


FAITH
UNDER PRESSURE
Revelation 2:8-11

Sooke Baptist Church

Sunday,
October 18,
2020,
9am and 11am

7110 West Coast Road

also on
Facebook
LiveStream
and YouTube



**under
pressure?**

Coffee/question:
When you have been
in a season
where you felt
stretched thin
and the pressure on you
was intense,
what encouragement
helped you most?



Smyrna is an ancient city.



Its origin stretches back to 1100 BC.



While Ephesus lies in ruins, Smyrna, renamed Izmir, is Turkey's third largest city.

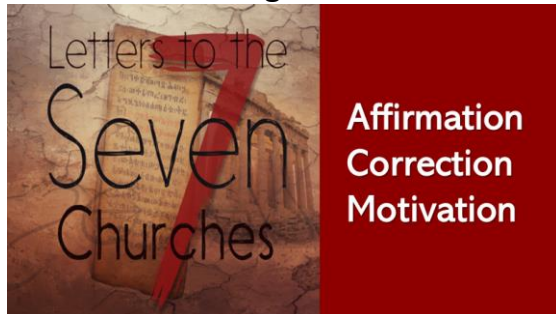
The present city has grown up around the old.



Today we are studying the second message of seven.



Each of these seven messages were directed to a specific church; but each message is also pertinent to every church in every location in every generation. The seven messages share a common format.

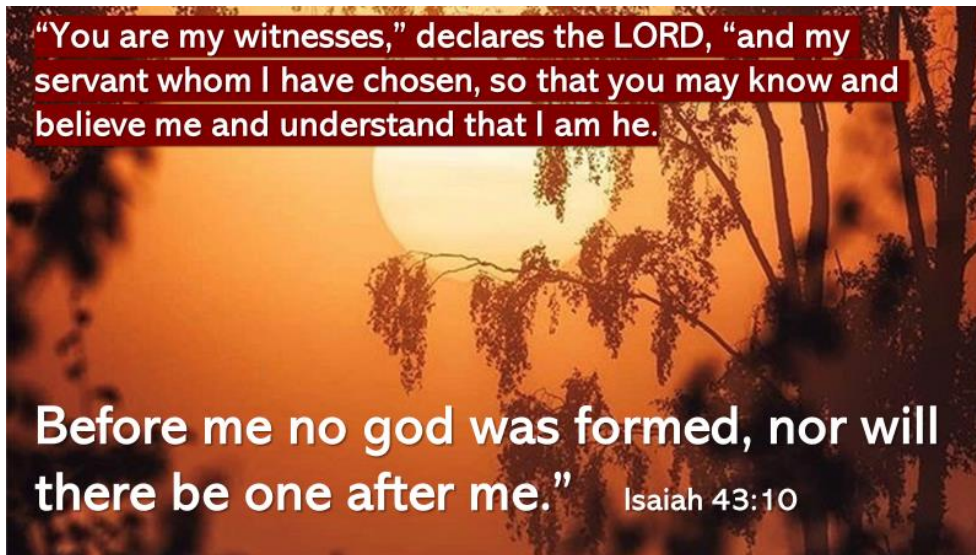


Jesus first affirmed the church.
He then identified an area in need of correction.
And lastly, he spoke words intended to motivate the believers of that church to press on in their walk of faith.



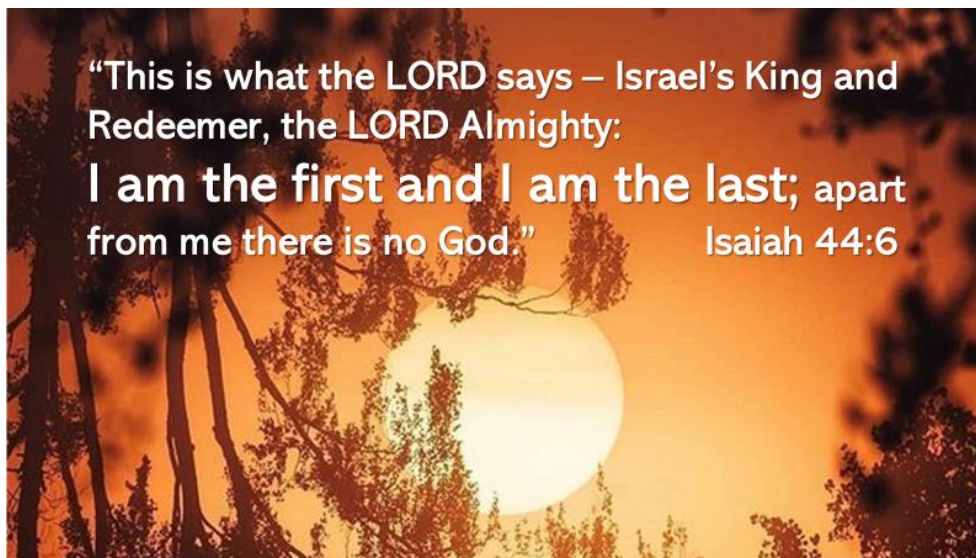
**2:8 – To the angel of the church in Smyrna write:
These are the words of him who is the First and the Last...**

Jesus' statement.... echoes the words of the LORD God recorded in the book of Isaiah.



