

The Power of Pain, Poverty, and Prison

Revelation 2:8-11

John writes his second message to the church at Smyrna. It is near the boundary of Turkey and is ruled by Rome. Jews and Christians residing there and in nearby towns are marginalized and shut out of the marketplace. In Smyrna the Jews were let in, but the Christians were left out.

In John's vision, Jesus is saying that he sees their affliction. He knows about those who claim to be Jews, but are nothing more than a synagogue of Satan.

In Church we experience hurt from the people who are supposed to love us, but there is power in pain. The pain that we experience helps to develop us, and we will know Jesus in the fellowship of suffering. 1 Peter 3:14 says, "If you suffer for what's right, you are blessed." God will move us closer to him in the process. James 1:12 states, "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because having stood the test that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those that love him."

There is power in poverty. Smyrna was an impoverished church. Although Smyrna was situated near the water and trade routes and was engaged in lucrative businesses, the church people were not. The thing about poverty is that you will seek the Lord that much more and it causes you to humble yourself. Jesus said he knew their poverty, but they were rich spiritually in faith, righteousness, and in heavenly places. Poverty builds up determination and leads you to take action.

There is power in imprisonment also. Christians were being persecuted, thrown in lion's dens, and boiled in hot oil. For 10 years they were persecuted. Emperor Constantine converted to the faith and

allowed the Romans to have a statewide religion, but they had to recognize him as a god.

God will allow you to be in prison to see if it breaks your faith. The important thing is to wait on the Lord. While you're in prison God is shaping, molding, training, and disciplining you, and setting up your future. He develops you and even gives you visions. Be patient in your private prison. God will see you through.