

The Blessed Hope!

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;” –(Titus 2:13)

Diamond & Nugget #6

“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” -(Revelation 3:10).

For all those who are faithful followers of Jesus Christ there is a place of high honor, a place of permanence and stability as a pillar in the divine inner sanctuary. The word "temple" here (*naō*) is the inner sanctuary, the Holy of Holies. It is a word also used of the Church in Ephesians 2:20-22, but here it is used of the believers' place in the final state, that is, in the New Jerusalem where God will dwell with His people forever.

When the tabernacle of Moses existed, and later the temple of Solomon, the Holy of Holies was the most sacred place of the entire complex. Only one person, the high priest, dared to enter it, and he only once a year on the Day of Atonement. In it were resided the Ark of the Covenant crowned by the mercy seat. This sacred room represented the presence of God, for it was from there the pillar of cloud and of fire emanated. So for Jesus Christ to give a believer such a position in the very presence of God will be an honor surpassing any ever achieved by mortal man. This is the final blessing which Jesus Christ announced to the churches, an honor which all believers should desire to attain.

Then Jesus will write on every overcomer the name of God, the name of the New Jerusalem which will come down to the new earth from the new heaven, and also Jesus Christ's own new name. The word "name" here stands for the authority, character, and person. It reminds Christians of 1st John 3:1, 2, which speaks of their being called the sons of God and as such bearing His name and character. John pointed out that believers are now the sons of God, but it does ***"not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."***

Once again the Scripture emphasizes that this promise is for anyone who will hear in all the churches of all times. The hearing ear is one of faith and obedience. Believers need to let the Spirit make these truths real in their hearts and lives.

This church kept the word or teaching about the patient endurance of Jesus Christ. They kept looking to "Jesus the author (leader, example, pacesetter) and finisher (perfecter who brings believers to maturity and completion because He has already reached the goal toward which believers strive) of our faith." For the joy (a joy believers will share) that was set before Him, He **"endured the cross, despising the shame (caring nothing for the shame and unafraid of it), and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God"** -(Hebrews 12:2). This implies that they laid aside every weight (or encumbrance) and sin, and then, by running with patient endurance the race set before them, they kept their eyes on Jesus.

What did Jesus mean when He promised He would keep these believers from the **"hour of temptation"**? There are two principal and conflicting views concerning this matter about which there is much dispute. They deserve to be compared with each other.

First of all, it should be noted that the verse should be viewed from an end-time perspective, for Jesus immediately says, **"Behold, I come quickly."** Obviously, the temptation or trial in view is not a personal distress or a local persecution. It belongs to the eschatological time of temptation **"which shall come upon all the world."** Events since the beginning of the year have resulted in Satan showing his hand!

Such an early theological writer as the mid-19th century hymn writer Dr. Edwin Hatch says in his *'Essay on Biblical Greek'* that Revelation 3:10 has an "evident reference to the tribulations which are prophesied later on in the book" (pg. 73). Most exegetes agree that it refers to what is called the Great Tribulation. This must mean that Philadelphia and the other churches are representative of the whole Church in this age.

Now, what does Christ mean when He says, **"I will keep you from the hour of temptation"**? Will the Church be kept in and through the Tribulation, or will she be kept from coming into it at all? One school of thought holds the Church will go through the Tribulation, but that Jesus Christ promised special protection here, pointing to John 17:15, where the same phrase **"kept from"** is found. Other expositors see in this verse a promise that the Church will be kept from enduring this trial, which is a time of God's righteous judgment upon sin, that the contexts of John 17:15 and Revelation 3:10 are quite different. One little word makes all the difference in the meaning.

That word expression **"will keep"** is found **21X (7 X 3)** times in the King James Bible, it is one of the thousands of God's special or unique ways God self-authenticates His Word: the "Heptadic Design Feature" or God's finger prints validating His Sacred Word! The Greek meaning of **"will keep"** is defined by the preposition **"from"** (**ek** – meaning **"out of"**). The direct object of our verb **"will keep"** is the Tribulation **"which shall come upon all the world."** Those who would dispute this verse as a Pre-Tribulation Rapture verse are guilty of showing their ignorance [lack of knowledge] of the Biblical Greek text. This is definitively a Pre-Tribulation Rapture passage. It is not even debatable, as the Greek is definitive beyond doubt.

