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Find Us Faithful

Revelation 3:7-13

“The letter to Philadelphia is a letter of undiluted praise.”* At least that is how biblical scholar William Barclay summarizes it. There is no condemnation of the church found in the letter. Philadelphia represents the faithful church and the faithful Christian. As Jesus speaks to these believers, he commends them and encourages them, but not once does he have to rebuke them. The command “repent” that appears over and over in these letters is absent from this one. This is a church weak in itself but mighty in the Spirit. It is a church Christ loves.

GROUP DISCUSSION. How do we usually measure success in a church? How do you think Jesus measures success?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. How do you think other Christians evaluate you as a follower of Jesus? Is their evaluation important or not important to you, and why?

The city of Philadelphia (in Asia Minor, not in Pennsylvania) gained its reputation as a missionary city. In 140 BC (more than two hundred years before the letters in Revelation were written), a ruler named Attalus decided to import Greek culture

to the barbarian people in this interior region of Asia Minor. He used the city of Philadelphia (first built in 189 BC by his brother Eumenes) as the launch point to spread the Greek language and the Greek way of life to people locked in what he saw as crude and uncivilized ways. Philadelphia was to be the door for Greek culture into the whole region.

Now a new door of opportunity was wide open in Philadelphia—not for the gospel of the Greeks but for the gospel of Jesus Christ. It was open to a small band of seemingly weak and uninfluential Christians, a band of Christians very much like us. *Read Revelation 3:7-13.*

1. Jesus knows this church's deeds (v. 8). As you scan back through this letter, what actions or qualities is Jesus referring to?

2. An "open door" stands before this group of believers (v. 8). What facts should encourage them to go through the door?

What realities about the church might cause them to hesitate?

3. Recount a time you sensed God opening or closing a door in your life. How did you respond to that situation?

4. The believers in Philadelphia also faced opposition to their mission, probably from Jewish people who had rejected Jesus as Messiah. What promise does Jesus give the Christians (v. 9), and how do you think they responded to that promise?

5. Jesus makes another promise to this faithful church in verse 10. What do you think Jesus is talking about in this verse?

How would you explain this verse to a Christian experiencing persecution today?

6. Jesus' affirmation that he is coming soon (v. 11) is followed by his encouragement to hold on to what we have. What exactly are we to hold on to, and what happens if we fail to hold firmly?

7. Jesus expands on the idea of rewards by making several promises to the one who overcomes by faith (v. 12). What does each promise mean to you, and why would you seek that gift from the Lord?

8. What aspects of the faithful church do you see in your church or small group?

9. What qualities of the faithful believer do you see in yourself?

How has the Lord spoken to you in this letter?

What needs to be strengthened in your life?

Ask Jesus to help you remain faithful and steadfast in your commitment to him as Savior and Lord. Seek his help to overcome any opposition and to strengthen those places where your spiritual defenses may be weak.

Now or Later

Jesus describes himself as the one “who holds the key of David” (v. 7). That phrase reaches back to the Old Testament to a man named Eliakim who is said to have the key of David (Isaiah 22:22). Eliakim was the steward for King Hezekiah. When someone wanted an audience with the king, they had to go through Eliakim. He alone could open or close the door. In the king’s household, Eliakim was sovereign and in control.

That’s the point here in Revelation 3. In God’s household, Jesus is in control. Absolute authority rests in his hands.

Who are the doorkeepers in your life—those who open doors of opportunity or who seem to block your progress?

How do you pray for them?

What does Revelation 3:7 tell you about who is really in charge?