

10. Philadelphia: You have what you need!

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Letters from Jesus

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Bible Text: Revelation 3:7-13

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Revelation 3. I hope that the sentiment of that song is our own prayer as well, is just that we would know Christ better.

We've been doing a series in the book of Revelation which is the last book in the New Testament. It's a book that speaks in part of how God will bring about the end of time and what awaits for us thereafter but it's also a book written to encourage a group of Christians who were going through persecution and that's a very common thing for Christians. The fact is, there have been more Christians martyred in the last 100 years than in all of history prior to that and I would say given what's happening now in the Middle East, it may be well said that there will be more Christians killed this year and next year maybe than in the last ten years put together so it's a phenomenal thing.

We've looked at five churches thus far in our study and it would be very difficult to sum each one of them up adequately but you remember that Ephesus was told by Christ that they needed to regain their first love which was for him and build that passion again for Christ. The church of Smyrna, one of the only two churches, that church and the one we're going to study today in the book of Revelation about whom nothing negative was said. But he said, "Don't fear the things that people are trying to do to you and about the things that are coming." Then the church at Pergamos, he said, "Study the word of God for yourself and don't give in to the errors of the people who want to come and pervert it, the doctrine of the Nicolaitans." Then Thyatira, a church that had become very worldly and he tells them, "Remain faithful to God and forsake your worldliness." Then Sardis, which was probably without a doubt in my mind, it's the harshest of the seven letters because he basically says, "You have a reputation that you're alive but you're dead." He says, "You go around with a name of Christian but the reality is there is very little evidence of any spiritual life in you. You're basically in a coma." That was the one that we looked at last week.

So we want to turn our attention now to the church at Philadelphia. Of course, this is the church, the city name itself means "brotherly love," but we want to show that this is a church that Jesus has nothing negative to say about but he does encourage them to let them know that they have everything that they need. Now, I want ask you if you'd just stand with me in honor of God's word as we read beginning at Revelation 3:7, he says

this, "And to the angel," remember that word means "messenger." That would be like the pastor of the church,

7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, These things says He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens: 8 I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. 9 Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie - indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. 10 Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. 11 Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. 12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. 13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Thank you. You may be seated. May God add his blessing to the reading of the word.

Let's look a little bit at the city of Philadelphia and, of course, it's about 28 miles to the southeast of Sardis. It's in Asia Minor. There is a modern city on its place today and it's called Alsehir and it's in Turkey. It has a population of about 15,000 people so it's just a small town even today. It wasn't a big city during the time that Jesus is dictating this letter but it was called the gateway to the east because it lay in a path between mountains and so frequently people had to travel through Philadelphia if they were going to the east from the west. So if you were trying to get to Sardis which was one of the ends of the Persian Royal Road, you pretty well needed to go through Philadelphia. It was on a very fertile plain and they were primarily known for vineyards and for hot springs. So if you were into soaking in hot springs to get rid of your bodily ailments or if there was someone who wanted to go and get the fruit of the vine, that certainly was the place that they would go. It was founded by Attalus II in 140 BC and he had a nickname. He founded the city really for a different reason, not just because he thought there needed to be a city there. He wanted a city that would spread Greek or Hellenistic, as they call it, but that means Greek culture throughout the world and he thought, "You know, there's so much traffic going right through this plain that if we put kind of a Greek cultural center right here, then as people are traveling through, they can spread Greek culture." Attalus II, because this was kind of a benevolent thing, he wasn't doing it to build another garrison or a fortress or something like that, he got the name Philadelphus which meant "brotherly love" and the city took their name from this nickname of Attalus II.

Now, there was one problem with building a city here is that the region is prone to earthquakes and so they were almost totally decimated in A.D. 17, so much so that

Tiberius the Emperor, had to bring disaster relief to them. The city was actually destroyed multiple times by earthquakes and had to be rebuilt. That's probably why the city never grew to be of any extraordinary size. And so we still have remains here of the city and its foundations and, of course, you see if you'll look closely there, there are some more modern buildings in the background and there are still people that live there today. There was a temple in the city to Dionysius. Now, in Greek mythology, Dionysius was the god of wine and partying and reveling and the Roman name for this God was Bacchus and so there was a temple there to him. That's kind of natural when you think about it because the city was known for its grapes and vineyards.

Now, let's look at the Christ that introduces himself here. One of the things he tells us: he's the Holy One; he's the True One; he's the One with keys; he's the One that is providing an open door. So let's look at those a little more closely. In chapter 3, verse 7, it says, "He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens." So first of all, you see that Jesus is holy. Now, holy just means set apart to God. It means that it's the thing that differentiates God from man is his holiness. Holiness with respect to God means the absolute absence of sin. It's absolute purity of moral character. That's quite in contrast to man who we think that the way to do things is to take advantage of others or threaten others or hurt others or to cheat others and it's our sin nature to do harm to others and yet God's holiness takes him so apart from sin that it enables him to love perfectly. By the way, we're told in the New Testament in 1 Peter 1:15, he says, "But as He who has called you is holy, so also be holy in all conduct." In other words, as God is holy, we're supposed to be holy. Now, we can't do that on our own. I can never by my efforts or power live a good enough life to be holy and yet Jesus Christ when he comes inside me, when I receive him as my Lord and Savior, he changes what I want. He changes my inner motivation so that I'm not worried about keeping laws and regulations and rules from the outside but rather God gives me a new want-to. He gives me a new heart. He says in Jeremiah, he says, "I'm going to take away the stony heart and I'm going to put in you," maybe Ezekiel actually, "I'm going to put into you a heart of flesh." He gives us a new heart.

Then he says here, "He is true." Jesus said in John 14, "I am the way, the life and the truth." Jesus was making an exclusive statement. The fact is, he went on to clarify just how exclusive it was. He says, "I am the way, the truth and the life and no man comes to the Father but by me." He's saying, "There aren't many ways to heaven. There is not one religion that is just as good as another religion," and in fact, Jesus would tell us that no religion really is going to help you." By the way, do you know that the New Testament uses the word "religion" 27 times between the start of Matthew and the end of Revelation. It uses the word "religion" 27 times and only one time is it ever referred to in a positive light. That's when James says, "Pure religion and undefiled before God the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." But the other 26 times, God condemns religion. You don't need a religion, you need a relationship with Jesus Christ. That's what changes us is that relationship with Jesus Christ.

