

# “O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?”

Revelation 2:8-11

Pastor Keith E. Gephart

## INTRODUCTION

Years ago a visitor to a cemetery was observing the various tombstones and the readings upon them when suddenly he saw one that caught his attention; it read thus:

The Church of Smyrna was a suffering church and its people faced the threat of death daily. Do we really know what that is like?

Our Lord in speaking with this church has no criticism for them—only encouragement.

Persecution had strengthened these believers and had helped purify them.

They Might Have To Face Death, But Jesus Would Give Them The Crown Of Life And The Second Death Would Have No Power Over Them.

**YOU MUST NOT FEAR DEATH, FOR CHRIST HAS REMOVED THE STING.**

Smyrna was and still is a prosperous city—today known as Izmir—3<sup>rd</sup> largest in Turkey.

Paul reminds us in II Tim. 3:12 that “they that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

In this letter we see 1) The Church’s Tribulation; 2) The Church’s Victory; and 3) Christ’s Exhortation.

### I. THE CHURCH’S TRIBULATION (“I Know”—He understands! “Tribulation” means “pressures”)

#### A. Kinds of Trouble

1. \_\_\_\_\_—the term implies “having nothing at all”—abject poverty
  - It was difficult for believers to make a living
  - There was much mob violence against them, and looting.
  - Yet, Christ says that **they were rich!** Contrast Laodicea in 3:17, rich man in Lk. 12:21; I Tim. 6:18—be rich in good works; James 2:5—poor are “rich” in faith.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ (includes blasphemy; among other things they were accused of”
3. \_\_\_\_\_ (v. 10)
  - Their suffering was going to get worse—“about to suffer”
  - They will “be tested”—in order to be approved!
  - “Tribulation” repeated.
  - Ancient imprisonment was horrific
4. Impending \_\_\_\_\_ (10)

Yes, this church faced many kinds of trouble; but, what were the sources?

#### B. Sources of Their Trouble

1. \_\_\_\_\_
  - But they are not really “true” Jews (see Rom. 2:28-29)
  - They are “a synagogue of Satan”—cf. Jn. 8:31ff, esp. v. 44—of your father, the devil.
  - See this same description in Rev. 3:9.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Authorities (who cast them into prison in reality)
3. \_\_\_\_\_
  - His name means “the adversary”—not only of believers, but of God.
  - Devil means “slanderer”; he is behind the slander and blasphemy and slander of the Jews, and he is the one really behind their being cast into prison.
  - Satan has always been the source of false religion—**thus we must hate it and oppose it vehemently!**

So we see the sources of all this trouble—but what is its purpose?

- C. Purpose of the Trouble—“to \_\_\_\_\_ you” (v. 10)
- D. Reaction to Trouble—v. 10: “Do not \_\_\_\_\_”—i.e. “stop fearing.”
- E. Duration of Trouble—v. 10: “**10 days**”

Yes, believers had to go through great sufferings and trials, but Christ Promised them ultimate victory!

## II. THE CHURCH’S VICTORY (vv. 10, 11)

- A. Reward of the Crown of \_\_\_\_\_ (10)
- B. Unharmd by the Second \_\_\_\_\_. [The “second death” is the Lake of Fire--Rev, 20:14.]  
Praise the Lord for the victory we have in Christ; now, what exhortation does the Lord have for suffering believers?

## III. CHRIST’S EXHORTATION (v. 11) [“He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.]

- A. He is the First and the Last—the **Eternal One**. (v. 8).
- B. He has conquered death—“was dead and has come to life”! (v. 8).

## CONCLUSION

Christ Faced death and Conquered it!

We must face death—but we face it through the Victorious One Who has already overcome it!

We will not experience the Second Death.

We need to avoid the Second Death as much as we seek to postpone the first death!

**YOU MUST NOT FEAR DEATH, FOR CHRIST HAS REMOVED THE STING.**