

As a direct consequence, they stood entitled to special privileges, promises and opportunities, afforded by Christ as a reward for their faithfulness. This small assembly, stands as it were, as a beacon to all other assemblies, who would, under the immense strain of age-end perils, remain faithful so as to receive Christ's unqualified commendation and His unmitigated blessing in this endtime. The door of endtime opportunity had been opened to this church, and *will be opened to any church of "like precious faith"* (II Pet. 1:1). A character-study of these saints is certainly in order, and is our hope that it will yield a rich increase in the lives of those thus occupied.

Faithful In The Face Of Foes

"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"

Christ begins His epistle to this beleaguered church by a three-fold self-designation germane to their present circumstances. "Τάδε λέγει ὁ ἅγιος," ("Thus saith The Holy One"). Despite the malicious slander levelled against the Christ of the Philadelphian church by the members of Satan's synagogue, Jesus remained the "Holy One." Is it not noteworthy that the notion of Christ entertained by the Devil's congregants ran completely

cross-grain to the Christ of the Philadelphian church? Unless our concept of Christ conceives of One Who is utterly separate from all that is morally unlike the God of the Bible, then we have joined the Devil's congregation and are following his false version of Christ. Many today, who name the name of Christ, have deviated from the Biblical version of Christ, by refusing to depart at once from the iniquity that holds them bound (II Tim. 2:19). As a consequence, they slander the Jesus of the faithful, Who says to one and all, in the face of the strife of tongues, "I am Holy." "ὁ ἀληθινός" ("the true one") is the next self-designation and refers to Christ's authenticity or genuineness. Contextually, it would mean that He Himself is the *real* Messiah, contrary to the allegations of the Jewish opponents, who would see Him as an imposter. It may also emphasize the fact that whatever names, titles, or offices are assumed by Christ, are realized to their *fullest extent*. Thirdly, He is depicted as having, or holding the "key of David" (ὁ ἔχων τὴν κλεῖδα τοῦ Δαβίδ), which speaks of His administrative authority and activity as the Messianic Son of David (cf. the prototype Eliakim, the royal treasurer: Isa. 22:22). Moreover, Christ's administrative authority in the spiritual dimension (Matt. 28:18), as well as in the Millennial Kingdom, is final, for He "*openeth, and no man*

shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." Despite every attempt by men or Satan, whether by false accusation (Rev. 2:9), malicious resistance (II Tim. 4:14,15), or subtle hindrance (Matt. 23:13), to shut the door of access to Christ and His abundant provision for Philadelphia's need, Christ's action to shut out the influence of their foes, and open the door of access to His own, will prevail.

Faint But Pursuing

"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. 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."

The Great Assessor of men and women's true character and spiritual condition takes special note of what this church did with what they had. He said, in a reassuring tone, "I know thy works" ("Οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα"). There is much contained of intimate knowledge and sympathy with suffering contained in those four soothing words. It is as if Christ were saying. "*Yes, I know the strain placed upon your little strength and limited resources by the inauthentic religion that surrounds you. I know their biting barbs and the force of their resistance. I know your labor and toil to withstand. I know you have done what you could with what you have.*" How these words should assuage and relieve the battle-weary

pilgrims of our day! Like Gideon's three hundred special corps, they were "faint, yet pursuing" (Judges 8:4). Evidently the church had survived some historical crisis (note the aorist tenses, "ἐτήρησάς," "ἠρνήσω," which evidently refer to some ordeal through which the church successfully passed) in the midst of which they had remained true to Christ's teaching (kept His word) and had not betrayed His true character (not denied My name), nor deserted His cause. In response to this faithfulness Christ now points them to a special reward: "ἰδοὺ [the first in a series of three: 'look, consider, see'] δέδωκα ἐνώπιόν σου θύραν ἀνεωγμένην" (Behold, I have given in your presence [sight] an opened door [a door having been opened]).

Jesus has just taken the key of David and opened unto them a door of extended opportunity. The exact nature of this "open door," has generated some degree of speculation, but the immediate setting and the larger context of the entire New Testament seem to suggest several possibilities. The door is a *door of access to additional resources in Christ* (His wisdom, strength, provision [both spiritual and material] which will supply their present need (Phil. 4:19) and enable them to stand fast in the face of opposition. In opening for them the royal treasury,

Christ is in essence saying, *“I see your situation, the stress and duress, and now I grant you free access to My additional supply of grace, which will prove more than sufficient for your pressing need (I Cor. 10:13; Jn. 1:16 [χάρις ἀντὶ χάριτος]). Come boldly to My throne of grace and find a door opened to my supply”* (Heb. 4:16; James 4:6; Matt. 25:29; Luke 8:18; II Cor. 3:5,6; 12:8,9). Christ Jesus, who is replete with every requisite grace, opens to them freely the door of His supply that they may draw strength to sustain their stamina (Ps. 55:22).

Secondly, there seems to be the suggestion of *an extended opportunity for witness* (I Cor. 16:9; II Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3) with the additional idea of *a more effective and extensive influence* resulting from their previous testimony to those around them. As a gift to the church (ἰδοὺ δίδωμι), Jesus says that some from the synagogue of Satan (ἐκ τῆς συναγωγῆς τοῦ Σατανᾶ), that have vehemently withstood their testimony to Christ, will evidently be converted and become convinced of the sin they have committed against a people beloved of the Lord. Acknowledging the error of their way, they will actually bow in abject submission before the feet of this formerly despised church, recognizing that God is in them of a truth and that Philadelphia’s Jesus is indeed the Messiah of Israel. These Jews, in a manner similar to another Jew of an earlier age, will readily acknowledge

the faith they once sought to destroy (Gal. 1:23). Moreover, Jesus states that this sovereign work of God’s grace among their enemies was currently in progress (δίδωμι-“I am giving”). In vindication of His Word, to which the Philadelphians have remained true, God will cause some among their enemies to entreat them well (Jer. 15:11; Isa. 60:14; 45:14; 49:23) in the momentous days to come as they find it hard to “kick against the pricks” (Acts 9:5). This “open door” would not be the result of fleshly evangelistic schemes and clever programs, for Christ Himself will bring it to pass by the direct exercise of Divine compulsion (ποιήσω αὐτοὺς- “I will make them”).

Fit To Escape

“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.”

Undoubtedly, the open door given in the sight of this faithful church, is, in its third aspect, the same one shown to John in Rev. 4:1: *“After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.”* This, my dear reader, is none other than a doorway of escape from the tribulation woes that will shortly overtake the earth dwellers. Only those who have kept Christ’s word of endurance (the

message that the endurance exemplified in Christ’s career [Heb. 12:2,3] should be reproduced in the believer’s life [Gal. 2:20]) and been watchful in prayer (Luke 21:36; Matt. 26:41) will be deemed worthy to escape the horrors of the “hour of temptation.” This special, future exemption is a reward given for present faithfulness.

Favored With Future Rewards

“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. 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. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

Christ concludes His message to this favored church with an exhortation to hold fast and a listing of special awards that await the overcomer. The prospect of a coming crown, a position of prominence and permanence in the temple of God, and a special identification with God in Christ and the privileges of the coming celestial city, should be sufficient incentive to spur the sincere believer to new heights of Christian attainment as he ponders with longing expectation those comforting words: *“Behold, I come quickly.”* Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

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Revelation 3:7-13

The church at Philadelphia is one of the most unique among the cluster of seven Asian churches addressed by Jesus through His servant John. While five out of the seven stood in dire need of repentance, this unusual assembly, with slight numerical strength, and in the face of strenuous opposition, had kept Christ’s word, and despite almost insurmountable obstacles, had won the special favor of Christ.