Now, Jesus is the truth. It's fascinating how detailed in the Old Testament the prophecies were about Jesus before he was ever incarnated. When God incarnated him means when God took on human flesh and lived as a man among us and that's what Jesus is. Now, it's so detailed, in fact, that just to look at the mathematical possibilities of just eight of the over 300 prophecies that Jesus fulfilled will blow your mind. Just the fact that he was born in Bethlehem. That he moved from Bethlehem into Egypt for a short period of time and then he came back and he eventually rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. He was crucified with thieves. Just to do the mathematics on that is a staggering, I forget what the numbers are, but it's statistically impossible for a person to have met just those prophecies and there were over 300. Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecy. Why? Because he is the truth about which the Scriptures speak. By the way, we have the original, some of the documents we have for like the book of Isaiah that talks about his crucifixion in great detail, predate the birth of Christ in Bethlehem by more than 500 years. There is not one other faith on the planet that has documents that prophesied a Savior or a Messiah in very astonishing level of detail more than 500 years before he's ever born. Jesus is the truth.

Now comes a phrase that is so rich and that is, he says, "I have the keys of David." Now, I don't have my keys up here. I try not to bring my keys when I'm behind the pulpit because if any of you have seen my key ring, it's staggering. It's got two of those electronic things: one's for the Prius, one opens the garage door. And then there are keys for here at the church and one is for the sound booth and one is for the front door and one is for my office door. Then there are keys for the glass security doors on the front and back of my house and then there are keys to other things that I've been given a responsibility with over time. The fact is, every now and then I sit down and go through my key ring trying to eliminate this huge handful of stuff, trying to narrow it down. Every year, I find some keys I haven't used in a while and I have absolutely no clue what they go to any longer and I have to go around trying. I try to label them. I try to put little colored things around them. But basically your keys, if I was judged by the number of keys I had, I would look pretty important but then again, so would a janitor in a large company. You know, they would look pretty important because of the number of keys they have.

Keys in Scripture represent authority so Jesus says, "I'm the one who has authority here," but there's an interesting reference here to Isaiah 22. Now, during the reign of King Hezekiah of Judah, it was a large government organization like we have large government today and so they had someone who was in charge of the treasury. He was the comptroller we would call it today and his name was Shebna. Now Shebna got kind of caught up in his position and the Bible tells us that he loved to ride around in a chariot and he had a personal entourage so that everywhere he would go, everybody could see how important he was because basically he was second in command in the land only to King Hezekiah himself. So he would ride around in a chariot with a personal entourage looking important and he was concerned that people needed to remember him after he died. He thought he should have one of those names that would live on after him. So the Bible tells us in Isaiah 22 that he went up onto the side of a hill basically and had a cave dug out of rock. Now, that took some doing back then because it meant that you had to

dig but you probably had to have a hammer and chisel. It probably took a work crew an extensive amount of time to bust through the rock and create this cave. Then he had his name carved on the cave because when he died, he wanted to be put in that cave with his name prominently on the cave and you will remember this burial thing was a big deal. Last week, seven miles outside of Sardis, we talked about the fact that there was a necropolis which meant an entire city just for burying dead people in.

Well, he wanted a fancy place because he wanted in years and years and decades and centuries after he was dead, he wanted people to walk by, look up there on the side of the hill and see this monument with his name on it and say, "Oh, that's where great Shebna was buried." And God in Isaiah 22 says, by the way, there was one thing that really kind of ticked God off about Shebna. Obviously it was his pride but there was another thing. That was that Shebna advised Hezekiah to make a league or a treaty with the king of Assyria. You see, Rabshakeh was the king of Assyria and he came and was bringing assault on Jerusalem and basically Shebna says, "Do you know what? Let's not go through the cost of war. Let's not do war. Let's instead just pay them treaty. Let's just try to get along and let's make an alliance with Assyria." For all I know, Shebna probably found some way to charge the king of Assyria for this advice that he gave Hezekiah because if there was a buck to be made in it, Shebna probably would have. By the way, that is in stark contrast to the counsel that Isaiah himself gives to King Hezekiah when he is reading the words of an Assyrian king and they lay out that letter from the Assyrian king before the Lord and Isaiah and Hezekiah cry out to God and we find out that God judges the Assyrian army in a single night. A fascinating, fascinating story that you can read about in 2 Chronicles 20. I wish I had time to preach on that passage.

But this guy was so judged by God that he wound up not getting to be buried in his fancy tomb but he died in a foreign land and was buried in an unknown grave. Shebna, however, was replaced by a fellow by the name of Eliakim. Eliakim's name, by the way, means "God will raise up." Interesting name. God will raise up. He's a type or a picture of Christ. Now listen to these words said in Isaiah 22:22 about Eliakim, "The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulders; So he shall open, and no one shall shut; And he shall shut, and no one shall open." That's where this quote comes from that Jesus is quoting this passage about himself when he says, "Here's the one who is talking to you." You see, Eliakim was a faithful servant. Eliakim was a humble servant. And Eliakim had two privileges that no one else did. One is, he had access to all of the king's treasury but also he was the one who was in control of the king's household so you couldn't get in to see the king unless Eliakim said it was okay. You wouldn't get to have an audience with Hezekiah unless it was cleared through Eliakim. He controlled access to the king. Now, if you think for just a minute, there is a pretty easy picture or analogy of Jesus Christ here. Jesus Christ opens up to those who have received him as Savior, access to the throne room of the heavenly Father. Now you see, I couldn't really have my prayers heard if I didn't first of all receive Christ but he is the one who opens up the access to the throne room of heaven and not only that but it's because of Jesus Christ that I have access to all the resources of heaven when I need them. This is why Paul was able to tell the Ephesians that, "God has blessed you with all spiritual riches in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Why? Because Christ gave us access. He has the keys of David. By the way, it's

interesting that, it's a whole lot more comforting for me to hear that Christ has the keys of David than to remember those words in Revelation 1:18 where he says, "I am he that has the keys of death and hell." Wouldn't you rather be on the heavenly side of that than the punishment side?

