

Christ commends the believers in the church at Philadelphia for their obedience and their faithfulness to His name even while they considered themselves to be lacking in strength. However, their weakness became a strength when their dependence was on the Lord and as a result He opened a door of ministry that “no man can shut.”

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<sup>7</sup> And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

**“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write”** - This message is addressed to the pastor of the church at Philadelphia, a city whose name means “brotherly love.”

**“These things saith he that is holy, he that is true [real; certain; genuine]”** - Christ describes Himself as being holy and true, two attributes that easily describe the Lord. When the angel told Mary she was going to have a child, he described the baby as holy: **Luke 1:35b** “...therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” Christ is also the truth: **John 14:6** “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” All other gods are counterfeits and false; only Christ is the true and genuine Son of God.

**“he that hath the key of David”** - Commentators seem to agree that this is a reference to **Isa. 22:20-23** where the LORD speaks of the steward of King Hezekiah as a type or foreshadowing of Christ: <sup>20</sup> *And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah: <sup>21</sup> And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. <sup>22</sup> And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. <sup>23</sup> And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house.”*

Christ is saying that He has been given full control over the house of David so that all blessings toward Israel will flow through Him.

**“he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth”** - Speaks of Christ’s total sovereignty and authority. A door provides access if it is open and blocks access when it is closed. Christ is in full control of any door that He opens or shuts and no one can change what He has established. We will see in the next verse that Christ has given the church at Philadelphia an open door (apparently to spread the gospel) and no persecutor or enemy can prevent the church from passing through it.

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<sup>8</sup> I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

**“I know thy works”** - As with the other churches, Christ assures them that He knows what they have been doing for Him.

**“behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it”** - Christ, the One with the key of David, has opened a door for them to continue their work for Him. He has opened this door and no one can shut it (prevent them from spreading the gospel). He states the reason He has opened this door in the remainder of this verse.

**“for thou hast a little strength”** - Christ recognizes that they were not a “strong” church. Perhaps this means they were few in number or they did not have people with great abilities to preach, teach, or otherwise reach people with the gospel. However, God loves using those with “little strength” in order to accomplish His purposes because such people depend on Him and not on themselves. **1 Cor. 1:26-29** <sup>26</sup> *For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: <sup>27</sup> But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; <sup>28</sup> And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: <sup>29</sup> That no flesh should glory in his presence.”* The Apostle Paul faced the same situation when three times He asked the Lord to remove a thorn from his flesh but the Lord responded “*My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*” (2 Cor. 12:7-10). They may have been weak but Christ could use them to do great things in His strength.

**“and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name”** - Another reason Christ has opened the door is because of their faithfulness. They lived lives obedient to the word of God (“hast kept my word”) and were not ashamed to be associated with the name of Jesus Christ. Christ has opened the door for them to reach their neighbors with the gospel because He knew they would be faithful.

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<sup>9</sup> Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

**“Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie”** - The Christians in Philadelphia were apparently targets of Jewish persecution because Christ refers to those of “the synagogue of Satan.” These were Jews who believed they were serving God by persecuting the followers of Christ. They were Jews, God’s chosen people, according to their bloodline but Christ says they were not true Jews because they were in rebellion against God’s will. See the notes on Rev. 2:9 in the lesson on the message to the church at Smyrna.

**“behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet”** - This statement seems to be a promise that the Christians in Philadelphia will be able to lead these Jews that have been persecuting them to salvation in Christ. These Jews will come and worship God in the presence of the Christians. We see a similar occurrence in **1 Cor. 14:24-25** where Paul is explaining the superiority of Spirit-filled preaching over speaking in tongues: <sup>24</sup> *But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: <sup>25</sup> And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.”* The same thing will happen in the church at Philadelphia.

**“and to know that I have loved thee”** - These Jews had thought that Christians were hated by God for following a “false” God (Jesus Christ) but after salvation they will realize that Christians are indeed loved by God and are following the true Messiah.

<sup>10</sup> Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

**“Because thou hast kept the word [statement; command; teaching] of my patience [steadfastness; endurance]”** - Christ is making a promise to the believers in Philadelphia because of their faithfulness in the face of the persecutions they had been enduring. They believed and obeyed Christ’s teaching to endure the temptations and persecutions and trusted the outcome to Him.

