***Satan  
  
RV10-01***

Please open your Bibles to Revelation. We are currently studying the letter to the church at Smyrna. This is the third segment in our examination of this letter. This covers verses 8 through 11. We have read thus far: "And unto the angel (that is, to the pastor-teacher messenger) of the church in Smyrna write: These things, said the first and the last, who was dead and is alive. I know your tribulation and poverty, but you are rich. I know the blasphemy of them who say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan."

**Christian Suffering**

We have found that these Christians here in the city of Smyrna (which was a city of magnificent beauty, and second only to Ephesus as a commercial center in the ancient world) was a city in which the Christians were under intense pressures from the Jewish community, as well as from the pagan gentiles. The Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, speaks to this group of believers as the eternal God-man who Himself knew what it was to suffer. He suffered to the point of giving His life as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. He died; then He was buried; and, He was resurrected. He speaks to these believers as the eternal one, because they themselves are going to go through suffering, and some of them will actually face physical death because of it.

The Lord Jesus is aware of their suffering at the hands of the unbelievers. He makes that immediately clear to them. He also makes it clear to them that he is aware of the material privations that they have been going through. They've been experiencing material suffering for one reason or another. We don't know exactly why. We may suspect that it was, again, the result of the antagonism by the Jews and the gentiles of the city against them, and thereby restricting the economic benefits to those who were believers.

**Spiritual Wealth**

But the Lord Jesus Christ also sees the Smyrna believers as magnificently spiritually rich, because of the fact that they were obviously a super grace type of church. They had some solid pastor-teacher instruction; they were a positive congregation; and, they moved on by leaps and bounds toward the top levels of spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity within the soul was a commonplace thing in this congregation. They knew what a spiritual maturity structure was, and they knew it at its fully developed level so that they were at that point that James describes as God giving us more grace – the super grace level of blessing. The container had been built in their souls, and God was pouring grace to the extent that it was simply overflowing the edge of their container. They were super grace people. The Lord said, "Because of that, you are tremendously rich. As super grace believers, you are at the prime of your spiritual lives. And as people who are at the prime of their spiritual lives, it is therefore possible for you to be storing treasures in heaven as only people who are at the prime level of their spiritual lives can store them."

So these people had the highest level of spiritual maturity, and the Lord says, "Consequently, you are very rich. It's tough for you on earth. You're under great pressures." Remember that the word tribulation means pressures against the soul. "But, in heaven, you'll be surprised at what I've got waiting for you when you come up here, when you finally arrive home."

We find that these Christians we're being slandered, especially at the hands of the Jewish group. This was probably because the Jewish group viewed themselves as the true assembly of God on this earth, and they described themselves as that. They said that they were the true representatives of God. Yet, the Lord Jesus Christ looks upon them and says, "You're not the synagogue of God. You're the synagogue of Satan." They were, in reality, the assembly representing Satan. Satan here, of course, is the one who is leading them in their persecution of the Smyrna Christians. He was doing that because of their divine good production. He was doing that because of their high level of spiritual development. Satan and the demons spend most of their time paying attention to super grace Christians. The rest are really not too much of a threat.

**Satan is the Adversary**

Satan is the adversary. You remember that the name "Satan" ("satanas" in the Greek) means "adversary." He is the great opponent of the Lord Jesus Christ. The only way He can strike against the Lord is to hit His body, and that's where you come into the picture. We are surrounded by the angelic warfare every moment of our day, and we are under direct attack by "satanas," the adversary of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Fear Not**

Now we move to pick up the letter at verse 10, which says, "Fear none of those things which you shall suffer. In the Greek, the word "fear" is the Greek word "phobeo." This word "phobeo" is in the present tense. In the Greek language, that indicates not so much time, like it does in English, but it indicates rather something that is constantly taking place. The Greek tenses give you the kind of action. Basically, they don't give you time relationships. So present is the kind of action that continues. So he's telling them that they are to have a constant mental attitude relative to fear. He's going to explain what that attitude should be in a moment. It's passive. It's an attitude which should control them. It's not an attitude that they instill in themselves (that they develop), but it's one which simply possesses their thinking. It's imperative in its mood. Therefore, this word is a command of the Lord Jesus Christ. What the Word of God commands to these saints, it commands to you.

