What was Jesus’ message to the church in Smyrna in Revelation?

**Revelation 2:8-11(NKJV)**

**The Persecuted or Suffering Church**

*8“And to the [*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+2%3A8-11&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-30726a)*]angel of the church in Smyrna write,*

*‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: 9“I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a [*[*b*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+2%3A8-11&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-30727b)*]synagogue of Satan. 10Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

*11“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.”*

The words of Jesus to the church in Smyrna offer insight into the life of a first century congregation, and there are many applications for today’s believers. Smyrna was a seaport city about 35 miles north of Ephesus. It has been described as the most beautiful of the seven cities.

Christians in developed countries today think little about being persecuted for their faith, but there are churches in the world where oppression is a daily reality. The church at Smyrna refused to worship pagan gods or the Roman emperors. They experienced pressure, poverty and persecution. Jesus acknowledged their trials : “I know your afflictions and your poverty – yet you are rich! “ In their physical poverty, the church of Smyrna was “rich”; that is, they had spiritual wealth that no one could take away.

**Matthew 6:20 (NKJV)**

*20but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.*

Two of the 7 churches received no rebuke from Christ and Smyrna was one of them. Christ’s words to that church can prepare all believers for what might come. (think about what I shared earlier about Nigeria and also think about what has recently happened in California)

**Be Fearless**

“Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer.” (v10) Why? Because Christ is Lord over all life’s circumstances, we have nothing to fear. Paul wrote that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:35-39) Fear is a natural human response, but we live supernatural lives through the power of Christ in us.

**Be Faithful**

“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (v10). Given the intensity of the persecution in Smyrna, Christ may have been saying, “Yes, you may lose your life for My sake, but be faithful until the end.” This martyr’s crown is also mentioned in James 1:12. “Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.”

Jesus makes a final promise to the believers in Smyrna: “He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death” (Rev: 2:11) The overcomers, or conquerors, refer to all believers.

 I John 5:4-5

The second death is a reference to the final judgement of the wicked. (Great White Throne Judgement)

Revelation 20:6, 14; 21:8 Believers will not be hurt “at all” by that judgment; their sin was judged at the cross, and, in Christ, there is no more condemnation. (Romans 8:1)

**Questions:**

1. Were you ever under the impression that life in Christ would be pain free with no suffering? Why did you think that?
2. Which attributes of God most comfort you in the midst of trials?
3. Have you ever experienced suffering in your life where it was difficult for a time to stand firm? How did you handle the situation?
4. How have you seen God use trials and suffering in your life?
5. Throughout the history of the Church the more that the Church has been persecuted the greater its purity and strength. Why do you think that is?

**Prayer:**

Oh Lord that we might be found faithful and fearless like those who lived in Smyrna. They gave off a fragrant aroma of faithfulness to you in the midst of their trials and persecution. Thank you Jesus for the reminder to stand strong, no matter what. We ask you Lord to strengthen our faith in the days ahead so that we are prepared to face whatever comes our way. No matter what, we have the victory because of you Jesus. We praise your HOLY name. AMEN.