



Historic Situation	Name Interpretation	Positive Affirmation	Corrective Exhortation	Eternal Motivation	Prophetic Revelation	Personal Application
Ephesus First Church	Let Go/Leave Darling/First Love	Perseverance Discernment	Left (not lost) First Love	Eat From the Tree of Life	Approximately 70AD to 170AD	Remember Repent and Repeat
Smyrna Persecution	Myrrh when it's Crushed is Fragrant	Rich in Poverty and Suffering	NONE	Receive the Crown of Life	Approximately 170AD to 312AD	Better not Bitter when Crushed
Pergamos Satan's Throne	Perverted/Adulterous Marriage Union	Remained True Didn't Renounce	Sexual/Spiritual Adultery/Idolatry	Hidden Manna and New Name	Approximately 312AD to 606AD	Purity not Adultery with the World
Thyatira Jezebel Doctrine	Continual Sacrifice	Love Faith Service Perseverance	Tolerate Deceptive Seductive Teachings	Authority Over the Nations	Approximately 606AD to The End	Bought at a Price as a Living Sacrifice
Sardis Rest on Laurels	Invincible Remnant	Hard Work Good Name	Wake Up and Watch Before it's too Late	Clothed in White Name in Book	Approximately 1520AD to The End	Be Watchful for The "Thief in the Night"
Philadelphia 2-Brothers Built	Brotherly Love	Little Strength kept God's Word/Name	NONE	Kept from the 7- Year Tribulation	Approximately 1750AD to The End	Known as Disciples by love for another
Laodicea Lukewarm Water	The Laity Ruled as the Diocese	NONE	Rich but Poor See but Blind Clothed but Naked	Sit with Jesus on His Throne	Approximately 1900AD to The End	Hot or Cold for and to Jesus

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DAVID: Would you join me in prayer? Lord, we believe that You're coming back to take us home, Lord. We look forward to that, Lord. But yet we stand by and wait for You, Lord. May our work be to just go out and reach out and touch others, Lord, to draw them towards You. We thank You for Your love, Your grace, and all Your mercy. In Jesus' name, amen.

PASTOR JD: Amen and amen. Good morning and welcome. You can be seated. Those of you online, we want to welcome you as well.

Before we jump in, though, I do have a prayer plea for Johnny Baginski. He is Xavier's younger brother. Many of you know Xavier and his wife, Ashley and their keiki are a part of our church ohana. He is riddled with cancerous tumors in his brain, all throughout his body. And this came about suddenly. And this is Xavier's younger brother.

These are actually dear friends of ours, going way back. Michelle, Johnny and Xavier's mom, is a good friend of my wife, Kailua girls born and raised. Xavier lost his brother a few years ago. And then his dad died of pancreatic cancer. His mom, Michelle — please pray for Michelle as well — has lost her son, one of her three sons, is about to lose — absent a miracle — her second of three sons and had also lost her husband.

So I'm just going to ask that you would join with me in prayer. And then also, as the Lord reminds you, please pray for Johnny, Xavier, and Michelle. Let's pray.

Father, I — once again, at times like this we're so grateful that we have prayer, that we can come to You and pray to You and ask of You as the Great Physician for a healing. And that's what we want to ask for. Literally, we want to ask You for a healing supernaturally because in the natural they're giving him no hope. His only hope is in the supernatural and if You touch him with Your mighty hand and miraculously heal him in the supernatural. That's the only hope.

So Lord, like I prayed First Service, I'm going to pray again Second Service and all my brothers and sisters are in agreement with me, both here locally and online as well. Lord, today would You heal him, as only You can, and remove every single tumor and cancer cell from his body so that when the oncologist comes into that hospital room, he will say, "What tumor? Where's the cancer? These are the wrong charts. These belong to a different patient because this patient doesn't have cancer."

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Lord, we know You can do that. It's not, can You? It's, will You? Will You please, Lord? Also, will You comfort Michelle? She's been through so much. Please, Jesus, strengthen Xavier and heal Johnny. And Lord, do this all for Your glory, all for Your praise. So Lord, thank You again that we can come to You with this, ask You for this, and even in advance thank You for that which You're going to do. Lord, he's in your hands. Will you please do that which only You can? We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you, by the way.

All right. *Revelation Chapter 3*. Our text today is verses 7-13. I'll ask you to stand if you're able. If not, where you're seated is fine. You can just follow along as I read the text. John is writing. This is the sixth of seven letters now to these specific seven churches. And Jesus is basically dictating the letter. And John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is writing the letter. And then he's going to send the letter to this church.

So verse 7. "To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of Him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What He opens no one can shut, and what He shuts no one can open. I know your deeds.