Right now, it's a bed-of-roses time for all of us. Right now, it is everything-coming-up as sweet times. Right now, it is summertime soldiering. The combat is not too tough. Yet, all around this nation, there are the signs that people are moving into places of authority and of influence. Ideas are moving into the control of our society that are going to change the picture drastically for us, and may bring us under great attack.

Right now, down in the city of Houston, the communist instigated International Women's Year is having a national convention. That national convention has very clearly declared itself, under its Marxist leadership, to be in favor of one concept after another that the Word of God condemns. It was something to watch one of those delegates on television the other day say, "I'm a lesbian, and I believe every little girl should have the right to grow up to be a lesbian." The whole system is a movement toward where people who are oriented to the divine principles of Scripture are going to come under attack and under a resentment. When these people come into power, you're going to know it.

The Bible clearly claims to be inspired of God. It is inerrant. It is without mistake. As long as you hold to an inherent Bible, then you've got an authority to say those women are wrong, and what they're proposing is wrong, because the Bible condemns these kinds of sexual perversions. The Bible condemns these kinds of improper relationships between men and women, where women are not in subjection to their husbands; the whole bit that all this involves; and, the whole question about the abortion of a life. All of these things can only be decided on what the Bible says. If you dismiss the Bible, and if you've destroyed its authority, then it doesn't mean anything anymore.

This is the kind of a world that these Smyrnan Christians lived in. They were in a world of the Roman Empire that believed the kinds of things toward which we are moving now in this country. What we are seeing taking place in Houston is an attempt to tear down the last bulwarks for the preservation, protection, and the honoring of the women of this country. These disoriented, confused women, who are shot-through with Satan's lies and human viewpoint, actually think that what they are pursuing is going to advance women, rather than to make them the garbage pile of the nation.

So to these Christians in Smyrna, God was saying "Fear not" toward a very powerful group. He was saying, "Fear not the governmental authorities. Fear not the people that can throw you into the arena to be eaten by the lions. Fear not the people who can put you under the most excruciating torture. Fear not the people who can destroy your family before your eyes. Fear not the people who can rob you of every material thing you possess." And that was really saying something.

So, summertime soldiers, be aware of the fact that the United States is moving in a very serious direction. I don't think it's going to be reversed. I think the Bible makes it very clear the United States has to be destroyed. That's where we're going, and everything that is taking place is destroying the country.

**Satan's Attacks**

Remember that there are two main lines of Satan's attacks. There are two things he strikes at. One is education. Satan's evolutionary humanism is instilled through education. The other area that he seeks to control is the Word of God, because divine viewpoint counters everything he does. I think it's rather interesting that you could ask, "Where does Berean Memorial church stand? What is the basis upon which this church stands?" Lo and behold, in the providence of God, it's right here. We are deep in the field of education. We have a Christian day school. Furthermore, lo and behold, where do we spend most of our effort? It is on the Word of God. Most of the effort of this pulpit is spent on preparation; on explanation; on teaching; on editing; and, on preparing for public distribution the Word of God, not only here but throughout this country, and in many parts of the world.

So you may see right here that this is the double area of Satan's attack. Here's where it's all at for him. Satan knows he has to control education on the one side in this country, and on the other side, he has to control the dissemination of the Word of God. Any group that's occupied primarily on that front is right there on the front line. If you choose to become a member of this church, we really must warn you that you're not in a reserve area. You have elected to become a member right down there where the fighting is the hottest. We are under the maximum attack of Satan. The farther a church gets away from investing their ministry in Christian education that really seals a child's outlook and his attitude toward life; the less a church has to do with that; and, the less it has to do with the exposition of the Word of God (and I mean exposition of the Word of God – not just talking about the Bible), the less that church has any problem with Satan, and the more Satan prospers that church – the more people it has; the more money it has; the more personnel it has; and, the easier its work is all around.

