

7/2/23

The Suffering Church, Smyrna

Rev. 2:8-11

As we continue in our series of the seven churches of Revelation, we come to the second church, Smyrna.

* This is the shortest letter of all seven!

These messages are applicable to all of us today and not merely to the churches of John's day.

Keep in mind that the seven messages to the seven churches represent four things as we noted before.

1. A local church in John's day.
2. A period of history.
3. A type of congregation that can and will exist throughout the church age.
4. A type of Christian in their personal relationship to the Lord.

There is also a pattern in these seven letters to the churches that is found consistently:

1. The proclamation.
2. The commendation
3. The condemnation.
4. The exhortation.
5. The application.

We want to begin our study again looking at the historical background of the church of Smyrna to help

us better understand the message sent to her by our Lord Jesus Christ. Rev. 2:8-11

I. The historical information about Smyrna.

A. The city of Smyrna.

1. The city was located 40 miles N.E. of Ephesus in modern day Turkey called Izmir, it had a population of 200,000.
2. The city was founded as a Greek colony about 1000 B.C. and was a very wealthy and prosperous city, second to Ephesus, a rival, with a harbor narrow enough to close at time of war, for her protection.
3. In 600 B.C. the city was destroyed by the Lydians, rebuilt by Lysimachus and Antigonus in 290 B.C. as a model city.
4. Smyrna as a port city was successful in export trade by commanding the mouth of the Hermus River valley with a direct trade route from India and Persia to Rome.
5. Smyrna was a beautiful city, men called it "The ornament of Asia," "The Crown of Asia", "The fairest of the cities of Ionia".
6. The city was brilliant with great architecture, buildings, a stadium for its yearly games, a theater, one of the largest in Asia Minor that sat 20,000 on the slopes of Mount Pagus and flourishing schools of science and medicine.

7. The acropolis on Mt. Pagus was called the crown or garland of Smyrna, coins described the city as “First of Asia in beauty and size.”
8. The city had a large Jewish population and with her allegiance to Rome made it very difficult to live as a Christian.
9. The name Smyrna is of Semetic origin and means bitter, derived from its commercial product myrrh from trees, which had to be crushed to release the fragrance.
10. The myrrh was used for perfume, embalming, holy anointing oil for priest and purification for women. Ex. 30:23; Est. 2:12; Jn. 19:39
 * It yielded its fragrance being crushed, Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes.
11. Matthew mentions the gifts of the Magies to the Christ child, gold, frankincense and myrrh; symbolic of deity, royalty and death. Matt. 2:11

B. The church of Smyrna.

1. Paul could have been directly or indirectly responsible for its founding, but is uncertain.
2. Smyrna covers the period of church history, from A.D.100-312
3. Smyrna means the escaping ones, known as the suffering church, who had been crushed and was a sweet smelling aroma to the Lord.

4. Consequently it was a pure church, holy, faithful, a rich church in spiritual life.

C. The religion of Smyrna.

1. The city had a famous thoroughfare called the Street of God, which curved around Mt. Pagus, 500 feet above the harbor and at either end was a temple, one to a local variety of Cybele and the other of Zeus.
2. Inbetween the beautiful paved street that traversed the city from east to west with it's many temples to Apollo, Nemeseis, Aphrodite and Asclepios.
3. Smyrna became one with Emperor worship, the first to build a temple in honor of the emperor Tiberius and his mother Julia A.D. 23, therefore earned special favor as a free city under Tiberius and successive emperors.
4. Smyrna being a center for emperor worship, became compulsory under Domitian in A.D. 81-96, all had to burn a pinch of incense on the alter to the godhead of Caesar and declare, “Caesar is Lord”, after which one received a certificate.
5. Many Christians died refusing to utter such words, many were imprisoned and tortured, much like during the Japanese occupation of Korea in 1937-40, as they ordered Christians to worship at their Shinto shrines.

This was the historical information about Smyrna!

