

### Revelation 3:7-13 – To the Church in Philadelphia

The letter to the church in Philadelphia in this passage contrasts the previous passage which contains the letter to the church in Sardis. To the church in Sardis, God wrote probably the harshest letter containing a lot of rebukes and very little compliments. In the letter to the church in Philadelphia, we have seen no rebukes and a lot of praises. The church in Philadelphia was a small church but in the eyes of God it was a big church, an exemplary church that is acceptable before God. The church in Philadelphia did not have great buildings, strong financials, or many attendees, but they are obedient to the word of God. God protected them and opened doors for them. We should meditate on what kind of church the church in Philadelphia was, as it is contradictory to what many people think what a successful church looks like.

What is the key to the uniqueness and the beauty of this small church? It is a church that obeys the Word of God. This is mentioned twice in this passage:

Verse 8b - "I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name."

Verse 10 - "Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth."

God told the church in Philadelphia that He has opened a door for them that no one is able to shut. This is both a blessing and the evidence of the presence of God in this "weak church". What does an "open door" mean?

1. The door of salvation that Christ has opened that no one can shut. In Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus says "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." Though this gate is narrow, God has opened it so that through the church in Philadelphia many would enter and be saved. This is the church that experienced how narrow this door is and yet through obedience they bring many people to enter it.
2. The second meaning of a door can be understood as the opportunity to preach the gospel. As Paul has said in 1 Corinthians 16:9 "for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries." Although there were many difficulties, God was with Paul and blessed his work - the door was opened wide. The door of opportunity was opened by God and the church in Philadelphia faithfully used it to preach the gospel. Through the difficulties and persecution, it is exactly here that God opened the door for the church in Philadelphia to testify for the name of Jesus Christ. Throughout history we know that the more the church is persecuted the more it grows. Amid persecutions, they were never defeated, in fact their faith grew and they became witnesses to many people. This door of opportunity, however, may not be open to us forever. We see this in many of Jesus' parables, for example the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins. As long as the gospel is being preached to us, that door is still open.

Not only, that God is the only one who can open doors, he is also the one who holds the key to those doors. This shows the power of our God. Verse 7 says "The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens." If that door symbolises the opportunity to preach the gospel, then the one who holds the key symbolises the authority of Jesus Christ.

May we really use this door of opportunity that has been opened to us, relying not on our strength but by depending on Him who in His wisdom can open and shut doors. The key for us to do this is to be faithful and obedient to His Words in everything that we do in our lives. To hold fast to God's Words means that we meditate and obey. This is not merely about learning and studying, but to rejoice in the Word and to meditate upon it day and night. For this is the picture of the righteous man in Psalm 1:2 – "but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night".