

Today - **Jesus** addresses the **SUFFERING CHURCH** of **SMYRNA**

we are **going** to **see Jesus** say to those
who are **Suffering** in the Church today:

I KNOW what you're going **thru**
DO NOT FEAR what's ahead of **you**
BE FAITHFUL to the **end**

What **Jesus says** to Suffering Christians in the **First Century**
is what **Jesus says** to Suffering Christians **TODAY**

To the **Church of Smyrna** – Jesus issues
NO Rebuke - **NO Warning** - **NO Challenge**

Because This church is **STANDING FAST** - & being **REFINED**
in the fire of **SUFFERING**

& so **Jesus comes** to them with only **Encouragement**, **Assurance**,
& **Promises** of **Eternal Reward**

Let's Pray

By the earliest writers - **Smyrna** was called "**The FIRST City of Asia**"
Because of its Outward Beauty

It was a **Huge**, **Beautiful City**, on the **Shore** of a **Beautiful Harbor**
of the **Aegean Sea** - about **35 mi North** of **Ephesus**

But **just beneath** its **outward beauty** - **Smyrna** had an **incredibly**
DARK & **DEPRAVED** spiritual side

The Worst of its **Spiritual Darkness** - Was the **Worship** of the Patron **Goddess** of the city - **Cybele** (SIB-uh-Lee)

She was the **Mother goddess** - A forerunner of **Mother Earth** & a **Goddess of Fertility**

But her **worship** was one of the **Worst** in all of **paganism**

Let me **read** a **bit** of the **description** - of the **Worship** of this **Pagan Goddess** – just in **case** it **relates** to **anything** in our culture today

Rick Renner, Scholar & Historian

The act of castration was involved in the worship of Cybele, the ritual worship emphasized self-mutilation and self-castration. The male priests had to castrate themselves and then dress in feminine garments to be deemed worthy to be called her priestesses. Once their male organs were removed these new “priestesses” were considered a “third gender” – neither male or female. These castrated male “priestesses” took female names and their physical appearance became so feminine that they were frequently mistaken for genetically born women.

Guys, I am **talking** about 1st & 2nd Century **Pagan-Worship**

It just **SOUNDS LIKE** what **Public Schools** are trying to **help kids** do - without their **Parents** knowledge

This was **hard-core** - **pagan-goddess worship** – that **centered** around - the **Mutilation** of a **person’s gender**

& this **Self-Mutilation** “Worship” – **Prepared** the **people** for the **Torture & Death** of **thousands** of **Christians** in **Smyrna**

& it seems like it was **BOTH**

This Pagan Community – AND the JEWISH Community

that incited & provoked the PEOPLE & ROME

to turn Violently against the Christians

until Christians were Regularly Rounded up - & led into the
great stadium there - to be fed to the wild animals

Or to be lined around the stadium - dipped in Pitch & Lit on fire
as Nero had made famous years earlier

& - It became common for Christians to be mobbed & killed
while walking in the STREETS & MARKETPLACE

William Barclay

“Nowhere can life have been more dangerous for a Christian than in Smyrna . . . In Smyrna, above all places, for a man to enter the Christian Church was literally to take his life in his hands. In Smyrna the Church was a place for heroes.”

This Persecution developed a small - but STRONG Church

Their Devotion to Christ cost them EVERYTHING

& so their BOND with Christ - & with Each Other - was STRONG

We can learn MUCH from the Lord’s Letter
to the Suffering Church in SMYRNA

Revelation 2:8 (NLT)

8 *“Write this letter to the angel of the church in Smyrna.*

As with every Ltr - **Jesus directs** his message
to the **Angel** (Messenger) of the **church in Smyrna**

Again - **Most scholars** believe this is a **reference** to the **Pastor** of the
church

One of God’s **Most Famous Messengers** (Pastors)
of the church in **Smyrna** - was - - **POLYCARP**

Polycarp was a **personal friend** and a **disciple** of the **Apostle John**

Who **eventually** became the **pastor** of the **church** in **Smyrna**
& then the **Bishop** of all the **churches** in that **area**

