

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 18th March 2018
Services: 730, 930 Peregian
Series: 7 searching letters
Passage: Revelation 3:7-13
Title: To the church in Philadelphia
Outline: Authority
What's good
What's not
Action
Encouragement

Life here – even on the beautiful Sunshine Coast – is full of uncertainties.

People move here to escape the city...

They come for a fresh start... tragically sometimes after a family break up...

They come to live life at a slower pace...

..to enjoy the great outdoors – the surf, the golf, the cycling, the walks... the national park...

And yet – and yet – where ever you move to – you still take **yourself**...! And after a while in a new place, you wake up and find many of the issues you face are still the same!

So, our own personality traits cause *some* of our issues...

And you still face same health issues...

...some family issues – they can sometimes be **harder** because your family is now further away...

So although we feel like we've opened a new door to a new chapter when we come... life still throws up uncertainties... challenges... surprises...

In today's letter, we see mentioned another open door... a door that is opened to us by Jesus **himself**... a door to his **Kingdom** – his **future**... which itself is a door to opportunity here and now...

We are going to follow our usual pattern here.... and begin by seeing why Jesus has

1. **authority** to speak

Then we'll see

2. what's **good?** ... in the church at Philadelphia
3. What's **not** –

What's the call to

4. **action** is

And finally, what's the word of

5. **encouragement**...

so first – how is Jesus described here in term of his:

1. AUTHORITY

Have a look with me – v1 – *These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.*

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Now there's background here both in Revelation 1 and in Isaiah in the Old Testament.

When God through Isaiah was pronouncing judgement on the nation of Israel, he promises that the palace administrator, Eliakim, that he will have this same authority:

I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. Isaiah 22:22

The house of David = the temple

But looking down the track – through the telescope of time... the temple comes to signify the **Kingdom** – eternal life...

This fits with what we read of Jesus in Ch 1 of Rev – where he said that he holds the keys of death and Hades.

Jesus has authority to speak to the church – to US this morning – because he alone can open the door to eternal life...

And what he **opens**... no one can **shut**... //

Do you have **eternal life** as you sit here this **morning**?

Is that an **assurance** you have – a **confidence** you have – a **joy** that you have? – you **have** it because Jesus in his death paid the **price** for your **rebellion** and in his **rising** to new life, **flung** the door to his everlasting kingdom **wide open** for you to **enter**!

So – **yes** – he has authority to speak – he holds the keys to death and hades... and opens the door to eternal life... he has authority to speak.... and we do well to **listen**!

2. WHAT'S GOOD?

Have a look with me at v8 *I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.*

Notice again that the Lord knows **all about** the church in Philadelphia – and their deeds.

He knows all about the Anglican Church of Noosa too – and our **deeds**... and our **needs**!

He knows **you**... and all **your challenges**... and your **perseverance**...!

Specifically here he says to the church in **Philadelphia** – that he's placed before them an **open door** that no one can shut

...although some think that he's talking about an open door for the gospel – as Philadelphia was on the edge of Greek society – and from there Greek language and culture was spreading into Asia – so the argument is made – that this also provided an open door for the gospel...

...I think it is more logical to take it that he's reiterating what he has just said – ie – the open door for the Philadelphians is the open door of the **Kingdom**...

In the **uncertain** world in which they lived... a city wracked with **earthquakes** requiring them to leave the city and return...

...here Jesus is saying – that because of **Jesus** – because of his **death and resurrection**... there is **certainty** – there is **stability** – there is **hope** – there is a **future**...

That's a promise to **you** too!

In the midst of all **your** uncertainties today - because of **Jesus** – because of his **death and resurrection**... there is **certainty** – there is **stability** – there is **hope** – there is a **future**...

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What's **good**? – that even though they have little **strength**, they have kept Jesus' **word** and have not denied **Jesus' name!**

...and down v10 – they have kept Jesus' command to **endure patiently...**

Brothers and sisters... I see this same good here...

Some here have **little strength**... many **challenges**... they've sapped our **strength**... **stresses** and **strains** of living in **2018** – **health** pressures – **family** pressures – **financial** pressures – **years** of **servicing Jesus**... with all the sadnesses that might accompany that... but you have **kept** Jesus' word and not **denied** his name.

You've been **faithful**

You've **resisted** sin and temptation

You've resisted the ways of the **world**

You've stood **firm** in the face of **ridicule**

You've been **patient**

You've been **kind**

You've been **generous**

You've reached out to **others**...

You've stuck your **neck** out at times to stick up for Jesus

You've **ministered** here in the life of this **church**...

You've **studied** God's **word**

You've been **diligent** in **prayer**

You've sought to be an **encouragement** to **others**

You've **supported** those in **need**

You've **cooked** for those who need a **meal**

You've done things for which you've received no **recognition** and no **thanks** – but you're totally fine with that because you didn't **do** those things for thanks or recognition you did them for the joy of **servicing**...

Well **done** – **so** good!

I'm **so thankful** to you... I'm so thankful to **God** for **you**...

