

The Power of Love

Revelation 3:7-19



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FOCAL Read Responsively Revelation 3:7-8^{KJV} And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; **(8) 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.**

Revelation 3:14-19 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; (15) I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. (16) So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. (17) Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: **(18) I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see. (19) As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.**

The last two churches mentioned in the *seven churches of Revelation* are stark in contrast one to another. The one called *Philadelphia* gained a blue ribbon for faithfulness from the Lord Jesus Christ. The other

Church called *Laodicea* received one of the longest rebukes given to all the Churches in the book of Revelation. What was Philadelphia doing right, and what was Laodicea doing wrong?

1. God Has Designed His People To Actively Love

The Lord tells Laodicea:

FOCAL Revelation 3:14-16 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the **Amen¹, the faithful and true witness, the beginning² of the creation of God;** (15) I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. (16) So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.

Let's see how Jesus addresses the Laodiceans. First of all, Jesus gives Himself the Title **Amen, the Faithful and True Witness**. Jesus Christ is faithful. His followers are expected to be faithful to Love, faithful to serve Him, faithful in letting God live through them. The Bible teaches that:

1 Corinthians 14:33 **God is not the author of**

1 G281, ἀμήν, amēn, *am-ane'*, Of Hebrew origin [H543]; properly *firm*, that is, (figuratively) *trustworthy*; adverbially *surely* (often as interjection *so be it*): - amen, verily., (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries)

2 G746, ἀρχή, archē, *ar-khay'*, From G756; (properly abstract) a *commencement*, or (concrete) *chief* (in various applications of order, time, place or rank): - beginning, corner, (at the, the) first (estate), magistrate, power, principality, principle, rule.

confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

If you are in God by faith in Christ Jesus, and if God is in you as the Scripture testifies for the true Christian:

Romans 8:9 ... **the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.**

then you will live not in confusion but in peace, both with God and with one another. The **faithful God, the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness** lives in you. He lives in you because you, dear Christian, are a **new creation of God**. Notice that title that Jesus uses for Himself, **The Beginning of the Creation of God**. The **BEGINNING of the CREATION of God**. What does this phrase mean? We see the same Greek word used in:

John 1:1-3 **In the BEGINNING was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. {2} The same was in the BEGINNING with God. {3} All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.**

God did not make all things *through* Jesus, but Eternal God, Jesus Christ our Lord *made all things for God*. The text says **all things were made BY HIM, and without Him was NOT anything made that was made**. Jesus Christ made all things. Not only this, Jesus Christ is the

one Who *holds all of creation together*. We read in another place:

Colossians 1:16-18 For **by {Jesus} were all things created**, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: {17} And **he is before all things, and by him all things consist**³. {18} And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

We see that by Jesus ALL THINGS were created, and that He is before all things, and by Jesus ALL THINGS are held together. So let's review. Jesus as He begins to speak to the Laodiceans says I am the Faithful God, the very Amen of God. I am the Creator God, the God Who made you and Who holds you together. I am the Very God Who is the Head of the Church. I am the Head of You. Now Jesus says:

FOCAL Revelation 3:15-16 **I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. (16) So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my**

3 Perfect Active Indicative G4921, συνιστάω, συνιστάνω, συνιστήμι, sunistaō sunistanō sunistēmi, *soon-is-tah'-o, soon-is-tah'-an'-o, soon-is-tah'-ay-mee*, From G4862 and G2476 (including its collateral forms); to *set together*, that is, (by implication) to *introduce* (favorably), or (figuratively) to *exhibit*; intransitively to *stand near*, or (figuratively) to *constitute*: - approve, commend, consist, make, stand (with).

mouth.

Jesus used this same statement with each of the seven Churches He addressed (**Revelation 2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15**). In every case *but this one* our Lord mentions the good that the Church had done before He mentions their failings. Yet with Laodicea Jesus has *absolutely nothing good to say*. Why? Jesus states:

FOCAL Revelation 3:15-16 **I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.**

Jesus described the Laodiceans as **lukewarm**, neither hot nor cold. **Thomas Constable** states in His commentary:

"The deeds of the Laodicean Christians manifested their heart attitude. They were neither cold nor hot in their love for God, just lukewarm. Beverages are better either cold or hot. Similarly the Lord would rather that His people be cold or hot in their love for Him, not apathetic. The Laodiceans knew how the Lord felt because their city drinking water came from a spring six miles to the south over an aqueduct, and it arrived disgustingly lukewarm. "Neighboring Hierapolis had hot, spring water, valuable for its medicinal effects. In its journey to Laodicea it lost some of this heat and consequently medicinal value by the time it arrived either overland or by aqueduct in Laodicea. Nearby Colosse had cool, life-giving water that was refreshing as a beverage (Hemer)."