His **Martyrdom** in **Smyrna** is one of the **most famous**

& we **have** a **complete record** of it - **FROM** that time

& it **says** – Polycarp was tied to a stake to be burned alive

But when the **Fire** was lit
the flames **formed a CYLINDER** around him

& a **Guard** had to **thrust a spear** into him to **kill** him

(again) - Revelation 2:8 (NLT)

8 “Write this letter to the angel of the church in Smyrna. This is the message from the one who is the First and the Last, who was dead but is now alive:

The FIRST thing Jesus does for the Suffering Church is to REMIND them - WHO He IS

& the FIRST thing WE need to know – when We are Suffering is WHO Jesus Christ IS – in OUR Lives

So Jesus says to John - Tell them - . ***This is the message from the one who is the First and the Last, who was dead but is now alive***

Jesus is IDENTIFYING with the Suffering Church in Smyrna

& so - He picks a description of Himself from Ch1 that would SPEAK specifically to this church

When Jesus says - ***This is the message from the one who is the First and the Last***

Jesus says – I am the First & the Last - the Beginning & the End the Alpha & Omega - The ALL in ALL

ALL meaning – Jesus is in FULL CONTROL

& for THIS church to GET THRU what they were going thru They needed to KNOW - Jesus was in FULL Control

& when We are suffering – WE need to know – Our Lord Jesus – is STILL in CONTROL

& then Jesus says to them
I am the one who was dead but is now alive

This would speak Volumes to the Church in Smyrna
Because they were DYING for their FAITH

Jesus says - I BECAME Dead - for YOU – In your place
and I AM ALIVE - Just as you will be alive

Grk Tense for “*Is Now Alive*” - is “AORIST” - meaning
Forever - Continually Alive - Eternally Alive

Jesus BECAME Dead - in OUR Place - to pay for OUR sins

But that taste of Death was just a brief interruption
in His Eternal Life - which Believers will share - IN Him

The Suffering Church (& suffering Believers) need to know
Christ has Already CONQUERED Death – ON our Behalf

He has FINISHED the Work - & Already WON that Battle

& BY OUR FAITH - We are So Identified with Him
that What HE has done - has been credited to US

Meaning Our Eternal Victory is SECURE - in HIM

When the Tribulation RISES - in our lives
WE need to know - IN CHRIST - We have Already WON

So **1st** - Jesus **IDENTIFIES** with the **Suffering Church**

& **then** - in **Rev 2:9** - Jesus **says** the words
we **need** to hear **so badly** - in **OUR OWN** times of **Tribulation**

Revelation 2:9 (NLT)

9 *"I know . . .*

7 Letters - **7 Churches** - **7 Times** Jesus says - **"I KNOW"**

& to the **Suffering Church**
This is the **"I KNOW"** of **Great Comfort**

To **some** of the **other churches**
the **"I KNOW"** from Jesus - is **NOT** so **Comforting**

But **to** the **Christian** who is - **Standing FIRM** in their Faith
in the **midst** of their **Suffering**

these **2 words** hold **TREMENDOUS COMFORT & ASSURANCE**

Jesus says - **"I KNOW"**

Are If YOU are in Difficulty - **Tribulation** – Suffering **Today**

& YOU are **Standing FIRM** in your **Faith** in **Christ**

Then **Jesus says** to you **"I KNOW What you are going thru"**
DO NOT FEAR - & **BE FAITHFUL** to the end

again - Revelation 2:9 (NLT)

9 (Jesus says) *"I know about your **suffering** and your **poverty** . . .*

Jesus is **Encouraging & Strengthening**
the **Suffering Church** in Smyrna

He's **not Reviewing** their "**Actions**" or their "**Works**"

Because **being FAITHFUL** in the **Midst of Suffering**
has a way of **PURIFYING** your **LIFE**

& So **Jesus** says

*"**I know your SUFFERING . . . and your POVERTY**"*

The **word** translated Suffering here
means ' "**to be under tremendous Pressure**"

