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Series: For the Time is Near
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Shaken, but Not Moved
Revelation 3:7-13

Revelation 3:7-13: ⁷ ***“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.***

⁸ ***“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 but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. ⁹ Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie— behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. ¹² The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, 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 from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. ¹³ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’***

We all know that life does not happen without being shaken from time to time. John 16:33 says: ***“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”***

What you need to know is how to go through those moments in life *when* you're being shaken *without* being moved to the point of *worry* (overwhelmed in thought), *despondency* (giving up/hopeless), or *displacement* (running away).

Jesus said not *if* you have tribulation, but *when* you have tribulation to "take heart" and remember that He has overcome the world and *if* we are His (through repentance and God's forgiveness) then we are overcomers of all the could come against us, most importantly the sting of death and the grave.

Evidence of this salvation should express itself in how we respond to tough times and know true peace in Jesus; being shaken, but not moved. The Christian should come to know true peace and stability in Jesus and not be given to worry, despondency, or displacement.

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Philadelphia is 28 miles east of Sardis. It was the youngest of the seven cities that Jesus wrote letters to and its purpose of existing was to serve as a missionary outpost for Hellenism. Hellenists are Greek-speaking Jews and Hellenism missionary work is the spreading of the Greek language, culture and manners throughout Asian provinces.

Philadelphia was known to be on the fringe of civilization. Beyond it lie primitiveness, as they saw it, people who were barbaric. We also need to understand that Philadelphia was a very prosperous city. At the time, it had one of the greatest highways in the world connecting Europe with Asia. So it was like this gateway that people traveled to and from.

Philadelphia was also one that had many, many, many gods. In fact, it was known as "Little Athens". To walk through its temple-scattered streets was to be reminded of Athens, the center of worship of the Olympian gods. A prosperous city, it served as a gateway between Europe and Asia. They had the purpose as a city to evangelize the world and bring them the Greek culture.

One thing that we have in common with Philadelphia is that it was shaken frequently by earthquakes. They had these earthquakes all the time, which would cause frequent evacuations to avoid the falling debris. They knew what it was to feel a shaky earth underneath their feet, sometimes with devastating results. We're familiar with that.

I was thinking about earthquakes in Southern California, and it's just kind of like, "Eh", right? Now, if you have an earthquake on the East Coast, it's kind of like having a little rain in Southern California, right? They say, "This is the end!", and it's only like a 3.2. For us, we see a little cloud in the sky and we say "Storm Watch 2015"; "El Nino is coming! He's real!" (Sometimes I think he's in my home. Just kidding! "Pastor, you're going to need to be counseled afterwards.")

Has there ever been a funny moment during an earthquake? We probably all have memories of something funny, though. I remember one time when I was younger and I was at home when it started shaking. My sister was sitting on the edge of the bed and she just fell off!

Another time, I was serving as a lifeguard when I was stationed at the Naval Station in Lemoore. When was the earthquake in San Francisco/Oakland? 1989? So basically as a lifeguard, for anyone who wants to grow up and be a lifeguard, just know that it's actually babysitting at the pool. You tell all the kids, "No, don't run. Stop. Sit down. Can't do that." One thing that happened was that there was a lap swimmer in the pool and the water started sloshing around. I was yelling at him to get out of the pool. At some point he came up and was looking around and I said, "Get out!" He didn't even know! It was just a scary moment, but later we laughed about it. We've all experienced that. If you've lived in Southern California for any length of time, you've experienced the shaking that happens.

We also can be shaken with different things that happen in our lives; shaken, but not moved. The church in Philadelphia did not live in a perfect world, just as we don't live in a perfect world. But there are certain things that we need to take note of:

1. I certainly believe we need to understand what they were **commended** for.
2. The Lord knew their works, but they were **commanded** to do just one thing. They weren't rebuked, by the way. They're the only church that wasn't rebuked.
3. They are **encouraged** with a reward of finishing well by the Lord. I pray that we would always set that before us, to honor the Lord.

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The first thing that we need to look at is how Jesus introduced Himself. In verse 7, He says, ***“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.’”***

Jesus introduces Himself to the church in Philadelphia as being holy, and being true; being real, not fake, not false. He is God and there is nothing false in Him. When people come to this place of belief then there is no time wasted in questioning God, but only themselves in light of a holy, righteous and true God. Oftentimes, what do we do? We question God in so many different ways. What Jesus is saying is, "I am God. I am holy. I am true. I am not false. I am not fake. I can be trusted with everything."