[Verse 8] See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept My word and have not denied My name. I

[Verse 9] will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars— I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you since you have kept My command to endure patiently. I will also keep you from the hour of trial [Or tribulation] that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth. I am coming soon. [Quickly]

Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. Him who overcomes

[Verse 12] I will make a pillar in the temple of My God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from My God; and I will also write on him My new name. He who has an ear, [Verse 13] let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Let's pray. Father, thank You for Your word. This, oh, what an encouraging word. I think of the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians, encouraging them to encourage one another with these words. Such is the case with this text that we have before us today.

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How encouraging is this. Lord, would You please take this letter to this church, though written for them then, and use it to encourage us now, especially those who are so downcast and so beat down and discouraged?

Lord, we need to hear. We have ears to hear. We need — we need to hear. We want to hear, but we need to hear what it is that You, by the Holy Spirit, have to say to us, this, Your church. So Lord, will You speak, please? Your servants are listening. Thank You, Lord. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen and amen. You could be seated. Thank you.

So we've arrived at what's arguably the most encouraging of all seven letters, a favorite to many a Christian and for understandable reasons, some of which are obvious reasons but actually some for reasons that one may not think.

Let me explain. The Christians in the church in Philadelphia were on the receiving end of adversity and opposition. And we know that because it's evidenced by how Jesus has John encourage them and even commend them in the face of what seemed to be this crushing pressure to deny His name and not keep preaching His word. **“You've kept My word. You've not denied My name.”** You just keep on keeping on and hold on. And don't let anyone take that away from you. By the way, that was the Prophecy Update, for those of you who weren't here.

Okay, I won't look at anybody. Don't raise your hand. Again, this is doubtless a favorite for many a Christian. But the truth of the matter is this letter is as adversarial as it is controversial. And the reason for that is within this letter to the church of Philadelphia is the sound doctrine of the pre-Tribulation rapture and the sound doctrine that God is not through with the Jew. Those are two great conversation starters at the dinner table, yeah?

I'll start by quickly referring to the map from our overview just to kind of point out the unique positioning of this particular city and with it, this church, namely that of its perfect location as an open door with which to spread the Greek language and culture throughout the region. I love it when God does this.

We're told that He uses even the wrath of man to praise Him. God set this up perfectly because this would actually be where printing would take place, and it would be the conduit to the entire region to spread Greek culture.

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Well, guess what? The New Testament would be inspired by God and written in the language of Greek. Perfect. Who knew? God knew. He used this location, this church, and He opened a door. And when God opens a door, no man's going to shut that door. You can try. Go ahead. It ain't going to happen. But this would be the open door, the conduit through which God would spread — not Greek culture — but the good news of salvation in the person of Jesus Christ.

Now, this is important because, as we discussed prior, these seven churches were selected for specific reasons and in order, by the way.

So in other words, you couldn't send the letter to the church in Thyatira, to Laodicea. That would not work. They would be, like, I think they got the wrong address. You did. And you can't rearrange the order. The first church, Ephesus, who left, not lost, their first love, that's the first church.

And it has to go in that specific order to the last church, which I — by the way, please pray for me. I am not looking forward to teaching. You have to come next week because I have to come next week. I'm the pastor. I am not looking forward to teaching the letter to the church of the Laodiceans, the seventh and final church, which, again, in perfect order, arranged and chosen specifically, representing the church age to the present. That's today.

I also want to quickly mention the chart from our overview, and I do so to draw your attention to the nature of the name interpretation. You know how the name is the nature? Well, Philadelphia, which we know here in the state of Pennsylvania as the City of Brotherly Love comes from the Greek word “philia.”

Now, in English we only have one word for love, which is unfortunate. So I'll say, I love you, I love my wife, I love my kids, I love spicy ahi poke. I use the same word for “love.” Now in the Greek language there are four — there's actually more — but four main words for love. And philia is one of them. Philia is brotherly love. Eros is another one. That's where we get our English word for erotic. It's a sensual, physical, sexual love.

Then you have storge, which is natural affection. It's a familial love. It's a parental love, the love that a child has for a parent and a parent has for a child. It's oftentimes translated in our Bibles as natural affection. It's a parental love: storge.

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And then fourthly, you have agape, which is the unconditional love. So the name is the nature. This was a city, the City of Brotherly Love. And what did Jesus say would be the gauge, the litmus test by which they would know that we were His disciples? By our love, one for another.

Two more fascinating facts, real fast, about the city of Philadelphia and by extension, the church in Philadelphia. Just that I think it will be germane to our understanding of this letter. First, it was founded by Attalus II, who in his love for his older brother, Eumenes II, named the city Philadelphia: Brotherly Love.

Second, and this will come into play towards the end of the letter, Philadelphia was in an earthquake zone and was almost completely destroyed in the year 17 A.D. And aftershocks, get this, were felt for years after. This was such a major earthquake that they had to leave and could not come back. It was so devastating that even Sardis was destroyed close in proximity to the location of where Philadelphia is.