This is a reminder to us that Jesus has all the resources we need for life under his command. He uses those resources for our benefit and he's the one person you can ultimately depend upon. The fact is in the very next verse, Isaiah 22:23, it says this about Eliakim. It says, "I will fasten him as a peg in a secure place, And he will become a glorious throne to his father's house." Now, if you keep reading Isaiah, you're going to find out that while that peg is there for a long period of time, God does say that eventually he's going to saw that peg off and it's going to be thrown away because in context of Judah, he says, "Judah, you will eventually go into captivity because of your sin." But with respect to Jesus Christ, he gives us security for all eternity that if you have Jesus Christ, you need never again fear what your eternal destiny will be. You see, a lot of religions get this idea that there's a big balance scale and they say, "Well, as long as my good outweighs my bad, I'll make it into heaven." The problem is, how do you ever know whether your good outweighs your bad? You know, you might look at my life and see some of the things I've done, the way I've raised my family and how I've served my employer and you might conclude, "Well, it looks to me like his good outweighs his bad." The problem is that Jesus tells us that God doesn't just see what you do, he knows your secret thoughts. He knows the motivations of your heart. He doesn't just see the outward man, he sees the inward man and how many of us really can say beyond any shadow of doubt that when we talk about God seeing our inner thoughts and our motivations and the intents of our heart, does our good still outweigh our bad? I wonder. Sometimes I think stuff that doesn't really glorify the Lord. Does that ever happen to you? You see, the beautiful thing about the New Testament is though, we're not meant to go through life guessing, "Am I okay or not? Or is it tipping this way today?" John, writing to a group of Christians says, "These things have I written unto you that you may know that you have eternal life." Not wonder about it but know that you have it. What a blessing that is. "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the Son," John 5:24, "he that hath the Son hath life everlasting." Pretty cool, huh? You can know it. It's not up for question. It's not up for doubt.

Now Jesus says, not only does he have the keys but he has opened the door. A door represents a number of things and the fact is, first of all he says, "There's a door here that no man can shut." That also goes back to that quote about Eliakim, in other words, he can grant you access and he can grant it permanently. Someone has said that there are three kinds of doors: there is a door of opportunity, a door of opposition and a door of obligation. Let's look at those briefly. First of all, there's a door of opportunity. I read a story, maybe you've heard it, about a Christian that God up every morning. He was kind of timid, a little shy. I don't know if any of you are like that but he would get up every morning and he would pray to God, "Now Lord, if you want me to witness to somebody today, if you want me to share Christ with somebody today, send me a sign." So every day he kind of waited for something big to happen and nothing really big happened so he didn't share Christ. One day he's on a bus and this big, burly man sits down next to him

and over the next few bus stops, just almost everybody else got off the bus except this guy but this guy didn't bother getting up and moving to an empty seat. He's sitting right there and he was just about to get into being a little nervous that this big guy is still sitting next to him when all of a sudden the big guy stops and weeps. He burst into tears and he cried out love, "I need to be saved. I'm a lost sinner. I need the Lord. Won't somebody tell me how to be saved?" Then he turns right to this guy, looks at him and says, "Can you show me how to be saved?" And immediately the believer bows his head and says, "Lord, is this a sign?" You know, sometimes I think we're like that. We're waiting for that.

We have a door of opportunity. I'm amazed. This was a little church. Remember, the town itself today is only about 15,000 people. It was probably that or smaller during this time that Jesus is writing to them. The church itself wasn't very big. In fact as we're going to see in a minute and Christ is going to comment on that, he says, "I know you have a little strength. I know you're kind of weak. I know you're kind of small. I know you're not a big group of people. I know you can't do a whole lot powerfully." But they had an opportunity because people went through and they shared Christ with them. I'm always amazed how many people find us on the Internet and they come here a time or two, some of them stay, some of them move on. Some people come just for a two or three week seminar somewhere in the Las Colinas district around our church because, quite frankly, if I was going to build a church, it would not be here. Lousy location. I'd find a residential area and I'd plo p something right down in the middle of a few thousand homes. That would make a whole lot better sense geographically and yet people find us. Who knows, even if they're only with us two or three weeks, what did they get out of that? It could be something significant. It could be life-changing. We have an open door. It's interesting, I went out and looked this morning and this isn't bragging, I just think it's illustrative of what an opportunity we have. We currently have 315 sermons on our website that play 24 hours a day, seven days a week. 20,773 downloads by MP3. 5,174 videos of sermons downloaded. 6,106 downloads have been to mobile phones, people listening through the service. There is an open door.

Now, I think it's interesting to think about having a door of opportunity because if I had been in Philadelphia back then, I probably wouldn't have thought about that. I would have thought about the fact that I kept getting earthquakes pretty frequently. So you have this huge earthquake in A.D. 17 that levels the city and you rebuild it and a year and a half later another earthquake comes on and knocks your home down again. So you rebuild it and another earthquake comes along and levels your home again. You know, after a while, I think I would seriously consider going down to whatever was left of downtown Philadelphia to whatever the 23 A.D. equivalent or 33 or 45 A.D. equivalent or 62 A.D. equivalent of U-Haul and I would pack up and get out of Dodge because it just wasn't a good place to keep living. I would have had a different kind of door, I would have had a doorway of fear, a doorway of pessimism, thinking, "Ah, nothing ever will come of this." A doorway of defeat. Quite frankly, some of you heard me tell this story of the first time I came in here to the church and God was trying to tell me to join the church. I was seriously hoping God was joking with me. God doesn't usually joke but he does have a sense of humor, that's why I'm here. But I was thinking, "No, there's just not

anything here," and yet it's come over the years to be a great source of blessing to me. It's a door of opportunity.