So I'm trying to portray for you something of the condition that existed here in Smyrna under the attack on the one side of the religious community of the Jews, and on the other side of the pagans and of the Romans with their emperor worship and their many gods and goddesses.

**Stop Being Afraid**

Now, to this word fear is added the negative, "none." The Greek word is "medeis." This negative, "medeis," is a negative which goes with this word "fear." You have a negative with the word "fear." Remember that we said that the word "fear" is in the imperative. That's a command. In the Greek language, whenever you have a negative that goes with a command, if that command with the negative is in the present tense, which this one is, then it is telling you that the people in Smyrna were already afraid. And what John is actually saying to them, which would be clear if you read it in the Greek, is, "Stop being afraid." That's interesting, isn't it? These people who had maximum instruction in the Word of God, and maximum spiritual maturity, yet found it a little fearful as they sat and they thought about facing the lions. They were fearful of being impaled on a stake; soaked in oil; and, lit on fire for somebody's garden party. They were fearful about seeing their children snatched from them and destroyed. There was fear in their hearts. It was an anxiety. It was already taking place in that congregation. Certainly we can understand it.

But God the Holy Spirit, through the apostle John, says to these people, "Stop being afraid." Do not let this fear continue to possess you." Divine viewpoint is able to see persecution from the frame of reference of eternity. That's what the apostle is trying to tell them: "You've got the maturity, Christians. Now get your maturity applied to your fear, and look upon the persecution that is imminent upon you (the things you are experiencing) from the frame of reference of eternity.

In Luke 12:4-5, the Lord Jesus put it this way (the same idea): "And I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear. Fear Him, who, after He is killed, has power to cast into Hades. Yea, I say unto you, 'Fear Him." Actually, he says "into Gehenna," the place of torment. So the Lord says, "Don't be afraid of the people who can only kill your body." That's what some of these people were facing. But He said, "Be really afraid of the person who can destroy your soul." Of course, that would be the person who has not received Christ as Savior. That is the person who will destroy his soul.

In Matthew 10:28, Matthew puts it this way: "And fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him, who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell" (in Gehenna). Those are the people that we should be concerned about.

This is very emphatic also in the Greek because this word "No" ("None"), the negative, stands first in the sentence. That's the place of emphasis. The fear of persecution has always been a major factor used by Satan to silence Christians. So the Lord Jesus is saying to these Christians, "I don't want you to be silenced by fear because that's exactly what the devil is trying to do to you."

"Do not fear any of those things which." This refers to the details of the persecutions: "the things which." That is the slander; the social pressure; the torture; the confiscation of property; the ridicule; the impoverishment; the imprisonment; and, the death itself. Don't fear any of these specific things– all the things that the pagan Romans and the religious Jews are doing to them. This is fear of what's going to happen in the next moment – fear of their future. That can paralyze your testimony. If you know it may cost you something in your business, you might think twice before you make a stand for a cause of righteousness. You're going to think a second time before you come out openly for something that God says is right. Fear is the thing that buttons us up in the Lord's service.

So the Lord says to these people, "Just don't be afraid of any of these things which you shall." The word "shall" is the Greek word "mello." The word actually means "to be about to:" "The things that you are about to." Here is a constant potential before them. It's active voice. These Christians are going to experience it. It's indicative mood – a statement of fact. The word indicates more trials still coming to the Smyrna Christians (because Satan just does not let up) – "The things that you're about to suffer." The world "suffer" is "pascho." This refers to the experience of some kind of personal injury or trouble. Again, it's present tense. You're constantly going to experience this. It's active. You are personally going to experience these things. It's infinitive. That's interesting. It's infinitive mood, expressing purpose. Don't be afraid of the things that you're going to suffer very shortly because it is God's purpose.

