Pastor Richard Allen Farmer

Crossroads Church

5587 Redan Rd.

Stone Mountain, GA 30088

770.469.9069

Seven Churches, Seven Lenses Part 6

The Church at Philadelphia

Text: Revelation 3:7-13

Philadelphia:

* 28 miles southeast of Sardis
* Named for Attalus, king of Pergamum, who so loved his brother that Attalus was called Philadelphus (one who loves his brother).
* The Greek word, *philadelphia*, appears seven times in the Bible (Romans 12:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; Hebrews 13:1; 1 Peter 1:22; 2 Peter 1:7[twice]; Revelation 3:7). This is the only time the word is used to refer to the city. The other references point us to *brotherly love*.

**Who Christ Is**

This letter is from the One who is both holy and true. This speaks to His credibility, He is Wholly Other (holy) and The Trusted One.. He is also the Door (John 10:7-9). This speaks to both His *providing* access and His *being* access. This holy holder of keys knows how to manage access; for those people who come in and go out; for those who are authorized and those who are thieves. Here, in this text, the Door talks about doors. When Christ shuts a door, it is shut and when He opens a door, it is sure enough opened! Christ is the keeper of the keys *and* the door (1:18; 3:8).

Speaking of doors, Christ presents an opened one before the Church in Philadelphia. A corollary verse is in Isaiah 22:22, which speaks of a faithful servant of Hezekiah, named Eliakim.

The key of the house of David, I will lay on his (Eliakim’s) shoulder; So he shall open, and no one shall shut; And he shall shut, and no one shall open.

When Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, he spoke about opportunities as “open doors”. (1 Corinthians 16:9).

The One who is true speaks, now of those who are not. There are posers, haters, liars who surround the Philadelphians. In that culture, the church at Philadelphia has remained faithful (v.8).

**Illus.**

John Geddie (1815-1872) was a Scottish-Canadian Presbyterian missionary, who served in in the New Hebrides Islands, now called Vanuatu. After his death, a tablet was placed near the pulpit of a church in Vanuatu, where he had preached. One line on the tablet read,

*When he landed in 1848, there were no Christians here, and when he left in 1872 there were no heathen.*

John Geddie kept Christ’s word and did not deny Christ’s name.

This letter is not only from the One who is the keeper of the keys (1:18; 2: 3:7). He also keeps people. The use of the Greek word, *tereo,* in verse 10,can mean either *keep you from going through a trial* or *keep you while you're in a trial.* Either way, Christ is the keeper!

**What Christ Says**

The Keeper and Dangler of Keys, has a word for us.

1. “Hold to what you have”. The same was said to the church in Sardis (3:3). “In light of my return”, says. Jesus, “don't let anybody take your crown!” Stand tall! There is nothing inappropriate about focusing on or thinking about your crown. Here, Jesus encourages the saints to hold fast and move toward the ultimate prize: the crown of life. Cf. 2:10. Another rendering of that clause in verse 11 is:

*Hold fast to what you have so that no person may steal your victory prize by force.*

Another paraphrase;

*Hold fast to what you have so that no one may be able to use force to take away the proof that you are a conqueror.*

2. “Stand up”.

Christ has used the language of construction, presenting before the church, an open door. Now, He tells them, and us, that those intent on overcoming will be made pillars in the house of God. Let’s pause here. The Philadelphians are being urged to go beyond the minimum in behavior and ministry. not everyone will go the distance. I’m talking to someone here, this day, who is only interested in the bare minimum in what you do. You're not interested in winning. You're not set to be an overcomer. You're not a conqueror. Spiritually, you're a slacker. Here is Jesus, the Door, the holder of the keys, the way-maker, the One who keeps those who are His, inviting you and me to be pillars. What an offer: we could be on the fringe of the temple, the church....OR...we could be an important part of the support of the house of God.

In the first chapter of the book of Jeremiah, Jeremiah’s call is recounted. Two parts of that call stood out to me as I read it this past week.

1. God tells Jeremiah not to be afraid (1:7-8)
2. God tells Jeremiah that he will be like a fortified city and a pillar. (1:18-19).

What a word for Jeremiah...and for us.

But wait...there’s more.

3. “Let me mark you”

We get new names applied to us.

We’ve been singing a song around here for the last couple of weeks. It’s new to some and a familiar gospel song to others.

1. I was once a sinner, but I came Pardon to receive from my Lord,

This was freely given, and I found

That He always keeps His word.

Chorus:

There’s a new name written down in glory,

And it’s mine (And it’s mine)

Oh, yes, it’s mine. (yes, it’s mine!)

And the white-robed Angels sing the story,

“A sinner has come home” (home, has come home)

For there’s anew name written down in glory,

And it’s mine (And it’s mine)

Oh, yes, it’s mine. (yes, it’s mine!)

With my sins forgiven I am bound for heaven,

Nevermore to roam.

2 I was humbly kneeling at the cross,

Fearing naught but God’s angry frown, When the Heavens opened, and I saw

That my name was written down. {Chorus}

3 In the Book ‘tis written, Saved by grace”.

Oh, the joy that came to my soul!

Now I am forgiven, and I know

By the blood I am made whole. {Chorus}

God will write on us His name, a new name (v. 12). If we keep hanging with this Christ, He will change our names. It’s the offer I made to one Rosemary Simmons in 1980: “You keep messing with me and I’ll change your name”; and so I did.

It’s what happened when we brought Timothy home from a United Way agency in Dallas, TX. We changed his name and he has a new father. The same can happen to us spiritually.

The overcomers belong to God. They don’t have to leave His house. This was good news to the church in Philadelphia.

**Illus.**

In A.D. 17, an earthquake struck several cities in Asia Minor. The earthquake was recorded by the Roman historians Tacitus and Pliny the Elder, and the Greek historians Strabo and Eusebius. Strabo described Philadelphia as a “city full of earthquakes”. Aftershocks were frequent and citizens would leave the city, deeming it unsafe to stay there. They would flee their own homes for fear of more damage from the earthquake. With that historical tidbit in our minds, let’s read verse 12 again. In God’s house you’ll be a pillar and you won’t have to go out anymore!

Do you have a new name? Have you been tattooed by God Himself?

I close with a line from later in this book of The Revelation.

Revelation 22:4

*They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.*

Hallelujah!!!!!!

Amen