

# 16. The Book of Revelation—3:8-10

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(9/2/20)

We are currently in chapter 3 of our study in the Book of Revelation.

Last week we started looking at the 6<sup>th</sup> letter of the 7 that Jesus dictated to the churches of Asia Minor—the Letter to the church of Philadelphia.

As we said last time, the church of Philadelphia wasn't a perfect church—but it was a good and faithful church.

It was a church that was living for the Lord in such a way that, along with the church of Smyrna, was a church Jesus had no words of correction or condemnation for.

Last week we looked at verse 7 and that brings us tonight to verse 8 where Jesus gives a *commendation* to this church.

## The Commendation

### **Revelation 3:8 (NKJV)**

**<sup>8</sup>I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.**

The Lord tells this church, “*I know your works—see I have set before you an open door...*”

What exactly is this ‘**open door**’?

Before we look at *what* this open door is—let’s first look at Jesus’ commendation of this church, and the reason *why* He opened this door to the church of Philadelphia.

Jesus tells them He opened this door for three reasons:

**1. They had a “little strength”** (the Greek is *dynamis*—power)

Remember that this wasn’t a word of ‘*condemnation*’—it was a word of commendation.

In other words, this was not a negative comment on their *febleness*—it was a commendation of their *faithfulness* and *strength*.

The Philadelphia church was *small* in numbers—but its impact on their city had been *huge* and *powerful* because they were faithfully ministering in the power of the Holy Spirit.

It could also be that many if not most of its members were poor (from the lower classes of society)—but with Paul they could say, “*I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong*” (2 Cor. 12:10).

Despite its small size—spiritual power flowed in the Philadelphia church—people were being *redeemed*, lives were being *transformed*, and the gospel of Jesus Christ was being *proclaimed*.

One pastor compares this last day’s church with the teaching from many pulpits today:

*“There are those who teach that in the last days there will be a major manifestation of the sons of God; that miracles will happen, wherein every sick person is healed, and glorious things will occur. But I believe that’s hype and hyperbole. Yes, there are some good things happening. But it’s the time of little strength. Jesus does not say this condemningly. He merely says that’s the way it is during the age of Philadelphia. Thus, it’s not an indictment, but rather an honest assessment of the ‘last days’ church.”*

*Apostasy* and not world-wide *revival* is the biblical prediction for the last day’s church.

## 2. They kept His Word

Like Job, they could say, “*I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food*” (Job 23:12).

The church of Philadelphia represents the true church in the last days— not the *denominational* church which, for the most part, no longer even believes in the inspiration of the Word, let alone is teaching it faithfully.

However, it’s not just denominational churches that are no longer teaching the Word—many so-called ‘evangelical’ churches are not teaching the Word faithfully anymore either.

This is the very thing Paul prophesied would characterize the Church in the last days—

### **2 Timothy 4:2-4 (NKJV)**

<sup>2</sup> Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. <sup>3</sup> For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; <sup>4</sup> and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

It is getting harder and harder to find pastors who teach the Word of God to their people faithfully—verse by verse, line upon line, precept upon precept, the whole counsel of God and have not been co-opted by the culture.

## 3. They did not deny His name

In Scripture, the ‘*name of God*’ represents His Person and His character.

### **Exodus 34:5-7 (NKJV)**

<sup>5</sup> Now the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. <sup>6</sup> And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, <sup>7</sup> keeping mercy for

thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

When Jesus commends the Christians in the church of Philadelphia for not denying His name the idea is: *"You have not denied My Deity. You have faithfully represented Me to those in your community—that I am fully God in human form, the Great I AM, the only Way to the Father."*

**2 Corinthians 11:3-4 (NLT2)**

<sup>3</sup> But I fear that somehow your pure and undivided devotion to Christ will be corrupted, just as Eve was deceived by the cunning ways of the serpent. <sup>4</sup> You happily put up with whatever anyone tells you, even if they preach a different Jesus than the one we preach, or a different kind of Spirit than the one you received, or a different kind of gospel than the one you believed.

**2 Peter 2:1-2 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction. <sup>2</sup> And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.

**Luke 18:8 (NKJV)**

<sup>8</sup> "...Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"

➔ Ligonier Ministries' State of Theology survey finds that 30% of U.S. evangelicals don't believe that Jesus is God.

**Revelation 3:8 (NKJV)**

<sup>8</sup> **I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.**

Henry Morris, in his commentary on the Book of Revelation says—

*"When a church begins to deal loosely with the Word of Christ, it will sooner or later deny the name of Christ...the name "Jesus" means "salvation," and one who honors this name accepts the great salvation provided by His substitutionary atonement and justifying resurrection. One who honors the name "Christ" ...acknowledges His Person—His threefold eminence as Gods' anointed Prophet, Priest, and King. One who honors him as "Lord" believes and obeys his Word."*

The Mormon 'Jesus' (brother of Lucifer); the Jehovah Witness 'Jesus' (Michael the archangel)—these are a denial of Jesus' name—His Person.