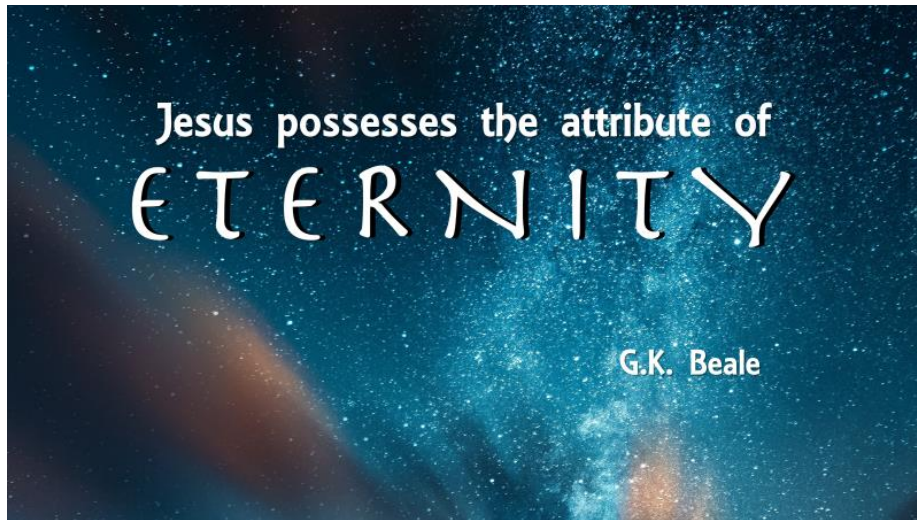
God tells us that we do not live in a world where there are multiple gods. The LORD has revealed himself as the only God. He has revealed himself so that we might know him and believe in him.

The fact that God reveals himself is an act of grace. When a person comes to know him, the LORD entrusts them with the responsibility and privilege of **being his witnesses**, along with his servant, whom we know to be Jesus Christ.



The LORD is Israel's King and Redeemer. As the Lord Almighty, he is the God of Angel Armies. And he asserts there is no other God except him...he is the first and the last.

When Jesus claims this title and applies it to himself, he is stating, that he alone, as G.K. Beale writes...



p.61.

Who Jesus is... Impacts the daily lives of his followers.
Because Jesus is the first and the last, he....

Jesus brackets our lives.
Darryl Johnson



DJ, p.65.

What does that mean?

The circumstances of our lives are not determined by fate or by chance. Everything that touches us, passes through the hands of Jesus, the First and the Last, who is in control of all things.

2:8b – These are the words of him....who died and came to life again.

Who Jesus is... was intended to be a strong anchor for the souls of his followers in Smyrna.

Jesus said there were three things he knows about his church.

2:9 – I know your affliction...

The word affliction is “thlipsis.”

It literally means...



The usage of this word in the New Testament is very specific. Darryl Johnson explains.



DJ, p.67.

The gospel of Jesus confronts humanity with its lostness.
The gospel tells the truth of humanity's helplessness.
The gospel states that humanity's gods are not gods at all.
The gospel offends human pride.
This is why there is thlipsis towards the followers of Jesus.



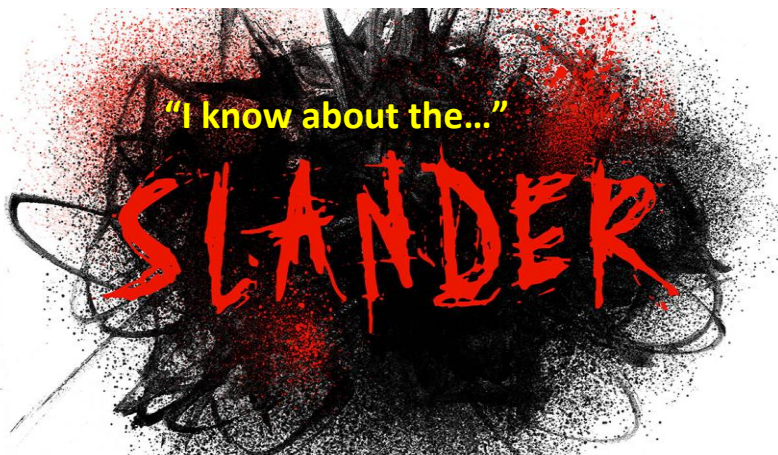
2:9 – I know.... your poverty – yet you are rich!