Okay, hopefully, that backstory will be of help to tackle — that's a poor choice of words but I don't have another one — so tackle. It's been a rough week again. I say that every week, don't I? Well, they're getting rougher. That's why.

I want to tackle this encouraging letter and how it applies to our lives in our day. Because you understand that this letter, though written to them then, is a letter written to us now. In fact, I would even argue that in some ways, in some respects, it applies more to us now in our day than it did to them in their day, which is why we have this letter in our Bibles.

And by the way, just parenthetically, let me say, Philadelphia was one of only two churches for which there was no rebuke. You know what the other one was? Smyrna. No rebuke. Only encouragement. Two of the seven churches were not on the receiving end of a rebuke, only encouragement and commendation. And just hang in there. I know what you're going through. Just hold on. No rebuke. Philadelphia and Smyrna.

So that alone has powerful personal application in a letter that also has profound prophetic implications, which, again, we talked about at First Service, for those of you who were here. Okay. I spent some time inquiring of the Lord about this text and sensed that there were five questions to pose specific to this text and this for a number of reasons, chief of which is

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that we as believers are today experiencing in the same way that which they experienced back in their day. And if you'll kindly allow me to, I'd like for us to focus on how it is that despite the opposition we face in these last days, and it's getting worse, seemingly, with each passing day, we, like them, can keep His word and not deny His name.

Can you imagine the pressure they were under, the crushing pressure to cave? Keep in mind these were seven selected churches for a reason because of what they represented as the church age. But there were hundreds of churches. So when Jesus writes this letter, has John write this letter and send it to this church in Philadelphia and says things to them like, don't let them take your crown away from you, why would He say that? Unless there were those in opposition to them coming against them, trying to take from them their crown, which again, is what we — boy, you should have been here First Service. We talked about that.

Well, let's get to these questions. And please know whenever I teach the text by asking questions, that I always ask them of myself as well. Now these questions are going to be specific to the pressure that we face as Christians, certainly as pastors.

You've heard of peer pressure? Well, there's pastor pressure. Literally, that's for real, by the way. I'm not seeking pity. I will always seek prayer. But boy, the pressure on pastors today to kind of just, you know, can you soften it up a little bit? Can you tone it down just a little bit? And why do you got to be like that?

No, because I'm supposed to preach the word. Yeah, but man, I mean, no, you... When Jesus says, **“You kept My word,”** do you get the impression that there were other churches that didn't? They lost confidence in the word of God and thus were not preaching the word of God. But not Philadelphia.

And if the name is the nature and Jesus says, you've also not denied My name, there were churches that had denied the name of Jesus and had not kept the word of God. And so you've got the pastor of this church in Philadelphia getting emails from his fellow pastors. I shouldn't have gone there.

Let me see if I can just kind of simplify it, which I need to because I complicate everything. I want to pose these five questions that all of us would do well to ask ourselves, especially when, like Philadelphia, we're being pummeled by adversity and opposition.

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And I want to take it a step further and sort of qualify it by adding that these are questions to consider as it relates to what God is accomplishing in and through the opposition. You know, last week at Tamayo's Celebration of Life, I sensed very strong, impressed upon my heart from the Lord, I mean, just prompted. It was such a heavy, you know, prompting from the Holy Spirit to include this: Don't ask God "why?" Ask God "what?"

Not God, why are You allowing this to happen? God, why is this happening? We don't know the whys or the ways of God. They're too high for our understanding. Let's not ask "why?" Let's ask "what?" Not God, why did You allow this to happen or are You allowing this to happen? Instead, ask God what is it that You want to show me because this happened?

Here comes the adversity. Adversity strikes. This is *Ecclesiastes 7:14*, by the way, a verse that God has used in my life over the years in a powerful way. Solomon writes, **"During times of prosperity enjoy."** This is *Ecclesiastes 7:14*. As if to say, don't feel guilty, don't apologize. God's blessing you. You're not in a trial. Just wait. You'll be in one soon. But you're in a time of prosperity. Enjoy.

"But [You know something's coming] when [Not if] when adversity strikes, stop and consider and realize that God allows the one as well as the other so that man will discover nothing about his future."

Translated: God will bring the prosperity alongside the adversity to get us to consider what it is that He wants to show us in that adversity. And by the way, isn't it true that we learn in adversity that which we don't learn in prosperity? I mean, think about your prayer life when things are going well, which isn't very often. But I mean, your prayer is like, Lord, bless this, bless them, bless that, in Jesus' name, Amen.

But then let adversity strike. Oh God! Well, now I got your attention, don't I? Yeah. Don't ask Me "why?" Ask Me "what?" Because I've allowed this opposition, adversity, pressure — you fill in the blanks — because there's something I need you to see, and there's something I need you to hear if you have ears to hear and eyes to see. What is it, Lord? I'm so glad you asked.

