

Revelation 3:7-13

"Hold Fast What You Have"

Thus far the book of revelation has subjected us to exhortation after exhortation. Words of rebuke, & warning, "Remember from where you've fallen, repent & repeat your 1st works...return to your 1st love relationship w/J.C." *Be faithful unto death, quit leading a life of compromise & allow yourself to be purged of pollution through the power of the Holy Spirit that you might lead a life of purity; sold out & committed to Jesus whole heartedly.*

In our last study we considered the difference between reputation Vs reality; to have everything set in order outwardly, to have the appearance of things being good on the surface (you see) but in reality underneath it all things are in shambles. You go through the regimen of ministry but your relationship w/Jesus is virtually non-existent, you draw near to God w/your mouth, you honor Him w/your lips but your heart is far from Him. *That was the state of the church of Sardis; they were moving & shaking, their services were slammin, they had the reputation in town for being the cool church; but as to where man looks to the outward appearance God is searching the heart. Jesus said, "You have a name that you're alive but you are dead."*

However here's the deal, there was still time. The exhortation was to let God's word, be God's word in your life once again; honor the Word, obey the Word & repent...

Moving now another 28 miles or so to the S.E. we come to the church of Philadelphia. Now when I say Philadelphia if you think of things like the liberty bell or perhaps Rocky Balboa, you're gravitating toward the wrong place ☺. That city was named after this city in Asia Minor.

As w/the other cities we've considered there was a plentiful pagan presence in Philadelphia, it was a prosperous city that served in many respects as the gateway to the east. The Arch in St. Louis is called the gateway to the west. Philadelphia served as the gateway to the east housing the highway leading from Europe on out to the east. Because of that it was stationed as a strategic missionary kind of city. Meaning that it was built w/missions in mind; oh not gospel missions, but Greek missions... "What do you mean?"

Beyond Philadelphia lay the wilds of Phrygia; various "barbaric" tribes & such. So it was intended that the city of Philadelphia should serve as an outpost that would spread Greek civilization, Greek culture & the Greek language into the otherwise uncivilized world.

It was also known for its ornate structures & beautiful buildings, so many were the gods & temples that it was referred to as “Little Athens” because it was so reminiscent of the city & temple scattered streets of Athens.

On the downside it was built on a geological fault & was known for its frequent earthquakes & was destroyed in 17 B.C. by the same earthquake that destroyed Sardis & 10 other cities. Rebuilt but unstable due to the aftershocks went on not for days but for years, because of which people were constantly being forced in & out of the city due to avoid falling rocks & slabs of marble from the structures during the quakes...

As for its place in church history again from the 1800’s up to the present we find this church at work in the world. It would become the bible teaching, bible believing, mission minded church (regardless of the label outside on the church building). Men like William Carey, Charles Spurgeon, D.L. Moody, Hudson Taylor, men who were moved to get the gospel beyond the 4 walls of the church into an otherwise dying world.

Now as most of you no doubt know the word Philadelphia means “Brotherly love” or “love of the brethren”. One thing that we want to be known for is our love of the brethren. When Paul wrote to the Ephesians he let them know that he was praying for them, “*after* (he said) *I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints,*”¹ We spoke of reputation in our last gathering, what’s the reputation of this church in our community. I’m not altogether certain but I believe that we have a reputation for being a bible teaching church. That’s great; we want to be known for that. But we don’t want it to be exclusively that, we also (along w/that) want to be known for our faith in the Lord Jesus & our love for all the saints.

That we love one another, we love the body of Christ. Jesus said that the tell tale sign that we belong to Him is what? He said, “*By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*” John 13:35 Paul told the Thessalonians, “*But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;*”²

But I say to you that as great as loving one another is that it’s not enough. God never called us to a mutual admiration club whereby we live in a bubble & love on one another. We’re also called to love a lost world & to get the message of the gospel out to those who are otherwise perishing.

