

“Crushed”  
Revelation 2:8-11

~ LET'S PRAY ~

WE'LL... I'VE TITLED TODAY'S MESSAGE:

- “Crushed”

TURN TO REVELATION 2...

- And follow along as I read (vv.8-11) NLT

~ INTRO ~

TODAY...

- We see Jesus speaking to...
  - The Church of Smyrna!
- This was one of two churches...
  - That received no criticism from Jesus.

POINT #1 – THE HISTORY:

NOW... SMYRNA WAS A CHURCH...

- Located about 35-miles north of Ephesus...
  - With a population of about 100,000 people.
- This City was known for advanced sciences & medicine.
  - And it housed the Temple of Zeus.

THE NAME SMYRNA COMES FROM...

- A word meaning bitter.
  - Related to the Greek word myrrh.

REMARKABLY...

- This City is still with us today...
  - And goes by the Turkish name = Izmir.

SMYRNA...

- Led the way in Emperor worship... during the 1<sup>st</sup> century...
  - And they built the first temple to Tiberius Caesar.

YEARS LATER...

- Under Domitian...

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- Emperor worship was forced upon all citizens.

ONCE A YEAR...

- Citizen had to offer a pinch of incense...
  - And say, “Caesar is Lord!”

IF THEY DID THIS...

- They received a yearly certificate...
  - Which would allow them to continue working & trading.

THIS CHURCH...

- Lived what they professed...
  - Even when it cost them everything!
    - They would not bow to Caesar.

CHURCH HISTORY...

- Tells of the Apostle John’s disciple... Polycarp (circa. 155-AD)...
  - Refused to denounce Christ...
    - And was burned at the stake at 86-years old.

JUST BEFORE THEY LITE HIM ON FIRE HE SAID...

*“Eighty and six years have I served Him and never once has He wronged me. How then shall I blaspheme my King who has saved me.”*

GOD GIVES US THE GRACE TO STAND...

- When we need it.
  - (2 Chron 16:9)(a) NLT

**POINT #2 – POWERFUL INSIGHTS:**

(v.8)

JESUS IS...

- *“...the first and the last...”*
  - When times of suffering come...
    - Pain can overwhelm us...
      - But it can never take our hope!

Jesus wanted them to know... He knew exactly what was happening!

- *He was dead, but came to life.*

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- The crushing was birthing something new.

(vv.9-10)

NOW JESUS GIVES...

- Insight as to what's going to happen to them.
- *Works* = Business, employment, industry.
  - Remember the situation these Christians faced.

As they made a choice to stand for Christ.

- They were cut-off from **the right** to make a living.
  - Because they refused to engage in emperor worship...
    - They weren't given a certificate to participate in trade.

LET'S PUT THIS INTO **21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY PERSPECTIVE**...

- Because Satan's tactics surface in the same way today.

- 1) **Stereo types**: Christians are labeled as malcontents with phrases like: Homophobic / intolerant / bigots / hypocrites.
- 2) **Marginalized**: Christians are told to keep our beliefs private... they're not allowed in public because we offend others. And the Christian is treated as insignificant in – media / politics / & education. Our influence is marginalized.
- 3) **Threatened**: Christians run the risk of demotion, termination, and disassociation because our beliefs no longer fit the general population. So we're told to be quiet or suffer financial loss at our jobs.
- 4) **Intimidation**: Christians are forced to accept abortion, homosexuality, gender dysphoria, and other morally misguided issues. Intimidation surfaces thru the idea that “*Acceptance & Tolerance*” can only be demonstrated if we celebrate moral disfigurement.
- 5) **Litigation**: When all else fails... Christian detractors are taken to court and punished by destroying them financially and holding our beliefs as repressive and dangerous to society. (Think about the baker in Littleton).

MAY WE REMEMBER (Mark 6:18-19)...

- When John the Baptist spoke up, it cost him his head.

**POINT #3 – AN OUTCOME TO REMEMBER:**

**FIVE POINTS OF SUFFERING:**

- 1) *Tribulation* = Crushing pressure...
  - Grinding grain into flour...
  - Crushing grapes for the juice.

**REMEMBER...**

- The name of this city (**Smyrna**)...
  - Comes from the Greek word myrrh...
    - Which gives off a beautiful aroma when crushed.
- 2) *Poverty* = Absolutely destitute of the necessities for life.
  - They faced huge economic pressures for being Christians.
- 3) *Blasphemy* = Christianity was birthed from Judaism... and Jesus desired the Jews to accept their messiah.
  - But instead the Jews persecuted the Christians.

\*Perhaps the hardest wrongs to handle...

- Are ones that come from those who should have treated you right.

4) *Prison* = Loss of freedom.

5) *Death* = Loss of physical life.

(2 Tim 3:12) NKJV

*“... all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”*

**HERE’S THE INSIGHT...**

- On how to get thru persecution & suffering.

#1) There’s a limited scope...

- *“...you will have tribulation ten days...”*
  - There’s a defined season – this too shall pass!

#2) We’re to arm ourselves with the mind of Christ

- (1 Peter 4:1-2) NLT

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*~ IN CLOSING ~*

THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA...

- Suffered persecution...
- And it was under this crushing pressure that...
  - The fragrance of Christ flowed thru their lives.

(Phil. 4:6-7) NKJV

*~ LET'S PRAY ~*