These are what these questions are all about. What is it that God is wanting to accomplish in my life vis-a-vis this adversity and opposition that has hit me, I mean, head on? Here's the

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first question, *verse 7* and the first part of *verse 8*: Is God authorizing — I'm using this word for a reason — is God authorizing this opposition to open a door before me? Stay with me. Right out of the chute, Jesus, true to form, has John reference the scriptures that they, at that time, would have understood.

What scriptures are we talking about? Well, it's going to be another Isaiah reference, which we'll get to in a second. But unique to the church in Philadelphia, Jesus has John draw upon a reference to His authority, holding the key of David.

You know, interesting about keys, when you see people who has — here's an example, for lack of a better one. You are with somebody, and the church is closed, and they bring you to the church and say, hey, I need to stop by and get something. Oh, you have a key? Wow! You must have authority. Yeah. That's right. You want to see my key? (Chuckling)

It symbolizes authority. The key of David, the authority to access, to open, to allow entrance. You have that authorization. And it's not a two-key authorization and verification either. No, it's just one. And he references this holding the key of David because that's what opens the door that no man can shut.

And oftentimes, it may very well be that God has allowed that — you fill in the blank — into your life because He's going to open up a door that no man could shut, a door that He could not have otherwise opened had it not been for the adversity and the opposition.

You know how it is when you go through a really, really fiery trial? And you'd never want to go through that again, but you'd never trade what God showed you in that for anything in the world. I don't want — okay, I got it, Lord. I don't want another one. But thank You because You did something in me, showed something to me that You could not have otherwise done had it not been for allowing that. I would have never even considered that door.

When my wife and I were — I had sold my business and started the church, entered the pastorate on the mainland. That's many years ago now. And because she's born and raised here, Kailua girl, and her family was here, we would come here. This was kind of our home away from home.

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So we would come pretty much every year, and I never in a million years would have ever imagined that God would have opened up a door for me that no man could shut to move here and start this church. Here am I, Lord. (Chuckle) Send me. You know, it's a rough job. Somebody's got to do it. Send me to — that sounds great — Oahu.

But you know how God got me to even consider that as a possibility? Adversity. It's been said that God comforts the afflicted, but so too does He afflict the comfortable. And sometimes I think we get too comfortable. We get all of our — you'll forgive my use of this example — but we get all of our ducks in a row, whatever that means. I think it just means that, I guess, ducks are in a row, you know, mommy duck. And so we get — you've heard the expression, right? Are we okay? Okay. You get it. I got all my ducks in a row. All right. Cool.

My wife, you know, she says, oh, I see that you got all your ducks in a row. Yeah. She goes, (Flick sound) not anymore.

[Laughter]

Because she knows that gets to me. So we've got all of our ducks in a row. We're comfortable. I mean, things are going good. We glide and abide. Praise the Lord. And then the Lord's like, well, what if I want to move you to point B from point A? And the problem is, you're too comfortable in point A, and you're not even thinking about point B.

So how am I going to get you to think about point B? I think I'll disturb point A for starters. I think I'll allow adversity to strike. God, what? Well, I'd like for you to consider. I noticed you're very comfortable. You're digging your roots down pretty deep. But I got a call on your life, and it involves relocating you. Oh, no, I'm good.

That's the problem. You're too comfortable. I mean, you've got a beautiful home, you got a nice car, you got a, you know — I'm not going to even talk about the prices of the real estate when we were — so I'm going to relocate you to the most expensive place in the United States of America.

[Laughter]

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So how am I'm going to get you to consider that? Well, I'm going to disrupt point A because only when I disrupt point A will you even consider point B. Maybe God has allowed whatever He's allowed into your life to get you to consider the possibility that He's opening up a door for you. And if He is, no man is going to shut it. Let's talk about this key. This is a cool key, man.

This is a reference to *Isaiah 22:20-22*. Listen to this. **“Then it shall be in that day, that I will call My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah; I will clothe him with your robe and strengthen him with your belt; I will commit your responsibility [Authority] into his hand. He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.”**

Now listen to *verse 22*. This is the reference. And they would have known it because they knew their Old Testament. **“The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder.”**

Stop right there. In that day — you talk about key rings on the belt? Forget that. They had a big thick rope thrown over their shoulder with the key. Woah, the authority! He has the key for everyone to see and the authority that goes with the key. That was pretty good, actually. It all rhymed.

