

Sermon #4: Stirred Not Shaken

2-11-2024

BREAKING THE ICE

- What impacted you most about this week's message?

UNDERSTANDING THE TRUTH

The church in Smyrna was living under significant oppression. Smyrna was considered a wealthy city where education flourished. However, the non-believing Jews had begun to ostracize the Jewish Christians. Their businesses were boycotted causing financial hardship. They were openly hated and often abused for being Christ followers. Therefore, they were suffering from persecution and extreme poverty.

Read the Revelation 2:8-11, the church in Smyrna

1. How does Christ portray himself to the church in Smyrna in verse 8? Given what we can know about the church of Smyrna, why do you believe John was instructed to begin this letter with these words?
2. What circumstance do the believers find themselves in? (verse 9)
3. Use James 2:5 to help you understand how one can be "afflicted in poverty, yet rich." Discuss how that speaks to you personally.
4. In verse 10 the believers are told that they will suffer, and some will be put in prison. Yet, Christ commands them to do what?
5. What will they be given at the end? Look at Philippians 3:13-14 for more context.
6. John ends both letters with the phrase, "Whoever has ears, let them hear ... to the one who is victorious [or overcomes]." To whom do you believe John was referring (see 1 John 5:4-5)? How does this apply to us today?

SEEING JESUS CHRIST

1. Jesus tells them, "I know your afflictions." Do you think those words comforted the believers in Smyrna? Explain.
2. Read 2 Corinthians 4:17-18. How do you see what these verses speak about, displayed in the church in Smyrna?
3. Read Isaiah 53:5 and Matthew 20:28. Why do you believe God allows His children to experience suffering?
4. There was no rebuke for the church in Smyrna. What were they doing despite their suffering that had kept them from rebuke? How does that speak to you?

MAKING IT MATTER

1. Think of the Christians in Smyrna, they chose Christ over Rome. Who or what do we love the most? Church in Smyrna had to consider government, wealth, security, and family when they chose Christ. What do we allow to dictate our thoughts, actions and beliefs?
2. Share how you feel, or your perceptions, about suffering.
3. At times, we will experience suffering. Is there a difference in general suffering (for example, a debilitating medical condition or grief after the loss of a loved one), self-inflicted suffering (bad choices), and suffering for the cause of our faith? How does Jesus respond to each?
4. It is our human tendency to find the cause of our suffering and react by placing blame, getting angry, or demanding that our hurt be fixed. Think of how the church in Smyrna reacted to suffering. Does that change your mindset?
5. How can we be a witness when we are in a time of suffering?

PRAYING FOR GOD'S POWER

"This is the confidence we have before him: If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have what we have asked of him." 1 John 5:14-15

When we pray according to God's will it engages the power and guidance of God to bring about our transformation. If we apply these things in our own strength, then it is just legalistic obedience. But, when we humbly ask God to change us and empower us according to His will and by His Spirit, it becomes transformational AND it glorifies God.

1. Ask people to share one key, specific application from today's lesson that they want God to bring about in their life. Then take time to pray for each other in these areas.