The Lord could have prevented these sufferings. The Lord can prevent the pressures that come into your life but He does not do so. Sometimes he does it because of discipline that you have coming. He's trying to wake you up to sin. Sometimes he does it because He is honored by the way you perform under the pressure. Sometimes it's because there is something down inside of you that needs to be brought to the surface so that you can get rid of it, and only suffering and trial will bring it up. We're going to see in a moment an interesting symbolic expression of that a little later in this passage.

So the problem for the Christian is to pass the adversity test in whatever form it comes. That's what He's encouraging this church in. The law has nothing to say to them in the way of condemnation – just encouragement. He's very tenderly saying, "Look, don't be afraid." This is like you speak to a small child who's frightened. You're trying to comfort him not to be afraid of the things that are out there. These sufferings of these Christians is Satan's way of attacking Jesus Christ. We're His body. The Lord says, "Don't be afraid."

**Satan is the Accuser**

This suffering in the future has a very specific kind of expression. After He tells them not to fear any of these specific things which they're about to suffer, He uses the word "behold" which in the Greek is "idou." "Idou" is a word that comes from the Greek word for "to see:" "horao." "Horao" gives the meaning "idou," because "horao" is the Greek word for an overview panoramic view. It's not a focused view. It's looking over the thing in the broad picture. So the word "behold" means "look at the broad picture." It is also a word that He uses to call their attention to listen carefully. He's going to tell them something. He's going to give them an overall picture – an overall picture about what? About the devil. About "diabolos."

"Diabolos" is the other name of Lucifer. We've already had his first name "satanas" which means "adversary" or "opponent of God." Now we have "diabolos," which means "slanderer" or "accuser." It connotes the quality of being a liar. When it is used, it is always used with the word "the." It is "the devil" – the specific accuser. This name applies only to Lucifer. There is no such thing as devils (plural). Sometimes the Old King James translated it that way. You should not speak about devils. There is only one devil. There are many demons, and the Bible speaks about many demons, but there is always *the* devil. That's always the way it's expressed in Scripture. There is only one devil. His name is "slander," and, of course, this is an appropriate title under which He should speak of him because these people in Smyrna were suffering from slander.

The whole name indicates that he is the accuser and the opponent of God and His people. Throughout the Scripture, he plays this role of accuser and opponent. For example, he accuses man to God. In Job 1:6-11 and Job 1:1-5 you can read about that. And you can read about yourself in Revelation 12:10, because that passage tells us that every time you and I are guilty of sin, "diabolos" calls God's attention to it, and he accuses us before the Lord. If it were not for the fact that the blood of Jesus Christ has given us a total covering, we would be in trouble. But because we have been covered, God constantly reiterates that we are not guilty. He maligns not only man to God, but he maligns God to man. Of course, the passage in Genesis 3 is a good example of that.

We read in the Bible that the "diabolos" is able to impose physical suffering on people. Acts 10:38 describes that for you. This is exactly what he's doing in Smyrna. Some of the times, the physical suffering that you have is from the devil. Some of the times, particularly during the holiday season, the physical suffering you're going through is because of your own eating habits. So don't blame the devil for everything. He has his hands full as it is. But this is one thing he does. He brings physical problems upon people.

