

Remnant Life Church
March 1, 2026
The Seven Churches of Revelation:
Smyrna
Revelation 2:8-11

The last remaining original disciple of Jesus, John, has been exiled by the Roman Emperor Domitian to the small island of Patmos off the coast of Turkey.

- It is about 60 years or so since Jesus ascended back into heaven
- The early churches are struggling
- Jesus appears to John in an open vision – meaning John is interacting and participating in the vision – and instructs John to write a letter to each of the seven churches located on Asia Minor
- The letter encourages them but also corrects many of them in some things they have let slide that are moving them away from the truth of God’s love and Jesus’ death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins

The first church Jesus instructed John to write to was the church in Ephesus

- A church founded by Paul and one that had been faithful to God through persecution
 - They were commended for their hard work and their perseverance (**Rev 2:2a**)
 - They stood firm against false prophets and teachers (**Rev 2:2b-3**)
 - And refused to be lead astray
- But there was also a problem
 - They had, as John wrote, lost their first love
 - IOW, they had stopped pursuing, stopped focusing on the most important aspect of their relationship with God, one that was intimate, personal and of the greatest importance
 - Something else had taken first place in their church life
 - Perhaps their good works
 - Perhaps their lives became too busy for God
 - Perhaps their success that John writes of had made them complacent or brought about spiritual pride
 - Whatever it was, it had taken them away from the intimacy of their relationship with their first love

And because of what we see in the church of Ephesus, and what we read in the words John writes as dictated by Jesus we take for us today...

- The works of the church, which are good and right in all that accomplish, but if elevated to the point of primary focus, will secretly steal the church’s heart
- It is only the presence and adoration of Jesus Christ that will keep the church, this church, free from abandoning what must be at the core of every body of believers

This morning we turn our attention to the second church and one of the two churches who Jesus did not condemn a behavior and bring correction

- The city of Smyrna is located about 40 miles north of Ephesus
 1. Like Ephesus, it was a port city but located on a direct trade route from India and Persia to Rome
 - This means that the city had access to all of the splendid, most expensive goods and items of the day and the city was one of great beauty because of that
 - It was a city celebrated throughout the region for its schools of science and medicine, for its ornate richly decorated buildings, and white paved streets
 - The temple of the Roman god of wine Bacchus was located there in addition to Zeus, Athena and several others
 - And it is considered the traditional birthplace of the Greek poet Homer who is credited with authoring the historical poetic works the Iliad and the Odyssey
 - So, Smyrna was by no means a poor, destitute city searching for any hope to cling to
 - And the city continued to thrive even as this young church is in their midst doing all that it can to hold to this new teaching by the crucified yet risen young rabbi who's fame and teaching are rapidly spreading throughout all of Asia Minor

- **READ - Revelation 2:8-11**

- Why did Jesus commend this church?
 1. Was it because they had become wealthy and influential?
 2. Was it their effectiveness in fighting against the pagan worship of the city?
 3. Was it the beauty of their temple that rivaled the temples of the Roman gods?
- No – Jesus commended them because none of these things were true and yet they remained steadfast and faithful to God

What were they dealing with?

1. **V 9a** – *I know your afflictions and your poverty – yet you are rich!*
 - The Smyrna church is operating and living, as are their people, in poverty
 - All the while living in the midst of great opulence and wealth
 - The wealth of the city only served to enhance their own awareness of their lack and want
 - Why were they so poor?
 - It was a time of emperor worship
 - Those who refused became social and, as an extension, economic outcasts
 - Yet they did not compromise or renounce their faith
 - I believe there are few areas of living that contrast so strongly as the wealth of the world versus the wealth of the Kingdom of God
 - Again, God does not require you are poor to serve Him
 - But He does require that you surrender your desires to Him
 - There are many men of wealth throughout the Scriptures

