

The Faithful Church
Pastor James Royster

Revelation 3:7-13 reads **“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write,**

‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens: “I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. 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. Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. 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 out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”’”

The city of Philadelphia was located 28 to 30 miles southeast of Sardis, and was named after the King of Pergamos, Attalus, Philadelphus, who built the city situated in a fertile region. Philadelphia was known for its agriculture; especially the cultivation of grapes. One of the chief objects of pagan worship in the city was Dionysus, the Greek god of wine. Also Philadelphia was commissioned as the city of vision or the mission city of the empire. That mission given to it by Rome was to spread the Greek language and Roman influence toward the East. Today the Muslim city of Alasawart is what is left of one of the Roman Empire’s most important cities.

From the 14th century to the 18th century there was a turning back to the Bible; a teaching of the Word throughout Europe and early

America. But from the 19th century to now, there has been the greatest global effort in history to communicate the gospel; it's called the "revived church" or "missionary church age." In church history, the period of great missionary outreach, from 1750 until 1925, was exemplified by the church in Philadelphia. This was the era of Hudson Taylor, John Wesley, George Whitfield, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, D.L. Moody, and many more. It will be the Philadelphian church which will be in existence in some form when Christ returns for His own.

Two things I want to point out:

1. The Roman Empire built roads so that it could spread its language and Roman influence toward the East. But God used those same roads to spread the gospel of Christ. **Proverb 13:22** says **"A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous."**
2. The church of Philadelphia coexisted with the church of Laodicea during the same time span. One church was lukewarm; the other church was in love with the Lord. **Luke 24:49** reads **"Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."** One church was about its Father business, the other church was about the business of the world.

Verse 7 - As always we will see how Christ identifies Himself to the Church. He says that He is holy, which means to be separated or perfect. In **Leviticus 11: 44-45**, He says **"For I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy. Neither shall you defile yourselves with any creeping thing that creeps on the earth. For I am the LORD who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy."**

He reminds them of who He is because they have chosen to follow

His path.

1 Peter 1:15-16 reminds us as such: **“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.’”**

Jesus tells them to move forward because He knows their conduct, their character and their integrity. What a statement for Christ to make to this church.

2 Chronicles 16:9 reads **“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.”** I believe that the Lord found what He was searching for in the church of Philadelphia.

Secondly, He identifies Himself as the One who is true. This means that anything contrary to Christ and His Word is false. In **John 14:6**, **“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”**

Think about this, the pastor of the church at Philadelphia was the kind of pastor who loved the Lord because the church was grounded in the Bible. The pastor of the church at Philadelphia was the kind of pastor who cared for the church; he tended to its specific needs. The pastor of the church at Philadelphia had a passion for the world; the congregants spread the simple gospel, simply. The pastor of the church at Philadelphia was the kind of pastor who had tenacity toward his calling. He could not and would not deny what God had done in his life, in this church, and in the world. **Jeremiah 23:4** explains **“‘I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking,’ says the LORD.”** If there is ever going to be a true revival today it will be a revival of biblical holiness and biblical truth. Will you participate?

Verse 7: **“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, ‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens**

...'"

He also says that He has the keys of David. What does this mean? Let's ask ourselves this question: What did David possess and were there any promises made to David? One thing we know is David possessed a heart to do the will of God.

1 Samuel 13:13-14: "And Samuel said to Saul, 'You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you. For now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you.'"

Psalm 51:6-10: "Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."

1. David knew that the Lord was in control over all that he possessed. Therefore he gave his heart fully unto Him just like the church at Philadelphia did. You see the Lord was the key to all of David's victories just like He is with us when we commit our ways to Him. **Proverb 16:3: "Commit your works to the LORD, and your thoughts will be established."**
2. Where there any promises made to David? **2 Samuel 7:12-13** reads **"When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever."** The promise is of the coming of the true King

of kings. What does this mean to us? It means that if we give our hearts unto the Lord like David and like the church at Philadelphia did, doors will be opened for us, doors of victory due to our service for Christ, and doors of the kingdom due to our faithfulness to Him. He is the key. By the presentation of Himself to the souls of His people He opens up the treasures of His Word. Thus Christ is the key to the Holy Scriptures. He is the key to our victories. He is the key to our entrance into our eternal estate in heaven and no other is needed.

Verse 8 - "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My Word, and have not denied My name."

"I know thy works." The Lord does not say what their works were, but we know that all things done for the Lord has to be done out of love for Him.

Hebrews 6:10: "For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister."

Verse 8 - "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name."

"See I have set before you on open door no one can shut it." Jesus is the One who is responsible for the opening and closing of doors. But what is an open door?

1 Corinthians 16:8-9 explains "But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries."

An open door is a clear view of the fruit of one's labor in spite of road blocks caused by the enemy.

