

The South Florida Avenue MESSENGER

A Friendly Church With a Vital Message Proclaiming the Unsearchable Riches of the Lord Jesus.
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SUNDAY SERVICES

Bible Study.....9:30 a.m.
Worship.....10:30 a.m.
Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Ladies Class.....10:00 a.m.
Bible Study.....7:00 p.m.

HOME OF

Florida School of Preaching
since 1969

MISSION FIELDS

Dub Hill.....Russia
Don Iverson.....India
Marc Veary.....Malawi, Africa
Graham McDonald..Scotland
J. Paguaga.....Honduras, C.A.
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Ted Wheeler.....Ghana, W.A.

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IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY

Sundays @ 8:30 a.m. Check local listings

The Church At Smyrna: "Suffering Saints"

Brian R. Kenyon

John, while on the isle of Patmos, wrote the Book of Revelation. In Chapters 2-3, there are recorded seven letters to the churches of Asia Minor. Although each letter was written to a specific congregation, each is also applicable to us. Jesus Christ concluded each letter through John by writing, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev. 2:7 cf. 2:11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). The second of these letters was written to the church at Smyrna. The subtitle, "Suffering Saints," is adapted from Ray Summers (*Worthy Is the Lamb*, 1951).

Background of the City

Smyrna was located on the coast of the Aegean Sea, about forty miles north of Ephesus. Due to its geographical location, Smyrna had great natural advantages. It had an excellent harbor with a gulf that made for a good trade outlet. Smyrna was second only to Ephesus in exports. The city was destroyed in 580 BC, but rebuilt in 290 BC (cf. "was dead, and came to life," Rev. 2:8). Politically, Smyrna was extremely loyal to Rome. She was one of the first cities to worship the Roman emperor, as evidenced by the city's erecting a temple to Tiberius. Smyrna enjoyed constant prosperity as a result of loyalty to Rome. The capital buildings of Smyrna were situated on a mountain in such a way that they resembled a crown. Thus, the crown became the symbol of the city. There is no Biblical record of the origin of the church in Smyrna.

Relevance of the Writer

The letter was written by "the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life" (Rev. 2:8). This description of Christ ties in with the vision that John earlier saw (Rev. 1:17). By this description we note the supremacy of Christ. He is all we need to overcome. Christ knows first-hand the suffering that the Christians in Smyrna endured (cf. Heb. 2:18; 4:15). Although Christ was "dead," He arose, and forever "came to life" (cf. Lk. 24:5-7). The victory of Christ over death and His present exalted position should encourage a congregation who is suffering persecution, even to the point of death (Rev. 2:10).

(continued on page 2)

Christ's Awareness

The church at Smyrna is one of two congregations (the other being Philadelphia) whom the Lord had nothing against. They were not told to repent of anything. Rather, the Lord said, "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan" (Rev. 2:9). Christ knew what they were enduring, and He was concerned. Along with their "works," the saints in Smyrna were suffering. "Tribulation" refers to serious trouble or distress, hard circumstances; the burden that crushes. The suffering saints in Smyrna had fortitude to endure such afflictions because they were committed to the Lord (cf. Lk. 14:26-27). Perhaps the extreme suffering of the saints drove off the "lukewarm," and that was the reason why nothing negative was said of them. The reason for their material "poverty" was probably the direct result of their faithfulness to God. Loyalty to Christ in a city so loyal to Rome often resulted in the confiscation of personal property by official edict and/or by boycotting Christian owned businesses (cf. Rev. 13:16-17). Their material poverty, however, was offset by a much greater wealth — "but you are rich"! Obviously, their "treasure" was in heaven (Mt. 6:20 cf. Lk. 16:11). The suffering saints in Smyrna were persecuted by those who claimed to be Jews, which were not (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 6:15-16), but, as Jesus said, were "the synagogue of Satan."

Christ's Encouragement and Promised Blessings

To encourage them, Jesus said, "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). These words contain two exhortations. First, "Do not fear"! The devil, who is the real enemy (Eph. 6:11-12; 1 Pet. 5:8), will imprison some. Satan is the ultimate source of all persecution against God's people (Rev. 12:10 cf. 1 Thes. 2:18). "Prison," in addition to its literal meaning, can refer to all forms of persecution from the civil government. This persecution would be a test of their faith. Their suffering, however, would only be for a limited duration—"ten days." God will see them through (Mt. 28:20; Heb. 13:6). The second exhortation is "Be faithful until death." Being "faithful until [unto, KJV] death" means more than just being faithful until the day we die. Rather, it means to be faithful even if our death results from it (cf. Rev. 6:9-10). We must hold to the faith no matter what the cost. Saving physical life at the expense of loyalty to Christ is too great a price to pay (Mt. 16:25-26). Although we may not be confronted with the same level of persecution as were the saints in Smyrna, we must still possess the attitude that will allow us to remain faithful even if it requires the loss of our life (Mt. 5:10-12; 1 Pet. 4:12-16). If we possess this attitude, then we, like the suffering saints in Smyrna, will receive a "crown of life" (cf. 1 Cor. 9:25; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 5:4).