¹ *The New King James Version*. 1982 [Eph 1:15]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² *The New King James Version*. 1982 [1 Th 4:9]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

God didn't wait till we became believers to love us; He demonstrated His love for us in that while we were still *sinner*s (Rom 5:8) Christ died for us. What was it that moved God to send J.C. to *die* for us? It wasn't the fact that we were so cool... "**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**"³ Even so we're to so love the lost that we get the message that Christ has shed His blood & laid down His life upon the cross for them so that through faith *in* Him they should never perish but have everlasting life.

Vs 7-13

Vs7 (read). 3 Basic things we discover about Jesus in this Vs. None of which speak of Him exhaustively, but speak to us of a few things basically. #1 Who He is, #2 What He has; & #3 What He does.

As for who He is; 2 attributes are brought out that speak to us of the intrinsic nature of Christ. They aren't tendencies of Christ, they're intrinsic/inherent characteristics of & found w/in Christ. #1 He is Holy, #2 He is true.

Now when He says these things it should stir you because these are attributes that only God can claim in an absolute sense as seen here. Only God is separate from evil & perfectly hating it; the bible is clear, "**No one is holy like the Lord, For there is none besides You, Nor is there any rock like our God.**"⁴ There are none intrinsically holy outside of God Himself; yet the bible declares again & again the holiness of Jesus. That God would not allow His "Holy One" to see corruption (Ps 16:10); that He who calls you is holy therefore you be holy. Jesus is perfectly holy in who He is, what He says & what He does...now, if Christ be in you what do you think the net effect of that is going to be? Holiness; what fellowship has light w/darkness, the temple of God w/idols...come out from among them & be ye separate, says the Lord. Be holy, for the Lord your God is holy. Which is to say that if God is holy & He lives in you, holiness will be seen in your life. (Not stuck up religious jerk, but set apart *to*, genuinely in love *with* Jesus).

"He who is true"; not only is Jesus holy, He is true; the very embodiment of truth, for the law came through Moses but grace and...*truth* came through J.C. (Jhn 1:17).

However the word used here for "truth" isn't the word that means true as opposed to a lie; it really speaks of being genuine as opposed to fake (those who say they are Jews & are not) Jesus contrasts w/that being exactly who He says He is.

³ The New King James Version. 1982 (Jn 3:16). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ The New King James Version. 1982 (1 Sa 2:2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

He is not a false god, He's the true God; Moses gave bread from heaven, but the Father gave the *true* bread from heaven; Israel was a vine of sorts, but Jesus said, "I am the *true* vine" all that those things spoke of & pointed to would be realized in Jesus. He is holy, He is true...

#1 Who He is; Holy, & true #2 *What He has*; the key of David, understand that "keys" speak of authority; now in a monarchy the King (as in David) has absolute authority; Jesus having the "king's key" is saying "all authority is Mine"; one of the things He does w/that authority, w/that key (#3) is "open doors that no one can shut, & shut doors no one can open." He exercises absolute sovereignty.

The picture is taken from Isaiah 22 whereby Shebna (King Hezekiah's steward) was being *demoted* by the Lord (because of sin in his life) & Eliakim was being *promoted* by the Lord. We read there where God said of Eliakim, "*The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; So he shall open, and no one shall shut; And he shall shut, and no one shall open.*"⁵ Jesus says here that what was promised to him temporarily in David's kingdom belongs to Him eternally in God's kingdom. He has absolute authority to open doors & close them & there's nothing anyone or anything can do to get in the way of His will being done His way.

Vs 8

In Vs 7 we learned 3 things about Him, in Vs 8 we learn 3 things about them. Now here's where the mission's opportunity comes in right? Philadelphia was the gateway to the east; a missionary city established to take Greek culture to the world beyond its borders. Jesus says, "See, I have set before you an open & no one can shut it."

Now for times sake let me just say this: generally speaking when you hear of an "open door" in a scriptural context the understanding is generally that of an opportunity to share the gospel. Yes, we speak of open doors w/regard to job opportunities or where we might live...whatever. But from a biblical perspective we're talking about an opportunity to spread the gospel. Jesus says to the church, "I've opened the door." He's created the opportunity, Matt 28, "*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*"⁶

⁵ The New King James Version. 1982 (Is 22:22). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶ The New King James Version. 1982 (Mt 28:18-20). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Jesus says, "I have the key of David, all authority, I've opened the door, now go." You see the door has been opened, the question is are we really going through it, are we responding appropriately to it? *It's been on my heart lately, because I believe we give ear to the word attentively, even want to hear it perhaps eagerly.* The question however that confronts us is that once we've heard it, do we respond to it appropriately?