Jesus says - **I KNOW** the **CRUSHING PRESSURE** you are Under

& **I know** your **POVERTY** – **Referring** to
the **general state** of their **Extreme Hardship** in life

& **When We** are in **SUFFERING & HARDSHIP** – **JESUS KNOWS**

& **In Fact - Jesus** made **TWO PROMISES** about this to every believer

John 16:33 (NLT)

***33 I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.**"*

BOTH of these Promises are Equally SURE

- 1) In **this World** – we **WILL** have **Trials** & **Sorrows** - **AND**
- 2) Jesus has **OVERCOME** those **Trials** & **Sorrows** **ON** our behalf

We have **GOT** to **Remember** - Our **VICTORY** in **JESUS CHRIST**
is **JUST AS SURE** – As our **Trials** & **Difficulties** are

& if you **want** to know **HOW to WALK** in that **Victory**

Write down 1 John 5:4-5 (NLT)

4 For every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith.

5 And who can win this battle against the world? Only those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

Jesus Christ has **CONQUERED** the Tribulation of this World

& Thru our **STEADFAST FAITH** in Him –
His Victory – **Becomes OUR Victory!!**

SO – Are you all up on the Acronym POV??

It means **POINT OF VIEW**

& **Jesus** gives us a **P.O.V. Lesson** here in **Rev 2:9**

Revelation 2:9 (again) (NLT)

9 (Jesus says) “I know about your suffering and your poverty—but you are rich! . . .

In the **LONG-RUN** – **WHO’S P.O.V.** is more **accurate**”
YOURS – or **GOD’S?**

This is a P.O.V. Problem

Because we have **mostly** a **Temporal**, **EARTHLY** – P.O.V.
But **Jesus** has – **Ultimately** – **ONLY** an **ETERNAL** P.O.V.

Jesus sees **PAST** the **temporal difficulties** of this World

& **he sees** – **How** these **temporal difficulties**
are **working** in a us – an **indescribable Eternal Blessing**

& so - **Jesus** says

I know about your suffering and your poverty—but you are rich!

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 is the **POWER** of the **Correct P.O.V.**

2 Corinthians 4:17–18 (NLT)

17 For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!

18 So we don't look at the troubles we can see now (our P.O.V.); rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen (God's P.O.V.). For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

Romans 8:18 (NLT)

18 Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later.

It is **all about** our **POINT OF VIEW**

Do we **have** - The **P.O.V. of the WORLD** – OR

Do we **have** - The **P.O.V. of HEAVEN**

& so **Jesus says** to the Suffering church

I know your **EARTHLY Poverty** - **But** you are **ETERNALLY Rich !!**

Now - **Jesus isn't finished** telling the **Suffering Church**
all that he **KNOWS** about them

Again Revelation 2:9 (ESV)

9 “ ‘I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and (I know) the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.”

There was a **strong** (& **angry**)

Jewish Community in **Smyrna** (**along** with the **pagans**)

& BOTH groups were committed to getting RID of the Christians

It **would be like** today - if **some group** had **unlimited financial backing** – say, from **George Soros**

& they **wanted to change** our **culture**
- & **Christians** were **“In The Way”**

They might **start campaigns** to get the **People** & the **Government**
to **see Christians** as **Narrow-Minded Extremists**, even **Racists**

& they'd **convince** this **Previously Christian Culture**
that they **needed** to **SILENCE** those **BAD Christians**

Which is **EXACTLY** what is **happening** in **OUR nation** Today

& so – thru a **MISINFORMATION CAMPAIGN**
to **Entire Culture turned on** the **Christians**

Which **led** to **Horrific Massacres**
of **many thousands** of **Believers**

in Rev 2:9 - **Jesus** **calls** **those** **doing** this **work** - *a synagogue of Satan* - **Because** they are **DOING Satan's** WORK

& you might think – right here - Jesus is going to **SAVE** the day & **RESCUE** His people - & **make** the **bad guys** - **PAY** !!!

BUT . . . That is **not** what **happens**

Instead - Jesus says - **Your faith** in the **Midst** of your **Tribulation**
has **made you ETERNALLY RICH**

And . . . **HOLD ON** - Because there's **MORE COMING** !!!

