

Philadelphia: Persevering Under Pressure

"10...you have obeyed my command to persevere...."
Revelation 3:1 NLT



Jesus is coming back to the world and he is working in the lives of his people to prepare them to be united with him (Ephesians 5:25-27). One of the most common and effective tools he uses to mature and purify his people is pain and pressure. The believers in ancient Philadelphia were experiencing great persecution and pressure to deny Jesus. However, they persevered no matter how difficult the opposition. Perseverance is an important quality Jesus wants to find in us when we are united with him. *Do you remain faithful to Jesus even when it is difficult or unpopular? Do you easily get detoured or discouraged in living for Christ?*

Central Lesson A maturing Christian perseveres under pressure.

Church: The Church in **PHILADELPHIA** (3:7-13).

"7 Write this letter to the angel of the church in Philadelphia...."

Christ: The one who is **holy** and **true**, the one who has the **key of David** (3:7).

"7...This is the message from the one who is holy and true, the one who has the key of David. What he opens, no one can close; and what he closes, no one can open"

- **HOLY** - A key title for God that appears often in the OT. Jesus described himself with this divine title. He was claiming to be God. The Christians in Philadelphia were facing opposition and hostility because they claimed Jesus was God. Jesus reassures them that he is God and they should persevere.
- **TRUE** - Jesus is also called "true" or "the true one!" The Philadelphian Christians were suffering for the truth, not error or a misunderstanding. This was an encouragement to not waver in their witness.
- **KEY of David** - This expression is found in Isaiah 22 and probably is the backstory. God told Isaiah to rebuke an individual named Shebna, the palace administrator, who controlled who was allowed to enter the palace to come before Hezekiah, the king of Israel. Shebna was arrogant and had a tomb carved in a place reserved only for Israel's kings. God was displeased and said he would give his position to another, *"I will give him the key to the house of David—the highest position in the royal court. When he opens doors, no one will be able to close them; when he closes doors, no one will be able to open them."* (Isaiah 22:22). Revelation 3:7 is referring to Jesus as the one who allows access to God, the Father (John 14:6) and *"the new Jerusalem that comes down from heaven from my God"* (Rev. 3:12).

Compliment: They had little strength, but refused to **DENY** Jesus (3:8).

"8 I know all the things you do, and I have opened a door for you that no one can close. You have little strength, yet you obeyed my word and did not deny

me. 9 Look, I will force those who belong to Satan's synagogue—those liars who say they are Jews but are not—to come and bow down at your feet. They will acknowledge that you are the ones I love. 10 "Because you have obeyed my command to persevere, I will protect you from the great time of testing that will come upon the whole world to test those who belong to this world."

Two Compliments:

- **Small STRENGTH** [Gk.: "power"] but refused to deny Jesus (2:8). This may refer to them being a small church with a small influence on their city. Or it may refer to them individually feeling weak from the constant spiritual warfare. *Are there times when you feel weak spiritually? Are you regularly reminded of your need for Christ's power in your life?*
- **Perseverance** (3:10). Jesus compliments them for enduring the pressure to deny Jesus and the temptation to stop witnessing to the Gospel of Christ.

Three Promises:

- **Open DOORS** (3:8). In this case, this expression probably refers to the opportunity for ministry (Acts 14:27; 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3). They lived in a city that desperately needed to hear about Christ.
- **Their critics will one day acknowledge them** (3:9). Notice that the so-called Jews were not true Jews in the biblical definition (Rom. 2:17-29). Also, notice the promise of a future time (Judgment Day—Phil. 2:10-11) when they will acknowledge that the Philadelphian Christians were right about Jesus.
- **PROTECTION from the Tribulation** (3:10). The time of testing the whole world is a reference to the tribulation period that is depicted in Revelation 6-19 and precedes the second coming of Christ. Many Bible teachers see this as a promise that the Church will not go through this worldwide tribulation. This implies that all true believers will be removed (1 Thess. 4:13-18) before the tribulation period begins. The Greek text of Revelation 3:10 literally states, *"I also you will keep out of the hour of the trial being about to come upon the world whole."* Keywords: ἐκ "out of" and τῆς ὥρας τοῦ πειρασμοῦ "the hour of the trial." Jesus said the true believer will be kept out of a period of time of trial = the tribulation period.

Criticism & Correction - (None).

Consequence: Victors: made pillars in the Temple of my God, will have God's name written on them, citizens of the new Jerusalem, etc. (3:11-12).

"11 I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your crown [the victorious athlete's wreath]. 12 All who are victorious will become pillars in the Temple of my God, and they will never have to leave it. And I will write on them the name of my God [the victorious believer will have an honored position in God's heavenly kingdom], and they will be citizens in the city of my God—the new Jerusalem that comes down from heaven from my God. And I will also write on them my new name [the new name signified God's ownership]. 13 "Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches."

Conclusion

A maturing Christian perseveres under pressure.

Action Steps: ► Receive Christ as your Savior. ► As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ► Invite someone to next Sunday's Bible study. ► Attend a small group. ► Pray for friends that need Jesus.