It's also a door of opposition. They were opposed. You notice that Jesus mentions in this passage, he says, "the synagogue of Satan," and then he clarifies who that is, he says, "it is Jews that say they are Jews but they're not real Jews." Now, what in the world does that mean? Paul said to the Romans that not everyone who was a physical descendent of Abraham was a Jew but only those who were spiritual descendents of Abraham were the true Jews. In other words, what he's really trying to say is, to God it doesn't matter where you were born or what race you're a member of because actually there's only one race and it's called the human race and people that say that there are all these different races, that's evolution, that's not what God says. There is not but one race, we just have different amounts of melatonin in our skin. Whoopedo. So he says, "It's not where you're born. It's not what ethnicity you are. It's not what language you grew up speaking but what matters is whether you have faith in the one true God. That's my people. That's my people." And Jesus looking on these...and Jesus, remember himself was a Jew, looks on these Jews in Philadelphia and remember they probably controlled a lot of the commerce going through that city and he says, "You say that you're true Jews but you're not because you don't have the faith in the same God that Abraham had." Amazing thing.

There is also a door of obligation here in the sense that when you walk through a door, you're obliged to pay respects to the house that you're in. I love having people over at my house but when I open up the door to my house and they come in, if they came in and they were totally disrespectful of my family, totally disrespectful of the property within the home, they probably wouldn't get invited back. I remember one time having some folks over and there were some very, very must have been hyped up on sugar young men and Judy and I were so worn out by the time they left we thought, "Oh, let's not have them back again." I thought I was going to have to repaint, rebuild, probably level the house and start over again. I didn't know if we'd ever recover from that event. But you know, when we walk through heaven's doors, we're obliged to pay respect to the King of kings and Lord of lords. We need to worship him. We need to approach him in reverence. We need to take him seriously. We need to look at his claims on our life, look at the fact that he's opening up all the treasuries of heaven to me and in response, he wants me to live for his honor and for his glory. That's not asking too much.

So there's a door of obligation. By the way, it literally says here, let me tell you why this whole door thing is significant: the Jews back in this time went around teaching that nobody had access to God unless you were either a Jew or you became a proselyte to the Jewish faith. The Jews actually taught back then and this is not in the Bible, this is Jewish tradition, that Abraham sat outside the gates of hell to make sure nobody could get in unless he was a Jew or a proselyte to the Jewish faith. By the way, that's not in Scripture. Jesus wanted you to know that it doesn't matter if you're Jew or Gentile because he says, "With Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, barbarian nor Scythian, free men or slaves, male nor female." What's he saying? We all have equal access to Jesus Christ. Every one of you can come to Jesus just as simply and easily as I did when I was a 9 year old child

and I invited on July 6, 1971 when I asked Jesus Christ to come into my heart and save me. We have access to that.

Now, Jesus by the way, when he says, "I've given you a door here, I have the open door," he literally says, "I have given you, I have provided for you an open door." Now, look what he says by words of commendation or praise to this church and let me just give you a little more background about the church. They were faithfully enduring persecution. We know that from this letter and it tells us what he says. We have a little more historical data because one of the early church fathers was a fellow by the name of Ignatius of Antioch. He wrote a letter to this church expressing gratefulness for the hospitality that they showed him while he was with them and he encouraged them in their Christian unity. Now, you know as we've looked at each of these churches, we've looked at some of the historical periods that correspond to the church. Now, I personally believe there were seven churches at the time of Jesus and he's writing each one of them but I also believe that each one of them represents a period in church history. I'm not surprised by that and a lot of people have said that the church of Philadelphia represents the church beginning about 1793 with the Great Awakening, during the days of George Whitfield and others and Moody and Edwards and John Wesley. There are still churches alive or still churches today that are really teaching the word of truth, that are still passionate about Christ, that are still doing things for the Lord. Now, we're going to find out next week, we have the letter to the church at Laodicea, the last of the letters and that's the lukewarm church that make Jesus want to spit them out of his mouth and we have some of those churches today too. So a lot of people that believe these churches represent periods believe that we're in the day today where they're both churches of Philadelphia and churches of Laodicea alongside one another.

Notice, there's not a single word of warning given to this church, just commendation. Now, I'm going to give you a little mnemonic. This is not an actual website but look on the back of your bulletin because I'm going to have you write down three "w's" here. So this is just a little thing to help you remember. Most of you know that usually when you type a url, that's a uniform resource locator, that's that thing you type in the box at the top of your Firefox or Internet Explorer or Chrome, God help you. But you type that up there and that takes you to a website. Now, we've gotten to where these things are smart enough now that we don't have to have the "www" every time but most websites will still show that when you go to their site, it still has it. So I want you to remember the three "w's" of accessing opportunities from God. So I'm going to give you these and the first is that this church was weak. Now, normally you would not count this as a commendation. I'm sure if I were to go to the gym, it's been a while since Matt and I have worked out together, too long, but if I went up there and laid back on the bench press and he gave me a whopping 45 pounds, first of all, I'd be insulted but then if just as he's handing me the barbell he says, "I'm giving this to you because you're weak," I would not think that was a compliment. It would not make me happy. Okay, but he's always had encouraging things to say. You know, when I do falter a little bit, "You know, everybody has a bad day it just so happens that today is yours." Anyway, he says encouraging things like that.

But it is a commendation though if when you're weak you know it and you cry out to God for his strength to help. Paul said that he prayed three times for God to remove a thorn in his flesh, a physical ailment that he had and God three times said, "Nope, I'm not taking that away from you. I'm not taking it away from you. I'm not taking it away from you," and Paul latter said, "Therefore I would rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ might be magnified in me." In other words, he says, "For when I am weak, then am I strong." In other words, when I acknowledge I can't do it in my own strength, that's when I cry out to God and he does it through me in his strength. Now, let me give you a thought: if you depend on a committee, you will get what an organization can do. When you depend on a government, you'll get what a bureaucracy can do. But when you depend on prayer, you will get what God can do. That's what this church did. They were small in number. They didn't have a lot of resources but they depended on God because they knew their weakness and so they depended on God and they relied on his strength to share the Gospel.