**“I also will keep [guard; to take care of] thee from [out of; away from] the hour of temptation”** - The underlying Greek indicates that Christ is not promising to protect them “in” the hour of temptation but “from” it. Because they have faithfully endured temptations Christ is going to prevent them from having to endure “the hour of temptation.” He goes on to further describe this hour of temptation. **“which shall come upon all the world, to try [test] them that dwell upon the earth”** - He is not referring to a period of temptation that the church will have to endure but to one that will come upon the entire world as a time of testing. The word “hour” indicates a short period of time. It would be difficult to interpret this “hour of temptation” as anything else but the 7 year period known as the Great Tribulation. This period will be a test that reveals the sinfulness and unbelief of the world. Christ is promising to deliver these Christians from the Tribulation period, supporting the view of a pre-tribulation rapture.

<sup>11</sup> Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

**“Behold, I come quickly [soon; suddenly]”** - This suddenness is a commonly mentioned characteristic of Christ’s return. It will be both “soon” (it could come any time) and “sudden” (it will take place with no warning).

**Matt. 25:13** “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.”

**1 Th. 5:2** “For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.”

**Rev. 22:12** “And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

**“hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown”** - Christ is encouraging them to continue being faithful and depending on Him until His return, for which they will be rewarded. Christ warns them that they could lose that reward if they give in to the temptations that people so often place in our path. Christ wants to reward us for being faithful.

<sup>12</sup> Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

**“Him that overcometh”** - The definition of an “overcomer” bears repeating, because it does not depend on our performance but on Christ. John defines who overcomes in **1 John 5:4-5** <sup>4</sup>“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. <sup>5</sup>Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”

**“will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out”** - One commentator pointed out that it was a custom in Philadelphia to erect a pillar in the name of someone they wanted to honor. Christ goes beyond that and declares that He will make the overcomer a pillar in the temple of God. Each overcomer will have a permanent place of honor for “he shall go no more out.” Others point out that the region around Philadelphia was prone to earthquakes and a pillar signified strength and stability with no reason to flee interior spaces during an earthquake.

**“and I will write upon him the name of my God”** - We often write our names on things to identify our property and Christ will write on us the name of His Father to show that we belong to God.

**“and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God”** - Christ will also write on us the name of our permanent residence and citizenship, which will be the New Jerusalem. John sees this city coming down from God in Rev. 21 after the white throne judgment and every aspect of its design has the purpose of glorifying God.

**“and I will write upon him my new name”** - Christ’s earthly name is “Jesus” which is the Greek form of the Hebrew name “Joshua.” The name means “Jehovah is salvation,” which is why the angel, when he was announcing to Joseph that his wife Mary was going to give birth to the Messiah, said: “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.” (Matt. 1:21).

However, “Jesus” is the name Christ went by while on earth. He apparently has a heavenly name that we do not yet know, but we will know it when He writes it upon us to show His ownership of us. The name “Jesus” revealed His characteristic of being our Savior. Likely His new name will reveal a new characteristic by which He will be known throughout eternity. He will write this new name on us to signify that we belong to Him personally.

<sup>13</sup> He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Christ again includes this statement in His message to the church at Philadelphia because He’s stressing the importance that we pay attention to what is being said to each of these churches. The messages contain commendations for what the churches are doing that pleases Him as well as rebukes for that which displeases Him in the churches. There are also glorious promises to His people from which we can draw encouragement while facing the temptations and persecutions of the world.

The statement is addressed to “he that hath an ear.” In a natural sense, anyone with the ability to hear (“that hath an ear”) is commanded to listen. However, they are to hear “what the Spirit saith.” Unsaved people are unable to hear the Holy Spirit unless He is dealing with them for salvation. Thus, the “he that hath an ear” is apparently limited to those who have been born-again and therefore can “hear what the Spirit saith.” All born-again believers are to “hear” (listen, understand and heed) what the Spirit is saying to each of these churches because it is important that we listen and learn from what Christ is saying.