

Lessons From the Sermon of Jesus on the Mountain Part 46

The Letter of Jesus to the Church in Smyrna

“8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; 9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. 10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. 11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.” (Revelation 2:8-11 KJV)

“8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive.” (Revelation 2:8 KJV) The church in Smyrna was a victorious church, who had stood lot of persecution and who had suffered martyred because of the repeated persecution from those who were called Jewish but they were a false testimony for Christ and who worked out to persecute and to execute the saints of God. Most likely this church was located in the city of Izmir which is in modern Turkey now.

These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive: That is the way that Jesus introduced His name in this church, ***the first and the last***, that He is the first and the last, so He is in full control of everything and He is aware of what is going on. ***“Which was dead, and is alive***, the same of what He declared Himself earlier, ***“I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.” (Revelation 1:18 KJV)*** That was the way Jesus encouraged them, that He was put to death, was buried as we are aware, and He was rose from the death and made alive. He is encouraging the church and the saints of the church not to be afraid from persecution and death, for even if they will be put to death, He will raise them up, and they will be raised up and made alive as He is alive. ***Jesus in this letter He was encouraging them and He is encouraging us today that even we die, we will have eternal life and we will live with Him forever.***

Most likely this church, the church of Smyrna was planted by or through Apostle Paul as a result of his work in the church in Ephesus, for through that work all Asia minor heard the message, ***“And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwell in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.” (Acts 19:10 KJV)*** Some think the present angel or pastor of this church, was Polycarp, the disciple of John. Irenaeus, who knew him, says he was appointed bishop of Smyrna by the apostles, and here he suffered martyrdom, and was buried.

Here the Lord did not mention anything negative about that church, because if the will of God for this church is to be persecuted and they will be killed and keep on obeying God and continue in this way till they are killed, then that is all what they needed to do. God for each and every one of us had outlined a way that we need to follow. ***We cannot outline our own way. What I want to say that you cannot outline your own scenario to live your life. Don't be amazed by the message, but God today is confronting you, not to***

be like Jonah who replaced the mission of God to Nineveh, with his own mission to go to Tarshish.

It is also said possibly that one of the disciples of Paul, his name Apelles, who had planted the church in Smyrna and he was the leader, ***“Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household.” (Romans 16:10 KJV)*** How Apelles was approved of Christ? By persevering in persecution. Persecution can be started by verbal, insults, slurs, bad words, then economic blockage, isolation, confiscations of properties, physical harm, beating, torturing, and murder. This all may happen in persecution, and we will be approved for Christ through all these things. ***We will be approved in Christ, when we are willing to go through the hardship and persecution with all its pressure that God would ordained for us to pass through in our lives.***

Also, there might be fear in the heart of the members and in the heart of the leader of that church, and they were afraid from persecution and from facing troubles from those who are persecuting them. Or they might be thinking to back out from the narrow and painful way that God would allow them to pass through. So this letter of Jesus sent to the church at the right time, and to us today, to help them and us to persevere in front of persecution. ***God knows you are persecuted and pressurized from every side, and you need to stand firm and to be strong in Him, because what you are doing is correct. Therefore continue in your perseverance and keep your right stand for God.***

“I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.” (Revelation 2:9 KJV) Here Jesus announcing to the church the strong points that this church was having.

1. Their good works as He said “I know thy works”: They were doing the good works the Lord had prepared in advance for them to do. Not only work but works. God wants us to do the multiple works that He prepared in advance for us to do. Yes, in front of you good works prepared by God and He wants you to do.

2. Their perseverance in trials and troubles and tribulation: The hard time and troubles that they were passing through, and they endured it because they were willing to follow Christ, and that is the way to enter the Kingdom of God. Paul and Barnabas confirmed that to the disciples: ***“Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14:22 KJV)*** The tribulation that we are passing through is important for us to enter the Kingdom of God. ***We are here recommended to enter the Kingdom of God by much tribulations and not by much parties, or much celebrations. The churches that spend much time in the banquets, celebrations, parties, laughing are not doing well in pertain to Scriptures. I believe they are moving in a wrong way.***

We will be having tribulations because we are speaking the truth and because we are not willing to compromise so we will be having tribulations and that is correct. God also in such is warning us not to try to bypass tribulations and deviate from the narrow way by our own compromises, flattering and avoid facing conflicts, avoid facing situations that people would hate us, and in our non willingness to suffer for Christ.

3. ***Their richness in spiritual things: (but thou art rich):*** They were poor because they were persecuted; isolated, lost their jobs, under sanction, and their material things were confiscated. They were also not up to the material things of this world. But they were rich in other things like faith, rich in the good work of God, rich in serving, and rich in the grace of God, rich in the peace of God, and having eternal life and eternal riches. They were not rich materially, but they were rich spiritually. One of the kinds of persecution is economic sanction to force you to submit to their will. God may allow that and we need to give up our own material riches in order to maintain giving the right message of God to the people. In such matter we need to persevere and be willing to suffer losses for Christ's sake.

4. ***Their perseverance in persecution:*** as Jesus told them ***“And I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan”***: Christ was aware of those who were opposing them, they were called Christians, but by name only, for their deeds are opposite to what they confessed about themselves. Because of them the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles. Those who blaspheming here are the non true believers. They were the synagogue of Satan based on what they were doing of evil deeds. They were called Christians but they were immoral, thieves, false teachers and the name of God blasphemed because of their ill and wicked behavior. This church of Smyrna were persecuted either by the Jewish that is why He called them the synagogue of Satan, or by Christians who were a bad testimony to Christ and the persecutor for His church. Now true Christians are persecuted by those who are disobedient to Christ; those who accept sin and keep it well inside the body of Christ.

