

"The Letters to the 7 Churches"

Part 7

Revelation 2:1-3:22

Introduction: Three weeks ago we were in our study of the book of Revelation and it was then that we began to look into the letter to the church at Philadelphia. Let me give you a short review of what we looked at in that study.

We looked at the history of the city and we found that the city was full of idol worship.

"Philadelphia had so many gods and so many temples that sometimes men called it "Little Athens." To walk through its temple-scattered streets was to be reminded of Athens, the center of worship of the Olympian gods." (Barclay)

Philadelphia was also a very prosperous city. It controlled one of the major highways of the world in its day. It was the highway that led from Europe to the East. It was a gateway city that from one continent to another.

It was in the middle of this spiritually dark crossroads that God planted this church. It was the smallest of all the churches and it is the only church that was never given any rebuke from the Lord.

I. The Greeting

Notice Revelation 3:7

Jesus identifies Himself in 4 ways in this greeting. Neither of the ways of identification is taken from the vision in chapter 1 but instead they are taken from the Old Testament. Many believe the reason for this was because of the Jewish influence within this church.

1. He that is Holy.

This refers to His separation from sin. He is set apart.

2. He that is True.

Jesus spoke nothing but the Truth and when He spoke to this church He had nothing negative to say.

3. He that hath the keys of David.

This statement was taken from Isaiah 22:20-22 and the keys of David were the keys to the treasure house.

4. **He that opens and no one shuts and He that shuts and no one opens.**

This speaks of the sovereignty of our Lord.

This brings us to where we are in our study of Revelation today. It is God who sets before us open doors of opportunity and it is God who closes doors that are before us.

I. **The Open Door**

Notice Revelation 3:8

There is much to consider within this verse.

1. **Jesus knew their works.**

The works are described at the end of the verse.

- a. **They had kept His Word.**

This means they had walked in obedience to the Word of God.

- b. **They had not denied His name.**

This tells me the believers who were in this church were under persecution. They were being pressured to deny the name of Jesus Christ but they refused to bow to the pressure.

Application:

We need to understand that when we take a stand for Jesus Christ there are going to be people who oppose our stand. On Wednesday evenings we have been studying the book of Hebrews and we have been in the life of Moses. Let me show you what happened in the life of Moses.

Hebrews 11:24-25

²⁴ *By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;*

²⁵ ***Choosing rather to suffer affliction** with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;*

Moses chose to live for the cause of the Messiah and when he did he entered into a life of affliction. He had a very easy life in the palace. He was believed to be the next in line for the position of Pharaoh. He had the world at his fingertips but he saw something far more valuable than the wealth of Egypt.

Hebrews 11:26

²⁶ Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

Moses believed that suffering for the cause of Jesus Christ was far more valuable than anything which Egypt could offer. Therefore he entered into a life of affliction when he decides to follow God and stand for His promises and His Word.

The church at Philadelphia had taken a stand for the Kingdom of Jesus Christ and so they were facing the heat of persecution.

2 Timothy 3:12

¹² Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

We will see who the persecution came from in a moment.

Notice Revelation 3:8 again.

They had a LITTLE STRENGTH. This did not mean they were without strength but it was a reference to how few believers there were within this church. They had few believers but the believers that were there at Philadelphia were deep spiritual believers. They had been taught the Word and they were walking in obedience to the Word.

Application:

I need to just stop here and remind you and me that the greatest need within the church today is for deeper Christians. We do not need more programs. We do not need more committees. We do not need more activities so as to keep people entertained. We need churches where the entire counsel of God is taught so that Christians will grow in their relationship with their Lord and they will be equipped for the spiritual battle.

Ephesians 4:11-15

¹¹ And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

¹² For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

¹³ *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:*

¹⁴ *That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;*

¹⁵ *But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:*

2 Timothy 4:1, 2

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

² **Preach the word;** *be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.*

2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶ *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*

¹⁷ **That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.**

Notice Revelation 3:8 again.

God had set before them an open door. This was without a doubt an open door of evangelism. This city was positioned at the crossroads of the world and so this little church had this great opportunity to reach many people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. So as these believers went out into this city they were reminded that they had been entrusted with an opportunity to reach the lost with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now I want you to see the order within this verse because this is so important. Jesus told them He knew their works and then He tells them He had set before them an open door. This OPEN DOOR which was before them was entrusted to them because they had proved themselves faithful in walking in obedience to the Word. This small group of believers was WILLING and they were FAITHFUL and so the result was this open door of opportunity.

Application:

We often desire God to open doors in our lives. We long to see the power of His hand as we face the different situations in our lives. But we need to understand that God will not place before us open doors until we prove our faithfulness in what He has already entrusted to us. God waits for you and me to show that we are committed and devoted to Him and then He will begin to move.

In Joshua 3 there is a wonderful picture of this. Israel is under the leadership of Joshua and they have come to the edge of the Jordan River and it is at flood stage. It is miles wide. God tells them He will stop the water and He will dry up the mud so they can cross but there was one thing they had to do.

Joshua 3:13-17

¹³ *And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the LORD, the LORD of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap.*

¹⁴ *And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people;*

¹⁵ *And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,)*

¹⁶ *That the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho.*

¹⁷ *And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.*

The leaders of Israel had to step off of the river bank and into the water before God would stop the waters. In other words they had to take a great step of faith and show they were committed to following God.

This is exactly what God desires to see within our lives also. He wants to see us walk by faith in His Word and He wants to see that we are committed to following Him and THEN He will begin to open doors which we never thought were possible to open.

II. **The Opposition**

Notice Revelation 3:9

Here was the opposition which came against the church at Philadelphia. There were Jews there who claimed to be BELIEVERS but were not. Jesus tells this church that these people claimed to be Jews but were not. He is saying that a TRUE JEW is one who has accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior. These people had not trusted Christ and so they

plagued this church with Judaism. These people were a thorn in the flesh to this church but it is important for us to know that Jesus never promised to remove the thorn.

Application:

There is a message here for us that is important for us to grasp. Jesus said these people who were opposing the church were of the synagogue of Satan. This was a reminder to this church that they were engaged in a spiritual battle. When Jesus says He will make them worship at the feet of the believers it does not mean that the opposition will worship the church but it means that there would be a day when these people would bow the knee to Jesus Christ and they would see those who they attacked and realize how wrong they were.

Philippians 2:10, 11

¹⁰ That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

¹¹ And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Now let me get back to the message to this church at Philadelphia. Jesus was telling them that they were in a spiritual battle and they were to patiently persevere. He would deal with the opposition in His time.

This is the message for you and me today as we step out and we serve the Lord. There will be opposition as we looked at earlier. People will rise up against us but we must keep in mind every battle we face is spiritual.

Ephesians 6:10-12

¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

¹¹ Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

*¹² **For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.***

This is so important to understand because Satan will use whoever he can in our lives to distract us, to oppose us, or to somehow hinder us. But our battle is not with those individuals. It is a spiritual battle and Satan is behind the scenes using these people in an attempt to stop us.

Conclusion:

Let me leave you with a passage about how to handle opposition.

Romans 12:17-21

¹⁷ *Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*

¹⁸ *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*

¹⁹ *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*

²⁰ *Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.*

²¹ *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*