

A New Name Written Down In Glory
Revelation 3:7-13

Of our Lord's seven letters to the churches in Asia Minor, only two did not receive any sort of correction or rebuke. One was the letter to the church in Smyrna, Revelation 2:8-11, and the other is this letter to the church in Philadelphia. Of all of the seven churches, if I could have chosen which church I would have attended, I would have gone to the church in Philadelphia. If I could have attended only one service, I would have been present at the service in which this letter was read to the congregation. They had probably heard of the other letters that Jesus had written. They were probably nervous having just found out that their neighbor, Sardis, had been called a dead church. I'm sure many were wondering, as the pastor nervously opened the letter, "I wonder what Jesus has to say about us?"

But this church had nothing to fear. Jesus only had words of commendation for this precious little fellowship. He did not have one condemning thing to say. This church was like a rose between two thorns. On one side was Sardis, a dead church, and just down the road was Laodicea, a disinterested church. But here at Philadelphia was a dedicated church.

The city of Philadelphia was the site of one of the greatest earthquakes in history. The devastation of the city was so severe, that the Roman senate not only offered assistance to rebuild, but they exempted the city from paying taxes until the rebuilding was complete.

It took far longer for this city to rebuild than expected. They continued to be hit by more earthquakes and aftershocks for decades after. They would rebuild their homes, only for an aftershock or another earthquake to bring it toppling back down. Many residents felt so unsafe, that they moved out of the city and into the countryside.

Jesus was writing to the Christians who stayed. You can imagine they were discouraged. Felt like they could not get ahead in life. They were persecuted... They were oppressed... They were likely poor. The ground beneath them was literally shaking. They had to have been discouraged. They felt weak. They were probably tempted to give up... And Jesus writes this letter to encourage them.

I know that many of you feel. You feel unimpressive. You feel vulnerable. You feel like your life has no value. You may feel like the ground beneath you is shaking, and you have trouble standing. You feel like the roof is crumbling in on you. You may feel like you are trying to get your life put together, but as soon as you've rebuilt. It topples down again.

The key verse of the letter is Revelation 3:8.

"I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name." Revelation 3:8

Jesus is addressing challenges that Christians and churches face. The church in Philadelphia is small; they don't have much power; they are excluded. They were prone to discouragement. They were weak. They were unimpressive. But they were faithful. And Jesus offers nothing but praise and promise to them.

Do you ever feel insignificant?

Do you often wonder if you matter?

Do you wonder if anything you do makes any real difference in people's lives?

You trust in Jesus, you know he's your Lord and friend; but you don't think you matter much to him. You don't think you matter much to anyone else. Jesus says to his people: You matter to me.

This church didn't have a great reputation like Sardis. They weren't well-known. They weren't influential. They

were overlooked and excluded in the city. Jesus gives a message to strengthen his people when they feel like this. He encourages his people by giving them four images: a key, a door, a pillar and a new name.

Jesus uses the language of pillars... It's funny because if you visited the ancient city of Philadelphia... All that is still standing today are a big row of pillars.

Jesus is telling them... The earth will give way... But my gospel remains forever... And those who place faith and trust in me... You may be shaken...But you will not crumble. If you know the future, you can endure the present.

1. The Christ Of The Church

At one time, Philadelphia was a large, important city, but in 17 AD the city was hit by a devastating earthquake. The earthquake was so devastating that Rome exempted them from taxes for 5 years. They had hoped for more, so they felt neglected and abandoned. They were promised more, but it was never delivered. They had a vast network of vineyards, and Domitian ordered them cut down in 91 AD. This broke the backbone of the city. The Christians felt betrayed by the world around them.

- He was pure in character.

“These are the words of him who is holy...” Revelation 3:7

Jesus is absolutely holy and righteous. He is untainted by sin, unscarred by iniquity, and unmarked by temptation.

- He was perfect in conduct.

“These are the words of him who is holy and true.” Revelation 3:7

Jesus is not just one who tells the truth, He is truth.

- He is powerful in control.

“Who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.” Revelation 3:7

Keys in the Bible represent authority and power, and Jesus is the keeper of the keys. This verse is a reference to Isaiah 22:22. We are told there that Eliakim, the son of Hilkiyah, had been given the key to the house of David. That is, he had been given the key to the treasure house of the king. This simply tells us that Jesus is our resource. Jesus is the great provider. He has the resources and the supply to meet all of our needs.

“My God shall supply all of your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:19

Do you have a need?

On the authority of the One who holds the keys to the storehouse of heaven, if you believe God, and you are right with God, He will meet all of your needs.

When Jesus mentions a key, He means a master key. In those days, there was a master key that, once it opened a door, the door could not be locked except with the master key. And once it closed the door and locked it, no other key could open it because the master key had locked it.

You need to know that when God opens an opportunity to you, no one can shut that door. And you also need to know that when God closes a door to your past, no one can open that door. He's the only One Who has that key. He's the only one.

Jesus is the keeper of the keys. He has the key to every circumstance of your life and of this church.

2. The Opportunity Of The Church

"I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut." Revelation 3:8

Have you ever had a door slammed in your face?

