

To the Church in Philadelphia.....

Intro:

Have you ever been running late for the theatre?

Did you leave home too late?

Were you held up on the highway?

Were you not able to find a Car Park?

Having trouble finding your tickets? Tickets? What tickets?

Booked them on your phone!

Had to find the Box Office.

So you hurry, hurry, hurry...sorry I just must take a loo stop .

Were you thinking there's bound to be a long queue at the theatre door, but when you got there the door was SHUT! And the usher, the one with the authority says "Sorry the show has started, you can't go in now!. You will have to wait...

You had a ticket

You had a reserved seat but you faltered and turned to blaming the other..

Making the point..you had driven all this way to the Concert Hall to hear your very favourite tenor, and the door was shut to you!

Recap: AUTHORITY

The Spirit of the Lord says in Rev 1:8 "I am the Alpha and Omega, who is and was and is to come, the Almighty."

The first Word and the last Word. I started history and I will close history.

The same Spirit directed John to write this letter to the church in Philadelphia.

"These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David".

(The key to the door of invitation into his future kingdom. Once opened no one can close it. Once closed no one can open it). Christ has the authority because He holds they key!

Only God could be called holy. Only God could be called true.

This church in Philadelphia knew and understood that it was because Jesus through his ministry on earth had claimed to be the Son of God that the Jewish synagogues had determined to hunt him down and kill him. They said he was guilty of blasphemy...calling himself God's son.

WHAT'S GOOD

This church in Philadelphia gave testimony to their own journey. Jesus who

alone has the keys to the kingdom of God, had opened the door of their hearts, inviting them to believe in Him and trust Him for their eternal salvation. They had believed and walked through that door of salvation.

How did that happen? Through the prayer, the vision, the teaching, of the apostles who set out to plant churches wherever there was an open door. They did this in the power of the Holy Spirit, as they were obedient to him. The church at Philadelphia had not lost their first love.

In this letter Jesus was reassuring them that no one could take away from them what they had received by faith in Christ. The door that had been opened to them then would never be shut in their faces.

Talking of open doors again:.....

The city of Philadelphia was founded in 140 BC for one overriding purpose to be a base from which to Hellenize the world.

It was to be a base from which to spread the Greek language, worldview and way of life to the whole world. So they were an open, friendly lot, encouraging visitors to come and spend their money, hospitable. It was to be a prosperous region as professionals, tradesmen, creative thinkers, artisans were given opportunity to establish themselves in this fertile region. So you could say that Philadelphia was a missionary city right from the start. It would now be a missionary city for the kingdom of Christ. An open door of opportunity.

BUT...Philadelphia was situated on the edge of an active volcano so that its citizens lived in constant danger from earthquakes. It meant that they always had their bag packed for a quick exit to spend the nights outside the city. Then as morning light came they would go back into the city to carry on their work.

So Jesus recognised the fears they lived with. He was reminding his church that they were citizens of a heavenly home -that this place with its dangers, its inconveniences was a temporary home. Jesus was saying "I am your security. I am your unshakeable foundation. In your coming and going here remember I remain the same. My presence with you is constant, not disturbed by geology, the economy, politics and false religion."

Now downtown Philadelphia was not a place to go find truth! There were plenty of options for idol worship, plenty of pagan temples to appease the gods ...any idol, any figurehead would do.

And then there was the synagogue! That gathering of so called God

worshippers who were really serving Satan with lies and deception, refusing entry to anyone showing interest in Jesus and his teachings.

You could go downtown Philadelphia to the markets to hear all the latest news, opinions, theories, from the regular traders on that busy route.

But truth was relative! It wasn't absolute truth but lies and deception that served them. Words, words, words I am so sick of words says Eliza's complaint in my Fair Lady! They were not words that would interest righteous living Christians.

But this church saw the many opportunities to tell people about Jesus and God's love for them. They would tell them that Jesus is the one true God, the only one worthy of worship. This church knew the words that would be the best news ever told. Words of life-giving water to thirsty souls. They themselves had come to trust Christ through the preaching of the gospel. Now they were obedient to Christ's commission to go and make disciples.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Jesus encouraged them again in noting: "I know you have little strength. You might be anxious and fearful, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. This church had discovered that day by day God's grace is enough. It is enough to keep them strong in faith. It is enough to hold onto the hope promised to all believers who endure in faith and service—the hope of that eternal home in heaven.

You are never alone as the Holy Spirit is all the strength you need.

Matthew 6:33. Galatians 5:20

This decision to become Jesus followers cost them their freedom. Their lives of devotion to Christ were lives of sacrifice. Jewish leaders opposed them from the start, refusing their inclusion in worship, disrupting their lives, and using every conceivable persecution against them.

The church in Philadelphia never looked back. They were thoroughly devoted followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, whatever the cost.

Rev 3:7 We imagine that this letter from Jesus was sent to their pastor.

We can imagine the gasps, the disbelief, that the One who is Holy and True had sent them a letter!

Jesus himself in his ministry claimed "I am the way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father but by me". In John 8 Jesus told the Jews who had believed in him: if you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples

In this letter Jesus said to that church: I am the one who holds the key of David. This key has opened the gate to the kingdom of God. You can be sure that this door will never be shut on you.

The Spirit of God had no complaint against this church in Philadelphia! They had ticked all the boxes by humble obedience.

Then it seems like Jesus acknowledges what a hard road they were on and makes this promise: "Whoever you are, Jews or Gentiles, leave those liars to me. I will vindicate you and they will have their day in Court!

But every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

V.10...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.

'I am coming soon!' "Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown". He who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Your eternal reward will include your names written on the great pillars in the temple of God, in the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which is coming down from heaven from my God.

And all of those who are against you now and who persecute you for my names sake will be brought to their knees as they will have to acknowledge that I have loved you. Hold onto what you have. Keep on doing what you are doing In your coming and going, in your daily lives, hold onto the Word of Truth, live a life of love for God and your neighbours, patiently endure together in worship, prayer, walking in the light you have from the Word of truth.

So what is the Spirit saying to the churches in Noosa today?

We often refer to Noosa as "the playground of the rich and famous" or those

who aspire to be!!

If we take any notice of the local papers we will recognise that there are moves to make Noosa a showcase city, offering the best of all the cultures represented here to call this beautiful place 'home'.

So many are looking for meaning, looking for a friend, looking for somewhere to belong. Its not unusual to see what they might call 'alternative spirituality' being offered to needy souls in the market place or along the river walk.

So what is the Spirit saying to the church in Noosa today?

You are my church. You have come into my kingdom through the door of faith and obedience. That invitation to walk through that door is still open. No one can close it against you. However the day will come when that door will close. Please don't miss out. It is not my desire that any should be left behind. To the faithful, seasoned believers I invite you to take up this fresh challenge.

I have opened a door of opportunity to you to go and tell people who I am and invite them to consider Christ. You may at times feel like the task is beyond you. However, I encourage you to endure patiently to fulfil my purpose for you and this city.

Hold onto what you have-the gifts I have given each of you collectively to be the church, working together.

I do have an enemy but he is a defeated foe.

All that you have in Christ together is far greater than anything the enemy uses against you.

Don't give up. Get a grip on hope. Get a grip on grace.

Pray together more, share your lives. Listen more to the Spirit through the reading of my Word.

Jesus is saying 'Look' I have put before you an open door, now go for it.