So when we come to that place where we no longer question God, when we no longer question His ways, then we turn our attention to ourselves. Remember what God reveals in our own lives is for our own benefit. Will we question it? It's for our own benefit to question ourselves. "What's my motive? Why is it that I'm doing what I'm doing? Why is that I'm doubting? Why is it that I'm worrying? Why is it? Why? Why?" Question ourselves in light of the truth.

We also see here that Divine opportunities are set by God. Jesus is able to open a door that no man can shut, and He will shut doors that no man can open. There is nothing; there is no one that is able to do otherwise. That's it. Period. End of conversation as far as that is concerned. Jesus is introducing Himself as the ultimate in authority and power to the church in Philadelphia.

He tells this church, *"I know your works."* What's absent from this letter are the words, *"But I have this against you."* He doesn't say that. And because of what Jesus knows, He *commends, commands, and encourages* in a perfectly accurate manner. So first of all, let's take a look at how they were commended.

Commended

Kept My Word and Did Not Deny My Name

This doesn't mean a religious, dutiful but sterile adherence to the Bible. But a faithful, passionate, intimate expression of their allegiance to Jesus Christ by living in a way that was faithful to the name and character of Jesus.

Sometimes we can get caught up in this way of thinking to where, "Ok, I know God's Word. I know His Law so let me just start out this morning seeing if I can keep up with what I know." Trust me, you won't. The moment you step off your bed after thinking that, you're done. You're going down. It's not about this list that you check off because that's not pleasing to the Lord. No! A heart that is bent toward Him is pleasing. And as we go along, we're in continual thought and understanding that He is with us every moment of every day that He gives us breath in our lungs.

Keeping God's Word is not about setting a goal of accomplishing a list of God's Laws, and I want to remind you of that. I want to say it again and again, because we tend to do that. When we start doing that we look to others that are not checking off the same list. Instead we need to live lives of being accomplished in the character of Jesus, that we are skillful in the person of Jesus Christ, that we know Him intimately and reflect the life of Jesus to the world and communicating that Life to those around us. *That* is being faithful to Jesus. There are people who claim they are followers of Jesus by word, but in actuality deny His character through their manner of life, and therefore are simply walking

contradictions that confuse people and give false testimony, leading some people down dangerous paths.

But Jesus is telling the Christians in Philadelphia that they are commended for not being such. For genuinely, and rightly, and faithfully representing Jesus and not being ashamed of Him no matter what came their way. He says, "I commend you. Persecution has come your way [we'll see that in a moment]. But you have represented Me well in character. You have remained faithful. You've not denied Me. You've not been ashamed of Me and for that I commend You." They remained unmoved in that place. Jesus said, ⁸ ***"And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, ⁹ but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God."***, according to Luke 12:8-9.

Possessed "Little" Power

Jesus also identified that they possessed little power. Oftentimes that's taken out of context, as if they were weak but actually that's not what it's referring to. It's not referring to weakness, but an acknowledgement of poverty in spirit. That's really important for us to be in that place where we understand the poverty we have in our spirit. It was their knowledge of their dependence on God that made them great in the eyes of Jesus.

One of the dangers of Christian service is success. It's not necessarily being in a place of want and not having, but when we have great success in what God has started in our lives in the Spirit, we tend to try to finish in the flesh. We do! We have that tendency. We say, "Hey, God, I've got this! I've got it all figured out. I've got this program down." It's a great danger.

In meeting with David Rosales, one of the things that he's always putting before us is: *"Hey, listen, do not despise the days of small beginnings. Don't do it. Remember that. If God decides to bless and add to your church and it becomes something that you know that it wasn't you at the beginning, but all of a sudden you start believing the fanfare of you being something great...careful! Because you're being prepared for a fall and you're not glorifying the Lord."*

Matthew 5:3 says, ***"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*** They knew that they possessed insignificant power outside of Jesus and therefore were faithfully dependent on Him. So they were commended for keeping God's Word, not denying Jesus, and acknowledging their dependence on Jesus.