Jesus says, "I've set before you an open door"; opportunity for ministry, but how do you, how do I respond to that opportunity? Now that's not to say that there won't be adversity, open doors don't necessarily mean smooth sailing. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians of his work in Ephesus he said he was going to stay there until Pentecost. He said, *"For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries."*⁷ So a door was opened tremendously, the gospel was going forth effectively, but there were still many difficulties, many adversaries.

But Jesus wants us to see the open door. He says, "See, I have set before you" often times the opportunity is there we just don't see it. God has opened the door for you to share w/your friends, work associates, classmates or whatever. If you don't know whether or not they're believers you need to see the open door.

"How do you recommend I go about speaking to them?" I'd just speak to them as though you presume they're a believer, you'd be surprised how open most people are even if they're not. If God speaks to your heart in a study, tell them about what you were learning at church, see how they respond. *If you need prayer say to them, "Hey, I was wondering if you'd pray for me about something?" See how they respond, it'll help you see that open door right in front of you... If they say, "Why do you want me to pray for you, I'm not a Christian?" Than, "Boom" now you have an opportunity to share w/them the hope you have in Christ.*

But see the door, then go *through* the door, pray *for* them, speak *to* them, invite them to church...see what happens.

Jesus gives them a 3-fold commendation: #1 You have a little strength, #2 you have kept My word, & #3 you have not denied My name.

Now when He says, "You have a little strength" there's 2 ways we might see that: #1 They just have a little strength in the sense of they're not super saints (if you will) but neither are they walking around in sin, they have a little strength.

⁷ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (1 Co 16:9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Certainly that applies in the sense of when you consider the commission to reach the world & all the resources available to the church today (automobiles, planes, T.V., radio, internet). Yet how many have still never even heard the name of Jesus? You have to say, “It’s true, we only have a little strength, we’re not where we could be, where we’d like to be; but we’re seeking to be faithful w/what we do have nonetheless.”

It could also mean “little strength” in the sense of that’s why the Lord is using them & moving among them. As in when Paul was seeking to get the Lord to remove his thorn in the flesh & finally Jesus said, *“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” (Paul went on to say) Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”*⁸ So Jesus could be saying, “You’re not much in this world, which is exactly where I need you to be that I might use you tremendously.” Either way you want to see that is fine by me because both are true.

“You have a little strength...have kept My word”, they’ve remained faithful to the teaching, heeding, living & loving of the Word of God. They didn’t throw it out because they didn’t want to offend people, or felt people wouldn’t relate to it, perhaps it wasn’t seeker friendly or whatever. They stayed true to the Word of God, what a great testimony.

“And have not denied My name.” Not only in the sense of expressing allegiance to Jesus but that they lived their lives in a manner that honored Him; that was faithful to the character of Christ, people could see Jesus in them. “You have a little strength, have kept My word, & have not denied My name.”

Vs 9

Evidently the believers there were meeting opposition from the Jews. Jesus says, “They’re not true Jews. Perhaps ethnically but not spiritually; they’re not of the household of faith; they oppose Jesus.” They’re like those whom Jesus said, “If God were your Father you would love Me because I came from God...You are of *your* father the devil & it’s his desires that you are about, he was a murderer from the beginning & doesn’t stand for the truth because there’s no truth in him...” (John 8:42-44)

But you can see that open doors don’t mean that people are going to flock to your feet & ask you how to be saved, you’ll have enemies & adversaries along the way.

⁸ The New King James Version. 1982 (2 Co 12:9-10), Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Jesus says, "Press on; the day will come when I will vindicate your position."
 "I will make them worship before your feet & know that I have loved you."

Now He's not saying that they'll worship *you*, but that they'll worship Him in front of you. He will vindicate you by having them bow before Him in front of you. Doesn't mean that they'll all be saved, though certainly the best way to resolve conflict w/a persecutor is to see them come to Christ.