II. The proclamation. vs. 8

- A. The identity of the recipient of the letter is, “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write.” vs. 8a
1. The word angel “eggelos” like in the church of Ephesus means a messenger from God.
 2. The context again is to the Pastor of the church, residing over the congregation.
* Polycarp was the bishop of Smyrna, a disciple of John!
 3. The word church “ekklesia” as we have noted means “to call out”, those called out of the world into the Kingdom of God’s dear Son, found 115 times in the New Testament.
 - a. 3 times in the gospels.
 - b. 62 times in Paul’s letters.
 - c. 24 times in Acts.
 - d. 2 time in Hebrews
 - e. 1 time in James.
 - f. 3 times in 3 John.
 - g. 20 times in Revelation.
* Acts is the most numerous, second is First Corinthians, third is Revelation.
 4. The name Smyrna means “bitter” yet it produced a sweet fragrance to God.
 - a. The command to Smyrna as to Ephesus was to identify and address her personal situation of suffering.
 - b. The period of church history covers from A.D. 100-312.

- c. The apostles of Jesus were all dead by a martyrs deaths, John was the last and the only one who died a natural death.
 - d. The command to write is repeated to every church.
 - 1) The word write “grapho” means to record the words of Jesus that John heard, John is only the instrument.
 - 2) This is an imperative aorist active command.
- B. The identity of the writer is Jesus Christ. vs. 8b-d
1. The words are of Jesus not of John, “These things says”. vs. 8b
 - a. The chain of command we have seen, God, to His Son, His angel and to His servant John, but it is the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Rev. 1:1
 - b. The blessings was and is to the one who reads. Rev. 1:3
 - c. The seven messages were to be sent to all seven churches. Rev. 1:11
 - d. The division of the letter is given so there is no way to mess up the book. Rev. 1:19
 2. The two characteristics that identify Jesus are appropriate to the church as we saw in Ephesus. vs. 8b-d
 - a. The first, “The First and the Last”, once again is taken from the first chapter of the “Glorified Christ”. vs. 8b; Rev. 1:17f

- 1) Ramsay and other commentators suggest the term alludes a contrast to Smyrna's claim to be the first of Asia in beauty and emperor loyalty, while that only was deserved by Jesus.
- 2) He is the beginning and the end, the source of all things.
* "I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no God." Is. 44:6e-f
- 3) He is the eternal existing One, exists of himself, through himself and by himself. Is. 57:15
* "For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones."
- 4) He depends on nothing outside or apart from himself and He takes full responsibility for everything created through Him and is held together by him. Col. 1:16-17; Rev. 4:11
- 5) He is the pre-eminent head of the church and the Judge of all.
- b. The second, "who was dead and came to life." Rev. 1:18c-d
* Literally "became dead" a historical aorist stating only the past fact.

- 1) The death of Jesus was not some fabricated event as the "Passover Plot" suggests, but a literal one, as Jesus said from the cross, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.'" Having said this, He breather His last." Lk. 23:46
- 2) Our Lord identified himself to these persecuted and suffering saints, as One who has also suffered buts conquered, being able to comfort, for He is the God of all comfort. 2Cor. 1:3-5; Heb. 4:15-16
- 3) Remember Myrrh was announcing his life of suffering. Matt. 2:11
- 4) Wine was mixed with Myrrh and offered to Him on the cross. Mk. 15:32
- 5) Myrrh mixed with aloes was for His embalming. Jn. 19:39-40
- 6) The personal experience of Jesus was that He tasted death for everyone, destroying him who had the power of death. Heb. 2:9, 14
- 7) The Lord Jesus by His death paid the atoning price to redeem lost man by becoming sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made righteousness of God in Him. 2Cor. 5:21
- 8) The Lord rose from the grave three days after, which is the cornerstone of

the Gospel proclamation without it
there is no good news.

This was the proclamation to Smyrna!

III. The commendation. vs. 9

- A. The words of Jesus were about their commitment, “I know your works.” vs. 9a
 - 1. The word know “oida” to perceive intuitively again.
 - a. Jesus knew what they were doing and had done in the past.
 - b. Nothing escapes Him. Heb. 4:13
 - 2. The word works “ergon” means what they had been occupied in and undertaking to do.
 - a. The word works some say does not appear in what some consider to be the best manuscripts.
 - b. The commendation of “works” is found in all other of the six churches, it is hard to believe the suffering church would not have works or be commended for them.
 - c. The work of God cost them everything as we will see, even their very lives!
- B. The words of Jesus were about their dedication, “I know your “tribulation”. vs. 9b
 - 1. The word tribulation “thlipsis” means a pressing together or pressure.
 - a. That which causes affliction.
 - b. That which causes distress.

