

***NO SECOND DEATH***  
**Revelation 2:8-11**

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

**Intro:** The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.

That's what Julie Miller was singing about when she wrote

*"Gold and silver blind the eye*

*Temporary riches lie*

*Come and eat from Heaven's store*

*Come and drink and thirst no more*

*So weep not for me, my friend, when my time below does end*

*For my life belongs to Him, who will raise the dead again"*

Smyrna is the only city of the seven churches of Revelation that still stands today. You can hear the name, Smyrna, in its modern name, Izmir, which, I'm not sure I mentioned before, but, if you know your geography, is in modern day Turkey.

It was prosperous trade city like Ephesus, with a good harbor and fertile and productive farmland to the east. It would definitely been on a list of the most desirable places to live in the Roman Empire – it was that nice a place.

Unless you were a Christ Follower.

Then it was not a nice place.

Christians were atheists. They didn't worship Caesar – who fancied himself a god and worthy of worship. That made them atheists. They had no place in society.

I began a biography of Henry Kissinger this past week. I know this dates me and anyone who knows who he is, but he was, as Wiki describes him, “. . . an American diplomat, political scientist, geopolitical consultant, and politician who served as the United States secretary of state and national security advisor in the presidential administrations of Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford between 1969 and 1977.” We saw him on the news a lot most of the first half of the seventies and he whenever he spoke his very thick German accent was unmistakable. This is because he was born in Germany and, his family being Jewish, fled Germany for the USA. Kissinger was 15 years old when his family emigrated in 1938, which was 5 years after Hitler, with his hatred for Jews, came into power. From that time, and, actually in increasing fashion in the years prior to it, persecution against Jews had become state policy. Kissinger and his brother were not able to go to public school or play on community athletic teams because they were Jews. Their father, Louis, was a beloved and dedicated teacher but he was not permitted to teach because he was a Jew. It only got worse and worse and, as you know, at least 6 million Jews were eventually murdered by Hitler's regime, including numerous of Kissinger's relatives and friends.

In the way Jews from the late 1920s until 1945 were ostracized by German society, Christians were ostracized in Smyrna and that comes through loud and clear in this letter to the faithful church there: *I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.* Revelation 2:9. Jesus acknowledges this, and, unlike the church in Ephesus, who were commended and then slammed, he has only praise and encouragement for his dear followers in Smyrna. Let's look at the message they received and receive it for ourselves.

First, notice how . . .

**Jesus identifies with his friends**

- These are the words of the first and the last, who was dead, and came to life. This is a reminder from earlier when he said the same thing in Revelation 1:18, and it's a reminder to the persecuted but very faithful Christ Followers in Smyrna that they served the risen Lord, who had been victorious over death. Of course this makes me think of a song that Dallas Holm sang so powerfully,

*Go ahead, drive the nails in My hands*

*Laugh at Me, where you stand*

*Go ahead, and say it isn't Me*

*The day will come, when you will see*

*'Cause I'll rise, again*

*Ain't no power on earth can tie Me down*

*Yes, I'll rise, again*

*Death can't keep Me in the ground*

*Go ahead, and mock My name*

*My love for you is still the same*

*Go ahead, and bury Me*

*But very soon, I will be free*

*'Cause I'll rise, again*

*Ain't no power on earth can tie Me down*

*Yes, I'll rise, again*

*Death can't keep Me in the ground*

*Go ahead, and say I'm dead and gone*

*But you will see that you were wrong*

*Go ahead, try to hide the Son*

*But all will see that I'm the One*

*'Cause I'll come again*

*Ain't no power on earth can keep me back*

*Yes, I'll come again*

*Come to take My people back*

- Death could not hold Jesus, and it cannot hold His people – and so this encouragement here in Revelation 2 is our encouragement too – Death is not a threat for us because of our Savior who defeated it once and for all. More on that later.
- Here's another thing . . .

