

# Morning sermon: 9th January

A little strength is still enough (Revelation 3:7-13)

## (Sermon Summary)

This passage from the book of Revelation is a message from the risen Lord to the church at Philadelphia in present-day Turkey. In the days of the Roman empire, Philadelphia was an up-and-coming town with ambitious plans, but the church was content to be small and insignificant in the world's eyes. The seven churches of Revelation faced the same problem as churches today: trials, persecution and false teaching. Philadelphia is one of only two of these churches which the Lord does not criticise; instead, He promises to protect them from a coming trial. 'Little strength' is sufficient - for them and also for us - because it is undergirded by His promises.

## It's alright to have little strength

This isn't the impression we get from the literature put out by some churches. They boast of their large numbers and promise 'explosive growth' for those who buy in to their methods. 'Little strength' is not a problem in Heaven; the Lord Jesus was content with His small group of disciples. The Sanhedrin were amazed that these uneducated men could stand before them, but then realised that the disciples had been with Jesus. Do we sincerely keep His word(v8)? That's what matters.

In fact, there are advantages in being a small church. We know each other well and can be quick to respond to prayer needs. Our limitations force us to focus on what matters most, the work of the Gospel.

## Conserving our strength

We have a responsibility before God to be wise stewards of our limited strength. Some of the ways we can do this are:

- as a church, outsourcing practical tasks such as cleaning
- not sapping our strength by perpetually grappling with unanswerable questions such as the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility
- not expending excessive energy on 'distinctives' such as home schooling, Sabbath observance traditions or disputes over Bible versions.

Sin will diminish our strength if we are entertaining it. It will keep us busy and give us a troubled conscience. If we are complaining about something in the church, we should instead seek to be the answer to our problem.

We also need to let go of perfectionism which leads to worry and anxiety.

## **Pray for more strength**

Pray that both we and other churches will have the strength to hold fast and persevere. Pray that we will have the strength to overcome sin, live with differences, forgive others, change, and cope with having little strength.

Jesus promises to come soon, bringing relief and help for the soul. Those who overcome will be pillars in the temple of God (v12) - 'pillars' suggesting strength and moral uprightness. Christ will 'write His name on us', not literally, but rather identifying us as His own people, citizens of Heaven. We have this wonderful promise as we travel on in our little strength.