By the way, let me give you the actual Greek translation here. Jesus says, "I know your works. Behold I have set before you a door that is open and no one is able to shut it because you have little power and have kept my word and have not denied my name." During Richard's Sunday School lesson this morning, he was saying there were some qualifications that you had to meet in order for God to grant you wisdom. Well, here he's telling this church, "In order for you to have access to this door of resources, there are some things that you have to do." He says, "That you acknowledge that you have little power. You keep his word. You don't deny his name. And then you've got access to all the resources of heaven." Amazing.

Some of you, I know Matt knows who this person is but hopefully some of the rest of you do too but a fellow by the name of Ben Carson, he is a pediatric neurosurgeon at Johns Hopkins University and if you know about his story, he didn't come from an easy background. In fact, he grew up without a father. He was so mad one day that he picked up a knife and nearly killed another young man in his neighborhood. His mother is who he gives credit to for changing his life in many respects. His mother was one of 24 children. That's pretty amazing by itself. She grew up in a poor home. She was married at age 13. Don't even think about it, girls. She had all the markers on her life that spelled trouble and in society she was a minority, she was poor, she was uneducated. But Ben Carson says of his mother that there was one thing that put her on a different course than the standard and that was that if she had an obstacle in her way, she never said, "Oh my, I can't do it. I'll have to quit." Instead she said, "I'm a child of God who makes a way out of no way and I'm going to do it." He says it's because of his mother that he became the surgeon and the Christ-like man that he is in many respects.

I think of two Latin phrases here I think we get to choose between. When I was growing up, there was a show on television with Doris Day and there was a song she already saying, "Que sera, sera, whatever will be will be, the future is not ours to see, so que sera, sera." Meaning, whatever happens, that's what's going to happen. Whatever it is, it's going to be. It's a fatalistic attitude. It means that there really is not anything you can do to change the future. Ben Carson's mother certainly could have adopted that attitude and

just said, "Eh, whatever happens," and the church at Philadelphia could have said, "You know, we're poor, we're small, we're weak. Why try? We can't do anything anyway." But then there's another Latin phrase. I've never watched the movie, "Dead Poet's Society" for reasons I won't go into right now, but it was one of Robin Williams' movies and as I understand the plot, there is a group of kids that the school has just kind of given up on and they put them all in his room and his job is to teach them classical literature. So he can't get these boys to be interested in anything so he forms this thing called the dead poets society and he comes into class wearing costumes and he sometimes jumps on tables and does things and he tries to stimulate them and one by one these boys start actually picking up and reading around campfires this classical literature that they are supposed to learn and it starts to transform their lives to where they become more scholars than just problem children. At one point as I understand it in the movie, he jumps on top of a desk and he just starts shouting, "Carpe diem, seize the day!" Carpe diem. They all stare at him for a minute and after that goes on for a while, they start shouting it with him. "Seize the day! Seize the day!" Through the influence of this one teacher, a group of young men are transformed at least in one respect positively in that they make something more of themselves than they might have been.

Now, that of course is a worldly movie, worldly attitude, worldly actor, an actor that I believe died without Jesus Christ and in a spirit of hopelessness and that's tragic, but I think it's interesting that we have two Latin phrases we can grab onto if we're small. We can either say, "Well, que sera, sera." I look at just as a human and I'm not saying this to be discouraging, I just want you to know what's going on inside these squeaky wheels of mine, but as a human I look at the fact that we're losing families and it's not because they're mad, they are just moving away. They are finding jobs in other places. They are finding other places to live and as we lose families, we lose income and as we lose income, it's harder to support the missions that we support and from a human perspective, that's a little scary. There's a part of me that kind of has that "que sera, sera" attitude and I think, "Well, I wonder what will be next." And yet Jesus would tell the church at Philadelphia not "que sera, sera" but "Carpe diem, seize the day. You have an open door of opportunity. Use every moment you have to share the Gospel," and I want to encourage all of you to do something. As you go through the next few weeks, when you meet someone and you're talking, find out if they have a church and if not say, "You really ought to come. We don't have a church so much as a family but come investigate it." Invite them. What happened when this church began to grow so dynamically for a period of time is that people kept telling other people what they had found here and other people came and they felt like family and they stayed. How long has it been since you've told somebody about that? Seize the day. Carpe diem. Tell somebody about it. Tell somebody when you have an opportunity to talk to them about Jesus. Seize the opportunity. You may never again have an opportunity to tell that person about your Savior and if you don't tell them, who will? Seize the day. Carpe diem.

This church was weak but they used that weakness not as a reason to give up and cry "que sera, sera" but to call upon the strength of the Lord. Here's the second "w": the church was wordly. By the way, that is an actual word. I looked it up and it's not hyphenated, it's wordly. I was afraid though if I didn't put that hyphen, my spellchecker

would change it to be worldly. So they were wordly. Jesus says about this church, "You have little strength but you have kept my word and you have not denied my name." Now, this church wasn't rich in material goods. The fact is he says about their strength, "You have only a little," the Greek word there is a "micron." He says, "You have microscopic strength but you've kept," and that word means to obey, to observe, "you have kept my commands. You have followed my teaching and kept my commands." I don't know that I can think of too many better adjectives that I would want my Savior to describe me as as saying that I was wordly.

You know, there are two approaches to reading the Bible. One approach is to read it and then you act as judge and say, "Well, I'll keep that part and I'm going to ignore that part. I'm going to keep that part. I'm going to ignore that. I'm going to ignore that." That whole Jonah thing, let's forget that and you become judge of God's word. There is a second way and that is to recognize that God's word is God's word and that he says that every word of it is inspired by God, it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works and realize that it's not my job to judge the word but it's the words job to judge me and see where I am. That's what they were. What an amazing thing.

The church was wordly and then the church was, yeah, and I'm pushing the alliteration here just a little bit, I can see the pastor up here saying, "Boy, he's struggling to get another 'w.'" But they were wavering not. Jesus refers to this synagogue of Satan. Jesus once said to a group of Jews who were proud of the fact that they were Pharisees and righteous and all these things and he just looked at them and he said, "If you were really Abraham's children, you would do the works Abraham did." Wow. By the way, this is why Jesus wasn't popular with Jewish leadership. That's why they took him to the Romans to have him crucified on a cross. Paul says in Romans 2:28, "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, but he is a Jew who is one inwardly." What he meant by that is that you're the descendent of Abraham if Abraham is called the father of the faithful, you are a descendent of Abraham if you have his faith.

