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W.A. R. Bible Study

The Seven Churches of Asia Minor Bible Study

The Church in Philadelphia – Lesson 10

The David Church in a Goliath World

Revelation 3:7-12

Introduction

While it is normal to think that size matters in our everyday experience; smallness often alludes to weakness and powerlessness. However, in the eyes of God, little becomes much when placed in the Master's hands. We see this all throughout scripture where God's power is given to those who are disadvantaged.

One of the most familiar stories of God using small to overcome a giant component is the Old Testament story of David and Goliath in in **1 Samuel 17**. David small in stature but faithful to God's Word was able to defeat and overcome the enemy of God, the giant Goliath.

In context with our lesson today, the Church of Philadelphia was small and seemed insignificant. The church was little in strength, appeared outwardly weak, faced with giant opposition, faithful, yet obedient and vindicated as David was. The Church of Philadelphia, although small and seemingly powerless trusted God and were victorious. God uses the faithful and seemingly weak to overcome great opposition.

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Context

The Church of Philadelphia is associated as being the *City of Brotherly Love* because of the Greek interpretation of the word Philadelphia. Philadelphia is made up of two words: *philos* – meaning love and *adelphos* – meaning brother. *Philadelphia was the youngest of the seven churches that Jesus Christ addressed, having been established in 189 BC by the King of Pergamum, Attalus II. King Attalus was well-known for*

his devotion to his brother Eumenes, and subsequently acquired the name Philadelphias, meaning “brotherly love.” As is true with the other cities to which Jesus addresses His letters, the name Philadelphia has special significance with regard to the nature of the church there. There is nothing specific about the church’s character that ascribes to the title brotherly love. However, their faithfulness could very well their love for Christ and one another.

The church at ancient Philadelphia was small with no great influence. Yet, it was pure, holy, and faithful to God’s Word. The members of the church of Philadelphia dedicated themselves to the study of the Word of God. Although they experienced opposition concerning their faith; they remained faithful and God opened doors of influential missionary opportunities before them. They did not receive condemnation from the Lord but assurance.

The church never denied His name under the pressures of certain Jews and Roman influence. Many saw the Roman Empire as pressure to worship other God’s. However, the Church of Philadelphia would not acquiesce to pressure although small in number and God blessed them and preserved them. Let’s observe the Letter to the Church of Philadelphia.

The Amazing Attributes of Christ and His Assurance: (v.7) *And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;* - Jesus describes Himself as Holy and True: Holy and True are attributes of God. – the two characteristics are significant. *Because Jesus is holy, He cannot lie. Therefore, He is both holy and true.* Attributes of God Himself (Hebrews 7:26, Isaiah 6:3; John 14:6). Holder of the Key of David – The mention of David is a messianic reference from Isaiah 22:22. It symbolizes Jesus’ authority to open doors for saved believers and shut spiritual doors to the unsaved as it relates to the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus has the power to open doors no one can shut and close doors no one can open. This verse makes reference to the door of opportunity Jesus has opened for the Church of Philadelphia.

The Opportunity of an Open Door: (v.8) *I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.* – In this verse Jesus commends this church and makes reference to His authority to open doors. Jesus has opened a door of opportunity for evangelism, sharing the Gospel, and divine favor for the Church of Philadelphia that no man can shut. Even though they were small in

number and influence; they were faithful to adhering to the Word of God. They were not ashamed of Jesus and did not reject or deny His name.

The Exoneration over Enemies: (v.9) 9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. This is the second time in the letters to the seven churches that the "synagogue of Satan" is mentioned, and the fourth time Satan is referenced (Revelation 2:9; 2:13; 2:24). The synagogue of Satan refers to a *specific* group of Jews in Philadelphia like the Jews in Smyrna who falsely opposed Him. *Behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.* Jesus promises vindication over their enemies in His own time.

Jesus promises that the false Jews will eventually acknowledge the faith of the believers at the Church of Philadelphia and Jesus' love for them.

The Prize of Patience Under Pressure: (v.10) 10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. The Church of Philadelphia did not buckle under pressure and abandon the Word. There is no correction given to this Church; only commendation that they have been true to His word under outside pressures that enticed them to abandon Truth. Because this church demonstrated patience and faith in Jesus; He promised to keep it or preserve and protect it "from the hour of trial." *The hour of trial* makes reference to a future time that the whole world will be tested to purify the earth. Some scholars refer to this period as end time tribulation meant to test humanity's loyalty; particularly the ungodly. Jesus said *I will keep thee from the hour of temptation*; meaning He will physically remove them. This hits different from other tribulations where God promised to be with us; here He promises to remove us out of tribulation. Most scholars interpret this as the rapture when faithful believers will be taken before the tribulation. Others see it as spiritual protection while on earth.

The Encouragement to Endure (v.11) Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. The crown is the eternal reward for believers. Jesus promises to come quickly which means suddenly. It does not make reference to a time period, or a date or year but indicating to the very act of His swift coming. Jesus instructs the church to *hold that fast which thou hast*; meaning their faith in His word. Their faithfulness will be rewarded.

A Permanent Position In Paradise: (v.12) Him that overcometh will I

make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

For those that endure (overcome) I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God. Pillar denotes establishment, permanence, stability, and honor. A pillar in the temple of my God; *Just as pillars support and uphold structures, being made a pillar in God's temple symbolizes being firmly established in His presence. This imagery is reminiscent of the pillars in Solomon's temple, as seen in 1 Kings 7:21, representing strength and support.* Jesus promised to write the name of God, the name of New Jerusalem, and His own name upon the over comers. The written name of God signifies belonging to God. The written new name of Jerusalem refers to citizenship in New Jerusalem. The written name of Jesus represents identity with Christ. Those who overcome are eternal assured security in God's presence.

The Holiness in Hearing: (v.13) *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.* This message to the Church of Philadelphia is not exclusive but inclusive to all believers throughout time. This is a clarion call to all churches throughout the ages to hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

Bible Study Questions

- What does Jesus mean by saying He is *holy and true* and what key is He referring to in verse 7?
- What door did Jesus open for the church in verse 8 and how was the church protected in verse 9?
- What did Jesus mean by protecting the church during *the hour of trial* in verse 10 and explain verse 11.
- What does verse 12 mean for each faithful believer?

Keeping It Real

- The Church of Jesus Christ is faced with great pressure in this political climate (racial, economic, immigrants, religious, and voting rights pressures) many large congregations have acquiesced to the political structure that is ungodly. How can the small congregations mirror the Church of Philadelphia in this climate of pressure? 3 examples.
- What door of opportunities have God opened for Calvary?

- How does this lesson reflect the C.F.V.S.?