**Series:** Rev’d Up

**Sermon:** The Challenges of Church

**Main Scripture:** Revelation 2:1-11 (NASB)

**Supporting Scripture:** Isaiah 44:6

**Pastor** Kip McCormick

**Date:** June 9, 2024

**Message Takeaway:** If you remember the greatest thing, you’ll be able to survive anything**.**

**Supporting Thoughts:**

* Each of Jesus’ messages to the seven churches has three similarities, three differences:
  + 3 Similarities: 1) Addresses the leader of the church and Christ as the one speaking; 2) there’s important content in each message; 3) Each has a call to action by Christ.
  + 3 Differences: 1) All the letters reveal strengths and “’attaboys” except one: Laodecia 2) Each has a rebuke except two – Smyrna and Philadelphia; 3) all the churches are different, yet we can make applications to our churches today.
* Angel: “the angel of the church” = pastor, elder of that church.
* Christ walks among the churches and is active. He did it then. He does it now.
* First Love: The greatest thing: Loving God with our hearts, souls, minds, and strength; Loving others as we want to be loved.
* Truth and works without love lead to legalism and spiritual abuse. Love without truth leads to confusion and an inability to discern truth from lies.
* Ephesus was off track. The remedy to get back on track: Remember, repent, and do.
* Nicolaitans: Group of false teachers active in Ephesus and Pergamum (Rev 2:15) who encouraged self-indulgence, sexual immorality and the eating of meat sacrificed during pagan temple worship. (They would combine pagan temple worship with worship of God.)
* Nicolaitans: Greek: *nikao* = one who conquers and *laos* = people.
* Nicolaitans Hebrew: *“nokhal”* is a verb meaning, “we will eat.” So what? Jesus:  
  “*To him who overcomes the ones who conquer people (Nicolaitans)/the ones who satisfy their appetites sexually/immorally (Nicolaitans), I’m going to reward you with real food: You get to eat from the tree of life.”*
* We overcome by knowing and applying God’s word in our lives; sharing Jesus with others in truth and love, and serving others with love.
* Smyrna: God gives strength to those who suffer and rewards those who endure.
* Great persecution by two forces: 1) Roman Government 2) Jewish synagogue rejection for worshiping Jesus as Son of God.
* Poor: Jesus here isn’t talking about money in the bank. He’s talking about Christ in your heart.
* Blasphemy means to be the target of hate and slander – here by a specific group of people.
* Your suffering has an expiration date. The presence of trials doesn’t negate the presence of God.
* Two questions to ask God when going through suffering: 1) What are You trying to teach me? 2) How can I respond in a Christ-like manner?
* Second death is the final destiny of the unsaved after they are judged and cast into the lake of fire in their resurrected bodies (Rev 20:14; 21:8).
* Overcomers: Will be raised in our immortal bodies to experience eternal life in glory.
* **Challenge: Memorize Psalm 56:3-4** *When I am afraid, I will trust in You. In God – whose word I praise – In God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?” (NIV 1984)*

**Discussion Questions:**

* What was the thing that challenged you the most in today’s teaching? Why?
* What did the Ephesian Church do well? Where did they misstep? What’s the warning for us?
* Talk with your group about suffering. What can we learn from the Smyrna Church about suffering and how to deal with it well?
* Why do you think Jesus wanted to address these two churches first?
* If Jesus were to show up at New Life Fellowship, how would He address us? Where can we build our strengths and in what areas can we improve?

**Seven Churches of Revelation**

A map of the country

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**Sources: Voddie Baucham** (Voddie Baucham Ministries); **Eliyahu Lizorkin-Eyzenberg**, Israel Bible Center (multiple books and commentaries); **Michael Heiser** (Naked Bible Podcast; multiple books); **David Jeremiah** (Shadow Mountain Community Church; multiple books); **John MacArthur** (multiple books, sermons, study bible; Grace to You Ministries); **Chuck Missler** (multiple YouTube videos on his Revelation Commentary); **Grant R. Osborne** (Revelation Exegetical Commentary); **RC Sproul** (multiple sermons and writings), **Chuck Swindoll** (New Testament Commentary – Revelation, as well as Insight for Living Broadcast, 2 series on Revelation) **Warren Wiersbe** (New Testament Commentary); **The Bible Project** (multiple videos); **Through the Word** Bible App.