There is a foolishness adrift in our society of a thing that's called mental illness. Did you ever hear about mental illness? Well, there isn't any such thing. The Bible indicates that there is no such thing as mental illness except in the way of perhaps a chemical imbalance within the body that causes a disruption of the mentality. But other than that, there is no such thing as a mental illness. There is only a sin illness, and there is only a "diabolos" controlled illness. That's where it's all at. Interestingly enough, that's the very thing that the psychiatrists and the psychologists attack more than anything else. They say, "The trouble with people is religion. That's what drives them crazy." But the Word of God says that we can have the mind of Christ. The Word of God says we are fully capable of thinking God's thoughts after Him. But you have to be born again, and you have to take doctrine. Then the mentality is stable. There is no such thing as mental illness. This is the world's poor, helpless way of trying to explain something that they see. But they do not understand that this is the result of sin, and that this is the result of satanic distortions placed upon the thinking of people. "Diabolos" can do a lot of things to you physically.

Also, Christians have the means to protect themselves against "diabolos." Ephesians 6:11 and Ephesians 4:27 make that very clear. You are not the sitting duck of the devil. If the devil is giving you problem, it's because you have invited him to do so by something that you have done. You have opened the door. He has the power to deceive in a very great way (Revelation 12:9, Revelation 20:10). He has the power of imposing death itself (Hebrews 2:14). He'll do that through sickness that he brings upon people, and then it brings death. He'll do that through putting a person in an accident and bringing death upon the person. Hebrews 2 tells us that this is one way that Satan keeps people in fear of him – through death. People are afraid of dying. The Christian who has not developed the maturity through doctrine to have dying grace is also going to fear death. "Diabolos" has the power of imposing death. "Diabolos," the Bible tells us, can completely dominate a person (John 6:70, John 13:2). In the case of an unbeliever, the devil can actually enter into the person and completely dominate him that way.

"Diabolos" also seeks to trap believers with various snares (1 Peter 5:8). All the time, the devil is going around watching for your weak points in order to trap you into sin. "Diabolos," however, will flee from the resisting believer (James 4:7). If you resist the devil, he will flee from you.

The devil is characterized by violent fury. Revelation 12:12 warns the earth to really beware – once he has been cast out of heaven, in the tribulation, and he comes down on this earth, because he has a temper. He has a violent temper. You've heard about people acting like the devil. That's true. That's exactly where they get it. He's characterized by a violent fury. The devil is destined to go into the lake of fire forever (Matthew 25:41, Revelation 20:10). He absolutely cannot escape that destiny.

Another very important point about the devil is that he has power to perform miracles. Please don't forget that. Matthew 7:21-23 gives you the description of a group of people who were performing miracles by the power of the devil, and who were giving Jesus Christ the credit. That's what the charismatics and the Pentecostals do. That's white magic. Jesus Christ says, "I'm dismissing all of you into hell. You performed miracles, but it was 'diabolos' and his demons who were doing it." Revelation 13:14 also indicates to you that Satan is able to perform miracles.

Diabolos is the ruler of this world through its various institutions. Luke 4:5-7, John 12:31, and John 14:30 tell us that the devil runs this world. Does the devil run elections? You betcha he runs elections. Does the devil put people in authority over nations? You betcha he does. Do you know what the Bible says? The Bible says that the basest of men are permitted to become leaders of nations. That makes sense, doesn't it? This is the devil's world. He's running it. He's in control. The one thing the devil will never permit in this world is for a man of divine viewpoint orientation ever to become the head of a nation. Never. That would absolutely destroy everything that the devil is after. He will not do that. If a man of divine viewpoint orientation were to look like he's coming into a position where he may find himself in authority over a nation, and thus to influence its thinking, that's one person that's going to be high on Satan's assassination list. Satan will destroy that kind of a man just as quickly as he can. Unless the hand of God restrains him from it, he will destroy that person.

Satan is the ruler of this world. He rules all the institutions: education; social; religious; business; and, the whole thing. The devil has great influence on the minds of unbelievers (2 Corinthians 4:3-4, Luke 8:12).

So the Smyrna Christians are going to face the attack by God's archenemy in this role presented to them in the role of the devil – the slanderer, and the great deceiver. The Lord is encouraging the Christians to cut out the fear because fear short-circuits the use of doctrine in the human spirit. When you are afraid, you can't use the doctrine that you have. He encourages them, in other words, to get their eyes on the Lord, and off of their trials. He's leading them to a divine viewpoint response.

