



THE LORD'S FLOCK GROWTH DIGEST

PASTORAL GROWTH SERIES

WINE PRESS

Pressure Series, Part 1

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The church in Smyrna was under pressure/danger because they had to endure the tortures inflicted on them (Rev. 2: 8-10). Despite this, their spirit allowed them to surpass trials and persecutions without complaint, to remain faithful and to display amazing grace. They are worthy of emulation amidst pressure/trials due to their immense faith in God. As Christians, we should conform to the image of Jesus Christ who suffered and endured for our sake. Hence, we must wholeheartedly trust the Lord who knows what we are going through (pressures), and that He is always in control because he would provide a way out.

The persecution of the Church in Smyrna:

1. **The Affliction they experienced: "Thlipsis"** which represents the pressure of stones used to grind wheat or to crush grapes. This church was being "pressed" even to their own deaths because of their devotion to God. In the same way, we may be facing crushing sorrows and persecutions but when cares/pressure increase within us, God's comfort gives us joy. (Ps. 94:19). This life may be filled with pressure, difficulty and loss; however, Jesus said, "In the world we will have trouble, but take courage because I have conquered the world" (Jn. 16:33).
2. **The Poverty they went through: "Ptochoeia"** which means "beggarly". The Christians at Smyrna had been reduced to poverty because they were deprived of the right to work and no business would hire them. Similarly, we may experience this kind of situation but the Lord is telling us, that we should not be afraid of what we might suffer (Rev. 2: 10). Truly, the Lord understands the pain of poverty. However, He cautions us to seek the true wealth, that does not tarnish, decay, or could not be stolen; we should not

store up treasures on earth, but store up treasures in heaven (Mt. 6:19).

Moreover, God reminds us in 1 Cor. 10: 13 that:

2.1 Trials, temptations and tests happen to us. So, we should not feel singled out if we experience adversity.

2.2 He will not allow us to fail.

2.3 Any temptation or test can be endured because God will help us, and He will show us a way out.

2.4 We can resist temptation, so we should

2.4.1 recognize those people and situations that give us trouble.

2.4.2 avoid doing what is wrong, but choose to do what is right.

2.4.4. pray for God's help.

2.4.5 seek friends who love God and can offer help when we are tempted.

3. **The Slander they faced called "Blasphemia"** – This word refers to the slander that the "synagogue of Satan" stirred against the church in Smyrna. In retrospect, we must always be alert to the wiles of Satan. St. Peter has cautioned us: "Be sober and vigilant (1 Pt.5:8) since the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for [someone] to devour."

CONCLUSION:

Pain is a part of life and it is never easy to suffer. However, Jesus encourages us not to fear the future, but rather, to remain faithful. Let's not allow difficult times to turn us away from God. Let us trust God and joyfully await our heavenly reward.

REFLECTION:

What pressures are you facing and how are you handling them?

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