

6-25-23 Seven Churches of Revelation (Philadelphia)

Revelation 3:7-13.

In a Peanuts comic strip, there was a conversation between Lucy and Charlie Brown. Lucy said that life is like a deck chair. Some place it so they can see where they are going; some place it so they can see where they have been; and some place it so they can see where they are at present. Charlie Brown's reply: "I can't even get mine unfolded."

I have the privilege of coaching football for H.P. As the new football player practice to become competitive, they must learn many new techniques and rules. At almost every practice 1 of these players will say these words, "Coach, I can't..." to which I reply, "If you say those words enough you will believe them and make them come true."

That statement "I can't" is not only an enemy of Charlie Brown and football players; but it is also the enemy of Christians and the Church.

Repeat after me: **"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13).**

Today we are looking at the 6th of the 7 churches in Revelation. The church in Philadelphia is one of only two that Jesus didn't have any condemnation with. The church at Ephesus had forgotten its first love. Smyrna was the persecuted church. The church at Pergamos was the compromising church. The church at Thyatira was a corrupt church. Last week we looked at the church in Sardis, which was the dead church.

Read Revelation 3:7.

Notice some things about the **"He"** in these verses. **(Verse 7)**

The things that **"He"** says matter because, **He** is holy, true, has the keys that open and shut doors that no one else can open or shut.

Jesus again is declaring Himself as God. Jesus is holy in His character, His words, His actions, and His purposes. As the Holy One, He is uniquely set apart from everything else, nothing can be compared to Him.

Jesus is the One who is true, that is, genuine. He is the original, not a copy; the authentic God and not a manufactured one.

"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. 19 Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this." (Revelation 1:18-19)

The Church of Philadelphia was successful. This Church received a good report from the Savior. Philadelphia means "love of the brethren."

Read verses 8-10.

I. Doors

- As we go through life there are many doors that we come to; but not every door is intended for us to go through at that time.

- Jesus Christ is the One who opens and closes those doors. If Jesus opens it, no one can close it and if Jesus closes it, no one can open it.
- This is where we run into problems as Christians and in our Churches. Sometimes we find ourselves standing and looking at someone else's door, trying to figure out how to get into what they have.
- The problem here is, if you are focused on trying to get into a place that Jesus isn't going to let you go into anyhow; then you aren't going to be walking through the door He has intended for you.
- Church, we need to stop trying to be like other churches and go through the doors that Jesus has opened for us.
- In the N.T., an "open door" speaks of opportunity for ministry. He gave the church in Philadelphia a great opportunity for ministry. But could they take advantage of it?
- There were at least two obstacles to overcome, the first being their own lack of strength **(v.8)**. Apparently, this was not a large or a strong church; however, it was a faithful one. They were true to God's Word and unafraid to bear His name.
- **Revelation 3:10** suggests that they had endured some special testing and had proven faithful.
- This brings us to our 2nd point. When we come to an open door, we must make a...

II. Decision

- According to God's Word the church in Philadelphia had made the right decision.
 - Notice in our text that Jesus placed an open door before them **(verse 8, "I have set before you an open door...")**. He did not make them walk through it. If you just stand at an open door and look in, but never walk into that place, it will do you no good. That's called Christian window shopping.
 - Christians, we must stop window shopping for God's direction in our lives. Do you want joy? Do you want peace? Do you want spiritual growth? Then you must walk through the door.
 - What keeps us from walking through the doors that God has opened? FEAR?!
 - Notice what Jesus says, **"for you have a little strength, have kept My word...not denied My name...kept My commandment..."** Even in the face and persecution that came from Satan's army they (church in Philadelphia), with little strength kept God's Word.
 - What keeps you from walking through the open door that Christ has opened? (Door of salvation, service, worship, surrender, witness) What keeps you from keeping His Word, doing what He instructs? Or from denying His name?
- a. Fear of Failure of your past?**
 - You are sitting in the chair that is looking back at the past failures in your life and you figure that if you go through that door that you will just fail again.
 - b. Fear of Failure of your present?**
 - You are sitting in the chair that is looking at all your problems and schedules of the present and you are saying, "God I can't do this right now, maybe later". Maybe you just feel weak. (Don't forget that it is in our weakness when Jesus is made strong!)
 - c. Fear of Failure of your future?**

- You are sitting in the chair that is looking ahead (which is great); but instead of walking by faith, you're wading through fear. All you can see is impossible barriers and giants and you are "shaking in your boots". God says, "Walk in faith" and you're looking at your checkbook going, "That isn't going to work". God says, "Walk in faith" and you're telling your Church friends, "We better pray about this some more" (although God has already given you an answer, but you wanted a different one).

If it isn't fear, then.

Is it a stronghold...

a. A Sin in your past?

- Is there something that you did in your past or something someone did to you that just seems to keep you from walking through the door?
- (Have someone come up and hold them by the belt loop as they try and walk away)

b. A Sin in your present?

- Is there something that you are doing right now in your life that you know is out of God's will, but you just want stop?

c. A Sin in your future?

- How could you predict sin your future? Because you have already made up your mind that you're not going to change. Maybe you don't plan on going through anymore doors, because you're too old, too sick, too tired, to set in your ways, etc....

Conclusion

The second obstacle the church in Philadelphia came against was the Jews in the city. This was really the opposition of Satan, for we do not battle against flesh and blood (**Eph. 6:12**). These individuals may have been Jews in the flesh, but they were not "true Israel".

These false Jews were excluding Jewish believers from the synagogue, and false accusations.

Unbelief sees the obstacles, but faith sees opportunities. And since the Lord holds the keys, He is in control of the outcome!

Let us not miss verse 10's promise. **"I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth."** I believe this is a reference to the time of Tribulation that John describes in **Revelation 6-19**, "the time of Jacob's trouble." This is not speaking about some local trial, because it involves **"those who dwell on the earth."**

In many Bible scholars understanding, **Revelation 3:10** is a promise that the church will not go through the Tribulation but will be taken to heaven before it begins. **Verse 11, "Behold I am coming quickly!"** would strengthen this view.

The church today is like the Philadelphia church, for God has set before us many open doors of opportunity. If He opens the doors, we must work; if He shuts the doors, we must wait. Above all, we must be found faithful to Him and see the opportunities, not the obstacles. If we miss our opportunities, we lose our rewards (crowns), and this means being ashamed before Him when He comes.

1 John 2:28, And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

Has God opened a door in front of you and you find yourself just standing there staring at it? What is keeping you from walking through? Maybe it's the door of salvation. Maybe it's a opportunity to serve, surrender or give.

Maybe God has closed a door and you are trying to kick it back open. Or you are going to stand there until God opens it back up. **"He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens." (v.7)**

Could it be that you have spent too much time looking at someone else's doors? Wishing it was your door, or trying to figure out how they should or shouldn't go through their door; trying to push them through it.

We need to be like the church in Philadelphia, no matter what Satan throws at us, may we be found faithful, keeping His word, and not denying His name. With man things are impossible, but with God, nothing is impossible.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13).