

SERMON NOTES:



THE SEVEN LETTERS

To Philadelphia: Patiently Endure

WEEK 7

WESTERN MEADOWS BAPTIST CHURCH
SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

OPENING THOUGHT

With the exception of the faithful sufferers in Smyrna, each church appears to be a downward progression from the previous one. Ephesus had good doctrine but no love. Pergamum had good works, but they were conforming to the world around them. Thyatira had love and good works, but they allowed false teaching to enter the church. Sardis received no encouraging commendation; they looked alive but were dead.

Like Smyrna, the church of Philadelphia disrupts this pattern, as both are the only churches to not be rebuked at all by Jesus. Philadelphia was apparently a fairly small church in an environment that was hostile to Christianity. This persecution seems to have come from the Jewish population of the city attempting to stir up conflict between the Roman government and the Christians.

But even though Philadelphia was constantly threatened and had little power, Jesus gives them a flurry of encouragements. First, after being dispelled from the Jewish synagogue, Jesus promises that He has opened a door to His Kingdom for them, and no one can shut it. Second, He promises to one day reveal before all that the church of Philadelphia is loved by Him. Third, because of their patient endurance, Jesus promises to keep them from the hour of trial yet to come. Finally, Christ promises to establish those who finish their race faithfully within the New Jerusalem, which is an assurance that He will love them for all eternity.

SUGGESTED VERSES FOR MEMORIZATION & MEDITATION

- I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have kept my word and have not denied my name. (Revelation 3:8)
- Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. (Revelation 3:10)
- I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. (Revelation 3:11)

READ VERSES 7-8 AND DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING

1. Jesus introduces Himself as having “the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.” He then claims to have placed an open door before them that no one is able to shut. What is the open door to which Jesus refers?
2. Jesus knows that the Philadelphians have little power, but they faithfully keep His word and do not deny His name. What encouragement can smaller churches gain from these words?

READ VERSES 9-11 AND DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING

3. As in Smyrna, we see that the Philadelphians were coming under persecution from the Jews of the city. Why did the hostility exist? Why does Jesus claim that the Jews are not really Jews?
4. Because the Philadelphians were faithful to keep Jesus’ word, He promises to keep them from the hour of trial that is coming. What does Jesus mean by this promise?

ACTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Though the world might have considered the church of Philadelphia to be weak, Jesus knows that in Him they are strong. Consider your areas of weakness and how God might be glorified by working through them.
- Philadelphia was built around a major trading road, meaning that traffic between Rome and Asia constantly poured through the city. This placed in Philadelphia a uniquely opened door for sending the gospel to places further to the east, like India and China. As in Colossian 4:3-4, pray also for open doors to declare the mystery of Christ in your own life.

READ VERSES 12-13 AND DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING

5. To the one who conquers, Jesus lists a staggering series of promises. What is New Jerusalem, and what is the significance of these promises?