### **Real riches have nothing to do with money**

- Playwright, Neil Simon, who made lots of money off his many, many hit plays said, "*Money brings some happiness. But after a certain point, it just brings more money.*" This truth is in another quote from Henry Ward Beecher, who wrote, "*It is the heart that makes a man rich. He is rich according to what he is, not according to what he has.*" This was particularly true about the Church in Smyrna. They were poverty stricken materially, but they were wealthy, beyond compare, spiritually.
- This is the very reasoning behind the Brethren in Christ Core Value, Living Simply, which is this: We value uncluttered lives, which free us to love boldly, give generously, and serve joyfully. Living uncluttered lives, free of the pursuit of the almighty dollar, helps us to focus on the Almighty God, our heavenly father, who is our daddy (Abba Father) who owns the cattle on a thousand hills.
- David Guzik writes, *Material riches are an obstacle to the Kingdom of God, an obstacle that some do not overcome* (Here Guzik cites Mark 10:23-25 where Jesus taught his disciples that *It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.*). and he continues, "*There is nothing wrong with having money; the trouble is that money so easily "has" us. Often, material riches are acquired and maintained at the expense of true spiritual riches. A story is told of the glory days of the Renaissance Papacy, when a man walked with the Pope and marveled at the splendors and riches of the Vatican. The Pope told him, "We no longer have to say what Peter told the lame man: 'Silver and gold have I none.'" His companion replied, "But neither can you say, 'rise up and walk.'"*"
- Just rest in the fact that, being poor in the eyes of the world, especially because we have chosen the way of Christ, means we are rich beyond imagination.
- Next . . .

### **Don't take it to heart when you are slandered for the Kingdom**

- This is tough talk from Jesus, but, he can because he's God and because he endured it himself. There was a large Jewish community in Smyrna and they allied themselves with the Roman culture and ganged up on the Christ Followers. In the process they sold their soul to the devil. Jesus is essentially saying that they aren't a gathering of God's chosen as much as they are a synagogue of Satan and their words and actions were empty and powerless against the truth of the Gospel.

- This is powerful truth for us Church! Don't be discouraged or angered by the loud words of people who cast aspersions and insults on our walk. In fact, remember what we looked at last week and remember to respond with love. We have nothing to lose. . . .

**Even though it might get worse**

- Jesus encourages the Christians of Smyrna and the Christians of Ashland with, *Do not fear what you are about to suffer.* . . . Revelation 2:10a and with *Be faithful unto death* Revelation 2:10c and in the middle he throws in the prediction that, for some, there will be prison, or testing, and tribulation for a period of time. And it makes you wonder, "If that's encouragement, I'd hate to see what you call discouragement!"
- But that's the nature of the cost of discipleship. Walking with Jesus is not easy, but it's good and, the prize for our faithfulness, even with the threat of slander, and hatred, and anger, and prison and troubles, and even martyrdom, is the crown of life. We can sing *Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine, O what a foretaste of glory divine!* Guzik points out our assurance with this promise, "*I know... I know: In midst of this kind of affliction, it is easy to think God has forgotten – but Jesus knows.*"
- Jesus knows and we can know that . . .

**Death isn't what it's cracked up to be**

- The writer of Hebrews tells us . . . *it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.* Hebrews 9:27 Christ Followers do not have to fear the second death. That is the promise here from Jesus when he tells the Christians in Smyrna and he's saying it to us, *The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.* Revelation 2:11b.
- This is much more than giving up and surrendering. Our faithfulness in the face of what the troubles the world sends our way, as its urged on by the evil one, means we are conquerors. This is a familiar theme. In a victorious recounting of a life free from condemnation when we have been set free in Christ, Paul proclaims, . . . *in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Romans 8:37-39.
- Conquerors like that die the first death victoriously, like Ron Graves and Norm Wynn and any other saint you can think of, and escape the second death to live eternally with Jesus in Glory. That's our promise too – no second death.

**Conclusion:** That's victory in Jesus, our Savior . . . FOREVER!

So we too can sing,

*When I go, don't cry for me  
 In my father's arms I'll be  
 The wounds this world left on my soul  
 Will all be healed, and I'll be whole  
 Sun and moon will be replaced with the light of Jesus' face  
 And I will not be ashamed, for my Savior knows my name  
 It don't matter where you bury me  
 I'll be home and I'll be free  
 It don't matter where I lay  
 All my tears be washed away.*

There's NO SECOND DEATH! Amen.