



To The Seven
Churches

Philadelphia



To The Seven Churches Philadelphia Revelation 3:7-13

When was a time you felt weak?

The church in Philadelphia, by human standards, would not have been successful. While they were in a large city, this city was loyal to Rome and resistant to any Christian influence. They did not present a great deal of wealth or influence. Their city had been ravaged by volcanic activity and earthquakes having to be rebuilt in the image of Rome. Yet, for everything stacked against this church, it is mentioned by name by Jesus Christ in Revelation. Furthermore, like the church in Smyrna, Christ brings nothing against the church but rather exhorts them to continue in the faith.

As Jesus introduces himself to the church in Philadelphia, Jesus describes himself as three things. First, Christ is Holy. He is perfect in His very being stemming from His identity as God. Second, Jesus is true. There is a veracity to the message of Jesus Christ brought with Him. Anything that contradicts Him is a falsehood and should be fully abandoned. Finally, Jesus holds the keys of David. David, being the central King of Israel, remained synonymous with the Kingship of Israel. Thus, as Jesus proclaims He holds the keys of David, Jesus identifies himself as being in the line of the monarchs and the true leader. But Jesus is not relegated to merely Israel and holds the keys for a sovereign reign over all creation. He is the Perfect and True King over all Creation. It is this man who guides and exhorts the church in Philadelphia to remain in Him.

Using The Strength of God in Weakness

The church in Philadelphia was not encouraged to remain strong but rather to remain faithful. They did not have an abundance of ability or strength, but they had faithfulness in God. From their faithfulness, God deals out the strength needed for them to continue in their resolve to follow Jesus Christ. For the church in the end days and in witnessing to the Gospel, we must remain

faithful despite circumstances and situations we find ourselves in. Strength will come from God. Through the Spirit inside of us, strength beyond our ability to rise up out of us despite whatever we face.

In all things, the Church must rely on the strength of God to sustain and protect them. Furthermore, even while the church may endure temporary struggles, they have been promised to escape the testing that comes from God. This hotly debated verse references what scholars have come to call the **rapture** or when the believers will be rescued into heaven. For some, they believe in the **Pre-tribulation** (where the rapture occurs before the time of testing), for others the **Mid-tribulation** (where believers are raptured in the middle of the time of testing), and others the **Post-tribulation** (where believers are raptured after the time of testing). For whatever theory people hold, those who are apart of the church will endure a difficult time, as the church in Philadelphia is enduring, but will one day be rescued from the difficult times into eternity. This is the promise of God that by their faithfulness, they will be given the strength to endure the difficulty and will endure through until the end into eternity.

The Consequences of Faithfulness

First and foremost, those who pursue the faithful church of God will find themselves standing against a formidable adversary. Furthermore, this will not be the church that they will face but rather the King of all eternity. Where those who stood against God and His church may have seemed to be prosperous by the worldly standards, even to the point of holding the church down, ultimately they will be placed under the feet of the faithful. The persecution will end and the faithful will triumph having been given the victory of God as one of their own. They will be given the name and identity of God and the promises and inheritance of Jesus Christ will equally apply to the bride of Christ; the church.

Therefore, the church and believers are exhorted dearly and deeply to hold on. The struggle is not insignificant and it is not overlooked. There is purpose behind the suffering and people in seeing how the church acts in the face of supposed power-

lessness serves as a witness to the divine sovereignty of God. Enduring whatever the world may bring serves as a tremendous testament to the Holy, True King over all creation. The church in Philadelphia, for all of its lack of strength provided a strong witness for those who passed through the city. The church put God on full display, not by the strength of the church, but by the faithfulness to the strong God. The same is true of us. We have been placed in spheres of influence for our lives to serve as a testament to God, not because of our strength but because of our faithfulness.

Discussion Questions

- How does Jesus identify himself in this letter? Why is this significant? What qualities of God does it demonstrate to the church in Philadelphia?
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
- What rewards await the church in Philadelphia for their faithfulness to Christ?
- What are the current challenges for remaining faithful to the call and person of Jesus Christ?
- Do you find comfort in knowing that you do not need to bring the strength but only to be faithful to God? Why is it important that we understand that strength comes from God?
- When was a challenging time that you remained faithful to God despite the opposition? What helped you get through that time? What did you learn during that time?
- How does God show grace to those who are trying to remain faithful?
- How does it feel knowing that the promises that God promises to the church in Philadelphia are the same promises that God wants to deliver to His people today? Does this bring comfort or nervousness? Why?