Jews persecuted these Christians and yet Jesus says, "There is a day coming when they are going to come and," unfortunately the translation I read earlier says "worship" that's not the best word but basically "they are going to fall down before your feet and they are going to acknowledge that I have loved you." You see, the Jews are still hanging around waiting for a Messiah. They keep thinking that sooner or later there's going to come a Jewish leader who will put Israel at the top of the heap and who will dominate the world and they don't recognize that they did have a Messiah who came to them and they received him not. They rejected him. They crucified him but he rose again because his objective was not to create a worldly kingdom, his objective was to create a kingdom in the hearts of men. And it says, "But as many as received him," received Jesus, "to them he," God, "gave the power to become the sons of God even them that believe on his name." That's the big deal. You become a child of God by receiving Jesus as your Savior. That's the real deal. He says, "One day, the Jews are going to wake up and realize that the one that they crucified around 32 A.D. on a hill outside of Jerusalem on the north side

called Golgotha, that that was their Messiah, the Moshiach, the Anointed One." He says, "That day is coming."

Now, Christ gives every one of these churches a command. Let's see what command he gives to the church at Philadelphia. It's simply this: hold fast to what you have so that you do not lose your crown. What do you hold fast to? Well, don't hold fast to your works because one day you'll be pretty good and the next day you'll be pretty bad and if you're holding fast to your works, you're going to slip right off into hell. Hold fast your faith in Christ. I love Mark 11:22. It's probably one of my favorite verses in the New Testament and it's only three words long in Greek, echete pistin theou. But there are two possible translations both of which are correct. One translation is the translation the King James version has and many other versions have that says, "have faith in God." But the best translation of theou is not "in God" it's "of God." So a missionary by the name of Hudson Taylor when he was translating the Bible into Chinese, he looked at echete pistin theou and "pistin" can mean "faith," it can also mean "faithfulness," and so Hudson Taylor read the verse this way out of the Greek which is totally correct, "hold fast to the faithfulness of God." I like that better. Do you know why I like it better? One day my faith is pretty strong, the other day I have so much going on and so much stress in my life it's hard for me to have a whole lot of faith and I'm going to tell you, pray for me this week. I've been working until midnight most nights this last week and I'm going to be probably working until midnight tonight. I've got to start teaching a class tomorrow and I've got to get things ready for it. It's going to be a stressful week. I am scheduling a nervous breakdown for next Saturday if you want to join me. My stress level on a scale of 1 to 10 is somewhere about 12 1/2 right now and I've got to tell you, when I get that way, it's hard to be spiritual. It's just hard. So some days my faith isn't that great but do you know what is wonderful? It's that the faithfulness of God never changes. He is the same yesterday, today and forever, Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." He is always faithful. "It is of the Lord's mercies," Lamentations 3 says, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we're not consumed because his compassions fail not. Great is thy faithfulness." Which is also one of my top three favorite hymns of all time, "Great is Thy Faithfulness."

Hold fast to the word of God. Hold fast to your convictions. Hold fast to your stand for Christ, your love for the Lord. Then he says this, "so they you do not lose your crown." I don't know if you realize this but you should: we cannot earn heaven, period. No one gets to heaven by being good, you only get there by receiving Christ as your Savior because only he lived a perfect life and he died in your place, taking your punishment for you so that all you had to do was receive a gift from him and he would wipe out your sins forever. But once I have Jesus in my heart, when I serve God as his child, he rewards me. Now, we've got some amazing young people here today and I hope you parents encourage and praise and reward your children's good behavior and if I was a gazillionaire and if I could peer into your homes all the time, I would love to do something to reward your children but I really can't because they are not my kids but I will try and reward mine and when I become a child of God because I receive Jesus Christ in as my Savior, he wants to reward my service to him because he loves me. Isn't that awesome? I think that's an awesome privilege.

But he says, "don't lose your crown." Can I share something that makes me just a little nuts? I don't mean to jump on any of you because there are a lot of you here that probably do this and I haven't been around taking inventory but if you see me later, jotting people's names down, you'll know that I'm doing this but I haven't done this. But let me tell you something: I grew up back in the days when they actually taught grammar in grammar school. They actually taught you how to speak correct English and then somewhere in the 1970s and I haven't looked up in the history books to see when it happened but there was this phenomena, oh, and boy if I had a time machine and I could go back and blow it up before it started I would, but there was this phenomena called the Valley girls. They would talk kind of silly and they would use like, every other word they'd use like the word "like" because like they couldn't express themselves if they didn't use the word "like" because you know, everything is like something else, like it's just totally, totally necessary to say "like" all the time. Sometimes I hear my own children doing it and so I've come up with a plan. My plan is to pay each of them a \$10 allowance every week but every time they say the word "like" they have to give me back a quarter. It's not going to cost me a dime.

It would be them losing their allowance and yet I can serve God and yet through backsliding, I can lose some of the rewards he's already given me. I never will have heaven taken away. 1 Corinthians makes it very plain that God is going to judge my works by fire and we'll see what kind of works they were whether it's gold or silver or just hay and stubble. I'll keep the works that God knew I did with the right heart and for his glory and not for my own. But I also know that there's a foundation that can't be burned down. When you burn a house, everything crumbles but the foundation is still there and there is no other foundation that can be laid except for the name of Jesus Christ. What an amazing thing.

Hold fast to what you have. Now, let me close with the comfort that he gives. He says, "First of all, I'm going to keep you from the hour of trial." He says, "I'm going to keep you from the hour of trial that's going to come upon the whole earth." Now, they're already suffering some persecution but it's persecution that the Jews aren't letting them trade and they can't get jobs and they can't make money and they don't have a lot of resources. There is other persecution that's going to come in the days of Nero and then later all the way up to the days of Vespasian. You're going to have Domitian and Diocletian and all those emperors and they're going to persecute Christians for their faith and they are going to have them put to death and fed to the lions. By the way, this church doesn't exist anymore and yet he says, "I'm going to keep you from the trial that's coming to the whole earth." There is a lot of question about what that is. I personally think that God is speaking to us today because he says "keep you from the hour of trial that will come upon the whole earth." As far as I know, we haven't had a worldwide tribulation yet. And it clearly says the whole earth and some people say, "Well, that means the whole region." Well, why didn't he say that then? Why did he say the whole earth?