"There is no real plan to reopen the economy because the people in charge don't plan for most human beings to survive much longer. The coronavirus "vaccine" will contain a kill switch, a genocide weapon against humanity that's designed to depopulate the planet. That's why they don't need years of testing. It's not designed to prevent or cure anything; it's designed to kill. If it were a vaccine to save it would require up to seven years to test the safety and efficacy of the vaccine!

The food shortages are being engineered to cause widespread starvation, making people too weak to protest. Food scarcity is the weapon of the globalists, and they know that when people are starving, they will surrender their freedom in exchange for a meal. The hope of Jesus Christ's coming was to encourage the Philadelphian believers to hold fast to what they had, to what they received from Christ, lest they lose their crown. (The word "man" should not be emphasized here. The Greek word "man" is just a pronoun meaning "no one.") Because Christ promised to keep them did not mean they could let down their guard or become careless. They must avoid false teachers. They must keep fighting the only fight worth fighting, the fight of faith. -(See Colossians 2:18, 19; 3:1-4; 2nd Timothy 4:7, 8.).

The church at Philadelphia was not like the ones in Sardis and Laodicea. C. H. Spurgeon wrote, *'The Philadelphia church was not great, but it was good; it was not powerful, but it was faithful.'* The Lord Jesus commended this church for its faithfulness. Men might have looked at the little church in Philadelphia, as they do at many like it today, with contempt. It did not meet in an elaborately decorated, impressive building. So far as I have been able to discover, there were no men in this church of great political, economic, or academic power and influence. But it was a church known for its faithfulness.

Faithfulness honors God and is honored by God. And faithfulness, like slothfulness, has a way of rubbing off on others. Hence we read of faithful men and women in the church at Philadelphia for many centuries. The pastors of this church were consistently influential (not in the world, but in the kingdom of God) for eight hundred years. We read in church history of their influence from the first through the eighth centuries. Let us ever be found faithful to our God. He alone knows what influence our faithfulness, or lack of it, will have upon the generations to come.

The Lord Jesus found nothing in this church to rebuke, or even to correct. He gave no word of reproof to the saints at Philadelphia. That is a remarkable testimony to these people whose names are known only in heaven. To this congregation the Son of God spoke nothing but words of praise and encouragement.

In Revelation 3:7-13 the Lord Jesus Christ holds the church at Philadelphia before us as an example of what every believer and every local church ought to be. A careful reading of the Saviour's letter to the church at Philadelphia ought to put a prayer in our hearts, crying, 'Lord, make me faithful.' Read the Saviour's words and learn this: God honors faithfulness.

When the Lord of glory spoke to the church at Philadelphia, as I said before, there is no word of reproof, warning, or correction, but only a divine praise: ***“I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name”*** (v. 8).

Imagine that! The Son of God himself bends over from His lofty throne to speak a word of praise to a band of faithful believers on the earth! I would dearly like to be one of them. Wouldn't you?

Certainly, He is here giving us an example to follow. We are usually quick to point out one another's faults and failures. But love is always quick to forgive and quick to praise. A little praise is a great means of encouragement. Some people seem to think that kindness is blasphemy. But if the Son of God speaks an encouraging word of praise to His church, surely we shall be safe in giving a little praise to one another.

What was there about these Philadelphian believers that the Son of God saw fit to commend and praise? The matter of commendation and praise was their works, works of faith, love and patience.

1. ***“I have set before thee an open door...”***

The Lord God had set before this church an open door, which no man could shut. He does not tell us what this open door was, but generally this language is used to describe a door of utterance for the preaching of the gospel -(2nd Corinthians 2:12). Apparently, the Lord gave these men and women an opportunity to serve Him in the furtherance of the gospel, and they seized the opportunity He gave them. They faithfully performed the work God put into their hands. They did not talk about what they wanted to do, what they had done, what they used to do, or what they would do if they had more money and people. They simply did what they could for the glory of Jesus Christ and the furtherance of the gospel. It may be that their labor was insignificant in the eyes of men. But Jesus Christ looked upon it as an honorable thing. Nothing done for Christ is insignificant or meaningless to him -(Mark 14:6-8).

