





Pergamum

Thyatira

Smyrna

Sardis

Philadelphia

Ephesus

Laodicea

Patmos

Rev. 2:8¹¹ And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this:

⁹I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

Ray Stedman -Commentary God's Final Word

Perhaps the closest analogy to what the believers in Smyrna were forced to endure would be the experience of the Jews in Nazi Germany during the 1930s. Their travel was restricted. Their shops were subject to frequent vandalism and looting. Their livelihood was destroyed. Their synagogues were defiled or destroyed. Their property seized. They were humiliated, stigmatized, slandered, harassed and physically assaulted. Eventually, even their lives and their children's lives were taken.

I counted dollars while God counted crosses.

I counted gain while He counted losses.

I counted my worth by the things gained in store,

But He sized me up by the scars that I bore.

I coveted honors and sought for degrees.

He wept as He counted the hours on my knees.

I never knew till one day by a grave,

How vain are the things that we spend life to save.

I did not yet know, till a Friend from above

Said, "Richest is he who is rich in God's love:"

⁹I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

Matthew 10:16–22 (NASB95)

¹⁶Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.

¹⁷But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues;

¹⁸and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

¹⁹But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say.

²⁰For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

²¹Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.

²²You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.

Rev. 2:10 `Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Judges 2:21–22 (NASB95)

²¹I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died,

²²in order to test Israel by them, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk in it as their fathers did, or not.”

Exodus 16:4 (NASB95)

⁴Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction.

Job 1:5–12 (NASB95)

⁵When the days of feasting had completed their cycle, Job would send and consecrate them, rising up early in the morning and offering burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, “Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.” Thus Job did continually.

⁶Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.

⁷The LORD said to Satan, “From where do you come?” Then Satan answered the LORD and said, “From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.”

⁸The LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.”

⁹Then Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing?"

¹⁰"Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.

¹¹"But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face."

¹²Then the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him." So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD.

2 Corinthians 12:8–10 (NASB95)

⁸Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me.

⁹And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

¹⁰Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Rev. 2:10 'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

11'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.'

I discovered the importance of pacing when running my first triathlon. I did all my training for the swim leg of the race in a pool. And my times were fantastic. But the Atlantic Ocean is no pool. I was confident going into the race.

And so on the opening swim leg, I sprinted from the beach to the first buoy. I wanted to be at the front of the pack so I didn't have to embarrass everybody by swimming past them. That's just the kind of guy I am.

Well, let's just say that the ocean ate my lunch! Or more accurately, I drank the ocean. It's amazing what a couple gallons of salt water will do to your stomach. Lora said I looked like a dazed boxer when I finally hit the beach. She was being kind. I started so fast that I couldn't catch my breath the rest of the swim. I'm embarrassed to say that I ended up doing the backstroke instead of freestyle for much of the swim leg. And I learned an important lesson: how you start is not nearly as important as how you finish. And pacing is the key.

Mark Batterson, Wild Good Chase