

A Church that Gives also Receives

Revelation 3:7-13

(preached Pine Grove 12/18/16; Sunday AM)

Introduction

A Father had twin boys who were exact opposites..

One of the boys was a pessimist, who always looked for the bad and complained about any and everything....

The other boy was an optimist, who always looked at the bright side and was never discouraged about anything..

So one Christmas, the dad wanted to put the boys to the tests by buying each of them very different Christmas presents...

For the pessimist, the father bought the best toys imaginable and wrapped them all and put them under the tree...

For the optimist, he wrapped up a box full of horse manure and set it under the tree...

Christmas morning came and the boys came downstairs, where the pessimistic boy opened up 10 presents of the best toys imaginable and then burst into tears...

His father was shocked and asked why...

“Well, I have read all the instructions to these and then put them together, and I don’t have batteries for any of them, and some of them will probably break...”

The dad then gave the optimist his one present...

The boy opened it up to find nothing but a pile of horse manure...

And the biggest smile came across his face...

Equally shocked, the dad asked him what was he smiling about...

“The boy got up and started dancing around the living room, shouting....”

“I’m getting a pony....I’m getting a pony...”

There is always a fear at Christmas of unequal gifting, where you give someone a present that costs much less than what they gave you...

It goes something like this...

“Bud, thanks for pair of socks.”

“No problem. Thank you for the \$50 Outback gift card.”

You give them a box of horse manure and they give you the best gifts in the world...

You feel like crawling under the pile of shredded wrapping paper and hiding your face..

Well, today we come to the 6th church that Jesus addresses in the book of Revelation...

This is the church at Philadelphia...

And the church at Philadelphia was a church that gave greatly to the Lord, and the Lord was going to give greatly to the church at Philadelphia...

There was not going to be an unequal swap of gifts between the church at Philadelphia and the Lord...

As they gave to Him, He was going to give to them...

As you can see on our map, the city of Philadelphia was located east of Smyrna and Sardis..

The city was founded in 190 BC by a man who had an unusual love for his brother, and so the city was known as the city of brotherly love...

It was located on a major west to east trade road and got a steady flow of people daily.

We don't know how the church at Philadelphia was founded...

It isn't mentioned anywhere else in the Bible.

But it seems most likely that the church was born when someone came to hear Paul preach at Ephesus and carried his teaching back to Philadelphia and started a church there..

We know there was a Jewish synagogue there as we will see later...

And there was probably much idol worship as well..

However, in the middle of all of that pagan and unbelieving culture was the little Christian church of Philadelphia..

And it may have been small, but dynamite comes in small packages and it was a dynamite church...

Of all the 7 churches that Jesus addresses in this opening section, only the church at Smyrna and the church at Philadelphia get no rebuke from Jesus...

We know why the church at Smyrna wasn't attacked by Jesus...

Mainly because it was under severe attack by the world around it...

However, the church at Philadelphia wasn't under attack.

Yet Jesus is still greatly pleased with them...

So pleased that he has no correction to offer only rewards to promise to them..

Which is a great reminder to us of a very important truth...

Jesus is pleased with faithful churches...

We sometimes lose that thought in the book of Revelation and even in our world today where we see so many churches that are unbiblical and dead...

Yet, we must not forget that Jesus is pleased with faithful churches...

Though there are no perfect churches, Jesus is pleased with what he sees in some churches...

He is pleased with the faithfulness of some churches....

So, the question is what does Jesus want to see in His church, and what does he want to see at Pine Grove and in the lives of the people who go here?

And furthermore, what are the rewards for a faithful church and faithful believers?

Well, we will find out this morning in Rev. 3:7-13 as we look at a church in ancient Philadelphia that gave but also received...

Let's begin by looking at...

I. What a Faithful Church Gives (7-8)

Let's read verses 7-8...

7 "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this:

8 'I know your [d]eeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

To bring some of you up to speed on where we are in the book of Revelation and to set all of our minds back in this final book of the Bible, let's review for just a second....