The devil does just the opposite. The devil says, "Take your eyes off the Lord, and take a look at your troubles." But God permits suffering for His purposes. The soul of a Christian who has a fully developed spiritual maturity structure is always superior to the devil. Never forget that.

So the devil has his demons. They spend their time attacking Smyrna type Christians. These Christians, however, are going to know the greatest satisfaction. That's one nice thing about being attacked by the devil, because along with maximum pressure comes the other side of the coin, which is maximum blessing. The Christian who is under maximum pressure is the Christian that receives maximum rewards and blessings.

So the Lord says, "Fear none of those specific things which you're going to suffer. Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison. The word "shall" is the word "mello" that we had a little while ago. Again, it means "about to." "Cast: is the word "ballo." This means "to throw" or "to hurl." This is in the present tense. This is going to be constantly done to them. They're going to be thrown into prison. It's active. They are going to experience this. It's infinitive which means purpose. This is the devil's purpose for them. The physical placement of the Christians is what is meant by this word "ballo." Satan is constantly going to be doing something to them physically.

**Prison**

To whom? He says, "Ek," from the congregation. "Ek" means out from the Smyrna church: "Not all of you, but some of you, from this congregation are going to be cast into prison. This is the Greek word "phulake." This word means "a hold" or "a cage." You must not think of prison in the New Testament as you think about the institution of prisons that we have today. This is not a prison in the modern sense of a place of punishment. In the New Testament, they only used prisons to hold people until the time of trial. It was a temporary holding place. After the trial was over, the person was punished. He was punished not by incarceration. He was either punished by paying a fine; he was punished by exile (by being told to leave the nation, and to go to a distant place); or, he was punished by death. He was not put in prison where he was kept under lock and key at all.

**We will be Tested**

He says, "Be prepared for some of you from that congregation to be taken into prison, meaning for the purpose of trial. So he tells us, "That." That is the Greek word "hina." Here is the reason (the purpose of imprisonment): that you may be tried. This is "peirazo." "Peirazo" means "to test." This word means "to test in order to produce an evil response." This is to test so as to entangle a person in sin. It is mostly used in the New Testament where the testing proves negative. People break down under it. So the devil is going to test you. He's going to cause you to be pulled into this prison (to be taken under police custody) for the specific purpose of testing you so that you will break down, and that you will sin. This is the word that is used again and again in the Bible for the solicitations of the devil to do evil.

You have this demonstrated, for example, in Matthew 4:1, 1 Corinthians 7:5, and Revelation 2:10. We'll let you read those on your own. But every one of those passages uses this word "peirazo," and every one of those passages means the devil trying to get you to do evil.

So Satan imprisons the Smyrna saints to cause them to respond to the evil in their old sin nature. It's in the aorist tense which means they do this at the point of their punishment. It's passive. This is done to these helpless Christians. They're put under this kind of trial. It's subjunctive. That's potential. That's the potential mood – for some of them, but not for all of them.

There's another word "dokimazo." "Dokimazo" is a word that is used for testing, but it means "in order to prove the worthiness." For example, if you're going to be a doctor, then they "dokimazo" you to see whether you are qualified to be a doctor. It was used to describe testing money to see whether it was genuine. When this word is used in the New Testament, it always indicates the purpose of approving. The devil never uses this word. The Bible never says that the devil ever "dokimazo" a Christian. He never tests a Christian in order to prove something fine and good. But he always "peirazo" (again and again) a Christian in order to bring that Christian to do something bad.