- * So often we are prone to think we have to inform God about our situation or feeling yet nothing escapes him. Heb. 4:13
- 2. Jesus told His disciples that in the world they would have tribulation, but were to be of good cheer for He had overcome the world. Jn. 16:33
- 3. John was a companion in the tribulation and kingdom of patience of Jesus Christ, on Patmos for the word of God. Rev. 1:9
- 4. Paul knew and experienced persecution and suffering as His Lord.
 - a. “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. 2Tim. 3:12
 - b. “For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.” 2Tim. 1:12
* This was Paul’s last will and testament!
 - c. “This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.” Tit 3:8
 - d. Foxes book of Martyrs recounts the horror of Christians who have suffered from the beginning! Heb. 11:34, 37-38

- e. From Nero to Dometian Christians were dipped in wax, crucified and lit as torches, hot led was poured on their bellies, wild dogs were losed to tear at them as they were sown in animal skins, and they were fed to the lions, etc.
- C. The words of Jesus were about their loss due to their faith, “I know your poverty (but you are rich).” vs. 9c
1. The word poverty “ptocheia” means extreme poverty, nothing at all.
 - a. The word is used for the Christians in Mecedonia, who were in deep poverty yet abounded in their giving to the poor saints at Jerusalem. 2Cor. 8:2
 - b. The word is used of the poverty Jesus took on Himself to be rich in Him.
 - * “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might be rich.” 2Cor. 8:9
 2. The pressures of persecution for their faith affected their finances being boycotted and marked as Christians, being financial ruined.
 3. The desperation of not being able to meet the family needs had to be confronted with the same faith that brought about their ruin.

- D. The words of Jesus were about their true wealth, “but you are rich”. vs. 9d
1. How could Jesus say this to them?
 2. This was a church that had received persecution and were going to experience a lot more. 64-312 A.D.
 3. The church was told, “But you are rich”, “plousios” which means in Christian virtues and eternal possessions, certainly not material possessions.
 - * The unsearchable riches of Christ. Eph. 3:8
 - a. We get our English word “plutocrat” a wealthy class that controls a government.
 - b. The members of the church of Smyrna had little or no money banked, but an abundance of treasures in heaven.
 4. The church of Smyrna stood in sharp contrast to the church of Laodicea, the apostate church. Rev. 3:17
 - a. The world thinks that the measure of a man’s success or value is in the abundance of things he possessed and Jesus warned His disciples. Lk. 12:15
 - b. Paul says, “As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing as poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” 1Cor. 6:10
 - c. Hebrews reminds them of how they had endured the spoiling of their things for the name of Christ. Heb. 10:34

- d. James reminds us of God's perspective, "Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?" Ja. 2:5
- e. We are not to store up treasures here on earth but heaven, meaning that our heart are not to be dependent on them, not that we can not have a saving or be good stewards for the future! Matt. 6:19-21
 * Remember the rich man that trusted and depended on his riches and not considered the true riches, "You fool, your soul is required tonight and then whose things will these be?" Lk. 12:16-21

E. The words of Jesus were about their enemies, "I knew the blasphemers of those who say are Jews but are not, but are a synagogue of Satan." vs. 9e-f

- 1. The word blasphemy "blasphemia" means slander or injurious speech against Jesus and the saints or another's good name. vs. 9e
 - a. It can be towards man.
 - b. It can be towards God.
- 2. The Lord tells them that the individuals said they were Jews, but were not. vs. 9e
 - a. The Scriptures are clear that not all who said they were Israelites were.

