

# There Is A Blessing For Your Faithfulness.

Philadelphia, the Faithful Church

(Rev. 3:7–13)

Warren W. Wiersbe, The Bible Exposition Commentary, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 578-579.



*Leap*  
of FAITH  
Hebrews 11:1



# Revelation 3:7–13 (NKJV)

7 “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, ‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, “He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”:

8 “I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

9 Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.



10 Because you have kept My command to persevere, 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.

11 Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.

13 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’



# Philadelphia Means “*Love Of The Brethren.*”

- As most people know, Philadelphia means “*love of the brethren.*” Certainly, brotherly love is an important mark of the Christian.
- We are “*taught of God to love one another*” (1 Thes. 4:9): by God the Father (1 John 4:19), God the Son (John 13:34), and God the Spirit (Rom. 5:5). But it is not enough to love God and our fellow believers; we must also love a lost world and seek to reach unbelievers with the Good News of the Cross.

- This church had a vision to reach a lost world, and God set before them an open door.
- Jesus Christ presented Himself to the church at Philadelphia as “He that is holy.”
- This is tantamount to declaring that He is God, which, of course, He is.
- Jesus Christ is holy in His character, His words, His actions, and His purposes.
- As the Holy One, He is uniquely set apart from everything else, and nothing can be compared to Him.

- But He is also the One who is true—that is, genuine. He is the original, not a copy; the authentic God and not a manufactured one. There were hundreds of false gods and goddesses in those days, but only Jesus Christ could rightfully claim to be the true God.

## **1 Corinthians 8:5–6 (NKJV)**

**5** For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords),

**6** yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.



- The martyrs in heaven addressed the Lord, they called Him “holy and true” (Rev. 6:10).
- Their argument was that, because He was holy, He had to judge sin, and because He was true, He had to vindicate His people who had been wickedly slain.

# He Has The Authority To Open And Close Doors

**Revelation 3:7 (NKJV)** “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, ‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, “He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”:

- Not only is He holy and true, but He has the authority to open and close doors. The background of this imagery is Isaiah 22:15–25. Assyria had invaded Judah (as Isaiah had warned), but the Jewish leaders were trusting Egypt, not God, to deliver the nation.
- One of the treacherous leaders was a man named Shebna who had used his office, not for the good of the people, but for his own private gain. God saw to it that Shebna was removed from office and that a faithful man, Eliakim, was put in his place and given the keys of authority.

- Eliakim was a picture of Jesus Christ, a dependable administrator of the affairs of God's people. Jesus Christ also has the keys of hades and of death (Rev. 1:18).

# In The New Testament, An “Open Door” Speaks Of Opportunity For Ministry

**Acts 14:27 (NKJV)** Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

**1 Corinthians 16:9 (NKJV)** For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.



# In The New Testament, An “Open Door” Speaks Of Opportunity For Ministry

**2 Corinthians 2:12 (NKJV)** Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord,

**Colossians 4:3 (NKJV)** meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains,

**Christ is the Lord of the harvest and the Head of the church, and it is He who determines where and when His people shall serve. He gave the church at Philadelphia a great opportunity for ministry.**



## **Acts 16:6–10 (NKJV)**

**6** Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.

**7** After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them.

**8** So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.

**9** And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.”

**10** Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.



# We must take advantage of the open door.

**Revelation 3:8 (NKJV)** “I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

- There were at least two obstacles to overcome, the first being their own lack of strength.
- Apparently, this was not a large or a strong church; however, it was a faithful one.



# You passed the test and were found faithful

- 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 proved faithful.

**Revelation 3:10 (NKJV) Because you have kept My command to persevere, 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.**



- It is not the size or strength of a church that determines its ministry, but faith in the call and command of the Lord.
- “God’s commandments are God’s enablements.” If Jesus Christ gave them an open door, then He would see to it that they were able to walk through it! Martin Luther put it perfectly in his well-known hymn:
  - Did we in our own strength confide,
  - Our striving would be losing.
  - Were not the right Man on our side,
  - The Man of God’s own choosing.

