

What sort of church are we, Faithful?

Letter to the church in Philadelphia

Introduction:

Since the beginning of last month we have been studying the letters the glorified Jesus asked John to send to the 7 churches in the province of Asia Minor.

Each letter had a particular message and John was to tailor his exhortation to fit each spiritual need.

There were four commonalities in all the seven letters:

- The letters were sent to the Angels of the churches
- Each letter began with introduction of the risen Lord Jesus Christ who authorised letters :
 - To the church in Ephesus, He is the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walk among the golden lamp stands.
 - To the church in Smyrna, He is the First and the Last who died and came back to life again.
 - To the church in Pergamum, He is the one who has the sharp double edged sword.
 - To the church in Thyatira, He is the Son of God whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like the burnished bronze.
 - To the church in Sardis, He is holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.
- Each was told - "I know your deeds"
- Each was give a promise – "To him who overcomes-----"
- Each letter was concluded with the warning –"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches"

Text: Revelation 3:7-13

1 Historical Facts about the City of Philadelphia

- ❖ Philadelphia was located about 28 miles southeast of Sardis
- ❖ Philadelphia was originally called "Rabbath-ammon, Amman".
- ❖ The city was renamed in honour of "Attalus II" the king of Pergamos
- ❖ Attalus was given the title of "Philadelphus" because of his loyalty to his elder brother, Eumenes II, who was the king of Lydia.

- ❖ Philadelphia comes from the Greek word, "philadelphos" which means, "one who loves his brother."
- ❖ It was one of the most strategic cities in the world at the time.
- ❖ It stood at the place where 3 countries met (Mysia, Lydia and Phrygia).
- ❖ It has one of the greatest highways in the world, the highway that linked Europe to the eastern region.
- ❖ Philadelphia was built with the deliberate intention to become a missionary city to spread the Greek language, way of life and civilization throughout the region who were wild and barbarous
- ❖ This city had vast vineyards, thus, they worshipped Bacchus and Dionysus (the god and goddess of wine, drama and fertility)
- ❖ The city was destroyed by a great earthquake in 17 A.D. just like Sardis and other cities in this area.

2 The content of the Letter to the church in Philadelphia

- i. Description of the glorified Jesus as relevant to the church (3:7)
 - a) He is holy and true – Holy means spiritually pure, clean, without blemish; True means real & genuine. Jesus alone is the only spiritually pure, real and genuine saviour you can trust.
 - b) He holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open” (see Isaiah 22:22). Jesus holds the key into the kingdom of God. He is the one who can introduce us to the presence and riches of God (John 14:6). The key of David speaks of the authority of Jesus Christ to open the door of invitation into the kingdom of God. After the door is opened no one can close - Salvation is assured. Once the door is closed one can open it – judgement is certain
- ii. The Omniscience of Jesus Christ (3:8)
 - a) “I know your deeds” – God knows everything about the church in Philadelphia, their strength, weaknesses, trials, endurance, faith etc.
 - b) “You have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name” The important thing here is that they have some strength and with that they have held onto God. You will be accountable to God for what you have and not for what you don’t have (Matt. 25:14-28)
- iii. Jesus will reward them according to your efforts (3:8b & 9)
 - a) Jesus creates opportunities for those that keep his word “I have placed before you an open door that no-one can shut” The open speaks of opportunities. The opportunities open to the church in Philadelphia include; the strategic position of the city (where 3 countries met, a missionary city & linked Europe to the eastern region), the gift of the Holy Spirit.
 - b) Jesus reveals his plans to his servants. “I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan ----- come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I loved you”
 - c) Jesus will protect those who obey Him. “I will keep you from the hours of trial that is going to come upon the whole world” (3:10). Does it mean that you will not have challenges in life or you will

have no bad moments? NO!!! It means that you will not be overcome by your situation/circumstances (Isaiah 43:2). It means that in the time of global trouble/tribulations like the economic crunch you will be protected. I pray now that the current economic crunch will not be your portion in Jesus name. You will only hear of it but you will not feel it for he will protect you.

- iv. Jesus encourages His people (3:11)
 - a) "Hold on to what you have" Your faith in Jesus is of infinite value. The worst thing that would happen to a Christian is his/her lost of faith in the risen Christ Jesus. It will be the greatest achievement of your greatest enemy. No one has the power to take away from you but by your own free will you can lose it. Hold on to it comes with a crown of victory. Only the victorious athletes wear the medals.
 - b) "Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God" (3:12). You become a citizen of the kingdom of God (New Jerusalem) with your passport as the inscribed new name of Jesus Christ.
 - c) "He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (3:13). It is entirely your choice.

3 Conclusion

Things may be difficult for you now. You may have prayed all kinds of prayers and nothing seem to happen. Your adversaries or enemies may appear to be enjoying good time at your expense. You may even be considering whether it is worth carrying on.

I bring you good news this morning from the only one who is holy and true, the glorified Jesus Christ. He said "You are not forgotten" "I know your deeds, suffering, troubles, hardship, longings, heart desires etc". "I have placed before you an open door that no-one can shut" Hold on to what you have so that no one will take your crown" The only way you will lose your crown is if you let go. Only the victorious athletes wear the crown and become citizens of the kingdom of Christ – the New Jerusalem.

People are the churches. You are the church. What sort of church are you? What sort of church would you be when Christ comes?

Would you trust him who is true this morning to keep his promises? Only you can answer that question.

Father I pray for all who hear and read this message that they may know you better and trust you the only true God. That they may stay true to your word until Christ returns – Amen!