The one thing God requires of His people is faithfulness -(1st Corinthians 4:2; Matthew 25:23; Luke 19:17). When the Lord Jesus Christ opens a door for us, as we faithfully follow Him, no man can shut the door, and he will not shut it.

2. ***“Thou hast a little strength”***

The faithfulness of these saints at Philadelphia was especially commendable because they had very little with which to work. The Master said, ***“For thou hast a little strength.”*** This is not to be taken as a word of reproach, but as a word of praise. They had been faithful in their service to Christ, even though they had little strength. Many of the Lord's churches are like this church at Philadelphia: they have 'a little strength', but only a little. They had little numerical strength. The church at Philadelphia was a small church. Therefore they had very little strength for taking on any great work. But their lack of numbers did not deter them. They just rallied together and did what they could. And Jesus Christ commends them for it. God thinks more of quality than of quantity. He

has much greater regard for obedience than for tally sheets and numbers. Denominations, denominational representatives, religious businessmen and politically motivated preachers take polls and count heads. 'The Lord looks on the heart!'

Because they were small in number, like most small churches, this church had little monetary strength. When money was required, they could do very little. This was, for the most part, a band of poor people. There were no men of means among them. But they were precious to Christ, who counts sincerity of greater value than all the gold in the world.

And, again like most small churches, this assembly had very little strength in the area of talents and gifts. At Corinth, the church had talents and gifts running out of their ears. They had an abundance of teachers, miracle workers and wealth. But very little was done. They were rich in ability, but poor in grace. Not this church. No one here seems to have had any great talent or ability. But the people were full of grace. Grace made them faithful. Much was done for the glory of Christ, the souls of men and the furtherance of the gospel. They had 'a little strength', but used every ounce of it for Christ.

"Thou hast a little strength." Someone said, 'That was, perhaps, their misfortune, but not their fault.' Therefore they were not blamed for it. The Lord does not blame us for having little strength, but for having little faith, little love, little devotion, little zeal and little consecration. If our strength is little, let us pray for grace, that our little strength may be used entirely for Christ.

As I was typing this, I was reminded of one of the churches on my first student appointment was a small church by the name of Valley Chapel, near Holbrook, PA on PA route 18 in the south-western corner of Western Pennsylvania. Rain or shine, warm or cold, my 9:30am worship service would have the usual 20 or so turn out. A fire in the large pot-belly stove warmed the one-room wood building known as Valley Chapel, ideal on a damp rainy Sunday morning. It had once served as a one-room school house in the 1920's and 1930's. Three elderly sisters, the Gilbert sisters, one wheelchair bound, kept the church energized, baking, doing embroidery work, and raising money at the county fair and craft fairs to sustain the church's financial requirements. They characterized this image of being a little church with a big spirit.

3. Thou ... ***"hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name"*** The saints of God at Philadelphia were faithful and persevering in the midst of great opposition. The Lord Jesus gave them this word of praise and encouragement: ***"Thou hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name."*** These men and women simply could not be driven away from the word of the gospel. They could not be persuaded to forsake the gospel. They would not allow anything to come between them and Jesus Christ. They had a little strength, but with all the strength they had they kept God's Word and held fast to Jesus Christ.

What is the word which they kept? We do not have to guess. It was the word of the gospel. Our Lord says, ***"Thou hast kept the word of my patience"*** -(v. 10). That is the

gospel of Christ and Him crucified, in which His patient sufferings as our substitute are set forth -(1st Peter 2:21-24). The sinner's only hope before God is the gospel of substitutionary redemption -(2nd Corinthians 5:21). This is the word we must hold fast.

This threefold promise pictures believers belonging to God, having citizenship in heaven, and having a special relationship with Christ. The New Jerusalem is the future dwelling of the people of God -(Revelation 21:2). They will be citizens in God's future Kingdom. Everything will be new, pure, and secure.

How did these Philadelphian believers keep the word of the gospel? They believed it - (1st John 5:6-13). They loved it (1st John 5:3). They obeyed it -(Romans 16:26). And they defended it -(Jude 1:3; Philippians 1:7, 17). Though they were weak, few in number and a people of worldly insignificance, they were ready at all times and against all odds to hold to and defend the truth of God. Most men are like spiders, which spin their webs out of their own entrails. They spin their theology out of their own feelings, their own wisdom, or their own experiences. These Philadelphian saints took nothing to be truth but the truth of God revealed in sacred Scripture. And, with regard to the truth of God, they valiantly refused to budge an inch. They had no regard for current trends in theology and the wisdom of infidels. They walked in the old paths of everlasting truth - (Jeremiah 6:16). May God give us grace, in these days when nearly the whole religious world teaches and embraces that which the apostle Paul calls "will worship," to hold fast the gospel of his free and sovereign grace in Christ -(2nd Timothy 1:9-10).

Either God is totally, absolutely, universally sovereign, or he is not God -(Psalm 135:6). Either man is totally depraved, guilty and helpless, or he needs a Saviour -(Romans 5:12; 3:9-19). Either God chose and determined to save His people in eternal, unconditional election, before the world began, or He has no people to save - (Ephesians 1:3-6; 2nd Thessalonians 2:13). Either Christ effectually redeemed God's elect by His death on the cross, or He failed in His work and there is no such thing as blood atonement and substitutionary redemption -(Matthew 1:21; Galatians 4:4-6). The latter is what Pope Francis believes publically, stating that Jesus was a failure. Pope Francis condemned himself in that statement and exposed the Jesuit mindset! Either God the Holy Spirit regenerates and calls dead sinners to life and faith in Christ by effectual, irresistible power and grace, or man is saved by his own will, his own effort and his own work -(Romans 11:6; Ephesians 2:1-10). Either all God's elect will persevere unto the end, or none of them will -(John 10:27-30).

These are the truths by which we live and, if need be, God helping us, these are truths by which we shall die. But we will not, we cannot, give them up. This is more than mere doctrinal accuracy. This is the very fabric of our salvation. To deny these things would be to deny our only hope before God and to blaspheme the name of the one whom we most desire to honor. To deny these doctrines of the gospel is to deny Christ who taught them. Those who embrace these gospel truths are our brethren. Those who are enemies to these truths are the enemies of our God, and that makes them our enemies -(Psalm 139:19-22; 2nd Chronicles 19:2).

Do you keep the word of the gospel? Do I? Perhaps we have no great talents, perhaps we have little strength, maybe we have little influence over other people, and we may always be numbered among a small group of people who are looked upon by the world as narrow-minded fanatics, but the simple fact is that the salvation of our souls depends upon our persevering adherence to the truth of the gospel -(Colossians 1:22-23).

The saints in the church at Philadelphia were commended and praised by Christ because they kept and did not deny the word of his grace and truth in the gospel. Blessed is that man, blessed is that woman, who cannot be induced by Satan to forsake the gospel for any reason.

Though there is disagreement over when the living saints will be translated, there is concord among devout expositors respecting the truth that living saints will be translated to heaven without the experience of death and resurrection. Earlier I showed the Greek meaning of the tiny word "**ek**" validates a Pre-Tribulation Rapture. Christ implies just this when He said "**Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die**" -(John 11:26). This statement is in contrast to the declaration of the preceding verse, namely, "**He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.**" However, the two more direct revelations are found in the two passages cited above—1st Corinthians 15:51 and 1st Thessalonians 4:13-18. In the former it is said that a secret of God is revealed when the Apostle writes, "**We shall not all sleep**"; and in the latter it is said, "**We which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.**"

A highway of prophecy concerning resurrection and translation of saints begins with John 5:25-29 and terminates with various passages in the Revelation -(cf. John 5:25-29; 14:1-3; Romans 8:19-23; 1st Corinthians 1:8; 15:20-28, 51-57; 2nd Corinthians 5:1-9; Philippians 3:11, 20-21; 1st Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2nd Thessalonians 2:1; Hebrews 9:28 and passages in the Revelation).



And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God,
and into the patient waiting for Christ.

2 Thessalonians 3:5

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Blessings,

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