As a seaport city, Smyrna was wealthy.
But the Christians were poor.

They were materially poor because of their loyalty to Jesus. DJ, p.70
They'd had property seized.
They'd been denied business opportunities.
They'd been sidelined and pushed to the fringes.

Their poverty and affliction was inseparably connected.

But Jesus reminded them... you are rich...
In what?
In grace, in hope, in faith, in love.



**2:9 - I know about the slander...
of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.**

Jesus assured his church... I know the things that have been said about you. I know these things are not true. But rather than confronting the specific untruths the slanderers had spoken about his church, Jesus, instead, spoke the truth of who the slanderers were. He addressed their spiritual lostness.

We need to be clear about Jesus' statement to his church in Smyrna. He was not making an anti-Semitic slur...when he said that those Jews who had slandered them were a synagogue of Satan.

Rather, in stating this as he did, he was reminding his church...



...that the Jews of Smyrna, like all mankind, needed rescue from the snare of Satan, who has taken every person captive to do his will.

2:10 a- Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer...

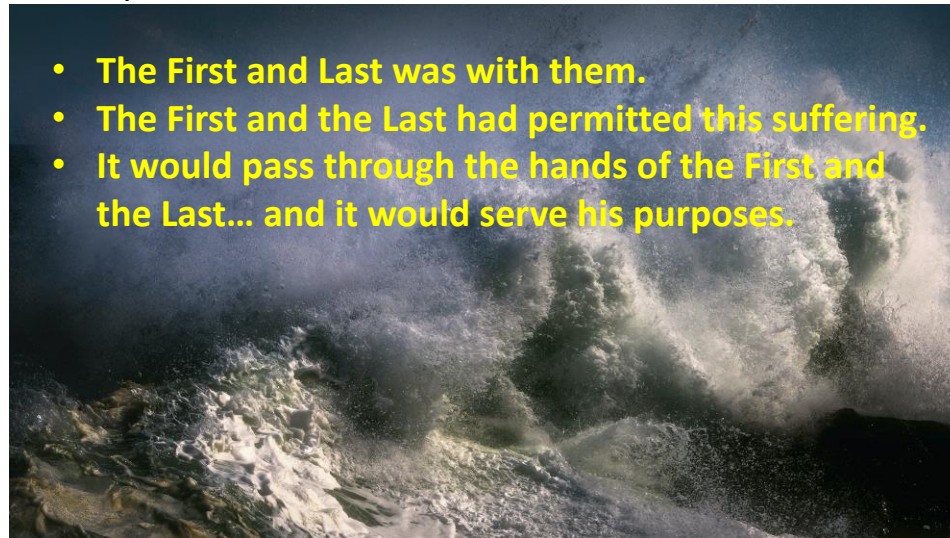
Jesus not only knew about the thlipsis his church had and was experiencing. He told them that another wave of thlipsis...



...was about to come upon them.

Repeatedly, throughout the Bible, you will read of this command.
It is not a cliché.
It is not empty words.
God tells his people to not be afraid because...he is with them.

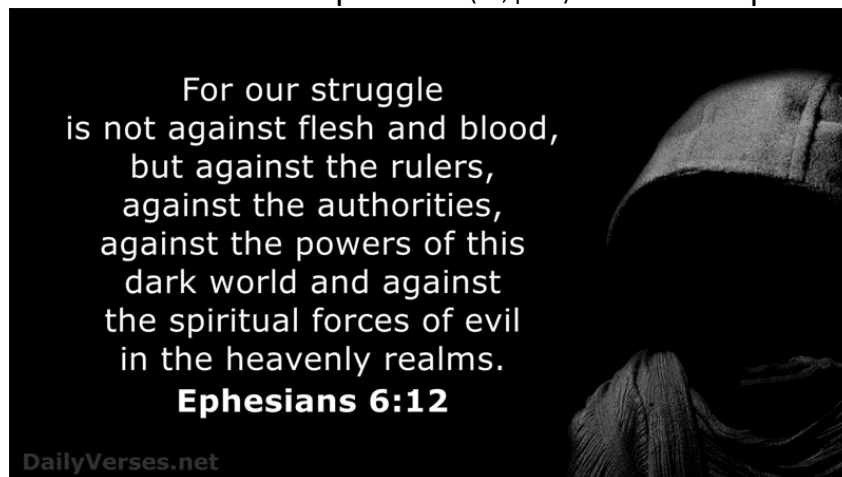
The Smyrnean's were not to be afraid because...



The desire of Jesus was that his church would hold onto him...and that their hearts would be a rest in the knowledge... that **he is the Lord of history.**
GK Beale, p.62.