The Laodiceans had become lukewarm, just like their

drinking water (traveling in an **aqueduct**) was disgustingly lukewarm. The vision the Lord gives - an image of Him *vomiting them out of His mouth* - is very vivid and very disgusting.

God demands that those Who have a relationship with Him be *either hot or cold*. He prefers us hot, on fire for Him. When Jesus Christ stood to teach His love was *always clear and always active*. He requires His Church, the Church He gave His life for, to be the same.

We have all seen people getting excited about watching their favorite sports team play. We have all seen people who were passionate about *eating and fellowship dinners*. We have all seen people passionate about *loving* their children or their grandchildren or their great grandchildren. We have all seen people passionate about a *political party*, or whether they were *conservative or liberal* in their politics. What we love, we are *passionate* about. We must be passionate about Christ.

The illustration Jesus uses of the aqueduct in Laodicea is very apt. The *reason* the water was lukewarm was because they were very far from the source of the water. Those who lived in **Hierapolis** lived where the water came out of the ground. Since the source was in their city, their water was boiling hot, suitable to drink. Six miles away, far from the source of the spring, Laodicea received disgusting water, unfit water, perhaps bacteria laden water. What is wonderful at the source is awful once the source is far removed.

So it is with Christ!

Jesus Christ made you. When you accepted Him as Savior He came into your life. The Source of all life, Creator God, Eternal Spirit, lives inside of you. For this reason each of you should be *passionate, loving springs of water*. Each of you should be *hot, loving Christians*. You should be **streams in the desert**, oasis' of life where ever you go. You are called to *active love, not apathy*. Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well:

John 4:14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

Did you read that? **Springing up!** You should be movable, portable, eternal oasis' of life giving water. You are designed by God to be **vessels of life**. The woman of Samaria, once she knew and accepted who Jesus Christ was, went out and brought revival into her world. She *passionately* declared:

John 4:29 Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?

Those Whom Jesus saves are designed to be wells of *living, not lukewarm* water. The font, the Source is in us. We live because He lives *in us*. We reign in life because He reigns in us. We overcome, because He has overcome. We sing the old song:

I serve a risen Saviour, He's in the world today;
I know that He is living whatever men may say;
I see His hand of mercy, I hear His voice of cheer,
And just the time I need Him, He's always near.

He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!
He walks with me and
Talks with me along life's narrow way.
He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!
You ask me how I know He lives?
He lives within my heart⁴.

If Christ lives in you, you are *designed to spread life!*
Jesus says of the Christian:

John 7:38-39 He that believeth on me, as the
Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall
flow rivers of living water. {39} (But this
spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe
on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet
given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

The Church of Philadelphia was actively working
within their design. Jesus says to them:

FOCAL Revelation 3:7-8 And to the angel of the
church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he
that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of
David, he that openeth, and no man

⁴ Words and Music by Alfred H. Ackley, © 1933 Homer A. Rodeheaver,
Renewal 1961 by The Rodeheaver Co. (Word Music, Inc.)

shutteth; and shutteth, and no man
openeth; (8) 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.

Look at the phrases Jesus uses to the Philadelphian's.
Our Lord is He that openeth, and no man shutteth,
and He that shutteth, and no man openeth.
Philadelphia was impregnable. They were a city with a
wall about them that no man could breach, the very Light
of God in a dark and fallen world. Unlike the Laodiceans
the Church of Philadelphia (their name, by the way,
means **Brotherly Love**) was *very close to the Source of
their power*. Please note, their power was *not* their own
strength or their own abilities. Jesus says to the
Philadelphian's:

FOCAL Revelation 3:8 I know thy works: behold, I
have set before thee an open door, and no man can
shut it: for thou hast a little⁵ strength, and
hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

He says **Thou hast a little strength**. What our Lord
literally says is **your strength is tiny, inconsequential,
unbelievably small**. Yet this Church was going to
succeed. Why? Because they were *fully surrendered to
Christ*.