One pastor put Jesus' words to this church this way—*“You recognize I am who I claim to be—not just an interesting teacher, not just a model of how to live successfully, of how to have prosperity, or of how to be happy—I am the Christ.”*

These three things are how Jesus gauges the success of any Christian church or ministry.

In other words, it's not about how large and wealthy a church is that determines their success in His eyes—these are the world's criteria for gauging success.

Jesus considers a church successful when they are being led by and operating in the power of the Holy Spirit regardless of their size; when they keep His Word when it would be easier to compromise; and don't deny His name in favor of some politically correct Jesus.

We believe in the Jesus of the Bible—God Almighty, Second Person of the Trinity, who became a man, died for our sins, on the third day rose from the dead, ascended back to His Father and is coming again to judge the living and the dead and establish a Kingdom which will never end.

Now because of these 3 things—Jesus set before them an 'open door' which no one could shut.

*“Yes, but again—what is this open door?”*

Well, many believe it's the open door for *ministry*—primarily evangelism.

**Acts 14:27 (NKJV)**

<sup>27</sup> Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

**1 Corinthians 16:9 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> For a great and effective door has opened to me, and *there are* many adversaries.

**2 Corinthians 2:12 (NKJV)**

<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, when I came to Troas to *preach* Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord,

**Colossians 4:3 (NKJV)**

<sup>3</sup> meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains,

So, I think we're on solid ground to interpret *this 'open door'* as—a door of spiritual opportunity to preach the gospel.

The church in Philadelphia had a heart to reach the lost and because of it—the Lord gave to them the desire of their heart and opened a door of *opportunity* for ministry and evangelism.

Notice that Jesus opens the door of spiritual opportunity for ministry and when He does—no one can shut it.

Unlike what a lot of TV preachers teach who try to manipulate money out of people by telling them—“*If you don't send your money in for the work of God, the work of God will come to an end.*” (in other words, “*the door of ministry will be shut...*”)

If man can ‘shut’ the door of your ministry—then it was man who opened that door in the first place and not God (a work of the flesh and not the Spirit).

As we said earlier, at this point in these 7 letters there is usually some words of *condemnation* and *correction*—but we don't see that in the letters to Smyrna and Philadelphia.

And so, the Lord Jesus moves right into the ‘**Challenge**’—which takes the form of an *exhortation* and *promise*.

**Revelation 3:9 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> **Indeed I will make *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not,**

**but lie--indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.**

In the early years of the Church much of the persecution it faced was from Jews who saw Christianity as a cult (a cult of Judaism) claiming to be the fulfillment of Judaism.

This caused many Jews (like Saul of Tarsus) to vehemently persecute those early Christians.

Jesus called these unbelieving Jewish haters of the gospel a “**synagogue of Satan.**”

In other words, they saw themselves as a ‘*synagogue of God*’ (‘synagogue’ is a word that means “*a Jewish assembly or congregation*”), doing the work of God in destroying this cult called *Christianity*.

But in reality, Jesus saw them as—a ‘*synagogue of Satan*’—a group of Jews doing the work of the devil in persecuting and killing the true people of God.

It’s amazing how zealous a person or a group of people can be for a cause or an ideology that they believe to be right and true—only to find out they were very wrong.

Again, I think of Saul of Tarsus and how he persecuted Christians in the name of doing the work of God in stomping out the ‘cult of Christianity’ only to be confronted on the road to Damascus by Jesus Himself and made to realize he was fighting against God and not serving Him.

**Romans 10:1-4 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. <sup>2</sup> For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. <sup>3</sup> For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. <sup>4</sup> For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

**Proverbs 14:12 (NKJV)**

<sup>12</sup> There is a way *that seems* right to a man, But its end *is* the way of death.

The Scribes and Pharisees were of this sort—whom Jesus confronted:

**John 8:44 (NKJV)**

<sup>44</sup> You [Scribes and Pharisees] are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning...

Jesus warned His disciples about these deceived zealots—

**John 16:1-2 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> "These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. <sup>2</sup> They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.

**Revelation 3:9 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> Indeed I will make *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—**indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.**

**Matthew 19:28 (NKJV)**

<sup>28</sup> So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Someday (the day of judgment) unbelieving Israel will “*worship*” before the Christian Church (the word for ‘worship’ is a Greek word that means “*to prostrate before a king or someone of superior authority*”) and acknowledge that we are the true people of God.

And then the Lord Jesus gives to this church (which represents the true Church on the earth at the time of the rapture) a promise—a promise that has generated much controversy and debate as to its true interpretation:

**Revelation 3:10 (NKJV)**

<sup>10</sup> **Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.**



The word “**persevere**” is a Greek word that means “*faithfulness under pressure.*”

We would say that this church was a faithful church that hung in there thru the persecution they were facing and didn’t quit or bail (run away)—and this is where Jesus’ promise comes into play.

As we just said a moment ago, in verse 8 when Jesus said to the church in Philadelphia that He has set before them an open door—we said that this is probably referring to an open door of spiritual opportunity to preach the gospel.

However, some believe this open door is much more than that—they believe this could be talking about ‘**a door of deliverance**’ out of the Tribulation Period that is coming upon this Christ rejecting rebellious world.

