

Smyrna

## Rev 2:8-11

**Introduction**

What would you say to a Xian who was undergoing intense suffering because of their allegiance to JC, and were about to undergo more - if you only had 4,5 lines in a telegram??

Your answer is important for two reasons:

This is a crucial part of Xian ministry.

It reveals whether you know how to respond when you suffer for JC.

We have just a message from JC Himself. In Rev 2,3, JC dictates 7 letters thru John to 7 churches in W. Turkey. He did this because these churches faced situations that are characteristic of what local churches face all thru the church age. Thus, the letters are precious counsel for us. The letter to the church in Smyrna is addressed to suffering Christians.

They are undergoing persecution for their faith in JC (vs 9)

"Tribulation": pressure to conform to Caesar worship (big temple to Caesar in Smyrna)

"Poverty": confiscated property

"Blasphemy": Jews aggravating in order to maintain legal status as approved religion

We will suffer also if we follow JC: Family & friend rejection; career sacrifice; pain from sanctification and ministry

>> In this letter, JC penetrates to the heart of the issue: counsels proper perspective & advises proper response.

**Perspective: crucial to know & focus on (Col 3) – relationship between this & response**

JC understands your suffering.

Vs 8: How JC introduces Himself is key insight into His ability to meet need >> "was dead". He understands what it means to suffer for your faith, not only because He's God, but because He's done it, too.



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Empathy is crucial during suffering. If you follow JC, you will wind up in situations where no one else really understands what you're going through (75). Then you have the opportunity to discover the comfort of Christ.

You realize that no matter how much you suffer, He suffered far more (Heb 12:4; you only feel forsaken - He was forsaken!)

If you draw near to him, He will personally comfort you in the midst of your suffering (Heb 4:15,16; II Cor 1:3 vs BABY SCREAMING TOO MUCH TO LET MOTHER COMFORT)

This is why Xians alone can go through terrible suffering & come out more convinced than ever of God's love for them (Ten Boom: "There is no hole so deep that God is not deeper still").

>> If you demand that God take the pain away, or that people understand, you will be disappointed. But if you reflect on JC's suffering & draw near to Him, you will be comforted & sustained.

JC is sovereign over your suffering.

Vs 8: JC "has come to life"; vs 10a: predicts fact, extent & duration, thus demonstrating His sovereignty.

Even though it is authored by Satan, JC is still in control (LUTHER). Since this is true:

We can be sure He won't let us be tested beyond what we're able to endure (I Cor 10:13).

We can be sure that He can use this very suffering to advance His purpose & deepen our confidence in His faithfulness.

"Test" (peirazo): In every adverse situation, Satan wants to use it to destroy God's purpose & your faith in Him; God wants to use it to advance His purpose & deepen your faith in Him. What determines which will result? Your response to the test! Therefore, focus less on where it's coming from and more on how you will respond to it.

Evidently, they had been responding correctly so far, because JC remarks that they are "rich". This is another unique paradox w/ suffering Xians who respond properly: they have their confidence in God's faithfulness and power experientially deepened. This is far more valuable than any material wealth (contrast to Laodicia). CHINESE XIANS; DON K: "I am in more pain than ever before, but I am more vital and excited spiritually by far."

JC guarantees you eternal life.

Vs 10b: "not a condition, a promise; vs 11: overcomer as per I Jn 5:4,5

JC consciously reminds & lifts their eyes away from & past the finite, painful present to the future, of what they will not experience ("the second death"); of what they will receive ("the crown of life").

Geography is the study of the Earth and its features. It includes the study of the atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, and biosphere. It also includes the study of the interactions between these spheres and the human environment.

Geography is a multidisciplinary field that draws on knowledge from other disciplines such as history, political science, and sociology. It is a dynamic and ever-evolving field that continues to expand its scope and depth.

The study of geography is essential for understanding the world around us. It helps us to understand the patterns and processes that shape our environment and the human world. It also helps us to understand the challenges we face and the ways in which we can address them.

Geography is a practical discipline that has many applications in the real world. It is used in a wide range of fields, including urban planning, environmental management, and international relations. It is also a valuable tool for understanding the world and for making informed decisions about the future.

Geography is a fascinating and important field of study. It offers a unique perspective on the world and the human experience. It is a field that is constantly evolving and that offers many opportunities for research and discovery.

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How often do you meditate on your eternal life? If untrue, it is a "Pie in the sky" deception which prevents us from dealing w/ reality properly. But if it is true, then we are not looking at/dealing w/ reality properly unless we take it heavily into account! It is a major focus of the NT. The NT Xians banked heavily on their eternal life & it made an incredible difference in how they responded to suffering. How much time do you devote to reflecting on this?

How long is eternity? (10 billion years >> thresh-hold) If you focused more on that, you'd worry less about the short-term pain.

What will your body be like? If you focused more on that body, you'd worry less about this one.

Rom 8:18; II Cor 4:17; I Pet 1:3-9 >> VACATION SYNDROME

**Conclusion: if we focus on these 3 things, what is the obvious response to choose?**

"Do not fear": not that you can't have fear feelings, but that you choose not to let them dictate your course of action. You will not do what your feelings tell you to do - quit, take the escape hatch.

"Be faithful": you will decide to go on doing what JC has given you to do in spite of the suffering.

In every suffering situation, there are both to do (PAUL: ME in 75). What are yours?

Gospel if needed: Why receive something that will give you more suffering? Because it is so valuable & fulfilling that it is worth it!

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