


A Call to be Faithful
Revelation 2:8-11




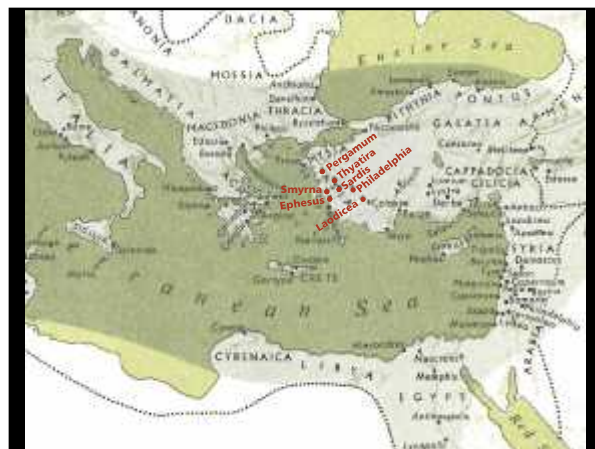
The Seven Churches of Revelation

- Following the glory of Easter we consider the birth and life of the Church
- The seven churches of Revelation represent Christ's ongoing word to the contemporary church



Smyrna

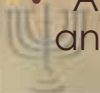
- An important city of size on Aegean coast
- Large natural harbour
- Today is the city of Izmir in Turkey – 3,000,000 people

i. Angel of Smyrna (v8)


Description of Christ refers back to theophany – 'the First and Last'; 'who was dead and came to life' (Revelation 1:17-18)

- A focus on the living Christ
- "And see, I am alive forever and ever" (1:18)



ii. I Know (v9)

- Affliction – severe trials & serious challenges
- Excessive/extreme poverty although called 'spiritually rich' ~ a contrast to the church of Laodicea – economically rich but spiritually poor (3:15-17)



ii. I Know (v9)

- iii. Suffering slander/hardship from opposing forces in Smyrna
 - Imperial Court – Emperor cult
 - Jewish community resistance – martyrdom of Polycarp (Bishop of Smyrna)



ii. I Know (v9)

- God knows all about our suffering.
- He is a compassionate Father who is with us in every situation.
- He understands and walks with us.



iii. Words of Affirmation (v10)

There is no message of critique to this church – only encouragement



'Do not fear'

- This is the controlling phrase
- Suffering will come but it will not last it is limited (10 days)
- Recognizes that suffering is part of our lot



'Be faithful'

- Endure patiently
- God is sovereign not the evil one
- Responsible Christian conduct



To the Persecuted Church

- Churches under attack; Syria, Iraq, North Korea
- For us in the west persecution is also real – but psychical – attacks on our mind, spirit; attacks of anxiety, distraction, depression



IV. Promise (v10b-11)

"Let anyone who has an ear listen..."

- The quality of our listening
- Churches are listening posts
- We are not to have 'heavy ears' (Isaiah 6:10) but 'ears that are awake' (Isaiah 50:4)



The promise - we will not experience death but life.

- Given 'the crown of life'
- Not be harmed by 'the second death'
- No separation from God - only life with God



A Call to Follow Jesus

- Conquer - patiently endure
- Be an overcomer
- Keep living from the centre of Jesus



A Call to Follow Jesus

- A call that will include the element of suffering
- 'take up your cross and follow me'
- Suffering is part of the human condition



A Call to Follow Jesus

- Motivated by hope - the hope of life (v10b)



The motivation to live strenuously for a lifetime must be adequate to sustain us through every shadowed valley and every parched wilderness. The promise of eternal life and only the promise of eternal life, is sufficient to provide such motivation.

Eugene H. Peterson