- 1) A person was not a Jew by mere ethnicity or outward circumcision, but of the heart. Rom. 2:28-29
- 2) They being ignorant of God's righteousness, were seeking to establish their own righteousness, having not submitted to the righteousness of God. Rom. 10:3
- 3) Not all are Israel, but those by faith in the promise. Gal. 3:16, 29
- b. There are many who say they are Christians, but are not.
 - 1) By contradicting the word.
 - 2) By living contrary to the word.
- 3. The Lord identifies these blasphemers as being of the synagogue of Satan. vs. 9f
 - a. These were assembled as the word synagogue means, but were the assembly of Satan, means adversary, opposer, that planned together to bring their slanderous and vicious attacks against the Christian.
 - * This does not mean they met in a literally synagogue, but only that they identified themselves with the Old economy of Israel.
 - b. This is the first time it is revealed in the Revelation the ultimate source of the persecution of Christians, Satan.
 - * The revelation will unfold more as the Revelation progresses. Rev. 2:13; 3:9; 9:11; 12:9-10, 12; 13:4; 20:2, 7, 10

- c. The Lord Jesus told the Jews of His day, “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.” Jn. 8:44
* Remember the word “devil” means slanderer, he was the source of the blasphemy at Smyrna.
- d. The Lord Jesus said the gates of hell would not prevail against His church. Matt. 16:18
 - 1) The first century church was evidence of this, and the entire periods of persecution have never destroyed her.
 - 2) The church in China during Mao’s cultural revolution did not quench her life, but ignited it. (Church in China)
 - 3) Modern day Rwanda and Sudan.
 - 4) Persecution of church is always through Satan, but the more he persecutes her, the more she grows and is purified. Heb. 11
- e. The only thing that ruins the church is compromise and luxury.
 - 1) The worse thing that ever happened to the church was when Constantine married the church to the state, as we’ll see in Pergamos.

- 2) No longer dependent on God, but dependant on man, the arm of flesh.
- 3) No longer having a living and daily relationship, but becoming deaf and blind, depending on a system and sure pattern.
- 4) The Kingdom Parables run parallel to the seven churches. Lehman Strauss.
- 4. The Lord has no condemnation for the church of Smyrna or Philadelphia.
 - a. Smyrna was a suffering church.
 - b. Smyrna had no time to play games only remember their Lord and depend on Him!

This was the commendation to Smyrna!

IV. The exhortation. vs. 10

- A. The church was not to be afraid of the coming sufferings, “Do not fear those things which you are about to suffer.” vs. 10a
 - 1. This is an imperative command, present middle voice to be obeyed by the individual, literally, stop being afraid.
 - a. The word fear “phobeo”, means to be struck with fear and frightened.
 - b. This is a repeated command throughout Scripture to men and women of God being afraid, it is human as laughter.
 - 2. Their fear was over the things that were about to come upon them in the future.
 - a. They had suffered in the past.

- b. They were suffering in the present.
- c. They would suffer in the future.
- * The viciousness of Rome and the manner of instilling fear through torturous deaths was well known and witness by all.
 - 1) We must remember that God will never ask of us anything we cannot endure. 1Cor. 10:13
 - * He will not allow us to be tested more than we are able, but with every testing show us a way of escape.
 - 2) We must never forget God never puts us through anything He has not gone through Himself.
 - 3) He'll never leave us nor forsake us. Heb. 13:5
 - 4) He'll be with us to the ends of the age. Matt. 28:20

B. The church was to know that it was going to be a time of testing. vs. 10b-e

- 1. The words of Jesus were, "Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison," vs. 10b-c
 - a. He already told them that He is the source of their persecution, devil means slanderer and accuser. vs. 9f
 - b. He had told his disciples that when they would be brought before magistrates, that the Holy Spirit would give to them the words at the very moment. Lk. 12:11

- * "Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say."
- 2. The words of Jesus gave the purpose, "that you may be tested." vs. 10d
 - a. The word tested "peirazo" means to make a trial for the purpose of revealing quantity, what he thinks, or how he will behave himself.
 - 1) The word is use of Jesus as he was tempted of the devil in the wilderness in a good sense to defeat Satan and reveal character. Matt. 4:1
 - 2) The word is used in a bad sense when Ananias and Sapphira agreed together to tempt God. Acts 5:9
 - b. The believer is to expect and understand the trials of our faith are normal and intense in the life of the Spirit, God enabling and giving a way of escape. 1Pet. 1:6-7; 4:12-16
 - * "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached

for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part, He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter."

