

To the Church of Smyrna
Revelation 2:8-11

INTRO:

Suffering and trials are not the kind of thing we twenty-first century American believers like to think about. Yet, suffering can be a part of what God expects for us. Smyrna was a church the Lord had called upon to suffer. From their suffering, there some lessons that we in today's church should learn to help us through the trials we may face from time to time this side of glory.

I. The Lord Who Dictated the Letter (v. 8)

II. The Suffering of the Saints (v.9-11)

I. The Lord Who Dictated the Letter (v.8)

A. ***“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this:”*** (Revelation 2:8)

The second church in Asia minor John must address is the church at Smyrna. As before the Lord Jesus dictated the letter and identified Himself with a part of John's vision in chapter 1.

B. The Lord Jesus was and is the first and the last. He was before the beginning and He will be after the end of the age. He knows all that will happen in this world. He is also the one who was dead and who had sprung to life from the grave. He has known rejection and suffering. He has been faithful unto death and has earned the right to exhort the believers in Smyrna to remain faithful unto death.

C. When the Lord Jesus speaks to us as suffering believers going through trials, He writes as One who has endured all the same trials we are facing.

II. The Suffering of the Saints (v.9-11)

A. ***“I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”*** (Revelation 2:9-10)

Is there anything more encouraging than to know the Lord of Lords knows what we are going through?

1. Life was not easy for Christians in Smyrna. Smyrna was a leader in emperor worship. Very early in the Christian era, the town had gotten permission to build a temple to worship Tiberius. There was also a strong Jewish presence in the community and these Jews did not like the Christians.

2. Suffering believers are far from our favorite topic. Yet, in the world in which we live suffering does happen. In fact, it may eventually happen to us. What can we learn from these suffering brethren in Smyrna?

B. We learn from these brethren that when we suffer as Christians, the Lord Jesus knows our suffering. He knows the pain we experience and the struggles we endure.

C. Second, He also knows our abject poverty, although in the eternal perspective we are spiritually rich. Do you remember the beatitudes we do not like so well?

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matthew 5:10–12)

D. We learn many other lessons about suffering in the Bible. There are several passages that speak to why our loving Lord will allow us to suffer.

1. For example, in **2 Corinthians 1:4**, Paul tells us one reason God allows us to suffer is so we can minister to others.

“[The Lord] comforts us in all our tribulation that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

2. Sometimes we suffer because we are receiving the overflow of the world's hatred of our Lord. (**2 Corinthians 1:5**)

“For as we share abundantly in Christ’s sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.”

3. Another reason we suffer is because in the short term it is necessary. (**1 Peter 1:6**)
“In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,”

E. However, when God’s children are called upon to suffer for Him, He gives us promises to help us through.

1. Two very great promises from the Apostle Paul help us. First, in **Romans 8:18** we read,

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

The glory the Lord is going to reveal in us will be so great that all of our suffering will be dust which is not blow off a scale because it is so insignificant. The second example is found in **2 Corinthians 4:17**.

“For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,”

God promises to award our suffering with great blessing and glory.

2. The Lord Jesus promised blessings for those who endured suffering here also.

“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. 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.” (Revelation 2:10–11)

Our Lord promises them the *stephanos* of life and assurance that eternal life not eternal separation from God awaits them.