The apostle John wrote the book of Revelation in 90-95 AD...

He had been sent to a Mediterranean Island as punishment for preaching about Christ...

The Roman government had an island prison way before Alcatraz and it was the island of Patmos...

John was the only of the original 12 disciples still alive.

All the others had died due to Christian persecution either from the Romans or the Jews...

John has survived and he had preached, but the government eventually exiled him to this island of Patmos to limit his preaching and teaching...

While on Patmos, John was visited by Jesus...

Jesus had been crucified and resurrected in the 30s, so this visit from heaven was 60 years later..

And Jesus came with one purpose....

To give John a glimpse of the events leading to his future second coming....

But before Jesus gave John the future, he had some words for the churches in John's present day...

Specifically, he had 7 messages for 7 churches in John's day...

And these churches in some represent any church at any period of time in church history...

Some of the churches are excellent churches...

Some of the churches are faithful but still fall short...

And some of the churches are dead and in need of serious repentance...

And so these 7 letters served the purpose of helping the churches in their day, but also help us today to see what we should be doing and not doing as a church in the world...

So, in verse 7 of Revelation 3, Jesus sends a letter to the sixth church, the church at Philadelphia and he comes to this church as the Lord of power and authority and sovereignty...

Look at how he is described in verse 7...

He who is holy and true and has the key of David...

What is this key of David?

Well, David was Israel's greatest king, and there are many prophecies in the OT that point to a descendant of David who would be greater than David...

Who would rule the kingdom of God greater than David ever did...

And that someone was Christ..

Though Jesus was a descendant of David, he obeyed God perfectly unlike David...

And he earned the right to rule the kingdom of God forever...

Jesus holds the key to the kingdom of God...

No one will ever be a part of God's kingdom unless they pass through Christ....

And he not only holds that key, he holds power over every part of the earth and especially over every church...

Jesus can open doors that no man can shut and shut doors that no man can open....

He has unmatched authority in the world, and he comes to the church at Philadelphia as one who holds the power and authority over them...

And let me tell you...

You want to be right with the one who has the authority over everything....

When I was at Carver Middle school in Whitmire, they had the best homemade rolls in the world...

Well, I was a picky eater, so those rolls were sometimes the only thing I ate...

And Mrs. Colleen was always the one at the end of the line passing out rolls..

And though everybody wanted two, she was tough.

You only got one.

Well, she was friend of my grandma's and sometimes I would see her at my grandma's house away from school..

And I was always extra nice to her...

I would talk to her and smile and be extra polite, and some days when there were extra rolls, she would give me one.

Because the simple principle for life is this..

You always want to be in good with the lunch lady in charge of rolls if you are a picky 5th grader...

And if you are a church, you always want to be in good with the One who has power and authority over the church...

And the church at Philadelphia was in good with Jesus and he was coming to them with nothing but good news...

Now, why did the church at Philadelphia please the Lord?

Well, there are 3 reasons right there in verse 8..

The first is that the church was powerful...

Jesus didn't say that they had a little power as an insult to them...

The thought of the phrase "a little power" is that they were small but powerful...

The church at Philadelphia was probably small in number but great in influence...

Size is no indication of how far reaching a church can be in its influence...

Israel was 70 people when it went down to Egypt but it walked out of Egypt with millions...

After Jesus' death and resurrection, the church first met in Jerusalem and there were 120 people there...

Yet, those 120 people turned the world upside down..

The church at Philadelphia was small, but they had power, and where does that power come from?

It comes from believers being in the Word of God and living out the Word of God in the world...

People want churches to do programs and events and all sorts of things to attract the world to that church...

And those things are fine, but do you want to know one of the most powerful ways to influence the world?

Go out and obey the Word of God in your life and stand firm in your convictions....

The world will take notice.

And a church filled with obedient people is a powerful force, no matter how many or how few...

The second thing that the church at Philadelphia gave to God is this...

They kept his Word.

Simply put, they were not only hearers of the word but doers of the word...