Ability to stay **faithful** to the **Lord Jesus**, even when the going gets **tough**. It's an admirable **quality!**

That **tenacious** attitude – that **dogged determination** which says – no – **Jesus** is my **priority**, I **love** him – **nothing** will stop me **servicing** him, **sticking** with him, being **committed** to him

And I have seen people persevere in their relationship with Jesus – in the face of **serious illness**; **losing** a loved **one**; in the face of a **failed marriage**; some have persevered even though they have an **unbelieving spouse** or **rebellious** children; some have faced **retrenchment**, yet they have hung in there...

You have **persevered** in the face of a **changing** world where being Christian is no longer the **accepted** norm; when you have been **challenged**, even **ridiculed** in the work place...

Some here have **persevered** even though what has happened in the church **itself** has been tough – hard **decisions** made which you haven't **liked**; **changes** in service style to which you were **opposed** – but you have **persevered**... A **minister** who hasn't always **listened**, perhaps made **decisions** which **disappointed** you... yet you have **persevered** in **relationship** with **Jesus**.

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Our church is **full** of people who have **hung in there despite the cost, despite the challenges; despite the unsympathetic world in which we live...**

... and Jesus **knows...** and commends **you** this morning!!

And do you know that as for the Christians in Philadelphia – one day – those who have given you the hardest time for **following** Jesus, will recognise that you are **loved** by Jesus...

This '*synagogue of Satan*' is mentioned again as we saw earlier in the series... these were Jews by name but not by devotion... Jesus calls them **liars**. They are living a **lie**. And they gave Gentiles a hard time. But one day that will **stop!** And they will recognise that these **Gentile** Christians **ARE** indeed **loved by God!**

One day the ridicule or lack of respect people have for you and your trust in **Jesus** – one day that **too** still stop – and people will see the **reality** of Jesus' love for **you** and your love for **Jesus!!**

Well – that's what was **good** – what about:

3. WHAT'S NOT (so good)

Well... **nothing**... there's nothing here that Jesus identifies as negative... nothing that calls for rebuke or admonition...

So we go straight to the call to

4. ACTION

Just two words... **two** words describe the action Jesus calls these people to.... The two words? – you'll see them there in v11 – **Hold on**

Hold on to what you **have**.

Doesn't **seem** much does it...

Hold on he says because he – Jesus – is coming **soon**...

Well you might say – he promised these Philadelphians 2,000 years ago that he was coming **soon**... and he hasn't come yet... will he **ever** come?

Well '**soon**' is open to interpretation... When we say Easter is '**soon**' we mean a couple of weeks... when we say this sermon will **finish** soon – we mean – around **5 minutes**.

In terms of **eternity**, 2,000 is not a long time and we know from 2 Peter 3 that with the Lord *a **day** is like a **thousand years**, and a **thousand years** are like a **day**.*

Jesus is still coming '**soon**'... and we need to 'hold on' until he comes!

We need to **hang on** in **here** – with **him** – with his **church**.

We need to **keep** doing those things for which he commended us... - **keeping his word** and **not denying his name!**

[Peregian – I know things are not easy. I know many of you are working so **hard** in the cause of Christ here... but '**hold on**'... Jesus is coming "**soon**..."

It's **worth** it...

He will **bless** you – **uphold** you – stand **with** you...

Don't give **up**... don't let the challenges **overwhelm** you...

The Lord is **good**... he is on our **side**... '**hold on**'!]

Finally – what is the encouragement here?

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5. ENCOURAGEMENT

There are a two encouragements here... -

Encouragement # 1 firstly v10 *since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth...*

That's a promise to a church at the end of the 1st century – that they will be protected from the worst of the trial of persecution...

But we can take it also as a promise to us – that the Lord will see us through trial and tribulation... he will be with us in it – protecting us from the worst of it... and he will keep holding on to us as we keep holding on to him!

Encouragement # 2 – v12 *The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it.*

Often in this world – we feel we don't belong.

This world is not our home.

As we began this morning – we saw that life is full of **uncertainties...**

Here is a promise of **stability** and **permanence**.

Again – Jesus is drawing from the local experience of those who lived in the city... they had to leave frequently because of the many earthquakes...

Here Jesus pictures – **no more leaving** – and a place to **belong...**

And the **name** – **God's** name, the name of the **city** and **Jesus'** new name – we're not quite sure – but again - maybe picking up on the fact that this city was renamed after a generous benefactor who had helped rebuild the city...

But people with **God's name** – a sign again – of **belonging** – of **relationship** – of **identity** with....

Here is a promise for **us**.

That against all the **changes** and **challenges** and **uncertainties** – and **threats** and **dangers** – and **moving around** we face...

...**one** day – we will have a **permanent place** in a permanent **home**... in the presence of **Jesus himself**...

And we will have an **overwhelming** sense of **belonging** and of **permanency**...

Jesus **has** and **will** open the door to that place – and nothing or **no one can shut it!!! //**

Brothers and sisters – '**hold on**'... '**hang on in there**'.

- **Keep Jesus' word**
- **Don't deny his name**
- **Endure patiently...**

...and take hold of these **precious promises**, looking forward with **hope**, with **delight** and **great anticipation**.

Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Amen.