There are two kinds of doors to which Jesus holds the keys. He holds the keys to doors that are open that no one can shut, and He holds the keys to doors that are shut that no one can open. There are several kinds of doors to which Jesus holds the keys, and when He opens them no one can shut them. When He does open them, we must, and should, walk through them.

"And 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." Acts 14:27

Jesus is the only One who can open the door of grace, the door of faith, and the door of salvation.

"I am the door, if anyone enters by me, he will be saved." John 10:9

"For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries." 1 Corinthians 16:9

"Meanwhile, praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ..." Colossians 4:35

Paul was praying that, even while he was chained in prison, the Gospel might be freed.

"Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord." 2 Corinthians 2:12

All over our great city, and all over this nation, there are people whose doors have been opened by God, and He is simply waiting on us to have the faith and courage and boldness to walk through those doors and bring people to Christ.

"I am he who lives and was dead; and behold, I am alive forevermore amen, and I have the keys of hades and of death." Revelation 1:18

"You have a little strength." Revelation 3:8

At first glance, it was a very unimpressive church. This church did not have a lot, but it had a lot of love. The name Philadelphia, means brotherly love." this church may not have had everything it wanted, but it had more than enough of what it needed. It had a great love for God, a love for the brethren, and a love for the lost. It was a small church with a big heart.

"You have kept my word and have not denied my name." Revelation 3:8

The reason why Jesus had opened up such a great door of opportunity for such a seemingly feeble church was because this church had kept his word. They were dependable. This church was a loyal and loving church, and it lasted because of that.

A church cannot be true to God unless it is also true to the Word of God. Martin Luther said, “We hold the same reverence to the Word of God that we do to God Himself.”

“For you have magnified your word above all your name.” Psalm 138:2

“Forever, O Lord, your word is settled in heaven.” Psalm 119:89

- The Opposition

This church was living daily in the fire of persecution.

Jesus refers to their opposition as “those of the synagogue of Satan.” Revelation 3:9

They were up against the very forces of hell, and Satan himself. When a person is saved, he becomes a friend of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, but then he automatically becomes an enemy of the world, the flesh, and the devil. He has to fight against the glamour of the world, the greed of the flesh, and the godlessness of the devil. He becomes an enemy of self, sin, and Satan.

But, the wonderful thing is that each friend takes care of each enemy. God the Father takes care of sin. He took care of sin by sending Jesus to die on the cross. God the Son took care of Satan when He was raised from the dead, and God the Holy Spirit takes care of our human self by filling it and indwelling it.

We face opposition just as this church did, but do not fear, *“Greater is he who is in you, than he who is in the world.”* 1 John 4:4

“I 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.” Revelation 3:9

This may be a reference to their national hero Joseph when his brothers betrayed him and put him on the road to death but then ultimately had to come bow before him and seek bread. The words of Joseph are so powerful, *“you meant it to me for evil but God meant it for good.”* Genesis 50:20

If you love Jesus, you do not fight FOR victory, you fight FROM victory—the victory that Jesus won on the cross!

“Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth. I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.” Revelation 3:10-11

3. The Triumphant Church

The Lord Jesus closes this sweet letter with some tremendous words of encouragement to this faithful flock who are steadfastly being true to their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

- Their potential for God

“I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut.” Revelation 3:8

- Their position in God

“The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it.”
Revelation 3:12

There was a book at the entrance of the synagogue that contained a list of people who could enter, and many times, names for political purposes were deleted. Jesus was saying, “You’re included forever.”

One of these days, those of us who love Jesus and are faithful to Him will be a pillar in God’s church. A pillar is simply a symbol of unity, stability, and strength. What the Lord was saying to the church at Philadelphia was *“Even though you may appear to be weaklings, even though the world may think you are insignificant, one day you’re going to have the prominent position of a pillar in the house of God.”*

“For none of us live to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s.” Romans 14:7-8

When people are steady and faithful to the Lord, He comes along side of them as their cheerleader and encourages them and thanks them for their loyalty.

You may feel excluded for your relationship with Jesus. In your family. In your office. At your school. On your team. Jesus knows all about that.

- Their possession by God

“I will write on them 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 them my new name.” Revelation 3:12

We write our name on everything we claim as our own. God is saying is that, not only are we going to have a great position, we are going to be a great possession. We are going to totally belong to God, for now and all eternity. We are His special possession.

Twice before, Philadelphia had changed its name. They gave themselves a new name. One of the times they changed their name to Neo-Caesarea. “Neo” in the Greek means new, so New Caesarea. The reason they did that was because an earthquake destroyed their city, and Caesar gave them funds to rebuild. So, they said, “We’re going to call ourselves New Caesarea.”

“I will write on him the name of My God, the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem.” Revelation 3:12

In Revelation 2:17, He said, *“I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.”*

This is not the first time that God talks about us having new names, and it's not the first time that He changes your name.

God changed Abram’s name to Abraham, and changed his wife's name from Sarai to Sarah.

God changed Jacob’s name to Israel.

In the New Testament, Simon had his name changed to Peter.

Saul had his name changed to Paul.

God is in the habit of doing this.

“You shall be called by a new name...” Isaiah 62:2

God has a specific place that He wants to write your new name.

“Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.” Revelation 14:1

“And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.” Revelation 22:3-4