Revelation 2:8-11

Christ's Message to Smyrna

Strength for the Persecuted



Summary of Christ's Letter to Smyrna

Christ's strength

The first and last, who died and rose again

Commendation

“I know your persecution and poverty, but you are rich”

Condemnation

None

Warning

Do not be afraid; you will be further tested

Promise

The crown of life

Summary

Remain Firm in Christ

Pride of Asia, and Still Standing

Second letter, **30 miles from Ephesus** on the circular route; the shortest and richest letter.
A small, prosperous city. Modern Izmir, Turkey, has 4 million people and is the only one of the seven cities still thriving.



Smyrna arch system that supported the Agora (market)

A Hard Place to Follow Christ

Refined Greek culture

Homer's birthplace, the region's largest Greek theater, pagan philosophy

Tied to Rome

Caesar was worshipped as God.

A hostile Jewish community

Rejected Christians, who lost their exemption from Caesar worship and faced severe Roman persecution

Persecution Is Normal for the Church

Smyrna and Philadelphia are the only two churches with no rebuke, and both were persecuted.

The world cannot stand Christ-centered godliness

Jesus Encourages her
in Persecution
in Four ways

1. Jesus is Greater than Our Persecution (Revelation 2:8)

He is eternal

The First and the Last

He outlasts every trial in faithfulness.

He is victorious

Dead and alive again

Death's sting is gone. We will not die the second death.

Death Has No Hold

“I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.”

Revelation 1:18



2. Jesus Understands Our Persecution (Revelation 2:9-10)

Burden

Thlipsis, a pressure that weighs on the spirit

Psalm 68:19

Poverty

Lost opportunities for loving Christ, yet rich in him

Matthew 5:3; 16:25-26

Blasphemy

False accusations from those who are not true Jews

Luke 21:16-19

Imprisonment

Satan acts only within God's limits

Job 1:12

3. Jesus Enables Us to Endure (Revelation 2:10)

“Be faithful unto death”

Jesus holds the process, even appointed death, and the resurrection.

Fix our eyes on Jesus, who endured the cross for the joy set before him.

Hebrews 12:1-2

Polycarp: Faithful Unto Death



Smyrna Agora colonnade, where Polycarp was condemned

A young man when this letter arrived;
arrested as Smyrna's pastor on Feb 22, 166 AD.

> “86 years He has not denied me,
> how can I deny Him now.”

Asked to recant, he gave this answer. At the stake he prayed, thanking God to be counted worthy among the martyrs.

4. Jesus Cares for Us Through Persecution (Revelation 2:9-11)

Present suffering

He knows our specific trials, and provides riches in poverty and hope in prison.

Future reward

He controls our suffering, even its length.

Ten days - literal

Come Boldly to the Throne of Grace

“Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.”

Hebrews 4:16

Promises to the Faithful

A crown of life

The *stephanos* wreath for finishing the race, life with Christ forever

No harm from the second death

The lake of fire

Revelation 20:14; 21:8

“There's no pit so deep that God's love is not deeper still.”

Corrie ten Boom

God was good even in a concentration camp, when her sister Betsie starved before her eyes.

Betsie's reminder: “He has not forgotten us”

Christ's Message to Smyrna

Remain

Do not be afraid.

Be faithful, and receive the crown of life.