2:10b – ... I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days.

Behind Rome's opposition... behind the hostility of the Jewish synagogue, there was "an invisible component" (DJ, p.70) to their thlipsis.



Things are not as they seem... not just in who the church's adversary is...but in the ability of God to turn the devil's efforts to harm his church... into a means to strengthen his people. GK Beale, p.62.

Romans 8:28 confirms this.



Why did Jesus permit the thlipsis to proceed, and not stop it?
I thought of three possible options...

- Jesus wanted to stop it and couldn't.**
- Jesus was occupied with other things, and it slipped by him.**
- Jesus allowed it to happen.**

Darryl Johnson believes the third option is the only one viable, truthful option in light of who Jesus is. p.72.

The Lord of the church, the Lord of history.... allows thlipsis... because it is good for his church; because it refines his church; because it strips away what is unnecessary in his church... and brings his people to bottom-line essentials.

For the church in Smyrna..., Jesus set the parameters of the thlipsis that would roll over them.

Look again at v.10 – you will suffer persecution for 10 days.

Did Jesus mean a literal ten days?

Or did he mean a relatively short period of time?

In this instance, we do not have any more information to base an answer on.

But what is clear... is that Jesus is in control.

He set the parameters.

What this teaches us is that...

“Evil is on a leash.”

Darryl Johnson

p.73.

When he began his message, Jesus told them he had died and come to life again. His victory over death is why Jesus urged his church to be faithful in the face of persecution, even if it meant that some would die.

Jesus had assured his church that he holds the keys of death and Hades... which is why he could promise them what he did.

Look again at v.10 – “I will give you life as your victor’s crown.

Smyrna regularly held athletic games.

Those who won a competition were awarded the ‘stephanos,’ a laurel wreath.



To those who were faithful in the testing to come, Jesus promised... the stephanos of life.

Jesus in John 10:10 described this life as the life of the ages.

Verse 11 qualifies that this life cannot be hurt by the second death.

- **First death**
- **Second death**

The first death is physical – it is the death we all will experience.

The second death follows the first for those who reject Jesus in this life....it is to live forever separated from the presence and the life of God.

See Revelation 20:6; 20:14; 21:8

Jesus did not promise his church that they would not physically die.

What he did promise them was that the second death would not touch them.

How great is the salvation of Jesus!

E.V. Hill says,

**“Those who are born once,
die twice;
those who are born twice,
die once.”**

E.V. Hill

DJ, p.73.

Were the believers in Smyrna faithful to Jesus...even in the face of death?

Yes!

What's more is that out of the seven churches to whom the Revelation was written, only the church in Smyrna still exists. DJ, p.74

What does this message teach us, what does it ask of us?

Concerning thlipsis.

We have not faced thlipsis like the church in Smyrna did.

Other churches of Jesus in other nations have – Sudan, Iran, Iraq, China, Myanmar, India, Cuba.
But we haven't. That said...our time may come...and most likely will come.

Is there anything as a church that we can do to prepare ourselves?

We can engage in spiritual practices in order to forge a resilient faith; a faith that perseveres.

We can approach these practices like getting in shape.

Not as something nice to do, but of the utmost importance.

We can learn to feed ourselves spiritually.

We can learn to discern the voice of God.

We can learn to ask for God's wisdom and help in all things.

We can memorize Scripture so that if our Bible is ever taken from us, we have the word of God hidden away in our heart.

We can learn to fast in order to bring our bodies under control.

Jesus says: Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

We can be intentional in the priorities by which we live – making Jesus first in every facet of our life...even if and when it is inconvenient to do so.

We can teach our children to do likewise.

Jesus says: Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

I can't but help wonder in the midst of this pandemic, if this is not what Jesus is endeavoring to accomplish in his church...

- To refine us.
- To strip away what is unnecessary.
- To bring us back to bottom-line essentials.

It's not thlipsis, but we are living with great inconvenience... at work, at school, when we shop, when we go out to eat or to engage in some recreational activity, and yes, when we come to church.

But regarding church.... are we not being reminded just how necessary and worthwhile and precious it is to gather together and worship our Jesus who is among us; to open our ears together to hear what he says to us through his word. To fellowship? To encourage? To pray for one another and our community?

Jesus intent is to use the fallout from this pandemic for our good.
To uncover in us areas where we need to grow in grace.
To train in the sufficiency of his grace.

The followers of Jesus can do hard things because the grace of God is always enough.

Jesus says: Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Jesus knows what we are living through.
And he is with us.
He knows what we are experiencing because our circumstances pass first through his hand.

Based on today's passage his word to Sooke Baptist is...
...do not be afraid
...be faithful
...and I will give you life as your victor's crown; life that cannot be touched or harmed by the second death.