We saw this last week in Sardis, except the people there were hearers only and not doers, and the church was dead...

Philadelphia was alive because the believers in that church kept the Word of God...

They heard it preached and instead of playing church, they lived church in the world...

In case you were wondering, the Lord is honored when His word is heard and obeyed...

The third thing they gave to the Lord is that they did not deny His name....

In other words, they said they believed in Christ with their mouth and they affirmed that with their life....

Denying the name of Christ is not just the moment where someone asks you if you are a Christian and you say "yes."

You can also deny Jesus by claiming to be a believer and living like a lot person...

If you are saved, you are saying that Jesus Christ is your Savior and Lord...

Yet, if you live contrary to what he commands, you deny His name and His Lordship over your life...

The church at Philadelphia said they loved Christ and they didn't deny that by how they lived....

They lived like they loved Him...

And because of their allegiance to Jesus, the One who has the power to open and shut doors kept the doors of the church at Philadelphia open...

Jesus told them in verse 8 that they had an open door before them....

What did He mean by this?

I simply think he meant that he would give the Philadelphian church opportunities in their city...

He would send lost people there to hear the truth...

He would bless the preaching there and draw people to hear it...

He would allow the church in Philadelphia to have influence in their culture...

Churches often forget that they can do nothing apart from Christ....

But with Him, all things are possible....

And since the church gave to the Lord, they received blessings in doing ministry in their world....

Let me get on a soapbox for a minute but I get really frustrated with Christians who gripe about how the world is silencing their influence in the world...

And they will protest and picket and sign petitions, but I often want to know if they haven't given their influence away by the lives they are leading...

Sometimes, Jesus shuts the door of the church's influence because the people in the church claim Christ but deny him with their lives...

It amazes me how people who are obedient to the Lord in their daily lives are amazed when trouble comes their way...

The church in America is losing and has lost influence not because of some evil government conspiracy, but because many have lived double lives...

They call on Jesus on Sunday and deny Him Monday through Saturday with their lifestyle...

Jesus has shut the door and no man can open it unless He opens it...

The door in America is closing quickly, and it should be no surprise to anyone who looks closely at the lives of most so-called Christians...

Now Philadelphia was not that kind of church, so the door of ministry was wide open there...

But that is not the only reward of faithfulness to Christ...

The other rewards are found in verse 9-13....

If you give to Christ, you can expect to receive from Him as well...

Let's look at verse 9...

II. What a Faithful Church Gets (9-13)

9 Behold, I [e]will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie— I will make them come and bow down [f]at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you.

Jesus will keep the door of influence open at Philadelphia, but he will also keep the door of evangelism open as well...

The synagogue of Satan is a phrase we have seen before in these letters..

The church at Smyrna was located near the synagogue of Satan...

In nearly every city of the Mediterranean world, there was a Jewish synagogue...

Some existed side by side with Christian churches, but others were openly hostile to Christians...

The synagogues in Smyrna and Philadelphia were clearly hostile to the believers there...

So, Jesus calls them synagogues of Satan because the Jews in the synagogue were doing the work of Satan in trying to destroy the church of the Lord...

So, not only will Jesus protect the church at Philadelphia from these Jewish attackers, He is going to bring some to the church to get saved...

They are going to come and bow down before the church and more importantly the Lord of the church...

Now this is amazing for a number of reasons, but the main one is that Jews would never bow to Gentiles...

This would be unheard of for a Jew to do such a thing...

Yet, the heart of a man is but clay in the Lord's hands and he can take the hardest Jewish heart and shape it into whatever He pleases...

Just as the greatest Jew of all time.....

The apostle Paul, who went from a murderer of Gentile Christians to a missionary of the Gentiles...

A church that is faithful to the Lord is given the privilege of seeing some miraculous things....

And there is nothing more miraculous than seeing a great enemy of God become a friend of God...

May God bring his enemies through the doors of Pine Grove and may they leave friends with Him...

And may we be witnesses to the miraculous power of God...