⁵ G3398, μικρός, μικρότερος, mikros mikroteros, mik-ros', mik-rot'-er-os,
Apparently a primary word, including the comparative (second form);
small (in size, quantity, number or (figuratively) dignity): - least, less,
little, small.

2. Success And Power Comes Only By Loving Obedience To Jesus

To Laodicea Jesus says:

FOCAL Revelation 3:17-18 Because thou sayest, **I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:** (18) **I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see.**

Laodicea was a very wealthy, prosperous city. It specialized in **banking**, and was particularly famous for its rare **black woolen cloth** and great **health care**. In short, this was a rich town with many comforts. The Church itself drew away from Jesus and toward the **gold of the banks**. They felt comfortable, safe, and secure, but their comfort did not come from a good relationship with Jesus Christ, but from that **god called Mammon**. Jesus tells His followers that we must make a choice. Either we follow - passionately and lovingly follow - a relationship with Him - or we follow the world. The Master has said:

Matthew 6:24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye

cannot serve God and mammon.

When the world serve the god Mammon this is expected. When the Christian serves the god Mammon, this is blasphemy! Success and power for a Christian only comes by a **loving and obedient relationship to Jesus Christ our Lord**. Jesus tells the Laodiceans:

FOCAL Revelation 3:18 ... **I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire**, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see.

Notice the Lord says **buy of Me gold**. Jesus wanted the Laodiceans to come to Him for sustenance, to come to Him for direction, to come to Him for riches. The gold of the bank will in time be spent. The gold of Christ brings true riches, happiness, peace, joy, contentment. What is **gold tried in the fire**. Again, we have a rich image. It is easy to mix impurities in gold, and so fool those whom you give that gold to. Most of the world's more costly coins are minted with ridges or writing around the edges. These mint marks not only insure that the coin is not counterfeit, but they also keep others from *shaving* the coin to steal gold off of it. This was a common practice in the ancient world, until mint marks were placed around the edge of the coin. **Gold tried in the fire** is gold that is purified, not counterfeit nor bogus. **Gold tried in the fire** is true riches. The Church at Laodicea is like the rich man that Jesus spoke of who *continually chased after Mammon*. Our Lord said to him:

Luke 12:20-21 ... **Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?** {21} So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

A person who lays up riches in this life, and yet is apathetic toward Jesus Christ, is indeed a fool. Success and power comes only by *loving obedience* to Jesus Christ our Lord. Jesus says to the Laodiceans:

FOCAL Revelation 3:18 ... I counsel thee to **buy of me gold tried in the fire**, that thou mayest be rich; **and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed**, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and **anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see.**

If you have been blessed financially by God, if you have prospered in any way, this prosperity was given to you *not* to draw you away from Jesus, but to enable you to serve Him. The Philadelphian Christians were poor in finances, but rich in love toward one another and toward Christ. The Laodicean Christians were rich in finances, but poor in love toward one another and toward Christ. The Philadelphians were on fire to serve the Lord, and were apathetic toward the things of this world. The Laodiceans were apathetic in serving Christ, but on fire for the things of the world.

Everything in life is a tool by which we must serve Jesus Christ. This applies to this building, your jobs, even your own bodies. When you use every resource to serve the Lord, then you *will* be blessed. When your resources become things that you use to serve anything other than the Lord, then you are in danger of falling into Laodiceanism. This is why God tells the Laodiceans to **buy white clothing from Christ** (even though they were famous for black wool clothing), and to **medically treat their eyes with salve** (even though they were famous for great health care).

Look what Jesus says to Philadelphia:

FOCAL Revelation 3:8 ... 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.**

The Philadelphian Christians had **little strength**. They were weak in the things the world considers great. They had little money, little prosperity, little fame - and yet **Jesus set before them an open door that no man could shut**. He set that door before them because they **kept or guarded His Word, and had not denied His Name**.

a. The Church at Philadelphia kept Christ's Word. Jesus said **thou hast kept My Word**. What is Christ's Word? The Scripture says:

John 5:24 **Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on**

him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

Philadelphia kept Christ's Word of Life. They preached Jesus Christ as The Way, the Truth, and The Life (**John 14:6**). They preached that **no man comes to the Father but by Jesus**. I heard a Church (and I'll not say which it was) say not long ago that they were tired of hearing of the preaching of hell and the preaching of the Cross. They wanted more *uplifting* messages. May I say to you, there is nothing more uplifting than the Cross of Christ. Where Jesus is lifted up, all men are drawn to Him. He is our Banner, the reason we will not spend eternity in hell. He is our Savior, our Lord, our All! The Word of Christ saved us - we will follow it, we will preach it, we will live it.

John 8:31-32 ... If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; {32} And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

I have been at funerals before when *professing Christians* have acted like unbelieving fools! As a pastor I have witnessed people screaming as if they were in the very flames of hell over the casket of a loved one who had departed. This is understandable in the life of an unbeliever, but inconceivable in the life of a true Christian. Those who do not continue in Christ's Word are not His disciples, nor are they empowered to handle the stresses of this life. When Jesus Christ rose from the

grave we read that Peter, running to the open tomb,

Luke 24:12 ... beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.

Why didn't Jesus take those clothes with Him when He resurrected from the grave? Why were they neatly **laid by themselves**, set to the side for all to see? Because death has no hold on Christ, neither do the things of this world compel the Master. Jesus is not here - He is risen just as He said! The Christian, redeemed by the Blood of Christ, is not under bondage to the things of this world.

**One day this flesh we'll drop and rise
To meet our Master in the skies!**

The Philadelphians kept Christ's Word. They stored that Word in their hearts. They heard that Word, and did not merely hear it, but put it into practice. Those who belong to Jesus **keep the Master's Word inside themselves**. Jesus told the Pharisees:

John 8:37 ... ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.

If you're saved, Christ's Word should be *in you*. The Word of life that saved you, faith in the Risen Savior and the efficacy of His Blood, this Word is what you wrap yourself in. You do not wrap yourself in the things of this world for, like Christ's tomb clothing, you will one day leave those things behind. Instead wrap yourselves

in the promises of the Master. Dwell on the Words that saved you. Has He ever been unfaithful? No! Guard His Word, store it in your hearts that you might not sin against Him.

b. The Church at Philadelphia Did Not Deny Christ's Name We read

FOCAL Revelation 3:8 ... 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.**

As I said before, the word **Philadelphia** means *brotherly love*. The **Shepherd of Love, Jesus Christ** called you to salvation. God is love, and God is inside of those Whom He has saved. Love is the earmark, the brand on a true Christian. Jesus told us:

John 13:34-35 A **new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. {35} By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples,** if ye have love one to another.

Philadelphia was impregnable and unconquerable because, no matter what happened, they loved Jesus Christ and the loved one another. When a Christian *despises or hates another*, then that Christian has **denied the Name of Christ**. James writes to the Church at

Jerusalem:

James 2:6-8 But **ye have despised the poor.** Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? {7} Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? {8} If **ye fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well:**

A Church that loves is a Church that cannot be conquered. There are times, my Beloved, when God's saints are attacked. There are times when we may not agree with one another. And yet, even if we do not agree, we must always keep our disagreements in check. The word that needs to mark the Church that Jesus died for is **ONE**. The Apostle, in writing to the Ephesians, wrote:

Ephesians 4:1-6 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye **walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, {2} With all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love; {3} Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. {4} There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; {5} One Lord, one faith, one baptism, {6} One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.**

God is One, a Tri-Unity we call The Trinity. God is unified in thought and in love, both within Himself and toward us. We who are born of God must uphold the Name of Jesus. We must ask ourselves, **What did Jesus do?**, then we must do it. We have no choice if we are to do His work. As the bond of peace and love grows in a Church, the Spirit of God increases that flock.

As Christ's people submit to the Master, the Master will open doors of evangelism whereby we may lead others to salvation by faith in Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 16:9; 2 Corinthians 2:12; Colossians 4:3). God will not add converts to an apathetic or diverted Church. Remember, Jesus cursed the fig tree that would not bear fruit. He will only add converts to a living and vibrant, loving Church. May God bring more life to our hearts, and more new life to our Church.

May God Bless the reading and preaching of this Word.



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