Well, what's he gonna do with this key that is over his shoulder? Oh, he's gonna **“open, and no one shall shut; and he shall shut, and no one shall open.”**

You know, this is of great encouragement, especially for anyone who's discouraged in this regard. If God has something for you, there is no way no one is going to take it from you. (Struggling to find words)

It might be good to remind yourself that God rules over all and overrules all. And if God has that for you, what can man do unto you? What, like here comes a guy going — God opens a door — I'm going to shut it. Oh, this is going to be good. I'd like to see you give it a try. You're not going to shut it. You know, sometimes we're pursuing something, and we're just wondering, God, is this what You have for me?

Listen, if that's what God has for you, then that is what God is going to give to you. And no man could thwart it. No thing can thwart it. If God opened it, it ain't getting shut. The only way is getting shut is if God shuts it, and then no man is going to open it either. That's another one on the other side of it. But that's for another sermon for another day.

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Question number 2. This is in the second part of *verse 8*. I'm slicing and dicing these for a reason. You'll see why in a moment. Question: Is God using this opposition, this adversity, to be my strength instead of me?

Again, stay with me. I want to point out a couple of important details that are not so easily seen at first read, and it has to do with the, again, original language of the Greek New Testament, which really adds color and flavor like we just saw with the word *philia*, it changes the whole complexion of the meaning of the word. So this is where Jesus says, **“I know you have little strength.”**

This is not a rebuke. It's not like, oh ye of little strength! You know, ye of little faith! No. It's like, listen, I know. I know you're just hanging on by a thread. I know you're battle weary. I know you're barely hanging on and holding on. I know that you're weak. And I know your strength is very small, very little.

You know what this word for “little” in the Greek is? *Mikros*. You know, where we get our English word *micro*, or, if you prefer, *microscopic*. And then this word for strength is the Greek word “*dunamis*” or *dynamis*, where we get *dynamite*, power, strength.

Do you realize what Jesus is saying, not rebuking, saying to them to be an encouragement for them? I know that you have microscopic power. Your power and strength is microscopic in size, but that's a good thing. You want to know why?

Let's ask the Apostle Paul in *2 Corinthians Chapter 12, beginning in verse 7*. This is another passage that has — God, in His grace, very gently used in my life. Listen to Paul. This is after the revelation that he kept for 14 years. He would not even utter a word about it, being caught to the third heaven. And even when he does, he speaks in the third person. That's called humility and the fear of the Lord.

So he writes, **“To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.”**

Do we know what it is? No. That's by God's design. Here's why. If we were told specifically what the thorn is — and by the way, speculation always abounds when the line is left blank, the details are not provided. So there's a lot of speculation.

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No, no, God wants us to fill in that blank line. Because see, if we knew specifically what was that thorn in Paul's flesh in his side and it's not something we struggle with or deal with or something that doesn't apply to us, we dismiss the whole thing out of hand. So God keeps it generic in a sense, so that we apply it, not dismiss it to our lives and we fill in whatever that thorn is as it relates to our lives. God will allow.

And I mean, this was a gift. Did you catch that? God gave me, gifted me a thorn in the flesh. What kind of a gift is this? God gifts me a messenger of Satan to torment me? Why? No, not “why?” “what?”

“Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore, [Listen to Paul now] I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, [I’m working on that one] in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. [And he’s going to tell us why] [It’s because] when I am weak, then I am strong.”

But not in my own strength, but in the power of His might. Years ago I was sitting under the teaching of God's Word, getting very convicted, as I always do when somebody else is teaching. And the pastor said, you know, some of us are just too strong for God to use. I was like (Surprised look).

I'm crawling under the chair, looking around at everybody. You talking to me? That was to me. That was a word — nobody else needed to be in that session. I was the one. That was for me. And I could have sworn everybody was looking. That's for JD.

[Laughter]

And it hit me so hard because, I mean, I’m a strong person. I'm not going to look at anybody because you know who you are. We're too strong in our own strength. We have these strong personalities. You know how they have words for it? Stubbornness. Obstinance. Strong-willed. And God's like, well, looks like you got it from here. So you don't need Me.

And so we talked about this last week. We forge ahead in our own strength. And then we get all the glory for what we did in our own strength. We take the credit for it. So here's God — this is why it's a gift. And Paul realized it. He finally came to the conclusion. I mean,

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he's struggling with it. He's tormented by it, but now he's okay with it. Why? Because he gets it. What does he get? He gets that this is a gift to keep me humble, because God's protecting me from the greater trial of the destruction that always ensues from pride.

You know, sometimes God will allow adversity and trials to protect us from a greater trial. I think about the disciples when Jesus says, "Get into the boat" with urgency. This is right after the feeding of the multitudes. I wouldn't have wanted to leave. I'd be like, you know, we just miraculously fed thousands of people. Let's start a church here. First church of the Fish and Loaves, you know?

[Laughter]

But Jesus, in wanting to protect them from the greater trial of the pride of staying on the that side, immediately gets them into the boat to get them to the other side. And he said, I'll meet you there. So there they are, right smack in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. And here comes a perilous life-and-death storm that is so bad that they think that's it. And then, to make matters worse, they see what looks like a ghost walking on water towards them. Like, that's enough. And the text says they were terrified.

