

FAITHFUL UNDER PRESSURE

Revelation 3:7-13

Christ's Message To The Church Of Philadelphia

I. The Church's Authority Of Christ (7)

7 "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: 'The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.

II. The Church's Attribute Of Faithfulness (8-10a)

A. As A Faithful _____, They Continually Pursued God's Open Doors Of Evangelism

8a "I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. (Acts 14:27; 1 Cor 16:9; 2 Cor 2:12; Col 4:2-3)

B. As A Faithful _____, They Depended On God's Strength, Not Numerical Strength

8b "I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

C. As A Faithful _____ Of Truth, They Did Not Compromise Sound Doctrine

9 Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you.

D. As A Faithful _____, They Did Not Deny Christ Despite Persecution

10a Because you have kept my word about patient endurance,

III. The Church's Avoidance Of Judgment (10b)

10b I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.

A. The Meaning Of "Keep From" (*tereo ek*) (cf. Acts 15:29; Jn 12:27; Heb 5:7; Jas 5:20; Jn 17:15)

B. The Meaning Of "The Hour Of Testing"

- The Scope Of "The Hour" - worldwide judgment
- The Purpose Of "The Hour" - a test
- The Deliverance From The Hour (11; 2 Cor 1:10; James 5:20; 2 Cor 1:10; 1 Th 1:10)

C. The Meaning Of "Shall Come Upon The Whole World"

IV. The Church's Award For Victory (11-13)

11 I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. 12 The one who conquers, I will make him^k a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. 13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

A. _____ To Our Opportunity For Eternal Reward (11; cf. 2 Jn 8; Col 2:18; 1 Cor 3:12,15; 9:24)

B. _____ In God's Security Of Our Eternity (12)

1. Eternal Memorial
2. Eternal Security
3. Eternal Adoption

Conclusion – The Characteristics Of A Faithful Church:

1. Holiness In Living (7)
2. Truthfulness In Testimony (7)
3. Obedience To His Sovereignty (8)
4. Faithful In Evangelism (8)
5. Soundness In Doctrine (8)
6. Perseverance In Trial (8-10)

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Revelation 3:7-13 ⁷“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens. ⁸“ ‘I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. ⁹Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you. ¹⁰Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. ¹¹I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. ¹²The one who conquers, I will make him ¹³a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. ¹³He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

Philadelphia

- **Location**

- 28 miles southeast of Sardis, strategically between the borders of the regions of Lydia, Phrygia and Pisidia
- along the Hermis River valley
- built on volcanic area called the “burned land” 900 feet elevation
- fertile land where agriculture succeeded

- **Reputation**

- terrific grapes were grown there and this place was known for its wines
- volcanic proximity brought hot springs which attracted tourists
- hot springs were said to have medicinal purposes

- **Religion**

- several temples to the several gods in the Roman polytheism
- Dionysius (god of wine) was the chief god of the city
- several memorials to outstanding citizens who were benefactors and philanthropists

- **History**

- founded in 140 BC, youngest of the 7 cities
- King Attalus II (159-132BC), also named Philadelphos, of Pergamos called the city Philadelphos (brotherly love) after himself because of his love and kindness towards his brother
- it has been speculated that Attalus founded the city in this particular location to introduce the Greek culture into the barbaric regions into Lydia
- ie/ missionary of Greek culture into uncivilized territory
- Philadelphos was successful in Hellenizing this region
- Greek replaced the Lydian language in 19AD

- earthquake destroyed both Sardis and Philadelphia in 17AD and suffered from aftershocks daily for several years afterwards
 - the Roman emperor Tiberius helped to rebuild Philadelphia by forgiving taxes and sending financial aid
 - Philadelphia responded by erecting a temple in worship of the emperor and changed the name of the city to Neacaesarea (new town for Caesar) – the name wasn't popular and changed back a couple of years later
 - when the Roman Empire moved the capital to Constantinople, Philadelphia became a more flourishing city
 - it had the reputation for being a missionary center for Christianity
 - called "Little Athens" in the 5th century
 - eventually, Islam began to dominate Asia Minor, but Philadelphia was the last of the Christian cities to fall
 - when it was the last Christian city remaining, it fought off 2 Turkish invasions
 - it took both the Turkish and Byzantine armies to take over Philadelphia
 - the Byzantine Christians were jealous of Philadelphia's prosperity, so they joined the Turks in the attack
- **Modern Day** – Today, the city is a small village called Alasehir (means "City of God") by the Turkish people.
 - **The Church** – Not much is known about the origin of the church, but it is reputed that the church was a tremendous evangelistic church.

I. The Church's Authority Of Christ (7)

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: 'The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.'

A. Holy

1 Peter 1:15-16 "But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'"

- separated from the world unto Christ

B. True

- *alethinos* – truth itself
 - not *alethes* = a true statement, but not truth itself
 - Christ is not saying that He is truthful or is making true statements
 - He is saying that He is truth incarnate

John 14:6 I am the way, truth and life

- Christ desires to live in the truth as Christ is the Truth
- Pluralism focuses on the love of God

- John Hicks, outspoken pluralist and former InterVarsity participant, changed from being an Evangelical to a Pluralist when, at Oxford, he observed that some of the nicest people were of different religions and that some of the most obnoxious people claimed to be Christians. He concluded it is not fair that God judge the nice people of different religions and that Christians get away with it.
- He claimed that all religions are essentially the same because of "LOVE"
- But would God love at the expense of truth
- Inconsistent with His nature
- Even *The Oxford English Dictionary* cites a corresponding view of truth: "Truth, n. Conformity with fact; agreement with reality".
- "Truth is what corresponds to its referent. **Truth about reality is what corresponds to the way things really are. Truth is "telling it like it is."** This correspondence applies to abstract realities as well as actual ones. There are mathematical truths. There are also truths about ideas. In each case there is a reality, and truth accurately expresses it." (Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics [BECA]*, p. 742)

Romans 3:4 Certainly not! Indeed, let God be **true** but every man a liar. As it is written: "That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when You are judged."

Jeremiah 10:10 But the Lord is the **true** God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth will tremble, And the nations will not be able to endure His indignation.

- Christ is the God's absolute truth
- God is both true and loving without diluting either
- **Postmodernism = truth is relative to a person or culture**
 - Truth became defined as relative to a **culture/person**, not absolute
 - Sincerity became a preferable virtue over truth
- Gene Edward Veith: "If truth is relative, it's impossible to lie."
- A children's tale of the blind men and the elephant, which has Buddhist correlations, describes how man might have different truths or religions, but it is all one part of a greater truth.
- Each blind man feels a different part of the elephant with various interpretations: side = wall; tusk = spear; trunk = snake; leg = tree; ear = fan; and tail = rope.
- Some have related this to the Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Jews and Atheists feeling parts of the same elephant (whole truth), but not fully comprehending the whole truth. Thus, religious contradictions are based on ignorance of the whole truth.
- This degrades anyone who believes that truth is absolute or anyone who criticizes one's interpretation of truth.
- Blaise Pascal: There are truths on this side of the Pyrenees, which are falsehoods on the other.

- **Truth Is What Is Right According To God**

Ephesians 4:21 ²¹if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the **truth** is in Jesus:

Revelation 15:3 ³They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and **true** are Your ways, O King of the saints!"

- **Revelation (Pre-Modern), Reason (Modern), Feelings (Postmodern)**

Christian Worldview	Modern Worldview	Postmodern Worldview
There is an Author	There is no author, but there are ideals	There is no author and no ideals
We live in a grand story, the triumph of God's plan	We live in a grand story, the triumph of reason, evolution and the progress of the human spirit	There is no grand story
We have hope	We are making progress (false hope)	We have no hope

(Lael Arrington, *World Proofing Your Kids*)

- "Walter Truett Anderson humorously gives us an insight into this in his book *Reality Isn't What It Used to Be*. He compares our predicament by presenting an analogy from baseball. A pre-modern baseball umpire would have said some-thing like this, 'There's balls, and there's strikes and I call 'em as they are.' The modernist one would have said, 'There's balls and there's strikes, and I call 'em as I see 'em.' And the postmodernist umpire would have said, 'They ain't nothing until I call 'em.' In brief, all reality is subject dependent and the postmodernist frames reality by naming aspects at his or her whim." (Zacharias, "Ancient Message...")

C. **Keys Of David**

- ie/ Eliakim, the son of Hilkiyah, was given the key to the house of King David
 - as treasurer, he had the key to King Hezekiah's wealth
 - he was the only one who could open and clothes the door
- The imagery of the "key of David" is mentioned in the context of [Isaiah 22:20–22](#). Eliakim, who had replaced unfaithful Shebna as King Hezekiah's steward, was given authority over the king's house and his treasury. The key represents authority and power over the Davidic house and kingdom. No one could reverse what Eliakim opened or shut. In like manner, Christ—who is holy, true, and of the Davidic line—possesses absolute authority to administer the spiritual and material affairs of God's kingdom.

Isaiah 22:22 "The key of the house of David will I (the Lord) law upon his shoulder"

- Christ is the antitype of Eliakim
- (type = OT picture fulfilled in the NT counterpart; antitype = NT counterpart of OT picture)
- Christ is the only one who can open and close the doors of heaven
- When Christ shuts it, no one can open it

II. The Church's Attribute Of Faithfulness (8-10a)

⁸ "I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. ⁹ Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you. ^{10a} Because you have kept my word about patient endurance,

A. As A Faithful Witness, They Continually Pursued God's Open Doors Of Evangelism

^{8a} "I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut.

- **"set before you"** (NKJ/ESV) or "put" (NAS) or "placed" (NIV) = perfect tense of *didomi* = lit. "I give"
 - bestow, grant, deliver, commit, entrust
 - God is placing before them an opportunity of ministry
 - as mentioned earlier, the city was set up to be a missionary arm for Greek culture (hellenism)
 - Sir William Ramsey, authority on churches in Asia, wrote: "It was a missionary city from the beginning, founded to promote a certain unity of spirit, customs, and loyalty within the realm: the apostle of Hellenism in an Oriental land."...Philadelphia "was a successful teacher. Before A.D. 19, the Lydian tongue had ceased to be spoken in the region of Lydia, and Greek was the only language of the country."
 - The door to Lydia was open and the Greeks took it
 - Similarly the **Philadelphian church followed that road with the message of the Gospel**
- **"open door"**
 - The open door was a common NT term for God's leading in evangelism:

Acts 14:27 "Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles."

1 Corinthians 16:9 "For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries."
- though there were adversaries, many were coming to Christ

2 Corinthians 2:12 "Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord."

Colossians 4:2-3 "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving, meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains"

Q: If an open door came to Paul, even while he had adversaries and was in chains, what are to look for in an open door?

Q: What are some misconceptions about what an open door could be?

- amazing that open doors did not always mean that it was smooth and easy
- Christ can be opening several doors but because it doesn't look easy, we don't walk through it

ie/ Promise land to 12 spies – not easy, not take it despite God's promise

ie/ China – persecution from communist govt., but open to Gospel

ie/ Marshall Neal (*Seven Churches: God's Revelation To The Church Today*):

- after WW2, Gen. Douglas MacArthur set up a provisional govt. in Japan to restore order
- he looked over the country and saw the receptivity of the people
- he sent word to the US requesting thousands of missionaries
- the door was open, Japan welcomed missionaries
- the old religion was undermined
- but the church did not enter the door and Japan was lost to the Gospel

B. As A Faithful Minority, They Depended On God's Strength, Not Numerical Strength

86 "I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

- "little power" = not describing spiritual weakness, but the small number
- Small in attendance
- God + 1 = Majority
- don't count chariots, but count on God
- 2 Sam 24 – God gets angry at David for taking a military census, depending on soldiers, not God

Q: What are you depending on more than God?

- company's success, stock portfolio, college degree, church experience?

Q: What indicators are there that demonstrate that we depend on God more than self, others, history, finances, etc?

C. As A Faithful Defender Of Truth, They Did Not Compromise Sound Doctrine

° Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you.

- Pergamos compromised doctrine – allowing in the doctrine of Balaam – selling out to the world’s highest bidder
- Selling out your doctrine leads to selling out your morality – Thyatira got seduced by Jezebel
- Artisan guilds with own pagan deities – sell out theologically, sell out morally
- With all the temptation, religion, philosophy out there, Philadelphia held on to the truth

- particular persecutors identified as the “**Synagogue of Satan**”
 - same persecutors as Smyrnan church
 - Jews saw Christians as threat to their system – persecute
 - they saw they are Jews but are not (heritage vs. spiritual)
 - Romans 2:28-29 – outward Jews vs. inward Jews
 - John 8:41-47 – Christ tells the unbelieving religious leaders that they are of their father, the devil (v.44)
- God Will Vindicate The Believer Before The Unbeliever
- God is going to judge them – bow at their feet, realize Christ’s love

D. As A Faithful Perseverer, They Did Not Deny Christ Despite Persecution (cf. 10)

^{10a} Because you have kept my word about patient endurance,

- “**kept**” = lit. watch over, guard, keep, preserve – give attention to, heed, observe
- Ie/ when we face hardship, it could be more convenient to deny Christ for immediate comfort

III. The Church’s Avoidance Of Judgment (10b)

^{10b} I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.

- The “rapture” is not a new concept in the Scripture. There were Old Testament instances of believers being caught up. Enoch, Elijah, Phillip, Paul and even perhaps Isaiah (Isa 6) were miraculously caught up and transported.

