



Sermon Series: The Last VII Letters

Message Title: SMYRNA - Persecution is coming!

Key Scripture: **REVELATION 2:10**

10 Do not fear what you are about to **suffer**. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be **tested**, & for ten days you will have **tribulation**. **Be faithful unto death**, & I will give you the **crown of life**.

READ: Revelation 2:8-11

8 “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: “The words of the **first** and the last, who died and came to life. 9 “I know your **tribulation** and your **poverty** (but you are rich) and the **slander** of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 **Do not fear** what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be **tested**, and for ten days you will have **tribulation**. **Be faithful unto death**, and I will give you the **crown of life**. 11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the **second death**.

The LETTER written to SMYRNA

Jesus’ message is one of commendation & encouragement, no rebuke, & begins with the words, **“I know.”** Jesus **knew** personally the **trials & tribulations** being experienced by His beloved & precious church. He understood **the suffering, pain, & rejection** they were enduring at the hands of sinners.

The word Jesus uses, **“tribulation”** includes, physical, economic, social, & religious persecution. The **poverty** they lived under was not just, being slightly underfunded, but rather a **crushing, devastating, & inescapable poverty** as the result of business being boycotted & deliberately suppressed by the Romans & Jews who hated them. The **slander** was disgusting & blasphemous from the Jews all intended to punish, marginalize & vilify Jesus’ followers.

Jesus revealed there was **more persecution coming** & encouraged His precious church not to **fear** but to continue in their **faithfulness unto death**. For doing so, they would receive the **CROWN of LIFE**.

Do we have that kind of FAITH?

To **faithfully endure**, to **trust God** with our lives, our families, & our death? Do we trust Him in persecution, oppression, struggle, want, & need, and sickness, fear, worry, depression?

Things we learned about SMYRNA

Smyrna was called the **“City of Resurrection”** because it had been destroyed & rebuilt. **BUT** Jesus IS the **RESURRECTION** & the **LIFE** & though we shall die, yet shall we LIVE, ETERNALLY

Smyrna was called the **“Crown City”** because its landscape & architecture resembled a crown. It’s also because it was home to a world-renown stadium where victorious competitors received a champions crown.

BUT Jesus gives those who are faithful unto death, a **CROWN of LIFE!**

Smyrna had **MYRRH** the resin that gives off its sweetest perfume when crushed. **BUT** JESUS was gifted myrrh as a baby foreshadowing the crushing he would experience for our sins & then anointed with it for His burial just before His GLORIOUS RESURRECTION & ASCENSION!

SMYRNA

1. **REFUSED** to abandoned their FIRST LOVE!
2. **TRUSTED** God & were FAITHFUL to Christ even “Unto Death.”
3. **FOCUSED** on the PROMISES of God (Resurrection & Crown of Life) & **VALUED** them over the treasures of earth!

Perspective doesn’t minimize, justify, or excuse the suffering, but it does allow us to **SEE HIM** through it!

What is JESUS saying to the Church in **SMYRNA** & to **US** today?

1. **Do not FEAR**, Stay close to your **FIRST LOVE**
2. **Trust God & Remain Faithful**, even **UNTO DEATH** (NOW & LATER)
3. **Know**, Jesus will **REWARD** those faithful to Him unto death with a **CROWN of LIFE**

—THOUGHT PROVOKING QUESTIONS?—

1. What are your impressions of Jesus’ letter to the Church in Smyrna? Is there anything about the church you didn’t know or surprised you?
2. Have you ever experienced poverty on your journey with Jesus? How did/does it impact your journey? Why? How can we help one another?
3. Why do you think people choose to slander each other? Have you ever been slandered? How did it make you feel? What was your response? Did your relationship with Jesus effect how you felt or how you responded? Have you slandered? Did you repent/seek reconciliation? Why/Why not?
4. Jesus said to people already feeling the weight of persecution & trouble that more was on the way? If we were to receive this letter on Sunday in our church, how would you feel/respond? How do you feel others would?
5. Have you ever thought about the possibility of being “faithful unto death”? Individually/as a Family/as a church? How would your suffering strengthen or weaken your resolve to be faithful to Christ? What are your thoughts about Kinde & Bindi’s testimony from India? Let’s PRAY!