

***“Philadelphia – The Committed Church” By Ed Terry Delivered 09 20 20***

Isaiah 22: 20 – 25; Luke 10: 1 – 12; 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2: 1 – 12; **Revelation 3:7-13**

Today we will continue our study of Jesus’ seven letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2 & 3.

As we study these letters, we need to ask the question is; *what would Jesus say to Mt Paran Presbyterian Church?*

Also, since the church is made up of people, we also need to ask ourselves; *what is Jesus say to me.*

In order for us to get the most from Jesus’ letter to the church at Philadelphia we need to know a little background about the church at Philadelphia

The city of Philadelphia was founded about 140 BC and was located on a major east west road.

The name Philadelphia means *“brotherly love.”*

The city of Philadelphia was named by Attalus II, the King of Pergamum to show his love for his brother Eumenes.

But the most important thing is why this city was founded.

Attalus founded this city as missionary outpost to show the uncivilized people in this region the splendor and glory of Greece.

But God used the church in Philadelphia for a far greater missionary purpose, which to demonstrate God’s love for people and to share the Good News of Jesus.

In verse 7 Jesus introduces Himself; ***“These are the words of him who is holy and true who holds the key of David.”***

In this verse Jesus states His supreme authority by reminding the church of who He is.

Holy means spiritually pure.

Holiness is the quality of being totally separated from everything that is contrary to God’s moral standards.

When God spoke to Isaiah: God said; ***“For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior”*** (Isaiah 43:3)

The disciples recognized Jesus as ***“the holy one of God”***. (John 6:69)

***“I am true”*** could be translated, *“I am the one who is genuine, or the original!”*

Jesus Christ rightfully claimed to be the one and only true God and Jesus proved that by raising from the grave and conquering death.

Jesus also affirmed His supreme authority to His disciples when Jesus said; ***“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*** (John 14:6)

**“... I hold the key of David”.** (verse 7)

The only purpose of a key is to lock or to unlock something.

In Isaiah 22 we find the story of a corrupt leader of the Jews being replaced by an honorable man named Eliakim.

In that passage we read; **“In that day I will summon my servant, Eliakim son of Hilkiyah. I will clothe him with your robe and fasten your sash around him and hand your authority over to him. He will be a father to those who live in Jerusalem and to the people of Judah. I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open”.** (verses 20 – 22)

In verse 8 Jesus said; **“I know your deeds”.**

Jesus is aware of our circumstances and the ministry we are doing.

Remember when Jesus is speaking of deeds in these letters Jesus is talking about the deeds they have done because they have been saved.

Jesus told these Christians; I know your faithful ministry for me even though you live in a pagan society.

Because of your faithful ministry **“I have placed before you an open door that no-one can shut.”** (verse 8)

Open doors are doors of opportunity for an even greater ministry.

Open doors are opportunities for service (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 16: 8 -9)

Open doors are opportunities for evangelism (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 2: 12 & Colossians 4: 2 – 4)

Jesus is very clear; He is the one who opens door for us that no one else can close.

Our problem is that often we fail to take advantage of the opportunities that Jesus gives us to be a faithful witness for Jesus and / or to be a faithful servant for Jesus.

Often, we are too timid to talk about Jesus to an unsaved co-worker or to speak out when someone takes The Lord’s name in vain or when someone is spreading hate.

Sadly, often we are too busy to even notice a person who is hurting or in need and we miss an opportunity Jesus has given to us.

There’s no shortage of open doors, but there is a shortage of faithful Christians that will take advantage of them.

In Luke 10:2 Jesus said, **“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest field.”**

The church at Philadelphia was small, but they were doing what they could for The Lord.

Jesus also acknowledged that the church in Philadelphia only had *“little strength.”* (verse 8)

In other words they were a small church with limited resources.

Even though the church at Philadelphia was small and had limited resources in verse 8 Jesus said *“you have kept my word and have not denied my name”*.

In other words, the church at Philadelphia was committed and they remained faithful to Jesus Christ.

The reality is that Mt Paran is a relatively small church and our resources are limited.

We don't have a food pantry, we don't have a bus ministry, or a deaf ministry.

There are many things we can not do; but we must never forget that there are many things that we can do.

God has opened a door for us to expand our ministry to our community.

Far too often we focus on the things we can't do, and we use that as an excuse to do nothing.

The question is do we have committed faithful members who are willing to step up and take a leadership role so Mt Paran can take advantage of those open doors?

I am sure you have heard the little story about somebody, anybody, everybody, and nobody.

All four of these people were members of the same church and all four of them lived in the same neighborhood.

When a new family moved in their neighborhood, everybody thought that somebody would visit the new neighbor and invite them to come to their church.

