

Message to the Church of Philadelphia: The Door of Opportunity

Revelation 3:7-13

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Introduction: The city of Philadelphia was founded in 140 B.C., & named after Attalus II, King of Pergamos. It was called 'Philadelphos' ("brother lover") because of the king's love for & beneficent conduct toward his brother. The city was located 28 miles SE of Sardis, 75 miles from the coast. Because of the many volcanoes in the region around the city, the area was known as the 'burned land', due to the cinder heaps, hardened black lava, and steam geysers. As a result, the land was very fertile & farming prospered; grape growing was also very profitable. Hot springs were numerous & attracted many for their medicinal properties. The area was then & is still today subject to violent earthquakes, like the one that destroyed the city (& Sardis) in A.D. 17. Emperor Tiberius helped rebuild the city (as he did Sardis) by suspending taxes & sending in a large amount of money. Not only was a temple erected in his honor, but the city itself was renamed 'Neacaesarea' (new town of Caesar). The church there could be called a missionary church. Note its command, its commendation, & its challenge.

I. The Command (3:7)

- A. He that is "*holy*" (absolutely pure & separate from sin) >
 - 1. Speaks of His Deity - cf. Isaiah 6:1-8.
 - 2. Speaks of His sinlessness - cf. I Peter 1:15-16.
- B. He that is "*true*" (Who speaks truth & is genuine, authentic) >
 - 1. He is completely reliable.
 - 2. He is the Author of Truth.

Note the connection between truth & holiness: "The Son, like the Father, is holy & true. If one is holy, he is also true. If one's character is right, if one is right inside, he will be true in his actions" (Neal). Walvoord adds, "...right doctrine & right living go together. There can be no holiness without truth."

- C. He that hath the key of David (He is Omnipotent) [cf. 1:18] >
 - 1. Speaks of authority - cf. Isaiah 22:22, Eliakim.
 - 2. Speaks of opportunity - Christ's sovereign control of the situation.

II. The Commendation (3:8-10) - Note, there is no Condemnation!

- A. The opportunity (:8) >
 - 1. Recognition of the open door - [see also I Cor. 16:8-9; II Cor. 2:12; & Col. 4:3]:
 - a. Christ knows their works (ours too!) - He is Omniscient.
 - b. "*Open door*" - a perfect participle, meaning 'having been opened' or 'standing open.'
"At the time of the writing, Christ had opened the door, & it was standing open inviting men to enter" (Neal).
 - c. The Lord opens the door; we cannot force it open nor can we keep it open. But it is up to us to go through it. - Illustrate: Japan after World War II.
 - 2. Reasons for the open door:
 - a. "*Thou hast a little strength.*"
 - (1) Little ability?? > yet using it to the best of their ability.
 - (2) Lacking in numbers?? > either way, there is the great need for prayer.
Points to the impotence of man, but the omnipotence of Christ. cf. II Cor. 3:5.
 - b. "*Hast kept My word.*"
 - (1) They protected His Word (Defenders) – see Jude verse 3.
 - (2) They practiced His Word (Doers) – see James 1:22.
 - (3) They proclaimed His Word (Declarers) – see Colossians 4:5-6.
- They knew the Word could be taken from them, but it could not be taken out of them.
cf. Psalm 119:9-11 [Is God's Word an important part of your life?].

c. *"Hast not denied My name."*

(1) Unashamed - to bear the name 'Christian' - cf. Acts 11:26.

"O Lord, grant that I shall not be ashamed of the gospel, nor a shame to the gospel."

(2) Unafraid - in spite of persecution.

B. The opposition (:9) >

1. The persecutors:

a. *"Synagogue of Satan"* - Jews who rejected Christ as the Messiah, now doing Satan's work - Rev. 2:9 & John 16:2.

b. Compare "true Jews" in Romans 2:28 & 9:6-8.

c. Those persecutors will one day bow before the Church, because Christ is in it - Phil. 2:10.

2. The parallel [any true church will meet Satanic opposition – see I Cor. 16:9]:

a. We are to expect the opposition - II Timothy 3:12.

b. We are to examine the opposition - II Corinthians 2:11.

c. We are to "execute" the opposition - I John 4:4 & 5:4.

C. The outcome (:10) >

1. The picture of their dedication:

a. *"Thou hast kept the word of My patience."*

b. "The teaching which was exemplified in Christ's steadfastness" (Leon Morris).

c. Their faithfulness & patience in witness & testimony.

2. The promise of their deliverance:

a. Kept from (out of) the hour of temptation (not 'through' it) [cf. John 17:15, "out of..."].

b. This tribulation period is to try the world - God's wrath upon the unbelieving Gentiles & Christ-rejecting Jews.

c. This speaks of the Rapture of the church, Christ's imminent coming (:11) for His Bride.

III. The Challenge (3:11-13)

A. Christ's return (:11) >

1. Christ comes quickly - suddenly, unexpectedly (not necessarily immediately).

2. The Christian is to keep holding fast (keep a firm grip on, cf. II John :8).

3. The danger is in losing one's reward, not one's salvation (cf. I Cor. 3:14-15) – "To serve God is a high privilege which is withdrawn & given to another whenever a man fails to fulfill his task" (L. Morris).

B. Christians' reward (:12) - "overcomer", I John 5:4-5 >

1. Made a pillar in God's temple (heaven) - cf. the custom of that day:

a. Permanent dwelling place – in God's presence.

b. Perfect safety - go no more out (cf. fear of earthquakes).

2. Marked with new names:

a. *"The name of My God"* - His Savior (ownership by God).

b. *"New Jerusalem"* - His heavenly citizenship (with God).

c. *"My new name"* - His name selected & awarded by Christ; cf. 2:17 - relationship to God.

C. Churches' response (:13) >

1. Individual - invitation to hear to each having an ear.

2. Universal - addressed to all churches.

Conclusion: Christ declared Himself to be the Door in John 10:9, *"I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, He shall be saved, & shall go in & out, & find pasture."* Have you entered the Door of salvation? Christ invites you to come to Him today.

Christ declares here in Revelation 3:8 that He has opened the door of service. The church of Philadelphia remained faithful in serving Christ for many years. The city there was the last Christian city to fall to the Muslims. This small, insignificant church received only commendation because of its response to their open door of opportunity. Are you entering this door of opportunity? Will you & I be faithful to the task of ministry before us? What will you do with your open door?