



**I am
persecuted
but,
I am still
winning**

Revelation 2:8–11 (NKJV)

Warren W. Wiersbe, [The Bible Exposition Commentary](#), vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 573.



Revelation 2:8–11 (NKJV)

8 “And to the 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 synagogue of Satan.

10 Do 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 name Smyrna means “bitter” and is related to the word myrrh. The city remains a functioning community today called Izmir. The assembly at Smyrna was persecuted for their faith, which explains why the Lord emphasized His death and resurrection as He opened His message.



- No matter what experiences God's people may have, their Lord identifies with them.

2 Corinthians 1:6 (NKJV)

Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.



Approval (v. 9)

The Church At Smyrna Was Not Having An Easy Time Of It!

Revelation 2:9 (NKJV)

“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 synagogue of Satan.

The members were persecuted, probably because they refused to compromise and say, “Caesar is Lord.”

2 Timothy 3:12 (NKJV)

Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution



- Smyrna was an important center of the Roman imperial cult, and anyone refusing to acknowledge Caesar as Lord would certainly be excluded from the societies.
- This would mean unemployment and poverty. The word used here for poverty means “abject poverty, possessing absolutely nothing.”

Matthew 16:26 (NKJV)

For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?



- A large Jewish community also thrived in Smyrna.
- The Jews, of course, did not have to patronize the imperial cult since Rome accepted their religion; but they certainly would not cooperate with the Christian faith.
- So, from both Jews and Gentiles, the Christians in Smyrna received slander and suffering.
- But they were rich! They lived for eternal values that would never change, riches that could never be taken away.



Luke 18:29–30 (NKJV)

29 So He said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God,
30 who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life.”



Their Suffering For Christ Only Increased Their Riches

2 Corinthians 6:10 (NKJV)

as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich;
as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

2 Corinthians 8:9 (NKJV)

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He
was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through
His poverty might become rich.



- Our struggles are not with flesh and blood but with the enemy, Satan, who uses people to accomplish his purposes.
- The Jewish synagogue was a synagogue of Satan. A real Jew is not one physically or racially, but spiritually.

Romans 2:28–29 (NKJV)

28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh;

29 but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.



Admonition (Vv. 10–11)

Revelation 2:10–11 (NKJV)

10 Do 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.” ’



- No words of accusation are given to the congregation in Smyrna! They may not have enjoyed the approval of men, but they indeed received the praise of God. However, the Lord did give them solemn words of admonition as they faced increased suffering: “Don’t be afraid!”
- He assured them that He knew the devil’s plans and was in complete control of the situation.



- Some of the believers would be imprisoned and tried as traitors to Rome. Yet their tribulation would not be long; in the Bible, ten days signifies “a brief time” (*Gen. 24:55; Acts 25:6*).
- Faithfulness was important, standing true to Christ no matter what the government might threaten to do.
- The “crown of life” is the winner’s crown awarded at the annual athletic games.
- Smyrna was a key participant in the games so that this promise would be significant to believers living there.



James 1:12 (NKJV)

Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

- The Lord reinforced James's promise and assured His people that there was nothing to fear.



**Because they had trusted Him,
they were overcomers—victors
in the race of faith and, as
overcomers, they had nothing
to fear.**



Hebrews 12:1–3 (NKJV)

1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.



**Even if they were
martyred, they would be
ushered into glory,
wearing crowns!**



- They would never face the awful judgment of the second death, which is the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:14 (NKJV)

Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Revelation 21:8 (NKJV)

But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”



- It costs to be a dedicated Christian, in some places more than others.
- As end-time pressures increase, persecution will also increase; and God's people need to be ready.

1 Peter 4:12 (NKJV)

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;

- The world may call us “poor Christians,” but we are rich in God's sight



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