

# The Faithful Church

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*Revelation 3:7-13*

## INTRODUCTION

- A. Illustration about the telephone operator refusing to turn back in a fierce snowstorm, Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations, #3392.
- B. The church in Philadelphia was an example of faithfulness.
  - 1. Jesus praises them for their faithfulness.
    - a. You “have kept My word, and have not denied My name” (v. 8).
    - b. “You have kept My command to persevere” (v. 10).
  - 2. This congregation would have had, from an earthly standpoint, every reason to turn back.
    - a. This congregation had probably, like the other churches in Asia Minor, faced severe persecution; remember Revelation was written to encourage Christians who were facing persecution.
    - b. In light of verse 9, where Jesus speaks of Jews’ being a “synagogue of Satan,” these Christians in all likelihood faced persecution from the Jews in their community.
  - 3. Yet, in light of their persecution, they had been faithful. In fact, this church was so faithful that Jesus did not rebuke them for a single thing.
- C. Because this congregation had been faithful, Jesus was going to bless them. Let’s examine this passage to see how Jesus would bless this congregation and how he will bless us here if we are faithful.

## THEIR NEW OPPORTUNITIES, v. 8

- A. Jesus had set before them an open door which no one could shut.
  - 1. This open door, in all probability, refers to more opportunities to preach the Gospel.
    - a. That is the obvious meaning in 1 Cor. 16:9 — “A great and effective door has been opened to me.”
    - b. This congregation had been faithful in preaching the Gospel; therefore, Jesus would provide them with even more opportunities to do so.
      - 1) We find this principle elsewhere in Scripture.
        - a) To the two faithful stewards in the Parable of the Talents, the master says, “You were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things” (Mt. 25:21, 23).
        - b) At the conclusion of the parable, Jesus says, “To everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance” (Mt. 25:29).
      - 2) The application seems rather obvious — if we are faithful with the opportunities God has given us to share the Gospel, we will have even more opportunities.
    - c. Illustration about Kublai Khan sending for Christian missionaries and Gregory X sending two Dominican friars, Encyclopedia of 15, 000 Illustrations, #8697.
    - d. Are we going to be faithful with the opportunities we have? Will Jesus, therefore, give us even more?
  - 2. No one could shut the door — no one would be able to remove the opportunities Jesus set before this church’?
- B. This congregation had little strength.
  - 1. Since Philadelphia had a small population, this little strength probably means that the church was small in numbers.
  - 2. Even though they were small in numbers, this church still faithfully proclaimed the Gospel.
- C. Are we going to be faithful and proclaim the Gospel? Will we seize the opportunities we have?

## **THEIR NEW RESPECT, v. 9**

- A. Jesus would make those of the synagogue of Satan who falsely claimed to be Jews to come and worship before these Christians' feet.
  - 1. That Jesus referred to these Jews as a "synagogue of Satan" shows where their true allegiance was; they, like Saul of Tarsus, probably claimed to be doing God's will when, in fact, they were doing Satan's bidding.
  - 2. They claimed to be Jews, but they were not.
    - a. They were physically Jews, and claimed to be right with God because of their physical descent from Abraham, but they were not right with God.
    - b. This shows that true Jews are Jews inwardly, not outwardly (Rom. 2:28-29).
  - 3. These Jews would come and worship at the feet of these Christians.
    - a. They, of course, would worship God and not these Christians.
    - b. But, the worship of God would take place at the feet of these Christians — this would cause these Jews to acknowledge that these Christians were correct and the true children of God.
- B. These Jews would know that Jesus had loved these Christians.
  - 1. It is highly possible that because this church faced persecution these Jews claimed their God did not love them.
  - 2. Jesus would correct that and prove to these Jews that indeed he did love these Christians.

## **THEIR NEW ESCAPE, v. 10**

- A. Because this congregation had kept Jesus' word, he would keep them from the hour of trial that was coming upon the whole world.
  - 1. This "hour of trial" refers to some great trouble that was coming upon the world.
    - a. "The world" refers to non-Christians, so we learn here that some great calamity would soon come upon those who were not Christians.
    - b. As one reads Revelation, he learns great upheaval was about to come upon the world.
      - 1) "Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth" (Rev. 6:4).
      - 2) Rev. 14:17-20.
    - c. That this period of time was described as an "hour" probably indicates a limited amount of time; hours are of short duration. This period of tribulation would probably be of short duration.
  - 2. These Christians, because they had been faithful to Jesus, would be kept from this calamity.
    - a. These Christians could have been kept from this calamity in a couple ways:
      - 1) The calamity could have come all around them but not befall them.
      - 2) They could die and go to be with the Lord before the calamity struck the earth.
    - b. Likewise, those of us who are Christians, if we are faithful to Christ, will be kept from the calamity that shall come upon the world at the end.
- B. This calamity would test those who dwelt upon the earth.
  - 1. The idea here in "test" could very well be that God would send calamity upon the earth in hopes that the inhabitants of the world would turn to him.
  - 2. God wants the world to turn to him.

## **THEIR NEW SECURITY, v. 12**

- A. Jesus promises blessings to the one who overcomes. Let's think about these blessings.
- B. He will make him a pillar in the temple of his God, and he shall go out no more.
  - 1. The idea of being a pillar in God's temple suggests stability and permanence; this idea is borne out by the statement "he shall go out no more."

2. This promise had a special significance to the inhabitants of Philadelphia.
  - a. This city was plagued by devastating earthquakes.
  - b. When an earthquake would strike the city, the inhabitants would often be required to go outside the city and establish temporary dwellings until the city could be rebuilt. This happened time and time again in Philadelphia.
  - c. But, Jesus says that if these brethren would overcome they would have a permanent dwelling and never have to leave it.
- C. Jesus would write three things on the overcomer's forehead:
  1. Pagan cults often branded their adherents so that they could be easily identified. There is probably a parallel to this practice meant here. The Christian will be branded by Jesus so he can be easily identified as his.
  2. He would write on his forehead "the name of my God" — this shows the possession, the Christian belongs to God.
  3. He would write on his forehead "the name of the city of my God" — this shows the Christian's habitation.
  4. He would write on his forehead "My new name" — this shows that the Christian will show in Christ's glory.
- D. Are these blessings yours? Or, do you need to overcome?