And if that is true, then verse 8 becomes a segue into verse 10 and the promise that Jesus gives to the last day’s Church that is faithful to Him and His Word—

(Verse 8)—“**I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it... (Verse 10)—because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.**”

Many Bible commentators interpret Jesus’ words, “**I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world...**”—as a promise by Jesus to rapture His true Church (Philadelphia) off of the earth *before* God unleashes the Tribulation Period judgments upon this Christ-rejecting world (chapters 6-19).

Those who believe in a ‘post-tribulation’ rapture of the Church say that what Jesus is promising His Church is that He would protect them ‘*through*’ the Tribulation Period and then rapture them off of the earth once it’s finished—and is not promising to take them off of the earth *before* it (TP) takes place.

But notice that Jesus doesn't say He will keep them *'through'* the Tribulation Period—but that He will keep His true Church *'from'* (the Greek is 'ek' and can be translated *'from'* or *'out of'*) the **“hour of trial”** (Tribulation Period) coming upon the whole world.

If the Lord Jesus had wanted to express the idea that His Church would remain upon the earth during the entire Tribulation Period but that He would *'protect His Church through it'*—He could have used the Greek prepositions, 'en' (*in*) or 'dia' (*through*).

Another problem with the interpretation that those who hold to a post-tribulation rapture view of this passage and that Jesus is here promising His Church *preservation* in, during and through the Tribulation—is as one author put it:

*“Believers in that terrible time will not be preserved. In fact, many will be martyred (6:9–11; 7:9–14), leading to the conclusion that promising preservation is meaningless if the believers face the same fate as sinners during the Tribulation...[to get around this] some hold that the promise of deliverance is only from God's wrath during the Tribulation—but a promise that God will not kill believers but will allow Satan and Antichrist to do so would provide small comfort to the suffering church at Philadelphia (the true church going thru the Tribulation Period).”*

Furthermore, to bolster the argument that Jesus is promising to remove His Church from the earth entirely before the Tribulation Period begins, He says:

**“I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world...”**  
(v.10)

The word **“hour”** is not referring to a *literal* 60-minute period of time—but to a *general* or symbolic period of time (in this case the 7-year Tribulation Period).

The Greek word for **“trial”** is *peirasmós* and means *“adversity, trouble, trial or tribulation.”*

So, here Jesus promises to keep the last days true church from the *“period of trouble or tribulation”* (the entire Tribulation Period) which is coming upon the whole world.

Author and scholar Mark Hitchcock said—

*“Notice Jesus promises to keep His people from the ‘hour’ of testing that is coming upon the whole world. The Lord promises to keep His people not just ‘from’ or ‘out of’ the testing—but from the very ‘time’ (‘hour’) of the testing. The exemption of believers is not just from the trials of the Tribulation—but from the very Tribulation itself. This means that the Church will be immune from the very hour or very time period when this testing occurs—that is, from the Tribulation Period itself!*

*The most natural meaning of this promise is that believers will not be on earth when the hour of trial takes place. This conclusion is bolstered by the next verse where Jesus says, ‘**I am coming quickly.**’ The inference is that He will deliver His people from the time of worldwide testing by his coming for them. This strongly supports the pretribulationists’ notion of removal from the time of Tribulation, not the posttribulationists’ idea of protection through it...*

*Revelation 3:10 is a specific, special promise from Jesus that His Bride will be kept from the ‘hour of testing’ or ‘time of tribulation’ that is coming upon the whole world. This strongly supports the pre-tribulation view of the rapture. As [Professor John] Walvoord notes, ‘The event in view here that will deliver the true church from the Tribulation—is the rapture, which must occur prior to the Tribulation for this promise to have its full force.’”*

The KJV translation of verse 10 more closely represents the ‘*play on words*’ that the Greek is going for:

**Revelation 3:10 (KJV)**

<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.

Again, this is a play on words—“*Because you have kept the Word of My patience...I also will keep you from the hour of temptation (tribulation/trial)...*”

Be careful that you don’t interpret what Jesus is saying wrongly.

“**Kept the word of My patience**” doesn’t mean—“*because you have been obedient and have endured hard things for Me, you have earned My deliverance...*”—that is NOT what He is saying here.

Vincent—“*Not the words which Christ has spoken concerning patience, but the word of Christ which requires patience to keep it; the gospel which teaches the need of a patient waiting for Christ.*”

You see, the New Testament warns us that in the last days a great apostasy (“*falling away*” or “*departing from the faith*”) would take hold in the Church.

Paul, in 2Tim.3:5, said that in the last days ‘*men*’ (people in churches) would have “*a form of godliness but would deny the power thereof*”—what did he mean by that?

I believe it goes along with what he said in Romans 1:16—

**Romans 1:16 (NKJV)**

<sup>16</sup>For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

The gospel is the ‘*power of God*’ that brings to salvation all who believe and embrace it.

So, this church was not ashamed of the gospel but was clinging to it tenaciously and proclaiming it faithfully—unlike many today who are *ashamed* of the gospel. (Explain)