# The second obstacle was the opposition of the Jews in the city.

**Revelation 3:9 (NKJV)** Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

- This was really the opposition of Satan, for we do not battle against flesh and blood (Eph. 6:12).



**These People May Have  
Been Jews In The Flesh,  
But They Were Not “True  
Israel” In The New  
Testament Sense .**

## **Romans 2:17–29 (NKJV)**

**17** Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God,

**18** and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law,

**19** and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,

**20** an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law.

**21** You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal?

**22** You who say, “Do not commit adultery,” do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?

**23** You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law?

**24** For “the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,” as it is written.

**25** For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.



**26** Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?

**27** And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law?

**28** For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh;

**29** but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.



**Jewish People Certainly  
Have A Great Heritage,  
But It Is No Guarantee Of  
Salvation.**

## **Matthew 3:7–12 (NKJV)**

**7** But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”

**8** Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance,

**9** and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.

**10** And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.



**11** I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

**12** His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

**John 8:33 (NKJV)** They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, ‘You will be made free’?”



# The Church Faced Opposition.

- How were these Jews opposing the church at Philadelphia?
- For one thing, by excluding Jewish believers from the synagogue.

# The Church Faced Opposition.

- Another weapon was probably false accusation, for this is the way the unbelieving Jews often attacked Paul. Satan is the accuser and he uses even religious people to assist him (Rev. 12:10).
- It is not easy to witness for Christ when the leading people in the community are spreading lies about you.

- The believers in Philadelphia were in a similar situation to that of Paul when he wrote 1 Corinthians 16:9—there were both opportunities and obstacles!

**1 Corinthians 16:9 (NKJV)** For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.



# Faith Sees The Opportunities

- Unbelief sees the obstacles, but faith sees the opportunities!
- And since the Lord holds the keys, He is in control of the outcome!
- So what do we have to fear? Nobody can close the doors as long as He keeps them open.
- **Fear, unbelief, and delay have caused the church to miss many God-given opportunities.**



**Revelation 3:9 (NKJV)** Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

- The Saviour gave three wonderful and encouraging promises to this church.
- **First, He would take care of their enemies.**  
One day, these people would have to acknowledge that the Christians were right!

**Isaiah 60:14 (NKJV)** Also the sons of those who afflicted you Shall come bowing to you, And all those who despised you shall fall prostrate at the soles of your feet; And they shall call you The City of the LORD, Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

## **Philippians 2:10–11 (NKJV)**

**10** that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,

**11** and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**If we take care of God's work, He will take care of our battles.**



**Revelation 3:10 (NKJV)** Because you have kept My command to persevere, 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.

- Second, He would keep them from Tribulation (Rev. 3:10). This is surely a reference to the time of Tribulation that John described in Revelation 6–19, “the time of Jacob’s trouble.”
- This is not speaking about some local trial, because it involves “them that dwell on the earth” this is world wide.

(see Rev. 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 12:12; 13:8, 12, 14; 14:6; 17:2, 8)



- Revelation 3:10 is a promise that the church will not go through the Tribulation, but will be taken to heaven before it begins. (Read 1 Thes. 4:13–5:11).

# 1 Thessalonians 4:15–17 (NKJV)

**15** For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

**16** For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

**17** Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

- The third promise to the Philadelphians is that God would honor them (Rev. 3:12).

**Revelation 3:12 (NKJV)** He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.

- The symbolism in this verse would be especially meaningful to people who lived in constant danger of earthquakes: the stability of the pillar, no need to go out or to flee, a heavenly city that nothing could destroy.



- Ancient cities often honored great leaders by erecting pillars with their names inscribed on them.
- God's pillars are not made of stone, because there is no temple in the heavenly city.

**Revelation 21:22 (NKJV)** But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

His pillars are faithful people who bear His name for His glory.

**Galatians 2:9 (NKJV)** and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.



# God Has Set Before Us A Open Door.

- In a very real sense, the church today is like the Philadelphian 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 faithful to Him and see the opportunities, not the obstacles.

# God Has Set Before Us An Open Door.

- If we miss our opportunities, we lose our rewards (crowns), and this means being ashamed before Him when He comes (1 John 2:28).

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