cor. 1 – We suffer so we can comfort others.
- (5) Suffering can be used by the believer for instruction
Romans 5:3-5 – Tribulation worketh patience
Heb. 5:8 – Even Christ is said to have learned obedience unto death.
- (6) Suffering often bears with it a powerful testimony of Christ’s presence.

Though the suffering of those at the church of Smyrna was severe. It was used by the faithful to spread the gospel.

We are given two exhortations to those who suffer – Rev. 2:10.

1. Stop being afraid

“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. Be faithful unto death.

“be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

THE TESTIMONY OF THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA

Rev. 2:9 – “I know thy works . . .”

No specific works are mentioned – only their poverty. So, I suggest their works were . . .

Endurance: They were so committed, in the face of poverty and death. Eternity with Christ was worth it all.

Steadfastness: Doctrinally they had to be clear on the issue of the atonement. Seldom does one die or suffer for no reason. They were steadfast against idolatry.

INSIGHTS

How are you with endurance and steadfastness?

How was Polycarp (the pastor of the church of Smyrna) faithful unto death?

How was a father and son (members of the church of Smyrna) faithful unto death?

THE TREASURES OF SMYRNA

They Were Spiritually Rich – “Thou Art Rich” (Rev. 2:9).

Where were their riches?

Why was their neighbor, the Laodicean church poor? (Rev. 3:17).

Would sneak off into the woods to worship in order to avoid the eye of the government?

Would you secretly walk to a small house with no airconditioning or heat in order to worship, knowing that at any minute you could be rounded up and imprisoned for your faith?

They were promised a shortened tribulation – Rev. 2:10. What does this mean?

Two views regarding this phrase. Ten days refers to a shortness of time. As in 2 Cor. 4:18, “For our affliction which is **but for a moment**, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” 2 cor. 4:18

How does Revelation 2:8, 10c-11 promise they would be cared for by the risen Lord?

“And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive. . . ¹⁰be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. ¹¹He 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.”