

BLESSED FOR SUCCESS – Seven Churches of Asia Minor

Philadelphia – Revelation 3

Unlike the other letters to the previous churches, here Jesus commends the **Church at Philadelphia**. Thus, this letter is probably the *most* important of them all; because it reveals a dependence upon Christ, which was *missing* in the other churches.

What made the church in Philadelphia different? Was there *less* persecution and ungodliness? *I don't think so.* In fact, historians tell us it was just as *ungodly* as all of the other *ancient* cities we've heard about thus far. The ancient city of Philadelphia, which means "brotherly love," is today called Alasehir – *Ala-sha-here*; it was located 28 miles southeast of Sardis, in the southeastern region of modern-day Turkey. The city was known for its agricultural products and for being a center of Greek culture and refinement. Thus, the faithfulness of the church in Philadelphia was not in the absence of worldly culture and godless influence, but despite it!

(v.7) As in the other letters, Jesus establishes His sovereign authority. He alone who is holy and true and has the "key of David." The renowned British pastor and author, G. Campbell Morgan writes: *"...as the 'holy' One, Christ is right in character; as the 'true' One, He is right in conduct..."* (G. Campbell Morgan) He alone possesses the character and conduct worthy of *correcting* or *commending* the church! The **"key of David"** – this phrase is *also* found in Isaiah 22, in relationship to God's commendation of Eliakim, the overseer of King Hezekiah's household (2 Kings 18:18;19:2). **ELIAKIM – literally means: "God is setting up."** (Nelson Bible Dictionary). Jesus in essence declares Himself in our text to be the God of "set up" **(v.7b)**.

Lesson: As believers, we should never despair, because it is God who opens one door and shuts another! Every closed door is a "set up" for an open door! **(v.8)** In John 10:9, Jesus declares Himself to be the "door of salvation." However, here the "door" speaks of opportunity. **(1 Corinthians 16:9) For a great and effective door has opened to**

me, and there are many adversaries. Note: opportunities, open doors, often come with *adversity*. **But if God opened the door, He'll make a way through the door!** Notice: the door He set before them was not according to their strength; they only had a “**little strength**” – “**little**” mikros: micro. **God is not looking for ability, but availability!** Jesus said, (Matthew 17:20-21) So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you."

Here (v.8) we see the key to faithfulness – trusting in the One who *holds the key* to every door, while doing our part: keeping His word and not denying His name! What does it mean to keep His word? The Greek word for Kept – pay attention, obey, keep in custody. They looked to the word as the anchor and guide for their souls. If we will keep God's word, God's word will keep us! Secondly, they did not deny His name. The Greek word for denied – verbal/non-verbal; be false to oneself, renounce. The church at Philadelphia remained true to itself! We, *the church*, ceases to be true to itself when we verbally/non-verbally (through neutrality) deny our trust in the only name given by which we must be saved!

(v.9, 10) Jesus addresses here, a certain group of spiritual bullies found in the *early church* called “Judaizers” – Jews who said they *believed the gospel*, but in fact, they were of the “**synagogue of satan,**” because they promoted another gospel – salvation through the *law*, rather than *grace*! Thus, Jesus declared (v.9b), Those who are antagonistic towards us, who have written God's people off, will have to humble themselves before His church and acknowledge how much He loves us! Hatred knows no bounds: “Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh” – “witches” “hex” - New York city; cost \$10; event this Saturday. (Isaiah 41:12-13) **You shall seek them and not find them — Those who contended with you. Those who war against you Shall be as nothing, As a nonexistent thing. For I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, Saying to you, 'Fear not, I will help you.'** *No matter how little our strength, He will be our shield and deliverer! (Exodus 14:14) “The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.”*

(v.11) Hold fast, that no one may take your crown! The “crown” here is not salvation, but the “crown of life” (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10). It denotes the abundant life Christ *died* to give us (John 10:10) – *a life of love, joy, peace, power, the fruit of the Spirit* (Galatians 5:22, 23). People, *if you are not careful*, can rob you of your crown. It’s amazing how one word can rob us of our crown. **(Proverbs 18:21) Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.**

This is an exhortation we should all heed! Jesus gives them an encouraging word and perspective to counter words which seek to rob us of our crown! ***“I am coming quickly!”*** The word ***“quickly” here implies; a “sudden” and “unexpected” return.*** *In other words, when it happens, no amount of human indifference, opposition or protest, will matter!* A hundred-years from now, *if the Lord should tarry*, what people say won’t matter! Therefore, “hold fast” to “His word,” don’t let them steal your crown!

Another reason the believers in Philadelphia were found faithful was because they understood **Perseverance is a command. (v.10).** God commands us to persevere. Without perseverance nothing worthwhile can be accomplished. God has not called us to a “Kum and Go” faith or “drive-through experiences,” but to perseverance that we might lack nothing! **(James 1:2-4) My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.**

“Those who dwell on the earth” refers to those who have no interest in *heaven*, only the things of this world. *“The hour of trial”* refers to the seven-year tribulation period yet future, described for us beginning in Revelation 6. This is one of the reasons why I believe in the pre-tribulation rapture of the church.

(v.12) Jesus encourages them with a glimpse of our glorious future! Overcomers are those who have placed their faith (trust) in Christ (1 John 5:4, 5); they will be a pillar in the temple of... God. “Pillar” – speaks of a permanent position in heaven; ***“and he shall go out no more.”*** In fact, *God Almighty and the Lamb will be the ultimate New Temple* (Revelation 21:22). ***“I will write on him the name of My God”*** (Revelation 14:1 – the 144,000 witnesses from the twelve

tribes of Israel, had the name of the Father (YAHWEH) written on their foreheads). Believers will also bear the name of the city of God, that is “New Jerusalem” (Revelation 21:2). Lastly, He will also write on them (believers) His “new name” (Revelation 19:12), a name not yet known. (Bible Knowledge Commentary).

CONCLUSION: Gospel singer Danniebelle Hall used to sing a song entitled “Ordinary People” – the last line in the chorus says, “Little becomes much when it’s placed in the Master’s hand!”
Little strength matters not to God! Jonathan said to his armorbearer, **(1 Samuel 14:6)**
“For nothing restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few.” *God uses ordinary people for His extraordinary purpose and glory!* (Read: v.13)