

A Little Strength

Scripture Reading Revelation 3:1-13

It would be profitable to study the Lord's messages to all seven of the churches in Asia Minor, found in Revelation chapters 2 – 3. These churches make a great sampling of what churches are like today.

- **Ephesus** (Revelation 2:1) was the church that was technically correct, but they had left their first love.
- **Smyrna** (Revelation 2:8) was the persecuted church.
- **Pergamos** (Revelation 2:12) was a compromising church.
- **Thyatira** (Revelation 2:18) was a church entangled with corruption.
- **Sardis** (Revelation 3:1) was a church that was pretending to be alive, but it was actually dead.
- **Philadelphia** (Revelation 3:7) was a faithful church.
- **Laodicea** (Revelation 3:14) was a lukewarm church – not hot, not cold.

See the headings that are given in Revelation chapters 2-3 (NKJV)

The warnings, rebukes, encouragements, and instructions that these churches received provide help for us today. With each church, Jesus reveals certain characteristics of Himself, ***“These things says...”*** He always reminds each church ***“I know thy works...”*** (To Sardis He says, ***“I have not found your works perfect before God”*** – Revelation 3:2). Each church receives a promise to its individual members, ***“To Him that overcomes...”***

But for this lesson we focus on something that two churches had in common – a little strength. We are talking about the “dead” church and the “faithful” church – Sardis and Philadelphia.

Revelation 3:1-3

Sardis is the dead church – the church that has a name that attempts to identify them as living. This church identifies with God, with Jesus Christ, with the heritage of love and truth that has been delivered, through the generations, to us today. Jesus says that this church needs to be watchful and strengthen that which remains. If not, their functions, their influence, and the purpose for existing will die. They are guilty of imperfect works. Which means that there is

incompleteness in what they do. They follow forms and traditions. They try to do some “good” things, but they have missed the main thing. Like Ephesus, they are called to remember and repent (Revelation 2:5 cp. 3:3). Remember the vital roots / the foundation of Christianity (The Gospel of Jesus Christ) and get back to the basic essentials (Ephesians 3:14-21; Colossians 2:6-10). The consequences of ignoring this will mean that the church could go out of existence.

Revelation 3:7-8

Philadelphia is the church that most of us want to be. They have been faithful to the Word of Christ and have stayed true to Christ’s name. Sardis had titles and descriptions that claimed to do this, but it was hollow. Consider II Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:16. Philadelphia, though faithful, is still vulnerable and needs to continue to appreciate their real strength. Otherwise they may get sidetracked and pursue the vain appearances of glory and power that dead churches promote.

Jesus offers them an open door – a door that no one else can close. Open doors are sometimes hard to identify. An open door is not usually the easy path. Open doors often cause many people to oppose us or to try to stop us (I Corinthians 16:9 cp. Proverbs 24:10). Jesus told the people of Philadelphia that they had a little strength and were using it. They were to keep on this path. Use this strength. As Paul said in Philippians 4:13, *“I can do all things through Christ, who gives me strength.”*

One church had a little strength that was dying. The other church had a little strength that was worth cherishing and maintaining. The message is:

- Take what you have and work with it.
- Little is much when Christ is involved with it.
- If we are faithful with little, then we might also get to be faithful with much.

A few words about strength:

Strength needs to be challenged to increase. You can’t coast on a bicycle when you’re peddling uphill (Psalm 84:7; Proverbs 4:18; II Corinthians 3:18; Hebrews 12:1-3; John 1:16; I Thessalonians 4:1,9-10; II Peter 3:18).

A few words about “little faith” – Matthew 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8

Remember your source of strength:

Psalm 16:11 (cp. Nehemiah 8:10); 27:1; 105:4; Ephesians 6:10-13; John 15:1-8