“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” (Revelation 2:10 KJV) Here Christ telling them and telling us, ***Fear none of these things***, it means that you are walking and moving in the right way. Did the Lord know that there will be persecution? Yes, and hundred percent if we continue to move in the right direction to live our lives to God and to serve Him we will face persecution. Christ gave them notice and warning that they will suffer and pass troubles and the devil is the one who will do such for them. Christ is all knowing of the future and that is why He is giving them notice ahead of time to be prepared. Christ here is encouraging them not to fear and not to get discouraged of what they will be suffering. Why? First, because Christ will be with them, and He will not leave them without support, Second, the outcome of all these trials are known and are settled, that they will be resurrected, have eternal life and will receive the crown of righteousness, as Paul said, ***“7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:7-8 KJV)*** The crown of righteousness is the crown of eternal life to those who had lived in righteousness. We should keep the faith and not change the Word of God in order to please the people. ***We need to continue to go forward. We need to continue to preach. We need to continue to make the message clear, that those who hear, they will be able to see their sins and the way to repent and out of them, and we need to continue in our living for Christ. The people that we are reaching out either will be repenting and start to follow Christ with us, or they will hate us and start to persecute us.***

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: Christ was encouraging them because suffering may include verbal insults, and attacks by tongue, emotional and disturbance in the mind, isolation, losing of jobs and income, confiscation of properties, beating, torturing, and even to be murdered.

Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: It is not a clear what Jesus meant with the period of ten days. It could be literal, or it could be a ten period of time, or ten terms of Romans emperors. But even if we are put in prison the Word of God will not be stopped, but it will continue to be preached to the lost. What we can conclude from that is that persecution will not be end or stop, but will continue until Christ will come and we meet with Him in the air. Therefore, we need to persevere.

Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life: The instruction of Christ to the church is that they need to be faithful to the end and they will receive from Christ the crown of life. ***Be faithful, don't cheat and don't compromise and don't flatter people because of persecution. If God allow persecution to happen then just bear it and don't let it to be stopped by compromises.*** We notice that in this church of Smyrna there was no admonition for a point that Christ was not happy with the church. But what we can understand here that Christ His focus was that the church should not show any unfaithfulness, but to persevere to the end. The message to the church is to exhort them not to get discouraged and stop their journey. Christ was motivating them to be faithful to the end, to the point of death, and He will give them, the crown of life. The crown of life is the eternal life.

The scribes and the Pharisees in this church are those who love their life but they are losing. But blessed are those who lose their lives for Christ for they will find them as Jesus said, ***“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” (Matthew 16:25 KJV)*** ***The more you want to save and preserve your life and avoid suffering, then you will be lost, but when you offer your life to God, then you will be saved.***

Scripture call us blessed when we pass through trials and temptations and endure them. After we are tried with these temptations, and endure them, we will receive the crown of life which the Lord promised to those who love Him. ***“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” (James 1:12 KJV)***

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.” (Revelation 2:11 KJV) Christ wanted them to hear what the Holy Spirit is sending to them of messages. Christ wants us to be attentive to the voice of the Holy Spirit. He has reward to us when we persevere. The Holy Spirit today wants you to listen and accept persecution and you should not bypass it. When Christ about to suffer, He asked God to take away that cup from him, but later He said, not my will, but let thy will be done. ***“O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.” (Matthew 26:39 KJV)***

He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death: Christ was telling them, they might be persecuted and harmed, and even killed for His name sake, but they will not be

hurt of the second death. Those who will endure and remain faithful till death, they will rule and reign with Christ upon His return for one thousand years, and the second death has no power over them, while those who will not overcome they will suffer from the second death with the wicked, the second death is the fiery lake of fire and brimstone, ***“4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. 14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.” (Revelation 20:4-6,14 KJV)*** As we overcome and remain faithful to the point of death, not compromising, nor flattering to make the people love us we will take part in the first resurrection and the second death will have no authority over us, and we will reign with Christ for one thousand years during His millennial reign.

My dear and beloved: As we hear the message of God, let us repent of our sins, and let us commit our lives once again to God to live the plan of God that He ordained for us to live. Let us be willing to loss our lives for Christ’s sake so we can gain the crown of life, eternal life, and we will not be hurt by the second death.

My prayer: Father God I come before you in the name of Jesus who died on the cross for my sins, who was buried and rose from the dead on the third day to give me eternal life. Lord, thank you for your Word that encourages me and make me understand that I need to persevere to continue to live my life for you and to be willing to pass through trials and persecution and not to fear death.

Confess your sins to God. Lord forgives me the following sins _____. Ask God forgiveness for your lack of perseverance and your non willingness to suffer during persecution.

Lord I commit myself to abide with this Word of yours that I receive in this message. Lord I surrender my life and my will fully to you. Lord I commit myself to evangelize reaching new people for Christ. Lord I commit myself to be a good example to others that people may see you through my life. Lord give me strength and patience to endure the pressure of the persecution because of your Word. Lord fill me with the Holy Spirit and have me fully to you. Lord give me the gifts of the Holy Spirit so that I can go and serve you and evangelize and reach others and spread your Word and teach those who are willing to follow you.

Lord, I pray for my Brothers and Sisters who accepted your Word and are willing to live their lives and serve you and suffer for your Word. Lord protect them and provide all their needs. Lord work miracles for them and enable them to pass persecution and to endure until you come to take us with you to Heaven.

Lord bless us and sustain us as a church. Lord help us, protect us, and provide for us to go on in serving you and do your work and your will. Lord give to us more of the Holy Spirit gifts to evangelize and to reach new people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and

with the message of the Word of God. Lord, we pray that you will enable us to plant new Bible studies and new congregations for the church. Lord bless us, enlarge our territory, let your hand be with us, and free us from harm so that we will not feel pain. May the grace of the Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all in Jesus’ name, Amen.

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