

# Living Word Fellowship Church

Revelation

## The Church of Philadelphia

Revelation 3:7-13

### Part II

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#### I. The Strength and Weaknesses of Church

A. Strength - Even though they were a small church and seem insignificant the Lord knew them well:

1. Know – Christ comprehensively has a divine understanding of all the deeds of the Philadelphia believers.
  - a) Only the letter to the church at Philadelphia and Smyrna contains no word of rebuke. Even today this Asian city has a Christian group. Though so worthy, this church was nevertheless to know a time of severe trial. Note carefully that the word is trial here, not *tribulation*. But in the trial, the believers were to be divinely kept (see Jn 17:15).<sup>1</sup>
2. Deeds – Christ's purpose of gathering, in having a full knowledge of the church of Philadelphia was to completely understand all the work they were doing because of their commitment to His Word. This is very different than the very next church John is taking about – Laodicea.
3. Put before you an open door - Christ completely establishes as a permanent possession, a door that cannot be shut. This is not because they earned it. Christ chose to give them this as a gift because He rewards faithfulness (Hebrews 11:6).
4. Which no one can shut – Christ says that once and for all that once He opens the door, no one has the ability to over-power Him, so it will remain open by His power and authority.
5. You have kept my Word – This church, once and for all, has actively, determine to watchfully, with no intent of every adjusting their convictions, completely surrender to the full intent of the Word of God.
6. You have not denied my name – This church did not disregard the character, power, authority, or reputation of the Lord (Mt. 10:32-33; Luke 12:8-9).
7. Behold – The character of this church gained Christ full attention causing Christ to take action in their favor.
8. Kept the Word – This church, once and for all, has actively, determine to watchfully, with no intent of every adjusting their convictions, completely surrender to the full intent of the Word of God.
9. Keeping God's Word leads to His (My) perseverance:
  - a) “It is unwavering constancy to faith and piety in spite of adversity and suffering.” Like a runner who is well trained for the Olympics but get injured while running but is so determined to finish he/she keeps running, despite the pain, to finish the race.
  - b) These believers possess character traits that demonstrate no desire to buckle when trials become overbearing as a result of their commitment to obey God's Word.

<sup>1</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F., & Harrison, E. F. (Eds.). (1962). [\*The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: New Testament\*](#) (Re 3:7). Chicago: Moody Press.

10. To hold fast what you have – Christ tells them to continuously cling to the intentional watchful attitude they have towards His Word.

- a) The believers are reminded to hold fast until Christ returns (3:11; cf. 6:9–11; John 16:33; 17:15; Rev. 7:1–8; 12:6). Satan is the chief accuser and persecutor of Christ’s children (12:10; 2:9; John 8:44; 17:15; 2 Cor. 11:14–15). “All who are victorious” will gain a place in the new city (cf. 21:1–2). The “pillars” (3:12) may allude to the custom of honoring a magistrate by setting up a pillar in one of the temples of Philadelphia in his name. The writing of the name of God on those who are “victorious” identifies the believer as God’s own possession.<sup>2</sup>
- b) When they hold fast to the Word of God, they gain an unchanging deposit that is self-prompted by God.

11. God rewards them for their faith and trust in Him by, on His own initiative, providing them a crown that He creates and provides to them.

- a) “Hold fast” suggests that they will be going through trials that will require especially diligent safeguarding of faith (of the two other uses of κρατέω [“hold fast”] in the letters, one allows a situation of trial [2:25], while the other clearly is used in such a setting [2:13]). Consequently, the “coming” referred to in this verse is the increased presence of Christ that will protect these believers when they pass through tribulation, as has just been mentioned in v 10.<sup>3</sup>

## B. Weaknesses:

1. You have little power – Without Christ, this church continuously has little capability to overcome or resist the obstacles or attacks presented to them by the Jews who gather in the synagogue of Satan. This was a weakness that God made a strength.