Revelation 3:10 Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

1 Thessalonians 1:10 And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

- "Paul states that Jesus is rescuing believers out of the wrath to come. The idea is not emergence out of, but rather protection from entrance into divine wrath." (LaHaye & Mayhue, p. 313)

A. The Meaning Of "Keep From" (*tereo ek*) (cf. Acts 15:29; Jn 12:27; Heb 5:7; Jas 5:20; Jn 17:15)

- external preservation vs. internal preservation
- *tereo ek* is always used of being preserved away from the situation; there is always a separation involved
- church mentioned on earth in Rev 2-3
- church mentioned in heaven in Rev 4-5
- church is absent in Tribulation description in Ch. 6ff

B. The Meaning Of "The Hour Of Testing"

"hour" indicates a specific period of time, not a general trial

1. The Scope Of "The Hour" - worldwide judgment
 - the definite article *teis* points to a well known hour of judgment, not a general set of trials that Philadelphia was exclusively experiencing
2. The Purpose Of "The Hour" - a test
 - "test" = gr. *peiradzo* = test to break down, demonstrate failure
 - the tribulation period will provide condemning evidence for judgment when Christ returns
3. The Deliverance From The Hour (11)
 - the Church will be preserved from this time of testing by being kept out of it when He comes quickly
 - post-tribulationist believe that *ek* means emergence from the tribulation
 - this is true in some contexts, but in others – it could mean *away from*
 - but it is used in connection with *sozo* (saved)
 - not *saved by coming out from*, but *saved away from*
 - 2 Cor 1:10 – "delivered us from death" – not that people *emerged from* death through resurrection, but that they had been *kept from* death
 - James 5:20, 2 Cor 1:10 – saved from death
 - 1 Thess 1:10, Rev 3:10 – saved from wrath

C. The Meaning Of "Shall Come Upon The Whole World"

- Philadelphia or the Roman Empire is no longer the microscopic focus. The world is now the telescopic focus.

IV. The Church's Award For Victory (11-13)

¹¹I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. ¹²The one who conquers, I will make him ¹³a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. ¹³He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

A. Cling To Our Opportunity For Eternal Reward (11)

- Their Charge (11) - *Hold Fast To Your Reward*
- Rewards Are Given For Faithfulness
- **Rewards Are Lost, But Salvation Is Not**
 - idea is not a clumsy person dropping something they loosely hold on to, but of a **competitor** who is trying to steal it away

2 John 8 "Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward."

Colossians 2:18 "Let no one cheat you of your reward"

1 Cor 3:12,15 – works burned up, but salvation still in tact

1 Cor 9:24 – run in such away where only one receives a prize – don't let someone take it from you

B. Rest In God's Security Of Our Eternity (12)

1. Eternal Memorial

- "he who overcomes" = believers will be victorious
- "pillar in the temple" – in ancient civilization, great statesmen, politicians, educators or other prestigious men would be memorialized by having a pillar erected with their name on it

Ie/ statues in the Capital

- God's temple will have a pillar with our names on it

2. Eternal Security

- "he shall go out no more"
- people frequently fled Philadelphia because of the frequent earthquakes

- cycle: earthquake, rebuild, earthquake, rebuild
- Strabo: "In Philadelphia...not even the walls are safe, but in a sense are shaken and caused to crack every day. And the inhabitants are continually attentive to the disturbance in the earth and plan all their structures with a view to their occurrence....Incessantly the walls of the houses are cracked, different parts of the city being thus affected at different times. For this reason but few people live in the city, and most of them spend their lives as farmers in the country." (*Geography*, 12.8.18.13.4.10)

- constant insecurity

- with Christ, there is eternal security
- a restful heaven is promised for us

3. **Eternal Adoption**

- new name
- ie/ new name given to Philadelphia – ***Neacaesarea***
 - honoring gesture, but it didn't last
 - this name that Christ will give will last

- writing a name of someone in biblical times was to describe a person as similar to the name written on them

- it was also a way of demonstrating ownership

- God's name is written on us – we reflect His character and we belong to Him

ie/ get married – wife take on name of husband

- we take on the name of Christ in our eternal marriage to Christ

Conclusion – *The Characteristics Of A Faithful Church:*

1. Holiness In Living (7)
2. Truthfulness In Testimony (7)
3. Obedience To His Sovereignty (8)
4. Faithful In Evangelism (8)
5. Soundness In Doctrine (8)
6. Perseverance In Trial (8-10)

Discussion:

1. How do we recognize God's open doors to the evangelization of an unbeliever? Why could it be difficult to recognize? How do we deal with the fear to step through the open door?

2. How can rewards be a more significant motivation in our spiritual life? What misconceptions do we tend to have about God's rewards? How does the Scripture answer these misconceptions?
3. Though small in number, the Church at Philadelphia remained faithful amidst the strong worldly pull within this center of Hellenistic culture. What struggles in our culture are trying to snatch away our faithfulness? How can we remain faithful in a morally disintegrating society?
4. When going through struggles in your life, how do the promises of verses 9-12 bring hope and encouragement to your spiritual life?