

**Write Seven Letters and Send Them to The Seven Churches (Mailbox/envelopes)**

These letters are the last words the risen, victorious Jesus spoke to the churches of Asia Minor.

**What would Jesus write to Believers Church of Statesboro?**

Last week we looked at the letter to Sardis: The Sleeping Church (Revelation 3:1-6). They were arrogantly living on their past reputation of being an alive and thriving city and church, but Jesus said in reality they were dead, so deeply asleep they looked dead. Therefore, He called them to wake up!

**The Letter to Philadelphia – The Faithful Church (Revelation 3:7-13)****Revelation 3:7 “To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:**

Many of us know from the American city that the name “Philadelphia” means “brotherly love” and the word is used seven other times in the New Testament. For example:

- **Romans 12:10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love... (NASB)**
- **Hebrews 13:1 Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters.**

Centrally located, Philadelphia was another major trade city and a center of Greek culture and language,

- The city benefitted from its location at the juncture of several important trade routes and began to be referred to as the “Gateway to the East.” Its modern name is "Alasehir".
- Leather and textile businesses provided much wealth to the city and brought financial stability. Even though they were financially stable, the city was literally (physically) unstable, being that it was in a volcanic region and on a major fault line which increased the threat of an earthquake.
- The city was devastated by a powerful earthquake in AD 17, that caused significant damage and the aftershocks continued for 20 years. You could be standing on solid ground one minute and then the earth would be trembling beneath you the next.
- The city was eventually rebuilt through financial aid from Caesar Tiberius.
- Speaking of Caesars, we know from our studies of the other five cities that Caesar worship and trade guilds worshipping the god of a particular trade or craft caused many problems for Christ followers. The chief god of Philadelphia was Dionysus, whom they worshipped to ensure a productive crop and financial endeavors.
- Jewish believers in Christ Jesus risked excommunication and disenfranchisement from the synagogue when they trusted Christ. Non-Jewish believers risked being branded a traitor to Rome resulting in great persecutions.
- Christians in Philadelphia would not say, “Caesar is Lord and savior”. They only declared that Christ Jesus is the true LORD and savior. So, they too, lost everything.

What do you do when you suffer so much persecution that your world crumbles around you, just like the stone pillars and buildings crumbled in an earthquake? **EX:** Lost job, business dream, sickness, divorce. How do you keep going in the middle of instability? **You remain faithful to Jesus.**

Jesus identified himself to them as saying...

**Revelation 3:7 These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David.**

- Jesus holds the key of David, the key to the messianic kingdom which He rules over and the kingdom that he brought us into. **Colossians 1:13-14 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.**
- Jesus also holds the key to my life and the key to your life as well. He is the one who is in control, the one we can rely on and trust even if our world seems to be crumbling.

**Revelation 3:7** These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.

Remember due to their faith in Christ Jesus, those who were Jewish believers were excommunicated from the temple. The Temple Door was shut. Jesus is saying, “I see your suffering, I see all you are going through, I see your brokenness. But know I’m the only one who can open and shut a door.”

### **The Door to Salvation and New Life**

Jesus opened to them the door that leads to life! **I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and go out, and shall find pasture. John 10:9 ASV**

### **The Door to Opportunity and Purpose**

Jesus opens doors of opportunity for His followers and to individual churches.

Paul told the [Corinthian Church](#). **...I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, <sup>9</sup> because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me. 1 Corinthians 16:8-9**

**Revelation 3:8** I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. The Door stays open until Jesus shuts it. When God opens a door, no power can resist. As Jesus promised Peter, not even Hell can resist (Matthew 16:18–19).

### **Revelation 3:8b** I know that you have little strength,

The church was beat down and zapped of its strength. But the statement “you have little strength” could indicate that they were a small church and, compared to the strength of the worldly governments in comparison, they had little strength.

Jesus told them to hold on to the little strength they had left and continue to be faithful.

To the Faithful Church Jesus said: 1) **yet you have kept my word and** 2) **have not denied my name.**

Can we do that? Can we be faithful to keep Jesus’ words and not denied his name?

- Jesus tells us that if we love him, we will keep his commands. (John 14:15)
- And if we hear his word and do it, we will be like a man that built his house on the rock. His house stood even when the storms and earthquakes came. (Matthew 7:24-27).

## **The Results of Faithful Service**

### **1. You will be known as the beloved of Jesus.**

**Revelation 3:9** I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.

King David wrote in **Psalms 23:5** **You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.**

### **2. You will be spared from the hour of trial.**

**Revelation 3:10** Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.

**The Great Tribulation** The “hour of trial” or “great tribulation” described in later chapters in this book of Revelation. This will be a uniquely horrible period of human history bringing God’s judgement to the world. This “testing”, this time of tribulation will come upon the unbelieving inhabitants of the earth (Revelations 3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8, 12, 14; 17:2, 8).

Jesus said, “**I will keep you from this hour of trial...**” I personally believe that the Church will be raptured or taken away before the Great Tribulation. The Church or Churches are never mentioned after Revelation 3. **Christians do suffer and will continue to suffer persecution and tribulation in general, but God saying, “I also will keep you from (Greek “out of”) the hour of trial”** is a clear literal promise to

believers for deliverance from the coming Great Tribulation (Rev. 6:1 – 19:10). It does not indicate preservation *in*, but a complete exemption *from* the Earth's final distresses.<sup>1</sup>

Although many people will be saved during the seven years of the Great Tribulation, the day is a day of great wrath and judgment on human sin and rebellion (Rev. 6:17).

**The Rapture** **1 Thessalonians 4:16-18** **For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.**

**“Caught up together with them”:** 726 harpazo (har-pad'-zo); from a derivative of 138; to seize (in Various applications): KJV-- catch (away, up), pluck, pull, take (by force).

**The exact word “rapture” does not occur in Scripture:** it was formed from a word in the Latin translation of the Bible, which, for this phrase reads simul rapiemur cum illis.

### **Patient Endurance**

**Revelation 3:10** **Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.**

Some of you are here today and your life is a bit shaky. You may feel like your world is crumbling around you- but you are patiently enduring, waiting for Jesus, and trusting Jesus through the process.

**ILL:** We have a great example of that in Scott Hamilton. His is a story of endurance. He won a Gold Medal in the 1984 Olympics and then turned pro. But his career came crashing down when hit with the earthquake of testicular cancer in 1997. He endured through and made it back to skating until 2004 when he was diagnosed with a brain tumor. Here is his story of endurance. **(VIDEO)**

You Can Endure ANYTHING, When Jesus is Your EVERYTHING

### **The Results of Faithful Service**

**3. No one will take your crown.**

**Revelation 3:11** **I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.** Jesus is coming back! So, hold on to what little strength you have! Be faithful!

**4. Jesus will make you a pillar in the temple of God.**

**Revelation 3:12** **The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it.**

Never again will the faithful followers of Jesus be put out of God's temple. The victorious will be made pillars in the temple of God. A place of permanency.

Over the years, the Philadelphians learned to build pillars and columns that could withstand the earthquakes. So, the believer will go from a life of rubble to a strong permanent pillar.

**5. God and Jesus will write their names on you as their own.**

**Revelation 3:12b** **I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on them my new name.** The Name of God, written on us, the pillars in the temple, denotes ownership.

**EX:** Parents wrote our names on our lunch box, supplies, jackets, and such when we went to school.

Jesus writes his new name on us too! “This one is mine!”

Therefore, We Don't Just Survive, We Thrive!

**Revelation 3:13** **Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**

<sup>1</sup> Jack W. Hayford, Litt.D., *Spirit Filled Life Bible NKJ* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991), p. 1962