2 Corinthians 2:12 says **“Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ’s gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord ...”**

Colossians 4:3 says **“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 also in chains ...”**

An open door is an opportunity to witness. Think about this, guys: The Lord Himself opens the doors for those whom He sends forth and He is the one who closes them when He so wills. That means the church doors will not be shut, prison doors will not be shut, hospital doors will not be shut, schools will not be shut. All these doors will be open unto the people for whom God has called to walk through them. But God has not called everyone to go through all of these doors. There is too much hit or miss; so instead of asking, “Lord, what will You have me to do?” one needs only to examine themselves when trying to enter into a locked door.

A man named Bernard Baruch says, “Whatever failures I have known, whatever errors I have committed, whatever follies I have witnessed in private and public life, have been the consequence of action without thought.” **Psalm 37:23** says **“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way.”**

Verse 8 - **“I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My Word, and have not denied My Name.”**

“For you have a little strength, have kept My Word.” The phrase “you have a little strength” does not mean that the church is running out of steam; it means that they are not the Goliaths of the world, but rather the Davids of Christianity.

1 Corinthians 1:27-29 says **“But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and**

the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.”

1 Corinthians 3:7 reads **“So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.”**

The Lord alone has opened the door, and the Lord alone will give the increase. Like the church in Philadelphia, we need not to rely on ingenuity, experience, talent, or abilities but on God’s strength.

Philippians 4:13 reads **“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”**

Verse 8 - **“I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My Word, and have not denied My name.”**

“Have kept my Word, and have not denied My Name.” The word “kept” means to guard or to protect from loss or injury.

The Scriptures are filled with warnings: Guard what was committed to your trust (**1 Timothy 6:20** says **“O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—”**); Hold fast the pattern of sound words (**2 Timothy 1:13**, **“Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus”**); earnestly contend for the faith (Jude 3); and continue in the faith grounded and steadfast (**Colossians 1:23** says **“If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.”**) Think about this: When a church begins to deal loosely with the Word of Christ, it will sooner or later deny the Name of Christ.

Verse 9 – **“Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.”**

Just as the Lord humbled the apostle Paul, so the Lord will cause these Jews to be humbled before the faithful at Philadelphia. In fact, in the heart of organized church today, there are those who claim to be a people of God. They have buildings, pastors, orders of service, hymns, prayers, Bible readings and sermons. But many of these are not the people of God; they lie. They talk about the Fatherhood of God, but have not been born again.

2 Timothy 3:8-9 reminds us **“Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.”**

Verse 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.”**

“Because you have kept My command to persevere.” Jesus makes a promise to the church of Philadelphia that they would not suffer the wrath of God because they persevered in the faith and did not deny the name of Christ, yet Jesus has made that same promise to all of us who hold fast in the faith in **1 Thessalonians 5:9: “For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ ...”**

I want you guys to notice something. Jesus didn't say He would keep the Church through the hour of trial, He said FROM the hour of trial. It is interesting that the word “church” is found 19 times in the first 3 chapters of Revelation. But from Revelation 4 on, which describes the Tribulation, there is no further reference to the Church on Earth. Therefore the conclusion from this verse is that all believers

will be delivered from this coming hour of judgment of the Earth by Christ Himself, as He returns to take them by resurrection and rapture to be with Him, in fulfillment of His age-long promise.

John 14:2-3: "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

1 Corinthians 15:51-53: "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

Philippians 3:20-21: "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself."

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17: "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."

Some reject this conclusion, contending there is no reason why Christians in the last generation deserve to escape the great tribulation. The fact is that Christians in every other generation have escaped the great tribulation, so there is no reason why the last should be singled out for participation in it. No generation of the Christian church has ever escaped satanic tribulation, but none will be judged with the world in Christ's coming purging of the earth.

Verse 11 – **“Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.”**

“Behold, I come quickly.” The crown of life has been promised to those who are faithful unto death: **Revelation 2:10** [**“Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”**] Yet there is always the possibility of losing one’s reward, which we see in **1 Corinthians 3:14-15** [**“If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”**]

Verse 12 – **“He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. 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 out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.”**

“I will make him a pillar.” The church at Philadelphia at one time had a little strength but once united in the temple of our Lord, they have become a pillar of strength.

People, Jesus Christ is the cornerstone but He could always use more pillars.

Verse 12 – **“He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. 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 out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.”**

“And I will write upon him.” History tells us that after the great earthquake of 17 AD, the Roman emperor ordered Philadelphia “tax free from Rome” for five years so that it could regain its footing in the empire’s economy. The city was so grateful for the tax break that it

declared its new name to be Neocaesera, or Caesar's City. In gratitude, many people in Philadelphia tattooed Caesar's name and the city's name, Neocaesera, on their bodies.

Jesus promises one more name in addition; His own name. **"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 out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name."**

Verse 13 - **"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."**

What does this mean for us? Let's look at it at this way: An opportunity neglected is a nail in the coffin for any church that fails to obey Jesus. As a Christian, if I don't go through the doors which Christ has opened I will grow timid, fearful, and unbelieving. Also, an opportunity neglected is the first step to backsliding as a Christian.

Amen.