3. The words of Jesus gave them the time period, "and you will have tribulation for ten days." vs. 10e
 - a. The ten days has been interpreted either the ten Roman edicts or symbolically to represent a short time?
 - 1) Nero. 54 A.D. 6) Maximina 235
 - 2) Domitian 81 7) Decius 249
 - 3) Trojan 98 8) Vailerian 254
 - 4) Antonius 117 9) Aurelian 270
 - 5) Severus 195 10) Diocletian 284 *

The worst was Diocletian, lasting ten years!
 - b. The manner was diverse.
 - 1) Nero dipped men in pitch and tar, crucified them to set them on fire, boiled them in oil, pour hot lead on their bellies, burned them at the stake.
 - 2) Diocletian tried to destroy the bible by public burning of the scriptures.

- 3) Polycarp was in his 90's and was asked to recant and said, "86 years I have served my Lord and he has never wronged me, how can I deny him now?" The soldier asked him to recant and spend his last days in peace for the flames would be hot, to which Polycarp responded, not merely as those you will experience", 155 A.D.
- 5) Christians were fed to lion in the third century.
- c. Some of the accusations presented.
 - 1) Cannibalism, due to the Lord's table.
 - 2) Orgies because or the love feast.
 - 3) Dividing families due to converts.
 - 4) Being atheist for worshipping in spirit
 - 5) Political disloyal having only one Lord.
 - 6) Pyromaniacs, stating judgment by fire.
 - * Satan is the source, but men are the instrument!
- d. The question is why does God allow it?
 - 1) God is sovereign, can the clay say to the potter, "What are you doing?"
 - * Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. Ps. 116:15
 - 2) Paul tells us for our discipline. 1Cor. 9:24-27
 - 3) God's way to keep us humble. 1Cor. 11:30-32; 2Cor. 12:7
 - 4) For our perfection. Ja. 1:1-3

5) To attest to the power of God. Acts 9:16

C. The church was to be faithful to Jesus, “Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life.” vs. 10f-g

1. The word be “ginou”, is an imperative command in the present middle voice.
 - * Once again to be done by each person, no one else can do it.
2. The word “pistos” means one who kept his plighted faith, worthy of trust, one that can and is reliable. vs. 10f
 - a. G. Campbell Morgan points out that the word “faithful” is from the root which means to be convinced.
 - b. The same word is used by Paul when he reminds us that it is He, Jesus who is faithful that calls you and I. 1Thess. 5:24
 - c. Peter uses the word reminding us we are to commit ourselves to God as a faithful Creator in our sufferings. 1Pet. 4:19
2. The extreme cost is the request.
 - a. Death is separation of our soul and spirit from our bodies.
 - b. Death removes us from this tent placing us in the presence of God. 2Cor. 5:1-8
 - * They were to remember Jesus had been dead, but was alive, had conquered both hell and death, for He holds the keys of Hades and death. Rev. 1:18

3. The promise is that He will reward the individual, “and I will give you the crown of life.” vs. 10g
 - a. The word crown “stephanos” refers to a victors crown, of joy and festivity.
 - b. The crown will be given to the overcomers, but they will all be placed at the Lord’s feet. Rev. 4:10
 - c. Those of Smyrna would be familiar with the term “the crown of Smyrna” which no doubt alluded to the beautiful skyline formed around the city by the “hill Pagos”, with the stately public buildings on its rounded sloping sides.
 - d. The crown usually was a garland of flowers that were chiefly worn in the worship of Pagan gods such as Cybele or Bacchus, who was pictures on coins with a crown of battlements.
 - * “Blessed is the man that endure temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love him.” Ja. 1:12; 1Pet. 5:4
 - e. It seems that many times we must wear a crown of affliction before we can appreciate the crown of victory.
 - 1) Jesus is our example by His crown of thorn.
 - 2) In the world everything that seems to be good, so pleasurable and you can

- have right now, appears to be sweet but afterwards turns out bitter.
- 3) While in the Lord, some of the most bitter things though they don't make sense and I don't understand, in obedience they seem to turn to sweetness and the glory of God.

This was the exhortation to Smyrna!

V. The Application. vs. 11

- A.** The declaration is an invitation for anyone, "He who has an ear." vs. 11a
1. There must be a willingness to listen.
 2. There is a sense of responsibility and accountability on what was heard.
 3. There is culpability to every person who does not listen.
 - a. To those that much is given much is required, having the greater judgment!
 - b. The words, "He who has an ear", were favorite words of Jesus to those who were hearing!
- B.** The declaration is an invitation to obey, "let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." vs. 11b
1. The word hear "akouo" means to be endowed with the faculty of hearing, not deaf.

