



CHRIST'S EVALUATION OF HIS CHURCH "Stout-Heartedness in the Church" Revelation 2:8-11

No. 1490

Stuart Briscoe

Smyrna called itself "the glory of Asia." Situated 35 miles north of Ephesus, its great rival, it is still a flourishing city; although now it is called Izmir. The church in Smyrna receives no criticism from her Lord only understanding and encouragement.

I. Christ Emphasizes His Control. v. 8

- A. I am the first and the last.
- B. I died.
- C. I came to life again.

II. Christ Empathizes with His Church. vv. 9-10

I Know About:

- A. Difficulties.
 - 1. Smyrna foremost in Caesar worship.
 - 2. Smyrna first city with "Dea Roma" temple.
 - 3. Christian principles verses political, social expediency.
 - 4. Pressure (Gk. "thlipsis") the result. See 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 4:12f
- B. Destitution.

"The "penes" has nothing superfluous, the "ptochos" had nothing at all." R.C. Trench

 - 1. In the midst of prosperity they experienced poverty.
 - 2. But in poverty they enjoyed prosperity. See 2 Corinthians 6:10; Revelation 3:17
 - 3. Because they were suffering for righteousness' sake. See Hebrews 10:34
- C. Defamation.
 - 1. Jewish hostility to Christ. See Romans 2:28-29
 - 2. Ongoing opposition to Gospel. Acts 13:45f
 - 3. Jewish privileged position with Rome.
 - 4. Synagogue of Satan (Slanderer).
- D. Death.
 - 1. Prison usually led to death.
 - 2. Permitted by the Lord. (Note: "Some", "Ten")
 - 3. Utilized by the Devil.

E.g., Bishop Polycarp of Smyrna martyred. A.D. 155

III. Christ Empowers His Church.

- A. By words of challenge.
 - 1. Be fearless.
 - a. Not exemption. b. But expectation.
 - 2. Be faithful.
 - a. Having something to live by. b. Having something to die for.
- B. By words of comfort.
 - 1. The promise of the crown of life.
 - a. Crown (Gk. Stephanos)—Games, weddings, coins.
 - b. Life after death.
 - 2. The promise of escape from second death.
 - a. Rabbinical teaching on death of wicked.
 - b. Does not apply to the faithful. See Revelation 20:6-14; 21:8