- But only one ever turned away from an encounter with God because of his wealth
- That was a man the Bible called the rich your ruler (**Matt 19**)
- God does bless His people with the things of the world – he did for Abraham, David, Solomon and many others
- What God hates, the Bible says, is the love of money
 - IOW a heart that does not have God as the very first priority
 - That is why I encourage to be faithful in your giving
 - Not so the RLC will become rich but so that you will receive all of the blessings that come through obedience to His Word
 - They were poor in the eyes of the world, but Jesus called them rich in spirit

2. **V10a** – *Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer*

- Notice the words John writes here
 - Not what you may suffer but what you are about to suffer
 - My friends, as a Christian in this world, during this time, you are going to suffer for Christ
 - **Js 1:2** - *Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds,*
 - Not if but when!
 - **John 16:33** - *I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*
- Now I do not believe any of us going to be forced to choose between our faith and death
 - But there are other ways that satan can bring struggle and hardship into your life to try and discourage you
 - You have heard me say many times, the trials are going to come, the most important question is; How will you respond?
- The church in Smyrna was living in extensive poverty, but Jesus said they were spiritually rich (**Rev 2:9**)
 - Contrast this to another church we will be looking at later that was called just the opposite
 - They were physically very wealthy but spiritually poor
 - Which should we desire to be?

3. **V10b** – *I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you and you will suffer persecution for ten days.*

- Here again we see that while this was a church that was doing everything right, there was going to be suffering
 - Struggles and difficulties in life are not always about consequence and punishment

- This suffering was strengthening the church in Smyrna
 - Something that is easy to miss and should confirm what many do not want you to believe, even within the church is – satan is real
 - In this verse you see both names used
 - satan, which translates literally to an adversary
 - devil translates to slanderer
 - The work of the devil, as portrayed throughout the Bible, is that of developing and promoting our own personal will against the will of God
 - This was the basis of the first sin in the Garden of Eden
 - The devil has both freedom and a measure of power available to him but only because of the sovereign will of God
 - satan can only do what God gives him permission to do
 - Just as we see happened to Job
 - I make this point again so that you can be reassured that nothing happens in your life that is not under the control of God
 - But there is a limit to satan’s reign of terror
 - Not only on the spiritual level but as we read in **Rev 20**, satan, the antichrist, and the false prophet are all going to be thrown into the lake of fire
 - But their power is limited
 - **V10** John writes that the church will suffer for ten days
 - IOW a limited amount of time
 - So too your trials and tribulations will only be for a set amount of time
 - And while things occur under the authority of God’s will, resist embracing the lie that all evil in the world is “according to God’s will.”
 - The evil in this world happens against God’s will
 - But He is still sovereign over all things!
 - Which means He allows it
 - The people then, just as we are today are encouraged to...*be faithful even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life (V10)*
 - This brings us to the final verse
4. **V11** *He who overcomes (stands, perseveres, is faithful) will not be hurt at all by the second death*
- What does that mean?
 - The second death is the eternal punishment of the unbeliever – total and complete separation from God and His love
 - Everyone of us will leave this life at some point in the future but those who believe in Jesus will never suffer the second death but spend eternity with Him
 - And it is not some mew-agey, ethereal astral plane of existence – No!
 - It is paradise in the presence of almighty God
 - We are promised, John writes in verse **10**, the crown of life

- Not the crown of Smyrna
 - One made of gold that burns up, the wealth of this world that is temporal and does not last
 - But the crown of life that is eternal
 - That is why we can call a storm of life a storm
 - It is why we face these times head on
 - It is why the time of pain can be realized exactly for what it is, but without fear
 - It is why we can face the persecution with an assurance that we will have a crown that will never rust, never be taken, and always be a testimony to the presence and power of God in our lives
 - But the choice is yours to embrace and believe in God's presence and power in your life...or not
- Like the church in Smyrna, you will face trouble and tribulation
 1. But you should not lose your faith nor your will to confront it because you have been given a peace that passes your knowledge and understanding
 2. Ephesus was the church of a lost love
 3. Smyrna is the church of persecution, but they faced it in a way that was pleasing to God
 - That is what I want this church to be known as
 - A church that is rich in the things of the spirit, faithful, ready to receive a crown of life...in spite of the storms