Now, there is a debate though about how he would keep that. A lot of people believe in what's called the rapture, that prior to God judging the earth for a period of seven years

during the tribulation, he is going to snatch up, the word "rapture" itself is not in the Bible but he's going to snatch up or catch up to heaven those who are alive in Jesus Christ and he's going to take them out of the world and there will only be lost sinners left and they will experience the judgment of God. There will be 144,000 Jewish missionaries who will preach about Jesus Christ, the Messiah they ignored and there will be people that come to know the Lord during those days. But I don't think this passage settles that question for us because a lot of people make a big deal that it says that he's going to keep from, the word "ek" means "out of" so it would literally mean that he's going to keep you out of the trial period that comes on the whole earth but we have to be careful with that translation because in John 17:15, Jesus uses the same Greek words and he says to his disciples, "I have prayed for you. I do not pray that you should," this is Jesus praying his high priestly prayer to his Father. He says, "I do not pray that you should take them out of the world," there's the "ek," the "out of," "but that you should keep them, to reign, to keep them from the evil one." Obviously Jesus didn't take his disciples out of the world so we can't really make that point on Greek. There are some other passages I think that would do a better job here but the point is this: Christ is going to preserve his people even in times of tribulation either by taking them out or by enabling them to get through it. I've had some times of tribulation in my life and God has always kept me through it even though sometimes I felt like I was standing at the edge of a cliff with three toes already over the edge. But I do believe that Christ is going to take care of his people.

Then he says, not only that but let me remind you that I'm coming. He says, "I am coming quickly." The word "quickly" in Greek actually means "suddenly." It's not so much that he was going to come in the next 30 minutes but it means that he is about to come. His return is imminent. It could happen at any moment and you and I will not be able to guess when it happens. In fact, if you guess a date, that's not the date. He's coming suddenly and quickly to his people so we need to hang on tightly.

Then he says something interesting. He says, "I'm going to make you pillars in a heavenly temple." The amazing thing is that if you go to the Middle East and by the way, this is a picture of a temple in Luxor, that's in Egypt. There are all these buildings in Greece and you can go to Athens and you can see part of the temple to Athena there. You can go to Greece and see this Egyptian temple. You can go all through out the Middle East and you can see, and in Asia minor, you can see temples still standing and the roof has falling in, the walls are down but the one thing usually that's still up somewhere or at least part of it is still up, are the columns or the pillars. The things that seem to hold up, the main support. It seems like for some reason, these are the last things to go most of the time. He says, "I'm going to make you pillars in the heavenly temple." Now, Philadelphia is in a volcanic area. They have lots of earthquakes and that's why so many of the things you look at there, the pillars are all that's left. By the way, in the Old Testament when it talks about the temple that Solomon built, there were two pillars on either side of the front porch and they actually named them. One was named Jachin which means "established and permanent." The other is Boaz which means "strength," because pillars were synonymous with the ideas of strength and permanence. What is he saying? He's saying, "I'm going to make you pillars in my temple," meaning, "I'm going to put you in my temple and you will always be there. You don't ever have to worry about leaving." I can't

wait until I get to heaven because I know that I won't have to worry about my property tax not being paid and they come to kick me out. I don't have to worry about the landlord calling and kicking me out. Once I'm there, I'm a pillar in the heavenly temple and I'm not going anywhere for all of eternity. What an awesome thing. Earthly kingdoms and temples and pillars fall but we have a place for all eternity.

He says, "I'm going to give you a new name." Three names in specific. He says the name of God. That just simply means that we're going to be godly. I won't have those wrong thoughts anymore when I'm in the presence of Christ. Then he says the name of the heavenly city. The last two chapters of Revelation talk about a new city called New Jerusalem. God is going to wipe out this earth and he's going to make a new heaven and a new earth and it's going to be totally pure and there's a new heavenly city called Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven and sits on top of the earth and we go into that city and we spend an eternity with God. All of that, of course, is imagery for something that we can't describe in our own human language. But we're going to have that name of that city on us. Then we're going to be given a name that symbolizes our role in the kingdom. You may remember that when Jesus was born, the angel told Joseph and Mary that they would have a son and that his name would be called Jesus for he will save his people from their sins. We'll be given a name that talks about what our role is in heaven. The fact of the matter is, a name is a mark of ownership. Let me explain something to you: you are a slave today, every one of you. You are a slave to either sin or to Christ. Now, the question is who you want to be your master, sin or Christ.

So here in summary as Richard comes to lead us in song, are our promises. He says, "Our enemies will be humbled. We will be kept from the tribulation. We will be strengthened and made secure. We will be given a new name." And all he asks us to do is hold on fast to the faith that we have. Let me ask you to do this: Philadelphia had really nothing negative he could say about it but they weren't the biggest, most numerically prosperous church, not the one that would have caught your attention if you were driving down the street in your chariot and there are probably a lot of people that drive down Gateway Drive and actually there aren't that many people that drive down Gateway Drive but the ones that do probably don't see anything real impressive over here. We're not huge in number and as people are moving off, the numbers are dwindling and yet we have a love here like that city of brotherly love and we have an open door that gives us access to all the blessings of heaven so that we can make a difference in the world.

I wonder, since there's not really anything in this message that says you need to repent of this, if maybe you just join me at the altar in prayer and ask God to help us go through that door and make a difference to the world around us. Would you pray for new families? I think the last time we actually prayed for new families was the Sunday that the Thornton family was all in the hospital after a car wreck and I got up here and we prayed and asked God to send us, I think we prayed for five new families and God sent twice that number. I want to ask him to do that again. I don't know about you but I'm ready to see new signs of life.

Would you stand and if you can, join me in prayer.

