

“Small but Strong”

Revelation 3:7-13

1. The city of Philadelphia

Philadelphia was situated in a strategic place on the main route of the Imperial Post from Rome to the East, and thus was called “the gateway to the East.” It was also called “little Athens” because of the many temples in the city. Philadelphia got its name because of the love that Attalus II had for his brother Eumenes who was king of Pergamum. Hence, the city was called “the city of brotherly love.”

2. The church of Philadelphia

Let’s look at Jesus’ assessment of this church. From the text we learn that it was:

a. A serving church

- Both Philadelphia and Sardis were told, “I know your works” (3:1; 3:8). What was the difference between the works done by each of these churches?
- What does Matthew 22:36-37 indicate about the right way of working?
- Think carefully: what drives your own personal service for God?

b. A witnessing church

- V. 8 “Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut.” What does this statement imply about the attitude of the Philadelphian church toward those around it?
- How can this statement encourage your own life as a witness for Christ (comp. Rev. 3:7b)?

c. A trusting church

- “I know that you have but little power.” This cannot be a negative statement, because in the context Christ is commending this church. So, what does “little power” refer to?
- In what way can “little power” be positive? (comp. 2 Cor. 12:9-10).

d. An obeying church

- “And yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name” (8b). What does it mean to “keep” Christ’s word?
- How does Philadelphia’s attitude contrast with that of Sardis (3:3)?
- Are you an “obeying Christian” when it comes to God’s Word? In your response, consider the following verses: Philippians 2:14; 1 Thess. 5:16; Proverbs 3:5.

Final reflection

- To which of these four characteristics do you need to give more room in your life?
- How will you do this?