



January 11, 2026

Kevin Sneed

Revelation 2:8-11

Introduction:

This week's message explores how we hold deep pain and expectant hope together as followers of Jesus. Through the letter to the church in Smyrna, Kevin Sneed reveals that affliction is unavoidable for Christians, but Jesus sees us, knows our suffering intimately, and promises that even crushing circumstances can produce beautiful fragrance when we remain faithful. The message challenges us to recognize that suffering, while not caused by God, is used by God to deepen our souls and drive us like a nail into His love.

Key Texts:

Revelation 2:8-11; 2 Cor. 12:6-10; Isaiah 53:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:11

Icebreaker

When you're going through a difficult season, what tends to emerge first—your best qualities or your worst? Why do you think that is?

Discussion Questions

1. Kevin began with the story of Grandma B finding peace in the Psalms as she was dying. Have you experienced a moment where Scripture brought unexpected peace in the midst of pain? What was that like?
2. **Read Revelation 2:8-11 together as a group.** Jesus describes Himself to Smyrna as "the First and the Last, who died and came to life again." Why would this particular description matter to a church facing persecution and poverty?
3. The message emphasized that "Smyrna" and "myrrh" are the same word—and myrrh releases its fragrance when crushed. What "fragrance" do you tend to

emit when you're pressed or crushed by difficult circumstances? What does that reveal about what's really inside you?

4. Jesus tells the Smyrnan church, "You are poor and yet you are rich." How does this challenge our cultural definitions of blessing and prosperity? In what ways might someone be spiritually rich despite material poverty or suffering?
5. Kevin quoted Tim Keller: "Suffering is unbearable if you aren't certain that God is with you and for you." How does knowing that Jesus "knows your affliction" and has walked the road of suffering change how you face your own trials?
6. **Read 2 Corinthians 12:6-10 together.** Paul says, "When I am weak, then I am strong." This seems completely backwards. How have you experienced God's power showing up most clearly in your weakness?
7. The church in Smyrna wasn't critiqued by Jesus—only encouraged to "remain faithful." What does faithful endurance look like in your current season? What specific area is Jesus calling you to keep holding on?

Key Takeaways

- Affliction is unavoidable, but Jesus sees us and is with us in our suffering
- What emerges when we're crushed reveals what's really inside us
- We are spiritually rich even when materially poor or suffering
- Suffering isn't caused by God but is used by God to deepen our souls
- Jesus doesn't just know about our pain—He knows it experientially through His own suffering
- Faithful endurance in affliction can produce beautiful fragrance for God's glory

Notes