- a) Their “little power” was expressed through their keeping Christ’s Word and not denying His name. The “little power” (together with the directly following phrase about persevering witness) probably refers to the effectiveness of their witness in the community, though not yet on a large scale, perhaps because the church was still small in numbers (note the similar use of the “open door” imagery indicating “witness” in Acts 14:27; 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3). The church’s low social standing in the community could also be intimated. That they had “not denied my [Christ’s] name” underscores the focus on witness in this letter.<sup>4</sup>

## II. A Blessed Church

A. Keep you from the hour of testing – Because these believers were committed to obey God, no matter the adversity they experienced, Christ says He will intently keep a watchful eye upon them to preserve them from succumbing to sin.

<sup>2</sup> Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). *Tyndale concise Bible commentary* (p. 739). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>3</sup> Beale, G. K. (1999). *The book of Revelation: a commentary on the Greek text* (p. 293). Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

<sup>4</sup> Beale, G. K. (1999). *The book of Revelation: a commentary on the Greek text* (pp. 285–286). Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

- B. Keep you from the hour of testing – Christ, knowing their desire to obey Him, will not allow them to breakdown under the pressure placed upon them to sin.
- C. He who overcomes – An overcomer is a believer who continuously demonstrates spiritual superiority over life obstacles (1 John 4:4).
- D. He who overcomes – An overcomer is a believer who, in the midst of adversity remains obedient to the Word of God, by the strength of the Holy Spirit, demonstrating genuine superiority over persecution and overwhelming circumstances (Romans 8:31-39).
- E. The New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven – The New Jerusalem is either the entire city coming out from heaven or all that the blueprints outline in heaven that is replicated on earth. It comes from God.
- F. My new name – Christ reputation, power, authority, glorious and majestic nature will take on an entirely new manifestation before us.

### III. Conclusion

While the door of the synagogue may be closed to the Christians, the door to the church will soon be opened by the Jews in a surprising turnabout. Isaiah prophesied that the Gentiles would worship at the feet of Israel (Isa. 49:23; 60:14). In an ironic twist, the unbelieving Jews will worship at the feet of the true Israel (cf. Gal. 6:16). This dramatic acknowledgment that God's covenant love now rests on Jewish and Gentile believers is Jesus' sign to the Philadelphians that He holds the key.<sup>5</sup>

He who has ears – Having ears here represents a person who continually makes it a habit to cling to what the Spirit of God is saying.

- a) The same Jesus who, during His earthly ministry, commanded persons with ears to hear (Matt. 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mark 4:9, 23; Luke 8:8; 14:35), now during His heavenly ministry commands His churches to pay attention. He who has an ear, let him hear reminds us that He does not force us to heed His words. Yet if the words of the risen Lord to John on Patmos are indeed what the Spirit says to the churches, then we neglect them to our peril.<sup>6</sup>

Let him hear – The believer who intently listens to the Holy Spirit is now commanded to comprehend what He is saying with a heart to obey.

- a) Just as Christ overcame through faithful obedience, a believer today who overcomes by humble, obedient faith will sit with Christ on His throne (20:4, 6). God's purpose in the church is to raise up co-heirs who will share Christ's authority in His kingdom. These co-heirs must overcome as Christ did by persevering in the faith despite suffering (Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:12).<sup>7</sup>

What the Spirit – The Holy Spirit is the person who communicates what God wants to say to us (John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15). He does this by illuminating the written Word and reminding us of what it says (John 14:26).

Says – The Holy Spirit communicates with us all the time so that He can empower us to be overcomers through the Word of God (Isaiah 55:11; 1 John 2:26-27).

<sup>5</sup> Arnold, C. E. (2002). *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Hebrews to Revelation*. (Vol. 4, p. 275). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>6</sup> Easley, K. H. (1998). *Revelation* (Vol. 12, pp. 61–62). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>7</sup> Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1999). *Nelson's new illustrated Bible commentary* (pp. 1741–1742). Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.

Church – The Holy Spirit speaks to those called out believer who assemble as brethren (loving community committed to the Word of God), freed citizens of the kingdom of God.