Now both words are used together in 2 Corinthians 13:5: "Examine yourselves whether you are in the faith. Prove yourselves. Don't you yourselves know, how that Jesus Christ is in you, unless you are discredited?" One word is "examine" which is "peirazo:" to test with the expectation of demonstrating the lack of new birth. The other word is "prove" which is this "dokimazo," which means to prove that you are born again, and that faith is there. That's what the result is that you expect. These people have been attacking Paul, and they've been attacking his authority as a teacher. So he says, "OK, I'll tell you what. Some of you better 'peirazo' yourselves." When he said that in Greek, they said, "Oh oh, that's kind of a slap in the face, Paul." Paul said, "Some of you people better test yourselves. Some of you people better "peirazo" yourselves." They knew that he was saying to them, "The reason that some of you people oppose Me is because you're the devil's crowd to begin with. You're not born again." Then He immediately turns around and says, "And others of you prove yourselves." He says, "You're 'dokimazo,'" because He knew that some of them were believers in the church at Corinth. He said, "You will prove up to be genuine believers."

So here you have these two used in one verse. They are very distinctive concepts. Some in Corinth were "peirazo." They really weren't believers. Some proved to be genuine. In Luke 14:19, we have "dokimazo." Remember the man who wouldn't go to the banquet. He said, "I have to go out and prove my oxen." One of the things that's interesting about it is that it says he had to go out and "dokimazo" his oxen. If he uses this word, what does it tell us about that man and his oxen? That man knew that his oxen we're just great. He was using that as a cover-up because he did not want to attend the Lord's feast. So he says, "Please excuse me. I have to go out and prove my oxen." The Bible uses the word that clues us in that he knew very well that that was a good team. He didn't need to prove it. He already knew that they were going to prove to be good.

In John 6:6, you have "peirazo" where Philip is complaining about Jesus trying to feed this crowd (this multitude). So Jesus puts a question to Philip, "What have you got to eat?" And the Bible says Jesus did that to "peirazo" Philip – to test Philip's faith in order to bring something to the surface that Philip needed to realize about himself, because Philip's faith failed. He was trying to tell the Lord, "You're ridiculous. You can't feed this crowd. This can't be done." Of course, you know what happened. The Lord Jesus fed it without any problem at all. These two words are very significant. "Peirazo" is the bad word. And this is what Satan is going to do to Christians. He's going to cause pressures to come upon you in order that you will fall into evil.

**Ten Days of Tribulation**

This brings up a very interesting thing. He says, to these people, "You shall then have ten days of tribulation. For ten days, you will experience tribulation. Here's our word tribulation again: "thlipsis." "Thlipsis" means pressure against the soul. Here it is persecution really of some kind for ten days. What does "ten days" mean? These are ten specific days. People are trying to say, "Well, these are ten ages of a church persecution. No, we can't do that with literal interpretation. We have to take these as being ten days. Without getting into all the possible explanations, I think we should take it, first of all, for its straight language. Jesus was telling these people in Smyrna, "You've had a lot of trouble. Satan has been putting you under pressure to try to get you to do evil. Now I want to tell you that some of you are going to be taken; you're going to be thrown into prison; some of you are going to be tested to get you to do evil; and, others of you are going to be under great pressure for a ten-day period. We have no information about this special period of ten days.

**The Number Ten**

However, I want you to notice the word "deka." Let's close this session with this. That's the Greek word for "ten." The Bible, as you know, is significant in numbers. The number ten in the Bible signifies completion. This gives us a clue as to what the Lord is telling them by these ten days. For example, when God wants to express His absolute righteousness in a complete form, what does He give us? Ten Commandments. When God wants to talk about complete giving, you would have to give, what? Ten tithes? Ten tithes would be complete offering. One-tenth is a partial offering. When God wants to express His complete judgment upon Egypt and Pharaoh, how does He do it? Ten plagues – the number of completion.

In Numbers 14:22, we read that Israel had rebelled against God's authority. This was at Kadeshbarnea where they were refusing to go into the land. That was the tenth rebellion. God specifically says, "Ten times you have rebelled against Me." That number ten was the end of the line. It was the completion of rebellion that God was going to tolerate from that people. That's when He told them, "You're not going in. You're going to die in the wilderness." The complete rejection of God's plan to enter the Promised Land was expressed by a negative volition from how many spies? Ten spies – who said, "No."

