

A GOLDEN LAMPSTAND



“Poor but Rich; Dead but Alive”

Revelation 2:8-11

Main Idea: Hold on to the promise of eternal life for strength to be faithful to Jesus through persecution and even death.

Jesus knows the suffering and slander we endure as his church (8-9).

- *In Christ, we are eternally rich though we may be poor in this world (9)!*
- *Those who claim to worship God apart from Christ are worshiping Satan (9).*

As Jesus spoke to his church, he continued to reveal the reality of who he was: The One, Triune God! He was the first and the last. He was the one who died but came back to life. He was the one who was all seeing and all knowing. Jesus saw his church in Smyrna. He knew what they were going through and all that they were enduring. This church was suffering. They were encountering tribulation and hardship as a result of their faith in Jesus. As those around rejected them and despised them because of their witness and love for Christ, they were faced with poverty and lack in their lives. No doubt they lost jobs, lost business and income, and lost standing in the community where they lived. On top of all of these problems, there was emotional and reputational damage that was being done by Jews in the area who were slandering these believers. In the midst of all of this trouble, Jesus encouraged his church. He reminded them that he knew all that they faced. He reminded them of their eternal riches in glory in Christ, which they had even as they faced not having in this world. He reminded them that those who claimed to speak for him and worship him apart from Christ were actually working for and worshiping Satan. In his mercy, Jesus reminds us still today that he knows the suffering and slander we endure as his church.

1. Where is the church still experiencing suffering like the church in Smyrna experienced? To help answer this question, use peoplegroups.org to explore world maps related to the work of the gospel, and use imb.org to search for articles and resources on “persecution.”
2. What does it mean that believers are “rich” even though they may be in poverty in this world? Use Scripture to support your answer.
3. How do these verses help us see the spiritual reality of those who claim to worship God apart from Christ (Jews, Muslims, etc.)?

Jesus calls us to bold faithfulness through the trials that will come (10).

- *Faith in Jesus conquers fear of man (10a-b).*
- *The promise of eternal life conquers the fear of death (10c).*

Jesus shifted from encouraging his church to commanding his church. In verse 10, there are two imperatives or commands that Jesus gave his church. The first was a call to courage and boldness in Christ when faced with the fear of man. The church was about to be tested even further. Some would be imprisoned because of their faith in Jesus, and some would even be put to death. In the face of human punishment and power, Jesus commanded

his church not to be afraid! He warned them that this would happen in Smyrna, preparing them ahead of time for what was about to take place. He prepared them further for the battle by giving them the ammunition they needed: Faith! Trusting in him would conquer the fear of man. Remembering that he knew ahead of time, strengthens faith that he already knows the outcome. As his church, our lives are in his hands! Second, Jesus commanded his church to be faithful unto death. In other words, some would die for their witness for Christ, and in the face of death, Jesus reminded them to continue in their faithfulness to confess him and to trust him. How is this possible? Because of the reward of eternal life that's promised to those who persevere in the faith that's in Christ Jesus!

1. What's important about knowing about possible, future hardships or trials? Since Jesus revealed this information, what does that reveal about him? What does it show us about God's love?
2. Why is the command to not be afraid so common in Scripture? Why do we fear things that others can do to us or take away from us? How does faith impact fear?
3. Some people have died and will die for their faithful witness for Jesus. Why does God allow that to happen? How can faith and the promise of eternal life bring strength in one's faith even at the point of dying for their faith?
4. Pray right now for those facing the real threat of death for their faith in Jesus. Pray for a bold faith that endures!

Jesus reminds us that faithful faith protects us from his judgment in the end (11).

Finally, Jesus called the church in Smyrna to hear these words in this letter. These were words from the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They were words of life and truth, and they were words of hope! Jesus reminded the church that those who remained faithful to their faith in Jesus may suffer tribulation in this world and may even be put to death; however, they will be eternally spared from the judgment of God against their sin. The second death is the final judgment. It's the unending, eternal death that comes to those who have rejected Jesus as Lord and Savior. For the believer, there's no fear of this judgment because of Christ's death for sin. There's no fear of this second death because of Christ's resurrection for eternal life. So remain faithful in your faith in Jesus no matter what you face for the cause of Christ in this world.

1. How is eternal life rather than eternal death made possible for sinners like us?
2. What is the second death? How do we know that this is an eternal death rather than annihilation?
3. Do you have ears to hear? Are you more than a conqueror in Christ? If someone in the group isn't sure, take time to share the gospel and to invite him/her to repent and to believe in Jesus Christ our Lord!