And then leave it to Peter. And I think he gets — there are going to be a lot of people that owe him an apology in heaven. By the way, I'll be in that line myself. Here's Peter going, it's the Lord! And then he says, "**Lord, if it's You, bid me come.**"

You know we all bash on him, you know, because he took his eyes off the Lord. Dude, he walked on water, man! He got out of the boat. The other disciples weren't doing that. In fact, I could almost hear the other — I know it's not in the text. I'm taking, you know, just for purposes of illustration and discussion.

The disciples are going, Peter, no! What are you doing? And then Peter takes his eyes — I know it says he looked at the storm, took his eyes — that's when he starts sinking. but I heard someone suggest that maybe he turned around to the other disciples and said, look what I'm doing. Boom! Down he goes. A haughty spirit before a fall and pride before destruction.

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I think maybe what I need to say before we move on and finish up is that sometimes God will deem it necessary to humble us for our own good because we're operating in our own strength, and we're wanting to take the credit.

See, he had been shown heaven 14 years prior. I would get heady and full of myself. I'd go — I'd write a book; I'd go on a book tour and speak about what God showed me.

But in order to keep him humble, He gifted him this thorn as a reminder: When you're weak, that's when I'm strong. That's why he would write to the *Philippians in 4:13*, **“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”**

You know what the JDV is on that verse? I can do no thing through JD who strengthens me. I can't do anything. And Jesus said as much. **“Apart from Me you can do nothing.”** You can try. You can do nothing.

Sometimes I think we get full of ourself, think more highly of ourselves than we ought. And God loves us enough to bring us down back to reality, lest we suffer needlessly the destruction that always ensues because of the pride.

Question number 3: Is God permitting this opposition and adversity to show all His love for me? You know, never think for a second that when you're going through a trial as a Christian, that people aren't watching you. The Apostle Paul said, we're living epistles, we're living letters.

People read the letters of our Christian lives and they're asking two questions: Are you the real deal? And does it work? And by the way, they want you to be the real deal, and they want it to work because if it's real and it works, then they have hope.

That's why I always marvel at how Peter said, be at the ready to give to everyone an answer. They have to ask. Don't tell them. Wait for them to ask. Be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks of the hope that you have within you.

Well, you say, Pastor, I haven't had anybody ask me about the hope that's within me. You better talk to the Lord about that. Maybe they don't see your hope when they read the letter of your Christian life. See, we're advertisement for God. Whoo! Some of us are really

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bad advertisement or God. We're ambassadors for Christ, right? We're representative of Christ.

And so the world is watching us, but so too are other Christians watching us too, especially younger Christians watching more mature Christians, or at least they should be more mature Christians as a model, as an example, because they don't have any example or model of what a godly man or godly woman looks like and is like. So what's God going to do? Well, he tells them.

And this is where he brings up the synagogue of Satan. And interesting, by the way, that the first time we were introduced to these so-called Jews was in the letter to the church of Smyrna.

Again, the only other church for which there was no rebuke. There's something to that. Now, of course, speculation abounds. We talked about it in the letter to the church of Smyrna. But I want to take a little bit of a different approach, because after really spending some time on this, inquiring of the Lord about this, I noticed something that I hadn't seen before. And it's the punctuation. Hear me out.

You understand that in the original manuscripts there were no periods or commas or chapters or verses. Thank God there are now. But those were never in the original manuscripts. So it is sad, but it's true that they put a period in the wrong place. And this is one of the reasons why I'm slicing these up into the first part and the second part of the verse.

Because what Jesus is saying to them is that He is going to make these so-called Jews that call themselves Jews, but are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan, bowed down to them so that He can show them His love for the Philadelphia church. They're not going to worship the Christians. They're going to worship the Lord, and the Lord is going to show these so-called Jews that He loves them. Who's a Jew, but the one who believes in Jesus? That's a true Jew.

Well, many commentators have taken this to mean that this is replacement theology. I see how they get there. I'm not dogmatic about it, but I think there's something a little bit different in this one. See, with Smyrna, they would say that they were Jews to get a religious

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exemption from having to take a pinch of ashes from the sacrifice and offer it to Caesar and confess Caesar as Lord. The Jews had a religious exemption, and they would even get a certificate. Nothing new under the sun.

So Jews were exempt. So you had these guys that were not Jews, saying they were Jews, to get the exemption so they wouldn't have to say Caesar is Lord. That was Smyrna. Well, that's not Philadelphia. This is different because the implication here is not so much — they're still a synagogue of Satan. They're still lying when they say they're Jews.

