

I. ***A Steadfast Commitment to Orthodoxy: The Church at Philadelphia 3:7-13***

Commendation: *little power, obedient, exalting the name of Christ; to patiently endure.*

INTRO

1. **The Setting of the Church**
2. **The Sovereign over the Church**
3. **The Strength of the Church**

I. **THE SETTING OF THE CHURCH**

II. **THE SOVEREIGN OVER THE CHURCH**

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: 'The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens'" (v7).

1) **He who is *Holy***

"The words of the holy one"

God is holy.

"And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come!" (Revelation 4:8).

We worship God in holiness:

"As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Peter 1:14-16).

"Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God" (2 Peter 3:11-12).

2) **He who is *True***

"the true one"

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

“For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).

“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

We worship Him in *holiness*. We worship Him in *truth*:

“But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24).

The church is to be the foundation of the truth. It is “the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth” (1 Tm. 3:15).

3) He is *Sovereign*

“who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens” (7b).

This expression speaks to His authority and absolute right to control everything that exists.

“I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades” (Revelation 1:18).

“For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent” (Colossians 1:16-18).

Jesus “upholds all things by the word of His power” (Hebrews 1:3).

“the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

“Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created” (Revelation 4:10-11).

“who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens” (v7b).

“When he pleases, he shuts the door of opportunity and the door of utterance, and leaves obstinate sinners shut up in the hardness of their hearts; he shuts the door of church-fellowship against unbelievers and profane persons” (Matthew Henry).

III. THE STRENGTH OF THE CHURCH

"I know you have but little power" (v8a)

"little power" does not mean weak or feeble. It means little in *number*.

"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32).

"and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name" (v8b).

To love Christ is to *treasure* His Word.

Jesus IS the Word revealed (John 1)

"I have not departed from the commandment of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food" (Job 23:12).

"I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11).

"Therefore I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold" (Psalm 119:127).

"Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good" (1 Peter 2:2-3).

"long for" Gk *epipotheo*; 'intensely crave'

The church at Philadelphia sets the example of what it means to be a true Christian:

1) What it means to be His *follower*

"So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples" (John 8:31).

2) What it means to be in His *family*

"And he was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you." But he answered them, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it" (Luke 8:20-21).

3) What it means to be His *friend*

We demonstrate that we are truly the friend of Christ when we love Him and keep our commitment to His Word.

"You are my friends if you do what I command you" (John 15:14).

The Philadelphian believers did not waiver from their allegiance to the name of Christ and obedience to the Word of God.

CONCLUSION

Sardis: *“the Dead church”* **Laodicea:** *“the Lukewarm church”*

How does a church earn the disapproval and rebuke of our Lord? How does a church die or become lukewarm? One or a combination of ten ways:

- 1) When it loses its love for Christ as preeminent above all other earthly loves.
- 2) When it becomes weak and turns a blind eye to sin among its members.
- 3) When it ceases to give careful attention to embracing and teaching sound doctrine.
- 4) When it rests on past achievements and does not look forward and work hard in Christian service.
- 5) When it is more concerned with traditional forms, cultural trends, or clever gimmicks in the church than it is in committing itself to the spiritual growth of the people.
- 6) When it is more concerned with moralizing the country through politicals than it is changing people’s hearts through the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- 7) When it is more concerned with what men *think* than in what God *says*.
- 8) When it is more concerned with the approval of the people than the glory of God.
- 9) When it loses its commitment to uphold the Bible and live by its convictions.
- 10) When it is more concerned about counting noses than caring for the condition of souls.

The church that will survive and thrive with the full blessing of our Lord until His glorious return will have:

- I. A Willingness to Exercise **Spiritual Discernment** and Reject Evil
- II. A Deep and **Abiding Love** for Christ and Others
- III. **Courageous Endurance** in Times of Trouble
- IV. A **Faithful Witness** in the Midst of Evil
- V. Love, Faith, and Diligence in **Christian Service**
- VI. A Resolution to **Pursue Purity**
- VII. A Steadfast **Commitment** to **Orthodoxy**