As He did in all seven letters, Christ gave a promise to all who overcame, "He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death" (Rev. 2:11). Jesus did not promise to remove difficulties, for they are valuable (cf. Jas. 1:2-4). Jesus did promise that his saints in Smyrna would not be "hurt" eternally. The "second death" is elsewhere described as "the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:14), and will be the eternal destiny of all who oppose God (Rev. 21:8). This promise that eternal destruction could not touch them if they remained faithful was comforting to those who faced the very real possibility of dying for their faith.

Conclusion

As we consider the promise to the suffering saints of Smyrna, we must realize that for us there are only two alternatives: "the crown of life" or "the second death." If we were Christians in Smyrna, facing the possibility of death for being loyal to Christ, would we still be faithful? Sometimes, living a physically-persecution-free life in this country hinders our faithfulness. May God give us strength and confidence in Him to be as the church at Smyrna, willing to serve God even though we may lose our lives as a result. ♥ *Brian*



PEW PACKERS EVERY SUNDAY EVENING AT 5:45

SFA FAMILY MATTERS

Prayer List

Our Members: It was good to have Virginia Walker and Bob Cooper back with us. Wanda Bruno is home from the hospital after complications from a blood clot. She is staying with her daughter. Sharon Washington, Dorothy Trice, Ginny Johnson, Cheryl Barker, Ron Cox, Wayne Shearer, Faith West, Jim Turner, Bill Long, Ginny Hamby, and Margaret Coone.

Shut In Members: Carol Eason, Virginia Plumlee, Dick & Joyce Burbage and Sharon Edler.

Others: Harold Hooks, Lynn Stevens, Chrissi Fuesner, Joyce Stearsman, Ruth Brunson, Chip Bolding, Ray Parker, Ted Okolichany, Connie Jordan (Jim & Carol Edmondson's, daughter), Barbara Paulin and Alexa Williams, (Kyle Williams wife) who lost her sister in a car accident.

Upcoming Events

Saturday, August 25th: Youth Ice Cream Social at 5:00 p.m. hosted by the Shearer family at their home.

Sunday, August 26th: Monthly Fellowship Meal. Wayne Shearer's team has set-up and clean-up.

Sunday, August 26th: Teacher Training Session at 3:00 p.m. in the library for the upcoming quarter which begins in September.

Monday, August 27th: Ladies Exercise Class begins, see flyer on bulletin board in foyer or call church office for details.

Sunday, Sept. 2nd: Fellowship In Service after evening worship.

Monday, Sept. 3rd: Labor Day Lectureship, hosted by the Sixth Street church of Christ, 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Lunch will be provided.

Monday, Sept. 3rd: Labor Day Cookout. Games for all ages! Games at 2:30 p.m. Dinner at 5:30 p.m. Bring your favorite side dish and dessert.

Wednesday Sept. 5th: Ladies Bible class will resume at 10:00 a.m.

Saturday Sept. 8th: Youth Devotional at 5:00 p.m. hosted by the Sweeneys.

Sunday Sept. 9th: Elders/Deacons Meeting at 4:30 p.m.

Thursday Sept 13th: Evening Ladies Bible class will resume at 7:00 p.m.

Saturday Sept. 15th: Men's Breakfast: North Jackson in Bartow at 8:00 a.m.

Tuesday, September 18th: FSOP Ladies Class 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Pantry

Pantry is low on individual fruit cups! Thanks.

Thank You

Dear Members, I would like to thank you and let you know how I appreciate all the prayers, cards and thoughts for myself and my family during this time with my health problems. Prayers do change things, Thank you again. Wanda Bruno and family.

Visitors

Johnny Davidson, Joshua Vandervort, Keyayna Thomas, Brett Gerhardt, Jeff Hollis, Deborah Bush and Karen Napier.

SCHEDULED TO SERVE

September

Charles Paulin **Table** C.J. Grimes
Tucker Sweeney **Assist** Bobby Sheumaker

Sunday, August 26, 2018

9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class Jim Turner
Prayer CJ Grimes

10:30 A.M.

Announcements David Williams
Song Leader Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer Bobby Sheumaker
Sermon Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer Tucker Sweeney
Sound Booth Alex Parramore

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader Tucker Sweeney
Opening Prayer David Anderson
Sermon Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer CJ Grimes
Sound Booth Alex Parramore
Greeters Longfellow (before) Bingle (after)
Att. Cards Paul/Ian
Open & Close Building Bob Pratt

Wednesday, August 29, 2018

Song Leader Matt Willcut
Opening Prayer Jason Hendrix
Closing Prayer Bobby Simpson

Please meet in the library. If you cannot serve, please call Stacey Paulin so he can get a replacement - (863) 838-8911

Sunday, September 2, 2018

9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class Kyle Williams
Prayer David Anderson

10:30 A.M.

Announcements Wayne Shearer
Song Leader Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer Frank Hamby
Sermon Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer Tyler Anderson
Sound Booth Casey Paulin

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader Paul Romine
Opening Prayer Alex Parramore
Sermon Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer David Anderson
Sound Booth Casey Paulin
Greeters Fife (before) Edmondson (after)
Att. Cards Willcut boy's
Open & Close Building Jimmy Sweeney

Wednesday, September 5, 2018

Song Leader Vince Daugherty
Opening Prayer Fred Strickland
Closing Prayer Matt Willcut

~ HOW ARE WE GIVING ~

July 29 \$5,380.46
August 5 \$6,852.52
August 12 \$5,546.63
August 19 \$5,273.72
Contribution Average \$5,780.48
2018 Weekly Budget \$4,887.98

~ Communion to Shut-ins ~

Aug 26 McShane
Sept 2 Kemp
Sept 9 Kemp
Sept 16 Parramore
Sept 23 McShane

The Holiness of God

God's holiness is clearly attested in Scripture! The Psalmist entreated, "Exalt the LORD our God, And worship at His holy hill; For the LORD our God is holy" (Ps. 99:9). The seraphim that Isaiah saw, cried out, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts" (Isa. 6:3). John heard the four living creatures say, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!" (Rev. 4:8). Holiness means that God is absolutely separate from and exalted above all of His creatures, and He is equally separate from all sin (Isa. 59:1-2; Hab. 1:13; Jas. 1:13; 1 Jn. 1:5). People cannot approach God based on their own merit (Ps. 24:3-4). Accountable people do not possess nor can they ever acquire the sinlessness that would be necessary to access God (Rom. 3:23). Christ, the only mediator, makes such access possible (Rom. 5:1-2; Eph. 2:18; Heb. 10:19-20). God's holiness necessitates atonement. What His holiness demands, His love provides (Jn. 3:16; 1 Pet. 3:18). Mankind, therefore, must approach God through Christ "with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12:28-29). The proper view of God's holiness leads to the proper view of sin (Ps. 97:10; 119:104,133 cf. Isa. 6:5-7). Humiliation and a contrite heart result from the proper view of God's holiness. Holiness is interwoven with and superimposed on each of God's other attributes. There is eternal conformity of God's being and will. God does not will the good because it is good, for that would imply that good is above God. Neither is the good good because God (*continued below*)



South Florida Avenue
CHURCH OF CHRIST
1807 South Florida Avenue
Lakeland, FL 33803-2653

Return Service Requested

The End of Your Search for a Friendly Church . . .

✓ Please fill-out the **vision/goal survey** ASAP if you have not. Thanks if you have!

Sixth Street Church of Christ
25th ANNUAL
LABOR DAY LECTURESHIP
MONDAY - SEPTEMBER 3, 2018
1 Corinthians 3:9 **BRETHREN WORKING TOGETHER** 1 Corinthians 3:9

 George Beals	 Vernon Simons	 Charles Broyles	 Bill Davis
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Sixth Street
CHURCH OF CHRIST
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(*continued from above*) wills it, for that would imply that good is arbitrary. God's will is the expression of His holy nature. That is, holiness "flows" from God. Although people cannot obtain holiness in perfection, they can and must reflect God's holiness in this life (2 Cor. 7:1; Heb. 12:10). Peter wrote, "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct; because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Pet. 1:16 cf. Lev. 11:44). Let us separate our minds from worldliness and be holy like God! ❤️ *Brian*

Many of our members are at Polishing the Pulpit in Tennessee. Let's keep them in prayer. The entire church will benefit from what they learn!