But why would Jesus say, I'm going to make them bow down before you and show to them My love for you? Could it be that they were being opposed by the Jews? You understand that the Jews persecuted the Christians early on. They had the Roman Empire. They had the Jews opposing them. They even had other churches opposing them. And this is what He's referring to.

And this is why the punctuation is so important in this particular case because Jesus says this. Follow me now. They kept his command to endure patiently. The key word prefacing that is, "since" you kept My command to endure patiently, I will acknowledge to them, and before all of them that I love you. Why?

Because you kept My command to endure patiently. Why would Jesus say endure patiently were it not for them having to endure patiently? What were they enduring? The opposition.

We don't have time today, but just this being a command rising to the level of a command, believe it or not, you want it to be a command because **"God's commands are not burdensome,"** John says.

And God will never command us to do anything without also enabling us to do that which he's commanded us to do. Because if he didn't, then he would be party to our disobedience. Did you get that? I hope so because I can't expound on that.

Okay, so I hope this isn't getting too discombobulated here. But the Jews at that time were vehemently opposing, even persecuting the Christians, specifically in Philadelphia. But God, as only He can and is always faithful to do, has the final word when they bend their knee and acknowledge the love of Jesus for these battle-weary Christians. Here's the application to us

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personally. Maybe somebody comes to mind right now. I'm sorry if I'm bringing their image of their face and their name to your mind right now. But they are opposing you, they're persecuting you.

You keep thinking about *Matthew 5* where Jesus says, **“Blessed are those who are persecuted”** and **“Pray for those who speak evil of you and spitefully use you and oppose you.”**

Oh, I'll pray for them, all right. But Jesus is saying to you, to me, whoever they are, whatever it is, it ain't over yet. I'll have the final word on it. I know it looks like that they're prevailing in their opposition against you. I know it seems like they're succeeding in their attacks on you.

But just wait because they're going to bend their knee. And they're going to acknowledge that I loved you. You're mine. They attack you. They falsely accuse you. They talk stink about you. They post things on social media about you. Don't worry about it. I'll have the final word on it. I've allowed it actually, for that reason, so that I could. Because think about it. I want to show them how much I love you. This would be a good way.

It's not my preference. You know, when you go to the settings to set your preferences, I would not select this one. I think there's got to be another way for them to know how much You love me and not, you know, selecting the opposition from them to show me — show them You love me. Is there another option? Are there more settings that I can set here?

No, this is how I'm going to do what I'm going to do. Again, don't ask Me “why?” Ask Me “what?” What is it that you want me to see because of this, Lord? Here's what I want you to see. I want you to see what I'm going to do when they bend their knee and I acknowledge you and My love for you.

Real quick. You know in your prayer list, for those of you who keep prayer list, which I highly recommend, by the way, prayer journals. I have prayer lists, prayer journals going back years. Sometimes I go back — sometimes it's painful to go back and read those prayer journals. But I just, I look at those prayer requests and I'm thinking, wow, God, thank You so much for not answering that prayer the way I prayed it. It would have been catastrophic.

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I could just picture God going, that's why I didn't answer it. It's kind of like, you know, we pray, we ask God for something and God's going, Ha! That's so adorable. And then He does something so exceedingly, abundantly, above and beyond anything we could ever think or imagine, let alone ask.

And we take that little prayer request, that little measly thing, and we're going, never mind. Wow! Way more better. Way more better! God's like, I tried to tell you. Told you so.

Number 4. First part of *verse 10 and verse 11*. Again, this was the Prophecy Update. I won't spend a lot of time on this, and we're almost done. But is God allowing this opposition, this adversity, whatever it may be, to be an encouragement to me? Well, that's an oxymoron. Adversity to encourage me? Yeah. How is that possible?

Well, what church would need to hear and be reminded of the promise that God was going to take them out of the tribulation that is coming upon the whole world? Just keep holding on. In other words — and this is, by the way, in the original Greek — again, this will be the last time I give you a Greek lesson — it's the Greek word *ek*. **“I will keep you from”** means out of, not through. I will keep you out of.

Again, Paul — The first time the Gospel is in the epistles is found in Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians. And it's Jesus was crucified, buried, rose again on the third day, and He's coming to rapture us before the tribulation one day. That's the Gospel. Stop taking that last — the best part out The Gospel is not Jesus died, buried, rose again. Have a nice afternoon. Bye.

No, He went to prepare a place for me. We already did this First Service, right? The first time you see the pre-Tribulation rapture is in John's gospel from the Savior himself, when He, as a bridegroom, says to His bride, **“Let not your hearts be troubled.”** **“I'm going to prepare a place for you in My Father's house where there are many mansions; [And] if it were not so, I would not have told you that I go to prepare a place for you.”** So **“that where I am there you may be also.”**

In other words, I'm taking you to the bridal chamber I'm preparing for you because for seven, the number of completion, we're going to celebrate and consummate our marriage,

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the wedding to the Lamb at the end of which they would have the wedding supper of the Lamb at the end of the seven period.

