



Sunday, November 10, 2019
Dr. Landon Dowden

FAITHFUL IN PHILLY
Rev. 3:7-13

At the heart of faithfulness is trusting and obeying Christ. Faithfulness includes a refusal to compromise His Word or to deny His name.

Osborne: Every small church in a difficult area of ministry will find this letter encouraging. Every Christian uncertain about his or her gifts and place in the church as a whole will be comforted. The basic message is profound: God is more interested in faithfulness than success. I met a pastor who had been ministering in an inner-city situation where growth was impossible. A church growth leader told him that he should leave since there was no future in that church. The leaders in Philadelphia would have been told the same. Does God care only about suburban ministry where neighborhoods are exploding with people and “church growth” is almost inevitable? I think not. When we get to heaven, the greatest rewards may well be for the kind of Christians who persevered in situations like that in Philadelphia, who remained true to the Lord in an extremely difficult situation. They are given an “open door” and a “crown” that no one can take away. Still, they can lose it by failing to “hold fast to what they have.” Thus the message begins and ends with perseverance, with “overcoming” any and all obstacles to the centrality of God and Christ in our lives. We will be vindicated; we will be given the very names of God and Christ for our own. We are citizens of heaven. But we must remain steadfast.

Passage in a Sentence: Because Christ is faithful to us, let us in the grace He gives to us strive to help each other be faithful to Christ.

- I. JESUS IS THE GREATEST LEADER FOR HIS CHURCH
 - a. Jesus leads simultaneously for His glory and our good.
 - b. What makes Jesus a great leader? Jesus is:
 - i. Holy
 - He is God – this was a descriptor for God in the Old Testament
 - All of His actions and all of His motives have always been and will always be what is pure, right and excellent – completely free from all impurity and evil.
 - He will never lead us to sin.
 - ii. True
 1. He is not lying.
 2. He is not deceiving us.
 3. He can be trusted.



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iii. Sovereign

1. Mounce: Having the “key of David” indicates complete control over the royal household. Specifically, in view of the following clauses, it means the undisputed authority to admit or exclude from the New Jerusalem. (Is. 22:22)

II. JESUS KNOWS ALL THINGS ABOUT HIS CHURCH

a. Jesus:

i. Knows your works

- They kept His word.
 - Obedience
- They did not deny His name.
 - Better to be excluded by the lost here than by Christ in Heaven.
- They kept His word about patient endurance.
 - They persevered through persecution.
- Their obedience got them excluded from the synagogue.
 - They lived a distinct enough life – somebody could tell they were a believer.

ii. Has set before you an open door

1. Keener: Though the authorities believe they have excluded these believers from God’s people, Jesus is the one who truly provides access to the new Jerusalem.
2. Paul’s use (Col. 4:3; 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12)
3. John’s use (Rev. 4:1; Jn. 10:1-2)
4. A bridge verse – Matt. 16:19

iii. Knows you have little power

1. Hughes: Human weakness is no hindrance to the power of God; on the contrary, by unmistakable contrast, it provides the setting for the manifestation and the magnification of God’s power.
2. Better to know you’re weak and depend on Jesus, than to think you are strong and depend on self.

III. JESUS WILL VINDICATE HIS CHURCH

- a. Those whom Christ loves, He will one day vindicate. (Is. 60:14)



HEBRON

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IV. JESUS WILL PRESERVE HIS CHURCH

a. Will keep

- i. Because they kept His Word He will keep them – blessings of obedience.
- ii. He will keep them from what He Himself endured – the wrath of God.
- iii. Though He was abandoned – He will not abandon them.
- iv. Whether we suffer or we are spared is based on Christ's providential decisions (Smyrna vs. Philly).
- v. We only experience what Christ allows us to experience.
- vi. After telling Philadelphia He will keep them He says:
 1. I'm coming soon.
 2. Hold fast – keep persevering.
 3. The one who conquers...I will make part of the temple and they will be mine.
- vii. Hour of trial – Rev. 6-19
- viii. Those who dwell on the earth (Rev. 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8, 12, 14; 17:2, 8)

V. JESUS WILL REWARD HIS CHURCH

- a. Jesus has seen every bit of their obedience and will reward them with: Vindication, Preservation, and Commendation (Pillar and Names).
- b. For believers, if they are removed from or preserved through the hour of testing, it will go well for them (even if they lose their life).
- c. For non-believers, it will not go well at all. An awful judgment on earth leads to an even worse judgment in eternity.
- d. There is no other access to the Father but Christ.
- e. Repent and believe while the door is open.