Anybody could have invited them but nobody did so the new neighbors went to another church.

When the pastor announced they needed to start a youth group nobody agreed to be the leader.

Everybody could have been the youth leader but they all wanted somebody else to step up.

So, when nobody would take the job the families with the youth left the church.

This little story illustrates the fact that each of us is personally responsible for doing The Lord's work.

If we leave it for somebody or to everybody or to anybody, nobody will end up doing it.

One person cannot do all the jobs that are needed around the church but there are some jobs at the church that each person can do.

One person cannot tell everybody the good news of Jesus but there is someone that each one of us needs to tell them about Jesus.

In Acts 1:8 Jesus said; *“you shall be my witnesses”*

In our lesson from 1<sup>st</sup> Peter we read; *“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”* (verse 9)

And then in verse 12 we are reminded that **if** we are living like Jesus taught the unbelievers God has put in our life will *“see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”*

The church at Philadelphia had little strength, but they did what they could because they were committed faithful Christians.

The Christians at Philadelphia stayed true to the word of God.

These Christians did not try to fit in and blend with the pagan culture they lived in.

Instead they were willing to be identified with the name of Jesus Christ.

Verse 9 makes it clear that these Christians at Philadelphia did not have it easy.

*“I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you”.*

Some Biblical scholars think that the church started out meeting in the Jewish synagogue, and then the Jews locked the doors and kept them from meeting there.

That may be why Jesus refers to giving them an open door that no one can shut.

*“The synagogue of Satan”* is a metaphor for the unbelieving Jews.

The church at Philadelphia was faithful and committed.

And because they were faithful and committed Jesus told them He would give them three things.  
Recognition - relief - reward

**Recognition** – In verse 10 Jesus promised that he would make the Jews admit that the church was loved by God.

Proverbs 16:7 says; *“When a man’s ways are pleasing to the LORD, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him.”* Then Jesus promises

• **Relief** – In verse 10 we read; *“Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth”.*

This is a promise that all believers will be spared from going through The Great Tribulation. (1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4)

But this was also a promise for tribulations in their immediate future and the tribulations that the church at Philadelphia would see in the next century.

The church at Philadelphia lasted longer than the other six churches in Revelation.

When most of the middle east became Muslim, Philadelphia remained as a Christian city.

• **Reward** – Jesus promises several rewards in verses 11 and 12.

***“I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no-one will take your crown. Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it.”***

The crown is a victor’s crown like someone who wins a race or athletic event.

In the first century when a prominent citizen did something worthy of memorializing, they would inscribe their name and the act on a pillar in one of their temples.

A new name refers to a change in a person’s character and / or a change in a person’s status.

In verse 12 Jesus tells us that Jesus is not ashamed to identify with a committed Christian who is faithful.

***“I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name”.***  
(Verse 12)

Jesus places His seal and His mark of identification on those Christians who are not ashamed to identify with Him.

Then everyone will see that we belong to Jesus.

Jesus not only promises security to those faithful believers.

But even more than this, Jesus says He will make these faithful Christians pillars.

In Jeremiah 32: 18 and 19 we read; ***“Great and mighty God, whose name is the LORD Almighty, Your eyes are open to the ways of all mankind; you reward each person according to their conduct and as their deeds deserve”.***

And in Genesis 15: 1 God told Abram ***“Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield your very great reward”.***

Our God is a great rewarder!

If we really believed that our Lord is a great rewarder, then we would all be more active in serving The Lord and ministering to those in need in our neighborhood.

In Matthew 10:42 Jesus said; ***“And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.”***

Jesus also said; “*Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.*” Matthew 10:45)

If I promised to give \$1,000 to everybody who shared the good news of Jesus with an unsaved person this afternoon, I think a large number of you would do it.

But if I said Jesus will reward you if you share the good news of Jesus with an unsaved person this afternoon, I do not think many of you would do it.

You see we really do not believe Jesus is a great rewarded.

The church at Philadelphia was established as a missionary outpost.

Mt Paran was also established as a missionary church in the western frontier of Maryland in 1715.

Today Mt Paran is a small church.

However, we need to learn a lesson from the church at Philadelphia.

Even though we have “*little strength*”, when we are committed and faithful, The Lord will use the little that God has given us so that we can make a big difference in our community.

God’s word to us today challenges each of us as individuals and us as a church to re-evaluate our faithfulness and our commitment to Jesus Christ.

Today, will you make a commitment to Jesus to look for new ways to serve The Lord with the time and the talents that God has entrusted to you?

Will you take an active part in Mt Paran’s commitment to make a difference for Jesus in our community?

**AMEN**