Encouraged with Reward

Perfect Vindication/Vengeance is God's (v. 9)

Verse 9 says, ***"Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you."***

That's vindication! And notice that it wasn't them that were telling Jesus. "Hey, bring all those that were persecuting us because You know what they were doing to us. Have them worship You in front of us." No! It was the Lord that brings them over and really causes their own actions to bring shame upon them before those who are faithful to the Lord.

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This implies that the Jewish people who belonged to the local synagogue were persecuting the Christians in Philadelphia. And Jesus told them that these were Jews in word and in the flesh, but they had no spiritual connection to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jesus called them liars. Now this is not to be interpreted as all Jews are of the synagogue of Satan. That's not what's implied at all. I know a lot of you are shaking your head, "No, that's not what we're thinking, Pastor." I'm telling you that there are those who do believe that, but that's not what this is saying. Jesus promised them that the church in Philadelphia would be vindicated by Jesus as He makes them worship right there before Him, and that they would come to know that they were loved by Jesus.

Philippians 2:10-11 says, "**...so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,** ¹¹ **and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**" Now every knee is going to bow, every tongue will confess, but it all depends on if it will be as the condemned, or as the forgiven. There is a difference, but every tongue *will* confess, every knee *will* bow at some point.

So, they were perfectly vindicated by the Lord.

Kept from God's Wrath (v. 10)

This is a reward. In verse 10 we see here Jesus says, "**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.**" So, we are kept from God's wrath. That's what the church in Philadelphia was being rewarded with. "Hey, listen, this is what's coming." Now there is a debate on whether the church will enter into the Tribulation Period and endure, or perhaps it will be spared. I believe that it's pretty clear that the church will be spared because Jesus is referring to something that is past tense; "**you've kept my word...**" So He's also placing before them a hope of not being part of the trial; the Tribulation, the Wrath of God that will come upon those who dwell on the earth. He's saying, "You will be rewarded. You will *not* have to endure this trial. You will be removed."

I believe that there is ample evidence that gives us, as a church, a certain hope of being spared having to experience the Tribulation Period. And since we will be spared, we should not spend our time looking for the Anti-Christ, or get caught up in studying different parts of prophecy trying to figure out who it could be. I tell you church, don't spend your time looking for the Anti-Christ, but rather keep your gaze fixed on Jesus Christ who will come suddenly at any time.

Patient endurance is what they were commended for. It is walked out in a person's life when they possess an unwavering belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Made a Permanent Pillar in the Presence of God (v.12)

Jesus also tells them, "This is your reward as well: that you will be made a pillar in the presence of God in all of His glory." According to verse 12 He says, "**The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, 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 from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.**"

This all has meaning to the church in Philadelphia. All the Philadelphians know what He's talking about. Remember I told you that they had a lot of places of worship to different gods and that they knew

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earthquakes very well. So although they had a foundation they didn't have one that would hold up all the buildings. Things came down. But they are promised that to the one who finishes victorious in Jesus will be made into permanent pillars in God's glory; fixed. These pillars will remain fixed. They will not have to leave and come back, evacuate upon a little shaking. They will be permanent and eternal in their place. These pillars were pictures of strength, and stability, and dignified beauty. That's what they represented. These people were familiar with these earthquakes, and having to evacuate, going in and out. They were looking forward to this reward, this hope, something that God had promised to them that they wouldn't have to do, that they would remain fixed and permanent in His presence. It was all a reward.

Exalted in the Exalted One

He said, ***"I will write on him the name of my God."***

William Barclay said, *"Philadelphia honored its illustrious sons by putting their names on the pillars of its temples, so that all who came to worship might see and remember."*

So Jesus is telling them, "Your reward is to be remembered in My presence for eternity, unmoved and in possession of eternal glory."

Jesus refers to the person who perseveres as a *conqueror* and *recipient of eternal rewards*—Exalted in the Exalted One. They are encouraged with reward, but they are commanded to do one thing...

Commanded to Hold Fast (v.11)

Jesus says, ***"I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown."*** They are commanded at this point to adhere, or to continue to stand in their belief of Jesus, as they had been: Keep His Word, continue to confess the name of Jesus Christ and to remain humbly dependent on Him.