- a. We get our word acute, hearing that is keen, sensitive.
 - b. Literally, let him accurately and effectively hear!
2. The obedience is not limited to the message to the church of Smyrna, but to all seven messages and all the Revelation.
- a. The phrase "let him hear", an imperative command, aorist active, refers to all the messages by each believer and the churches, plural.
 - b. The Spirit is the speaker in the person about Jesus, the One Jesus sent to represent Him, He would never speak of Himself or bring glory to Himself, only Jesus! .
- C.** The declaration is an invitation with promise of reward, "He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death." vs. 11c
1. The promise of the crown of life has already been declared as the promise to those who are faithful unto death.
 2. The one to receive the reward is the overcomer.
 - a. It is in the present participle, timeless.
 - b. It is the faith of the Christian that overcomes the world. 1Jn. 5:4-5
2. The overcomer shall not be hurt by the second death .
- a. The exemption is from Second Death.

- b. The second death is described for us at the “White Throne Judgment”. Rev. 20:6, 13-14; 21:8
- 1) “Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. It is eternal separation from the presence of God.” Rev. 20:6
 * The believer will receive his glorified body at the rapture.
 - a) The first resurrection includes all who have trusted in God and been redeemed, O.T. saints, N.T. saints and Tribulation saints. Dan. 12:1-2
 - b) Christ first, everyone else in their own order. 1Cor 15:20-23
 - 2) “And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.” Rev. 20:13-14
 - a) The unbeliever is born once and dies twice, physically and spiritually, the believer is born twice, physically and spiritually and dies once

physically, except for the rapture generation.

b) We have passed from death unto life.

3) “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” Rev. 21:8

- c. As myrrh was used for perfume, holy oil and, embalming but it came about by the process of being crushed, so the church of Smyrna became a sweet smelling fragrance unto the Lord, it became the holiness of God and became part of the church preserved by God’s love, never to decay or deteriorate. (Acts church grew.)
 * Today’s church of Smyrna is for the most part in China, Africa, Cuba etc.

Illustration

In 1998 I received a letter from a ministry that is going on in China and it told of a 21 year old girl that was arrested for gathering house church. Her skull was fracture, she was beaten so sever in the breast area that she has a heart condition now, one of her kidneys burst yet she lied silently in her bed in the hospital. As an old brother came to comfort her, he was attempting to find words to comfort her. Recognizing this she said, “This is what God allowed.

I am grateful now in this bed, because of His name, I am here. So that , don't trouble your heart for me, but please remember those who treated me and caused me to be in bed. Please pray for them, but not me.”

Another brother was imprisoned and did not know why God allowed it, even becoming very sick himself. But there was a man in the cell under the most deplorable conditions being paralyzed and very sick he was unable to care for himself and he constantly had defecated on himself to the point that his pants had deteriorated. He helped this man and cared for him and told him that he did it not do it because he was so good but because Jesus loved him and God also loved him. The man responded by saying, “You do not have to speak anymore. There was nobody, nobody tried to come up to me in the past years. But not you, you reached me right away as you came up to me in the past years. There were lots of people that passed by in the past, but there was nobody like you, as you did come. The time you moved on towards me, since that time, I was ready to open my heart to you. I believe you Jesus.

* The author of the letter says, “Our Chinese Christian friends, they often quote John 12:24.

“Most assuredly, I say to you, Unless a grain of wheat fall to the ground and die, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain”.

* You want to endure the bitter things of life and allow them to be a sweet fragrance to Jesus?

1. Remember to stop being afraid Jesus has been where you have been, are, or will be!

- 2.** Remember Jesus has conquered death and Hades!
- 3.** Remember to be faithful until death!

This was the application to Smyrna!

Conclusion

The entire message to the church of Smyrna is to be faithful in her sufferings unto death!

- 1.** The message speaks of a local church in John's day!
- 2.** The message speaks of a period in History, 100-312 A.D.!
- 3.** The message speaks of a type of Church that will exist through the church age, Pentecost to the rapture!
- 4.** The message speaks of a type of Christian in every church!