The size of the Holy of Holies (where God's complete holiness was found) was a cube – ten cubits in each dimension. The complete security of the believer and salvation is expressed in Romans 8:38-39. You can check it for yourself. This passage describes ten specifics of the complete security of the believer in his salvation. The complete kingdom of man, which Abraham was to replace with the kingdom of God, is expressed by ten nations. In Genesis 15:19-21, there are ten nations listed that describe the complete kingdom of man in a symbolic summary form that Abraham's kingdom of God was to replace.

Furthermore, when the kingdom of God is upon this earth, Jesus Christ is going to reign for a 1,000 years, which mathematically is ten to the third power: ten times ten times ten. That 1,000 years will be the completion of the demonstration of God's rule upon this earth.

But the number ten also has another quality that we notice as it appears in Scripture. That is that it is associated with situations where something inside of a person is being brought to the surface and exposed. This is very much like a silversmith would take a pot of silver, and he knows that there is dross in it. So what does he do? He applies heat to the thing; the dross gradually comes to the top; he scoops it off; and, then he gets shiny pure silver. In the same way, God has His ways of putting us under pressure so that the hidden negative volition qualities in us are brought to the surface. Then we skim them off by the use of 1 John 1:9 – in our confession of sin, and the application of doctrine.

We are summertime soldiers. We are very good looking Christians when life is a bed of roses. But when the pressure time comes, then we show what kind of a Christian we really are. When the demands are upon us, that's when what we are inside really comes to the surface. I think that, in part, what we have in Revelation 2 here about this ten days is that symbolically it speaks about a period of persecution that is going to reveal the hidden qualities of the Smyrna Christians. Some of them are going to come through brilliantly. Some of them are going to show that they were a lot of big-mouth in testimony meeting, and a lot of little performance when their lives and their material possessions were threatened.

Jacob, in dealing with his uncle Laban: on ten occasions, Laban changed his wages. Every time, Jacob resented it on the inside. But you will notice, if you read Genesis 31:7 and Genesis 31:41, that Jacob never brought his resentment out into the open until his wages were changed for the tenth time. That was a completion figure. At that point, what was hidden in resentment in Jacob was openly voiced to Laban.

Daniel and his friends, who wanted to demonstrate that their godly diets (minus pig meat and other things) was better than the diet that was being given to them by the Babylonians, asked for ten days to do what? He said, "You will see in us outwardly the superiority of the diet that we have been eating." Again, this was bringing what is inside to the outside.

We have this peculiarity of the number ten expressing the concept of completion, and the number ten expressing the concept of bringing out what is hidden – the real you to stand up. God says, "I bring persecution in Smyrna. I'm bringing tribulation, and that is going to express both the fullness of suffering and the cleansing of spiritual weakness."

You and I must all wonder how we would stand up if our lives were threatened because of our testimony for Jesus Christ. Well, we wonder, but that pressure would bring out into the open the real you. Summertime spiritual soldiers can always look very impressive on the parade ground, but in the storm of combat, it's another question entirely. Some are going to respond to this kind of trial with a winsome and an impressive and inspiring stability. Others are going to respond with resentments and with desertions. The Lord Jesus Christ showed his true colors as a man of God by praying for His murderers on the cross. When He was under that pressure, that's what He proved to be. What would you and I be in the face of our persecutors?

Well, the Lord says to these Christians, and to us, that when the pressures of trial come, Satan will try to lead you to sin, but God will permit it to bring out the hidden problems; the hidden resentments; and, the hidden negative qualities so they can be brought to the surface. You can scoop them off with doctrine and 1 John 1:9, and you can stand before Him in all the purity that enables Him to make maximum use of your life, and bring maximum blessing.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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