Revelation 2:10(a) (NLT)

10 Don't be afraid of what you are about to suffer. The devil will throw some of you into prison to test you. You will suffer for ten days . . .

The **simplest understanding** here is - Jesus says;
I am with you, I am your Victory – But . . . it's NOT over yet

Jesus **doesn't say**
I'm **going** to **make all** of your **hardship** go away

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| <p><u>instead</u> He says <u>1) I KNOW WHAT You're Going Through</u> <u>2) DO NOT FEAR</u> what's in front of you <u>3) BE FAITHFUL</u> to the end</p> |
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Let me ask you a Question

WOULD you want easy circumstances In your life
with NO JESUS?

Or would you want JESUS in your life
NO MATTER what the circumstances?

People Trade Jesus Christ

for the Pleasures of this World All the Time - DON'T DO THAT !!

ONLY in Jesus Christ - is there True VICTORY

ONLY in Jesus Christ - is there True Eternal RICHES

Don't Trade that - for EASY, Fleeting Circumstances - Today

Jesus says here in V.10 - for 10 days you will have Tribulation

This may be a reference to the fact that

There were 10 Periods of Roman Persecution

Under 10 Different Roman Emperors

& Christians were brutally persecuted

for the next 200 yrs after this letter was written

Until in the early 4th Century

When CONSTANTINE Married the Church with the State

Which - If you know anything how things went after that –
you would probably agree

that the Persecution was BY FAR BETTER for the church

But here (again) in **Rev 2:10** Jesus says
Some of you have **MORE Tribulation** to come

He's already said TWO Key things to these faithful believers

- 1) **I KNOW** your Suffering & your Poverty
- 2) **DO NOT FEAR** what's ahead of you

& **then** - at the **end of V.10** - He gives the **3rd EXHORTATION**

Revelation 2:10(b) (NLT)

10 . . . But if you remain faithful even when facing death, I will give you the crown of life.

REMAIN FAITHFUL – to the **END**
even when **Facing Death**

& Jesus **HIMSELF** will **give** you the **Crown of Life**

It is a **Victor's Crown** – Like in a Sporting Event - **Like A RACE**

Jesus Himself is **THERE** - at the **FINISH LINE**

With the **Crown of Life** for all **those** who **finish the Race**

THAT is what you're **Running** the **RACE FOR**
THAT is what you're Being **FAITHFUL FOR**

The **NET Bible** translates **v.10** as

I will give you the crown that is life itself.

JESUS CHRIST is **AT** the **FINISH LINE**

WAITING to Give you ***the crown that is life itself***

The Pleasures of This World - WON'T Be there

What you think you need in this World - WON'T matter

There is ONLY One thing that will Matter

Jesus waiting for you at the Finish Line

With the Crown THAT IS LIFE itself

There is a moment coming for EACH one of us

when THAT will be the ONLY thing that MATTERS

Make it matter TODAY !!

Run the Race with Full Faith in Jesus Christ

No matter What the Course Looks like

& Finally - if we're Faithful to Jesus - we can be sure of this

We will NOT EXPERIENCE - the SECOND DEATH !!

Revelation 2:11 (NLT)

11 "Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. Whoever is victorious will not be harmed by the second death."

There IS a Second Death - It is Eternal Separation from God

& the only way to Avoid it - is to put
your Full Faith in Jesus Christ ALONE

& then - HOLD ON to Him

THRU the Difficulties of this Fallen World

Don't be moved by the **Tribulations** & **Difficulties**
that **you face** in this **World**

Put your **Full FAITH & TRUST**
in **Jesus Christ** as your **Savior & your LORD**

& **HEAR Him** say to you **Personally**

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| <p><u>I KNOW</u> what you are going <u>thru</u> <u>DO NOT FEAR</u> – what lies ahead in this world <u>BE FAITHFUL</u> to the <u>end</u></p> |
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& I will **be there** - to give you ***the Crown that is Life itself***

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says

Let's Pray