So, the door of evangelism would stay open at Philadelphia...

But then in verse 10 Jesus moves to the future blessings of being a faithful church...

We have seen this before as the overcomes in the other letters are promised to rule with Christ in His kingdom...

They are promised to be able to eat from the tree of life in eternity..

They are promised to be saved from the second death..

They are promised the hidden manna and a white stone wit their name on it...

They are promised white clothes and a permanent name in the book of life last week...

Well, the church of Philadelphia adds to this list in verses 10-13....

10 Because you have kept the word of My [g]perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of [h]testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole [i]world, to [j]test those who dwell on the earth.

11 I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown. 12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; 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 My new name. 13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

Well, we get a number of additions to the list of rewards...

And remember these are promises to every faithful believer...

We will also get white robes and white stones and hidden manna...

Because these are promises to the overcomer, not just that specific church...

The next promise to add to our list this morning if we are a true born again believer this morning is found in verse 10...

WE will be saved from the hour of testing that is about to come upon the whole world....

And you may ask what world wide event is coming upon the whole world?

Clearly, this is Jesus' reference to a future 7 year tribulation period...

Though we call events worldwide, that is not an accurate description...

Even World Wars 1&2 were not world wide events...

Most events are still very local...

Creation was a worldwide event...

The flood was a worldwide event...

The scattering of the people at the tower of Babel was a worldwide event..

A truly worldwide event requires the hand of someone who holds the world in his hands..

Only God can create a world wide event and the next one to come will be the 7 year tribulation period...

A time when the whole world will experience the wrath of God for their rejection of Jesus..

A time when large numbers of the world's population will die...

Large numbers of trees and wildlife and fresh water will be destroyed...

World wide events that John has recorded for us to read about in the chapters ahead...

Yet, Jesus' promise to the church at Philadelphia and to every true believer is that He will keep them from this hour of testing that is about to come upon the whole world...

He will rescue them from this 7 year world wide event by snatching them out of the world at the rapture of the church...

And why would John give this promise to the church at Philadelphia right here in chapter 3 of the book of Revelation....

Because John is about to see a preview of tribulation breaking out in all its chaos...

And Jesus wants John to know and faithful Christians in Philadelphia to know and faithful Christians of all time to know that they will be rescued before that world wide testing begins...

What a glorious promise from the Lord Jesus Christ...

And this makes sense right?

People who have truly trusted in Christ should be reduced from the wrath to come...

I love my kids.

So if I saw a huge wave approaching the beach, I wouldn't sit in my chair and let it swallow them up and say, "Well, they deserved it. They are disobedient at times, so I'll teach them a lesson and hope they survive."

No, I would jump from my chair and grab them up and run for safety..

They are my kids and I would do whatever it is to keep them from suffering even if they weren't perfect...

How much more does Christ love his true children in the world?

Yes, we are flawed.

Yes, we are hard headed and stubborn...

No, we aren't always obedient...

But do you think for one minute that Jesus seeks to put us through a tribulation period full of disease and famine and strife?

What purpose would that serve?

To make us more holy or faithful or righteous?

Guess what?

If you are truly saved, you are already holy, faithful and righteous through Christ?

I see no point of a believer going through a tribulation period...

Jesus has suffered and died for our sins...

More suffering isn't going to make us more special in God's eyes...

Our suffering has been paid for in Christ's blood...

So, what a promise and you will want to hold on to that promise real tight in the weeks and months ahead...

It is going to get real bad before it gets real good...

And additional reward here is found in 12...

Jesus will make us a pillar in the temple of God...

The picture of a pillar was a picture of strength in the eyes of a Philadelphian...

This area was prone to earthquakes...

In fact, we learned last week that Sardis was hit with a powerful earthquake in AD 17...

That same earthquake struck Philadelphia as well...

And everything in a city would be leveled except a few structures...

And what structures were those?

They were often the pillars that held up a building or temple...

We looked at the ruins of Sardis last week, and what is still left in Sardis today after almost 2000 years?