1 2 **Review**

1. *Ephesus - return to your first love*
2. *Smyrna - Have no fear of those things which are about to try you*
3. *Pergamos - Study the word of God for yourself*
4. *Thyatira- Remain faithful to God; forsake worldliness*
5. *Sardis – Wake up! You are in a coma!*

3

Philadelphia:

You have what you need!

4 **Revelation 3:7-8**

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens": "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

5 **Revelation 3:9-10**

Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

6 **Revelation 3:11-13**

- *Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." '*

7 **The City: Philadelphia**8 **Philadelphia: gateway to the East**

- *Location:*
 - *28 miles southeast of Sardis*
 - *On fertile plain; known for vineyards and hot springs*
- *History:*
 - *Founded by Attalus II in 140 B.C. as a cultural center to spread Greek culture through Phrygia*
 - *Mostly destroyed in A.D. 17 by earthquake; received disaster relief from emperor Tiberius*

9 **The City (2)**10 **Remains of temple to Dionysius**11 **Christ***The Holy One*

The True One
The One with the keys
The One who gives an open door

12 **The Christ**

- 3:7 -- "...He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens"
- He who is holy
 - Set apart to God (see 1 Peter 1:15)
 - That characteristic of God that distinguishes Him from man; absolute purity and the absence of sin
- He who is true
 - He is *The Way, The Truth, and The Life*

13 **The keys of David**

- Keys represent authority
- Reference to Isaiah 22
 - Shebna
 - Comptroller of Judah under Hezekiah
 - Conducted negotiations with the Assyrians; favored making alliance with Assyrians
 - Exalted himself
 - Built a fancy tomb hewn in the side of a hill to leave a permanent monument to himself
 - Rode about in chariots with personal entourage
 - Judged by God so that he died in a foreign land and was left in an unknown grave

14 **The keys of David (2)**

- Shebna was replaced by Eliakim
- Isaiah 22:22 – *The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; So he shall open, and no one shall shut; And he shall shut, and no one shall open.*
- Eliakim served faithfully
 - Had full access to all the resources of King Hezekiah; used his authority for the good of the people
 - Controlled access to the king's house

15 **The keys of David (3)**

- When Jesus says that He has the keys of David, it is to remind us that:
 - He has all the resources of His heavenly Father at his command
 - He uses those resources for our benefit
 - He is the One person in life upon whom you can depend
- Isaiah 22:23 -- *I will fasten him as a peg in a secure place, And he will become a glorious throne to his father's house.*

16 **An open door**

- Jesus sets before this church an open door that no man can shut
 - Door of opportunity

- www.sermonaudio.com/rrohlin
 - MP3 Sermons Downloaded To Date: 20,773
 - VIDEOS Downloaded To Date: 5,174
 - Downloaded via Mobile To Date: 6,106
 - 315 sermons broadcastinjg 24 x 7

17 **An open door (2)**

- Door of opposition
- Door of obligation
- Jews taught that Gentiles had no access to God but Jesus provides that access
- Jesus literally says, "I have given you an open door..."

18 **The Commendation**

19 **The Church**

- Faithfully enduring persecution when John records this letter
 - No words of warning given to this church; only commendation and encouragement
 - Ignatius of Antioch (who became a martyr), wrote to this church expressing appreciation for his recent visit with them, and encouraging them in Christian unity.
- Thought by some to represent the church at the time of the Great Awakening

20 **www.opportunity.God**

Church was WEAK
 Church was WORD-ly
 Church was Wavering-not

21 **The church was Weak**

- Yes, this is a commendation!
- Small group of believers in a small city
- Had a great opportunity because of travel through the city
- They knew their own weakness and so relied on God's strength to share the Gospel with those traveling through the city
 - When we acknowledge our own weakness and rely on God, we get what He can do!

22 **The church was Word-ly**

- Revelation 3:8 – ...for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name
 - Church not rich in the worldly sense
 - Only a little (Greek: micron) strength left as the result of persecution
 - In spite of this, they kept (obeyed, observed) Christ's Word faithfully

23 **The church was Wavering-not**

- "Synagogue of Satan"
 - Jews knows that the Jews in Philadelphia oppose the Christians and add to the burden of their persecution
 - Jews in this society often controlled a lot of the trade and commerce; they could make it difficult for Christians to prosper financially

- *Jesus assures these Christians that one day the Jews will recognize that the Christians had the right Messiah!*

24 **The Command**

25 **Hold fast**

- *Hold fast*
 - *Your faith in Christ*
 - *Your convictions*
 - *The Word of God*
 - *Your stand for Christ*
 - *Your love for the Lord*
- *So that you do not lose your crown*
 - *We will be rewarded in eternity for our faithfulness now!*

26 **The Comfort**

27 **Kept from the hour of trial**

- *The church at Philadelphia was already experiencing some persecution*
- *But Christ promises to keep them FROM the hour of trial that will come upon the whole earth*
 - *Clearly a future worldwide tribulation*
 - *Described beginning in Revelation 6*
 - *How Christ keep Christians from this trial?*
 - *By removing them*
 - *Or by preserving them through it (John 17:15)*

28 **Reminded of Christ's coming**

- *Jesus comforts the church by reminding them that He is returning*
- *This return will be sudden*
- *In light of this, Christ's followers need to "hang on tightly" to what they have*

29 **Permanently reside with Christ**

- *Made pillars in a heavenly Temple and kept in heavenly city*
 - *Pillars are usually the one part of ancient structures that endure*
- *Earthly kingdoms, temples, and pillars fall, but Jesus promises them a place with Him for all eternity.*

30 **Given a new name**

- *Marks of ownership*
 - *The name of God*
 - *The name of the heavenly city*
 - *The name of Christ*
- *We are all slaves – either to sin or to Christ*
 - *His mark of ownership on us entitles us to His protection, security, and blessing for all eternity*

31 **What wonderful promises!**

- *Our enemies will be humbled*
- *We will be kept from tribulation*
- *We will be strengthened and made secure*
- *We will be given a new name*
-

God asks us to hold fast to the faith we have; to serve Him with strength and resources He provides; to never waver in our steadfast commitment to Him