

The Poor Church That Was Rich (Message #6)

Revelation 2:8-11

Smyrna is the second church addressed in Revelation. Prophetically, Smyrna covers the period from AD 100 - 312. It was a port city about 40 miles north of Ephesus, famous for its commercialism. There were around 200,000 people there. The main export of the city was myrrh, a spice used in embalming and perfumes. This seems significant because the church was persecuted for their faith, some even to death. These martyrs provided a sweet smell for the Lord.

Smyrna was also known as a religious center. There were various temples to the Greek gods. It was a city of wealth and culture. The church was persecuted because of their opposition to the sin and idolatry. Sounds a little like our world today. They are considered the “martyr church.” Let’s look at the church that faced persecution but was encouraged by Christ to continue for His glory. I want to preach on the thought: [The Poor Church that was Rich](#).

I. The Authority of the Church (8) – [And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive.](#) The word [church](#) means a “[called out assembly](#)”. This was no ordinary group, they had been called out. They were unlike most of that day; they weren’t serving idols, but a risen Savior.

- The message was given by Christ himself. Notice His authority, [v.8](#). He is the [First and the Last, the I AM!](#) He [which was dead, and is alive](#). Jesus also suffered, was rejected and crucified at the hands of sinful men, but He overcame death and rose again victorious.
- This wasn’t a group with no purpose, no future; they were the church of the living God. He was their authority for existence and reason to press on.
- We have the same authority today. We aren’t serving a dead idol, but a risen Savior. We can declare like Job, [I know that my Redeemer liveth!](#) I don’t have to look to others for my authority. I am not depending on the Vatican to tell me how to worship. Christ is my example, my authority, and I am determined to follow Him.

II. The Acknowledgment of the Church (9a) – Christ was well aware of their position. He knew where they were and the problems they faced. [Nah.1:7 – The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust him.](#) We may feel at times that we are alone, but Christ knows those who are His. He knew some things about Smyrna. It is interesting to note that of the seven letters, five of the churches were chastised, and two were not, Smyrna and Philadelphia.

A. He Knew Their Works – I know thy works. Christ was aware of the work they were doing through the faith. He realized they were laboring in the harvest, even in the face of death.

- He is aware of our works as well. Payday may not be Friday, but it is coming. Just keep working for the Lord; He is aware! You may feel that your work is in vain and unnoticed; just keep pressing on.

B. He Knew Their Worry – I know thy works, and tribulation. He was aware of their tribulation. Tribulation has a meaning of pressure; or pressing together. It carries the idea of a great millstone, crushing and grinding the chaff from the wheat. He was aware of the great pressure they were under.

- Our churches today are under pressure. There is pressure from within and without, pressure from the pew and the public. We can be strong under that pressure because Christ knows our worry. We don't have to bear it alone.

C. He Knew Their Wealth – I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich.) Poverty has the idea of "absolutely destitute." They lived in a wealthy city, but didn't share in the wealth of this world. The church was in poverty by the world's standard, but they were rich in Christ.

- I could be living in a cardboard box without a dime, but I would still be rich in Christ. Pr.13:7 – There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches. One life will soon be past, only what is done for Christ will last. Our wealth isn't measured by this world's standard. We have a Father in heaven who owns it all. The church is wealthy in Christ Jesus!

I. The Authority of the Church (8)

II. The Acknowledgment of the Church (9a)

III. The Adversity of the Church (9b) – I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. The church dealt with much opposition. There were Jews who persecuted them because of Christ. These were of the synagogue of Satan. They appeared outwardly religious, but were inwardly rebellious.

- Satan likes to use those who have religion, but no relationship. There are many today who are religious, but are bound for hell. The Bible warns of those having a form of religion, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away.

- We have an adversary who desires to destroy, but we must remain faithful. **II Ti.3:12, 14** – **Yea, and all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.** We are living in a dark day, but we must press on for the glory of God. They dealt with Satan and so shall we. We must be on guard against his attack. I praise God for the day that he will be forever bound.

I. The Authority of the Church (8)

II. The Acknowledgment of the Church (9a)

III. The Adversity of the Church (9b)

IV. The Assurance of the Church (10-11) – Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

- They seemingly had nothing to rejoice about. There was suffering and persecution on every hand. It would have been easy to want to give up and quit. Some would be cast in prison; some would even die for their faith.
- Some believe the **10 days of tribulation** refers to the persecution of the church under the 10 Roman emperors from AD 64 - 312. It's also possible that Jesus meant more suffering would come; it would be severe, but it would not last forever.
- It was here that the Bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp, a disciple of John was brought to be burned at the stake. He was called upon to deny Christ and proclaim Caesar as Lord. To which he replied, "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never once wronged me; how then shall I blaspheme my King, Who hath saved me?"
- This wasn't a message to shout about. They probably had hoped for a message of deliverance, but theirs was a message of endurance.
- Christ did deliver a message of hope. **Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.** He promised a crown of life to the faithful. A crown, (wreath or garland), was given to those who were victorious. What a picture to those who overcome.

- Jesus also promised life beyond the grave, [v.11](#). **He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.**

We know that the second death refers to the judgment of God reserved for those who deny Christ. Those in Smyrna may have been called upon to give their very lives for their faith, but death would not be the end, only the beginning. The great evangelist D.L. Moody said this, "He who is born once will die twice; he who is born twice will die once."

- I can't say what lies ahead for us; there may be some dark days to come. For the saved, there is a brighter day ahead. [Ja.1:12](#) – **Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.** What a day, glorious day that will be!

This world is difficult at best, but this isn't the end. Take courage in the Lord; He is our High Tower, our Hiding Place. We are rich in Him!