The pillars of the temple to Artemis...

Needles to say, pillars were seen as strength in a structure, so when Jesus promises to make true believers pillars in the temple of God...

He is promising that they will be there forever...

In other words, heaven has no exit door for the true believer....

There is only one way in and no way out...

True and faithful and real believers will be a pillar in heaven...

Then we see 3 other promises that are really interesting at the end of verse 12...

The first is a promise to the believer that Jesus will write the name of God on them...

This is interesting, but what does that mean to have the name of God written on you...

When we were at seminary, we went to Grace Community Church which had 6 to 8 thousand people there on Sunday...

Needless to say, the nursery was packed...

Well, we would get to church, and they had an automatic nursery check in...

You would go in, punch in your name and it would print a name tag to put on John Andrews' back...

You would get a duplicate sticker to claim him at the end of service ...

But that name on John Andrew meant ownership...

He belonged to Bud and Tonya Moss...

That same name will be written on you in heaven...

You are branded a child of God...

For what reason?

I don't know...

Maybe it will simply be a constant reminder of who owns you and saved you...

I simply know this...

For all eternity, you will either wear the mark of the beast or the name of God...

But that's not the only name you will get from Jesus....

Look back, you will also get the name of the city, which is the New Jerusalem that will be your home for eternity...

We will get to spend some time there at the end of Revelation...

For now, we simply know that we will bear the name of the city of God forever...

Maybe this is simply a mark of citizenship...

I am convinced it will be a real city with real citizenship and everyone in it will bear its name.....

A final name all true believers will receive in eternity is simply the new name of Jesus...

Now, what is this referring to?

Let me explain it this way....

If you have ever only talked with someone and then you meet them in person, you often find that they look nothing like you imagine...

When it comes to Jesus, we know him through what we read in the Bible...

We know him enough that He has saved us...

Yet what we see is Jesus still in dim light...

When we lay our eyes on Christ, we will have a new name for Him...

Because we will see for the first time as He truly is...

The dim light will have given way to the full light of His glory...

And in that day, we will have His new name written on us forevermore by Jesus Himself...

I wish I could tell you what that name will be, but that will have to wait for eternity...

For now, we just hold on to the promise...

And we also make sure our ears are open to this truth because Jesus again tells us...

If we have ears, we better listen to what He just said to the church at Philadelphia and to all churches everywhere...

This is the Word of the Lord...

Now, where does all of that hit our lives today?

Conclusion

1. Obey to be blessed today.

The church at Philadelphia kept the word, lived the word, and honored the name of Jesus...

And he gave them power and influence and sent people there to get saved...

Churches that are dying spend 1000s of dollars on experts who suggest all kinds of ways to boost attendance and get back on track...

The best advice is to teach the Word, hear the Word, read the Word and obey the Word...

A church that does that will be blessed by the Lord Jesus regardless of their size and location..

2. Press on to be blessed forever.

The promises of verses 10-13 are future promises because the church perseveres and holds fast...

Endurance had its privileges...

We live in a culture that makes it hard to push on...

We live in a culture that makes us feel like the fish swimming upstream..

So many things in this world can be had by taking to short cut and giving in to the pressures around us...

Yet, none of those things are eternal...

If you want something that lasts forever, live like forever matters...

If you want something that lasts just a little while, jut give in to the world and you can have it...

The church at Philadelphia had every reason to give up...

They were small...

They were outnumbered...

They were being attacked by others...

Yet, they stuck it out, and Jesus promised them and every other overcomer some incredible rewards...

Yet, not giving up is not always the right choice..

Today is not the day to stick to your guns if you aren't saved...

Today is give up your sin and repent of it...

Today is the day to give up trusting in yourself and start trusting in Christ....

If not, you wont be saved from the hour of testing that may come upon this world at any time...

And if you don't live to see that, you won't be saved from the second death....

Today is the day to give up your life to Christ in repentance and faith, and to assure yourself that you won't give up ever again....

Let us pray.