But this (to me) seems to be more of the sense of Phil 2:10-11; every knee will bow & every tongue will confess that J.C. is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Those who've persecuted you will bow before you & recognize Jesus for who He is.

Vs 10

The bible teaching, bible believing, mission minded church that has kept God's word & not denied the name of Christ will be kept from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world. "Are you alluding to the rapture?" That's exactly what I'm alluding to; He doesn't say they'll be preserved *through* the trial, but kept *from* the trial (which we see in Rev 6-19) we call it the Great Tribulation in which God *pours out* His wrath upon the earth to test those who *dwell* upon the earth.

Now time forbids us today but God willing in the near future we'll take the time to really develop our position on the rapture & why we believe what we believe according to the scriptures. I've been kind of baiting you w/little bits & pieces along the way but we'll be more thorough in the near future I promise.

For now I'd have you recognize the fact that the trial is coming to test those who "dwell on the earth." You should know that the phrase "dwell on the earth" is used 6 other times (7 total) throughout the book of revelation & each times it's used it speaks of those who are unbelievers & unsaved. That's who God is going to try, not you, not me; we'll be out of here, praise God!

Vs 11-13

We all want the praise & encouragement Jesus gives *to* this church. But for that to be the case we have to have the same characteristics we find *in* this church. A people who submit to the Person of the Holy Spirit so as to persevere through difficult days & tough times; who stay true to the Word of God & show people who Jesus is through the way we lead our lives & take advantage of evangelistic opportunities He sets before us.

Now I don't currently have any tattoos but for those who portray God as against them I'm not sure what they do w/these Vs... ☺

We've seen Miami ink, L.A. Ink, Evidently this is New Jerusalem Ink! Jesus says that to one who overcomes they'll get a few tattoos! "I will write on Him the name of My God, the name of the City of My God, & My new name!"

He says you will become a picture of stability, & strength, dignity & beauty; "I will make you a pillar in the temple of My God"; no more going in & out of the city due to instability & aftershocks; you will reside there permanently; w/peace, dignity & stability."

Now one thing to note about a pillar is that the building doesn't support the pillar, the pillar supports the structure, the only thing that supports the pillar is the foundation. As a believer I don't want to weaken the body of Christ, I want to add strength to the body of Christ, I want to support the body, not be supported by the body; what *I need as my* support is the Person of J.C. (The foundation; make sense?)

So hold fast what you have (reliance on Jesus, faithfulness to the Word, living a life that doesn't deny the Lord's name) that no one may take your crown.

Listen the enemy came to kill, to steal & to destroy; & if he can keep you from your reward believe me he will. Jesus says, "Hold fast" play the 2nd ½ as hard or harder as you have the 1st, finish well; reach for the prize of the upward call that is in Christ Jesus.

Because He's coming quickly...the word more literally is "suddenly"; at a time & in an hour that you do not know therefore it's imperative that we constantly be prepared.

...3 Things will accompany your arrival in heaven; #1 a permanent rest "you shall go in & out no more" no worries, no anxieties... rest (Jesus offers rest to the weary soul).

#2 A permanent residence; the New Jerusalem, our heavenly home, the city whose builder & Maker is God.

#3 A Permanent relationship; 3 names written on you showing that you are the Lord's & the Lord is yours...

May God help us; that we *rely* on the Lord, stay *faithful* to His Word & lead lives of genuine holiness that model what it means to confess His name...

Prayer Points:

God we thank You for Your word; help us to *keep* Your word...To see the open door You've set before us & take the time to share the hope of the gospel w/the hurting & hopeless around us... Lord we want to hold fast what we have, & bring glory to Your name. Use us, have Your way in us & pour Your Spirit out upon us...

Jesus offers Rest to the weary soul. He said, Come to Me all you who labor & are heavy laden & I will give you rest. He wants to make you a pillar in the Temple of His God & Father; give you permanent residence, a permanent relationship & permanent rest in Him, God has so loved you that He gave J.C. for you & He shed His blood upon the cross so that should you believe in Him you'll never perish but have everlasting life...