

PHILADELPHIA (3:7-13)

Introduction:

If I were asked to summarize the main lesson of this letter, I would quote the saying of our Lord, “***Fear not, little flock***” (Luke 12:32).

Philadelphia furnishes us with the example of the patient church and the message is one of high commendations and encouragements. Their resources seemed insufficient for the demand that was made on them.

The city of Philadelphia was located at the junction of important routes of the Roman trade and postal systems – the gateway to the east. They have come out of the cold and dead Sardis church and now produce the missionary movement. “I have placed you at this strategic position so you can **EVANGELIZE**.”

A. Description of Christ:

(They needed to know some of the characteristics of Christ to fulfill their mission)

1. **“He who is holy.”**

- This describes Christ’s moral excellence – His purity and perfection.
- The idea of holiness is established in the Old Testament in relation to God. Christ is the very essence of holiness.
- Holiness refers to the state of being set apart from the common for God’s purpose (Psalm 79:1 and Matthew 21:12-13)
- We should be reminded that He said, “Be you holy: for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16).

2. ***“He is described as True.”***

- True means genuine.
- He is real as compared to unreal. Moses gave the Manna – Christ is the true bread (John 6:32-35).

3. ***“He that has the key of David.”***

- This is a symbol of Christ’s Messianic authority and forecasts His eventual rulership of the whole world (1:5).
- This alludes to Eliakim (Isaiah 22:20-22).
- In the same way, Christ opens, and no one shuts.
- Jesus controls the doors of opportunity.
- There is the tendency to compromise to gain opportunity.

B. **Commendations – Lessons!**

(Christ defines the work of this church in terms of spiritual graces, such as strength, spiritual endurance, and faithfulness. He recognizes the “*weakness*” of the Philadelphians, but also commends them that there is some “*strength*.” Their strength is manifest in that they had *kept His Word* and that they *refused to deny His name*).

1. **An open door!**

- The notion of an open door appears several times in the New Testament and represents an opportunity for ministry.
- Ephesus (1 Corinthians 16:8-9) and Troas (2 Corinthians 2:12).
- It should be noteworthy that Paul did not force the doors open, instead the Lord opens these doors.
- More mistakes are made by speed.
- If the door is closed, then do not put your shoulder to it.

2. **“For you have a little strength.”**

- What does this mean?
- The Greek seems to be saying, “*you have but little strength.*”
- This could be problematic – “you have ample opportunity, but only a little strength.”
- The implication is, that **their power is not what matters – God’s power is what matters.**
- Because this church has such little strength, she is a fit object for God’s strength to prevail.

3. **“They have kept the Word of God.”**

- He commends their fidelity to the Word of God.
- They did not only believe the Word but obeyed the Word.
- The greatest threat to biblical soundness in the church today is the removal of God’s Word from the pulpits.
- 2 Kings 22 recounts the story of Judah’s King Josiah.
- We have no such excuse. The Bible is available in many translations and with study guides.
- God blessed the church at Philadelphia because of the presence and obedience to His Word.

4. **“They had not denied the Lord.”**

- They were faithful not only to the Word of God but to the Lord Himself.
- They would not deny the personhood nor the deity of Christ.
- In America we have a high degree of religious freedom – but the influence of the world deters God’s people from proclaiming His name in public.

- We need to resolve to worship no matter the cost; serve with a whole heart: and witness to a lost and dying world.

C. More Promises!

1. **First**, Christ promises to make their enemies come before them and worship.
 - We should not deplete our energies and emotions fighting those who rebel against God and His standards.
 - Jesus says, “***I’m coming quickly.***” He will set the record straight.
2. **Second**, Christ promises that those who keep or kept.
 - Loyalty has its rewards.
 - This promise is based on the fact they kept Christ’s command of patience.
 - This is a special promise – He is talking about the GREAT TRIBULATION.
3. **Third**, Christ exhorts this church to “***hold fast that which you have.***”
 - Do not let anyone spoil your crown or cause you to lose it.
 - Faithfulness to Christ is your assurance that no one will take your crown.
4. **Fourth**, Christ says, “***to him who overcomes, I will make a pillar in the temple of My God, he shall not go out anymore.***” This speaks of stability and permanence.
5. **Fifth**, Christ promises, “***I will write upon him the name of my God and the name of the city of My God.***”
 - The name of God indicates the believer’s identity.

- This entitles us to free entrance into the city of God, which is the new Jerusalem (Revelation 21:9).”
 - The city is the final and complete Kingdom of God.
6. **Finally**, Christ promises to write His own new name of the believer.
- Isaiah 62:2 says, “***And the nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; and you will be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord will designate.***”
 - When He returns, He will have a name that no one knows, and it is in that name that He is coming, riding a white horse of conquest.
 - Then we shall see the face of Him who is the object of our affection.

Conclusion:

Christ confesses them and denies their slanderers.

Christ makes them useful by giving them an open door.

Christ delivers them from Tribulation.

Christ gives them eternal recompense.