Some say the reference to "hold fast" is referring to the promise that God made when He said that He would open what no man can shut. I don't think so. It starts out that way, but what is it worth to hold on to works, really? There's no worth to that. Only to remain faithful to the person of Jesus Christ. We see here that we're to "hold fast" in a deliberate and conscientious manner because it's implied that there are those who desire to take it away. Or else he wouldn't have told them that. Don't lessen the grip on it and stay alert. Our worst enemy, by the way, is not from without, it's from within. We are our worst enemies. The worst thing that can happen, and often does, is not that someone comes and steals our crown, if finishing victoriously, but that we give it away.

How many times have we seen brothers and sisters in Christ who are going along so well, they're doing so good, and at some point, they give their crown away. By the way, this is not a crown to boast about. This is a crown of conquering of being victorious, of finishing the race well. How many times have you seen brothers and sisters give it away? You are in greater danger of giving it away, than you are of having it stolen.

1 Peter 5:8 says, ***"Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."***

Jesus is saying, "Hold fast to what I commended you for because I will come suddenly." Be found gripping what you were commended for: being faithful to Me, being humbly dependent on Me. Be

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found in that manner." Some people say, "Well, you know, I have some time. I know I'm not in the right place with the Lord, but I'll fix things with Him tomorrow, or later." There won't be any time when He comes, He comes like a thief in the night. It's not like a thief announces that they're coming. The element of surprise.

So how is that we can be shaken and not moved? By remaining in that place that is solid on God's truth. Not being moved, why? Because we are not denying Him. We're professing Him, confessing Him, we're standing in the truth.

Psalm 125:1 says, ***"Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever."***

Psalm 16:8 says, ***"I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken."***

Now, I didn't miss verse 8, but if you go through and study this portion of scripture, He brings them to the point to where He says, ***"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 but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name."***

What was that door? We're not told what that door was so we can only speculate. Some say it's an evangelistic opportunity. Perhaps it was, I don't know. They were just commanded to remain unmoved in Christ and then they were given an open door to walk through. But let me refer you to the Door; Jesus Christ. It's been said that there is no door knob on His side, it's all on our side. We have the power to open up that Door and allow Him into our lives. We have the power of doing a special work, individually, specifically, and accurately in our lives.

I want to tell you that the same Jesus that died on the cross 2000 years ago, the same Jesus who gave us access to the Throne Room of Grace to find salvation, is also the same One who is the Door that today gives us access to the Father, but Who also has sealed us with the Spirit to convict us to bring us to repentance to be right before the Lord. There is a Door that we can shut, and it's by our own choosing. The brothers and sisters in Philadelphia did not live in a perfect world. I am sure they were tempted. I am sure that there were things around them that caused them much heartache. There's so much, and yet the thing that they were commended for was that they stayed faithful to God's Word, they did not deny Him, and they were commanded to hold fast. They were told, "Leave that door open."

The doors of opportunity will come to serve Him, and that's fine. But I'm first and foremost concerned that we are opening and closing that door without even thinking twice. Church, I pray that we learn that there is power in continuously abiding in the Lord, in being obedient to Him, that we don't get into the habit of opening and closing the door when we want to, but that we allow it to remain open and allow Him to have free access to every part of our lives, and that from the time of the moment of salvation that we allow Him to do that work in our lives that is called *sanctification*.

I pray for anyone here, if you don't know the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, that this morning is the day of salvation. What does it require? It requires a sincere confession, a repentance, a surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. And from that moment on, sincerely and genuinely surrendering your life to Christ you will be filled with God's Spirit, you will be sealed for the Day of Redemption. Let me tell you, you will have a desire for the things of God like you've never had before, and there will be fruit. All

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of us should respond to the Lord and be those people as we learned about here, that can be shaken but unmoved in the Lord, and keep that door wide open and allow Him free access into our lives.

[Prayer] *Father, we are truly thankful for this example that we have before us in the church in Philadelphia. Lord, they were commended for being faithful to You, and walking with You. There are these beautiful rewards that You have for Your people that are called "victors" and "conquerors" as we remain in You. I pray that You would help us finish well, and that we would at no point fizzle out and fall by the wayside, being ineffective because of our own doing, but that You would strengthen us and that You would be with us as Your church. I pray for any here that do not know You, Lord Jesus as Savior. I ask that they would respond to Your love, the finished work that You did on the cross, and that they would understand that victorious life in You. And that they would understand that at the point of confession and repentance that You forget our sins, past, present, and future and You put them away from us as far as the East is from the West. We thank you for this moment and we lift Your Name on high. We pray that You would help us to be faithful. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*