We talked about that on Thursday night. So this is an encouragement to this battle-weary church that has just been buss-up. That's for the locals. It means to be bust up, beat up, beat down. He's wanting to encourage them, and sometimes, you know, God will allow discouragement to set in, adversity to strike, opposition to hit, if for no other reason other than to lift you up and encourage you, because of what He has in store for you, and to just hold on.

I know I said that was one last Greek word, but I'm going to do one more. You know, when He says, **"I'm coming quickly"** or **"I'm coming soon"** We've talked about this. It's the Greek word tachos, not tacos. Tachos, from where we get the English word for tachometer. It is revolutions per minute. The time is already set. It's how many revolutions per that set time of one minute. The set time of the appointed time of the pre-Tribulation rapture is set.

But things — Jesus is saying, just hold on. Things are revving up. But that means I'm coming quickly at a time when things are revving up. Just hold on. You haven't denied My name. You have kept My word. Just hold on. I'm coming. Just hold on. I'm coming! Be encouraged man, I'm coming.

Last one. That alone, by the way, that's a mic drop for me. I'm right there. I could close right — I won't. I should, but I can't because there's still more. *Verses 12 and 13*. Is God doing this to remind me that He will always be with me? Now this is where it gets really interesting, and we'll close with this. Check this out.

So He mentions making them a pillar. What's the pillar? A secure pillar. And He says they'll never leave again like they did when the earthquake hit. They had to leave, and they couldn't come back, and the pillars were all crumbled.

Well, I'm going to make you a pillar. It'll never crumble, and it'll be so secure. And you'll never have to leave again. He's referencing the aforementioned earthquakes in 17 A.D. in this letter that was written in 95 A.D., and they would have got it. And imagine how encouraged they would be to hear that.

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You know what Jesus is saying? And they would have got it. And I hope we get it because this is the final takeaway for us today. It speaks to the security of eternity for those born again, of the Spirit of God in that neither we nor He will ever leave, let go, or have it taken away. We're secure in our salvation in Christ. And it even gets better. And this is something that's missed in our culture in the West, sadly.

But in the Middle East, in my culture, this is huge. The highest honor, the most pronounced blessing you can place on anyone is to put the name of God on them. You know when the groom marries the bride, he changes her name, he gives her a new name, for which my wife has never forgiven me, changing her name from Lynn to Farag. I keep telling her, you're getting a new one. Just wait. I want a new one too.

But not only are you secure in your salvation for all of eternity, you will never leave or have to leave. There will be nothing that will shake or break or take you away. And then I'm also going to give you a new name: The name of My God, the name of the city of My God, Jerusalem, and the name of Jesus, My God, on me, His nature.

You know — okay, last Greek word. We are his workmanship. You know what that word is in the Greek? It's "poema," where we get "poem" or His work of art. You know, an artist, when they finish their work, they put their name on it when they're all done. Unless it's bad, then they put somebody else's name. I don't know.

[Laughter]

They put their name on it. That's the completed work. "Faithful is He who began that work in you to complete it." And when He's done, He's going to put His name on you. That's mine. I made them. I did that. His name is on you, and you're secure for all eternity.

Here's how we'll close. You're in a trial right now. God knows. God knows exactly what you're going through. He knows the pain. He knows the depth of the pain. He knows your struggle. He hears your cry. Sometimes it's not even a prayer. It's just liquid prayers or just even a moan.

But He's reminding you of what He has in store for you. You're secure. You're going to get a new name, a new nature, and a new final destination from which you will never leave again, nor have to.

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When I know what I have to look forward to, it makes whatever I'm going through easier to get through. I probably could have said that at the beginning and save a little bit of time. I tell you, these Philadelphia Christians, can you imagine after they had this letter read to them by their pastor, after it was sent to them by John, can you imagine? New spring to their step, new song on their lips, new hope in their heart, new joy in their life. And I pray the same for all of us today.

David, come on up. You can stand up. We'll close in prayer and song. Lord, how could we thank You enough for this letter to the Church of Philadelphia? Oh, what a word fitly spoken. What a — what an encouraging word. What a good word. Lord, thank You for Your word. Thank You for this.

Lord, I know that in my hearing, whether it be here in this church or online, there are so many that are just really, really hurting and going through just real raw stuff. And it's so hard. Lord, would You birth this anew to encourage and strengthen their hearts? Just the reminder of how much You love us, what You have in store for us. And if You're for us, who or what is going to ever be against us?

But we need to be reminded of that because we forget, and we fall prey to the discouragement that gives way to despair. So please, Lord, would You take that and work it for good for the edification of those who are struggling and weary? Thank You, Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen.