

02-10-11b Revelation

We're ready to resume our study in the third chapter of Revelation, looking at the letter that the Lord Jesus Christ addressed specifically to the church at Philadelphia. In that letter he says, Revelation 3.7, To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, These things says he who is holy, he who is true, he who has the key of David, he who opens and no one shuts, shuts and no one opens. I know your works.

Look, I have set before you an open door and no one can shut it, for you have a little strength, have kept my word and have not denied my name. You remember when Paul made the comment, Bodily exercise profiteth little, and some people say well is that it profits little or profits a little? Bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable unto all things. And there's been something of a debate, well is he denigrating bodily exercise, it's of little profit, or is he saying, well it has a little profit but godliness has more.

You have the same sort of option here in verse 8, when it says you have little strength. Because the Micron, we talked about that last time, and then the word for strength here is from Dunamis. We have five different words for power or strength in Greek.

And I might just give you a quick review. This is Dunamis. Exousia is one of our words, it means authority.

That's strength in the sense of authority or power in the sense of authority. For example John 1.12, but as many as received him, to them he gave authority to be called the sons of God, the right. The second word is Iskuos, I-S-C-H-U-O-S, Iskuos, and a lot of these have verbs with them as well, like Iskuo.

And this is strength in the sense of inherent strength, natural strength, strength that inheres because you are endued with some sort of strength. And this is often in the sense of potential strength. You have this strength, you look at somebody who lifts a lot of weights, you look at them, you may not be lifting any weights at the moment, but you look at them and you say, he's strong, I can tell by looking at him, he's got inherent strength.

Third word is Energeon, E-N-E-R-G-E-I-A-N, and of course you recognize the roots of our English word energy there. This is effective strength, this is strength that accomplishes something. In fact, you can look on the world wide web and see that there's a fellow that's got this, he was a Czech or some kind of a northern European man who lived down in Florida, and he did this marble garden and he moved these huge blocks of stone, and he was a little shriveled up, past middle age man, and he built these things and put these blocks one on top of another and nobody can figure out how he did it.

But they look and they say, well, did he figure out some principle of magnetism, did he float them with levitation? They can't figure out because he built this whole castle out of these great big

blocks and then he moved it one night. The whole thing was moved, no trucks, no cranes, they can't figure out how he did it. Maybe it wasn't marble, maybe it was granite, I don't think you could afford marble, but great big 12 ton blocks.

Anyway, you look at what he accomplished and you say, well, he must have some sort of power. People think, was it mental power, had he solved some principle of defying gravity, did he somehow get them to be magnetized? Some power, and so Energeon is power or strength in the sense of accomplishment, it's effective, effective strength, effective power. It's often translated to working of something, it's the working out.

The fourth word is Kratos from Kratos, K-R-A-T-O-S. This is power in the sense of supremacy. You are stronger, you're strong in comparison with something else.

There's a Greek compound word, Pantocrator, which means the ruler of all, the Almighty, is the idea. In fact, Pantocrator is the Greek translation of Almighty. When you see the word Almighty God, or the Septuagint in the Old Testament where it talks about the Lord God Almighty, Almighty is Pantocrator.

This is God's ruling power, his supremacy, his omnipotence. Our word here is none of those four. It's not Exusia, it's not Iskuos, it's not Energeon, it's not Kratos.

Our word is Dunamis, Dunamis. Jesus says in verse 8, I have set before you an open door, no one can shut it, for you have Micron Dunamin. The door is there because they have, either little or a little, strength.

And the word strength there is Dunamis. What does Dunamis mean, especially in comparison to the other available words? Dunamis is strength or power in the sense of ability. Now unto him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all you could ask or think, he was not able to.

Anytime you see able to or not able to in the New Testament, you're going to find Dunamis or one of its cognates behind it. This is strength in the sense of potential, ability. There is an ability that the Philadelphian believers have.

It's a little ability or little ability. They have kept my word, they have not, actually you have kept my word. And once again as we've seen in the other letters, this is a singular.

This is a second person singular vocabulary here. You have kept my word, you have not denied my name. Then in verse 9 we have a little bit of a digression.

He says, and we'll come back and talk a little bit more about Dunamis. Indeed, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say they are Jews and are not, but lie. Indeed, I will make them come and worship before your feet and know that I have loved you.

Well, what is this about? First of all, we've seen the synagogue of Satan a time or two before in

these letters, and they say they are Jews and they're not. Why would that be important? This becomes something of a theological question because should you be a Jew? Should they say they are Jews and they really are? Is that the idea? They say they're Jews, but they're not. It's sort of like saying you're spiritual, but you're not.

You're supposed to be spiritual, you say you're spiritual, but you're not. And we ask ourselves the question, and I'll give you a little time here to ask it of yourself. Why are we talking about this synagogue, which is obviously a Jewish gathering? It's not an ecclesia.

It's not a mob scene. It's a synagogue, but Jesus says it's a synagogue of Satan, which we've seen before. And he says these are this gathering of Jews.

They say they're Jews, but they are not. They lie. Well, does this mean that they're not doing the right Jewish things, that they're not really descended from Abraham? What does it mean that they're not really the Jews that they say they are? And should they be? That's the other question.

Does that make sense? Should they be Jews? Could Jesus commend them if they really were Jews? They say they're Jews and they are, and they get a pat on the back. Well, what does the Bible tell us? One of the most famous things Paul says, in Christ there's what? There's neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female, there's neither bond nor free. We're all one in Christ Jesus.

Do you ever find being a Jew a positive thing, not to be anti-Semitic? There's nobody that's trying to push any sort of anti-Semitism here. We're talking about the terminology of the New Testament. Are we ever encouraged to be Jews? Be a Jew indeed, be a true Jew.

Is that the encouragement? It's really not, is it? In fact, that tends to be the problem. People who make an issue of Judaism are the ones who are attacking and harassing and otherwise ensnaring believers. Take a look, for example, at Galatians.

We just looked at this recently, but Galatians chapter three, O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified. Then he goes on to talk about the works of the law. Have you begun in the spirit and now are going to be made perfect by the flesh? He talks about the issue of faith.

In verse 10, as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written, cursed is everyone who does not continue in all the things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for the just shall live by faith. The law is not of faith.

The man who does not live by faith shall live by the law. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us, for it is written, cursed is everyone who hangs on a

tree, so that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Brethren, I speak in the manner of men, and he goes on throughout this book of Galatians talking about the law, the law being set aside, you are all sons of God through faith.

You get all the way down to chapter 5, and he culminates by saying, Stand fast in the liberty by which Christ has made us free. Do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. What is he saying? Do not let the Judaizers try to drag you back under the law.

He spends the first four chapters of this letter explaining how Christ is the end of the law, Christ has fulfilled the law, Christ has redeemed us out from under that curse. Paul says if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. So if someone says they are a Jew, and they are not, what is Jesus really saying? You can say you are a Jew all you want, you can keep the law all you want, you are not supposed to be a Jew.

That is not the point. And you can't be a Jew anymore, and be spiritual, and be pleasing to God. You can't bring your Judaism to God and say I am a Jew, I am a law abider, I am like the rich young ruler, all of these I have kept from my youth.

Circumcised on the eighth day, Hebrew of the Hebrews and all that. Jesus says these people say they are Jews, and they are not. You can't be a Jew in this age, in the spiritual sense.

You can have a Jewish heritage, you can have Jewish culture, you can be Zola Levitt, you can be friends of Israel, you can do lots of things. But when you come before God, Paul says in this age there is no Jew, and there is no Gentile. There is one spiritual life that can be led, and that is in Christ.

He is the peg on which everything hangs, it doesn't hang on the peg of the law. There is no righteousness by the works of the law. There is no credit before God, there is no stewardship, there is no approval that comes by keeping the law.

You can say you are a Jew all you want, but you are not. It doesn't matter, maybe they are Jews. They are at the synagogue, they are probably descendants of Abraham, they can probably tell you their tribe and their heritage going back generations.

Jesus says they are not a Jew. They are not, even if you want to say spiritual Israel and this, he says no, they are not. Even if it was possible, they still wouldn't be.

They are a synagogue of Satan. So I think that is fairly understandable here, we won't belabor that point. But he says, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say they are Jews and are not, but lie.

Why does he emphasize that when they say they are Jews, not only are they not in fact, but they are liars when they say that they are. Because they are rejecting the truth, this is the Aliphenos

true one speaking, and they have received the apostolic teaching that says, it is not a matter of your Jewishness anymore that makes you people of God, it is now a matter of faith. It is not your Jewishness or your obedience as a Jew that makes you spiritual, that makes you righteous.

Righteousness is by faith, as it actually has always been. But these who are trying to propagate a false system of righteousness are persecuting those who are trying to walk by faith. Like Paul talks about in Romans chapter 4, the son of the bond woman persecutes the son of the free woman.

And you can go to that whole discourse in Galatians, as well as in Romans. He talks about Abraham and his example of faith in Romans chapter 4. And then you have the same idea in Galatians about the fact that it is righteousness by faith, that is what we are called to. And these individuals in this Philadelphian church have been faithful.

They have not denied Christ's name. And whether you see that as little strength or a little strength, this is strength, this is dunamis in the sense of ability. And there's two sort of different ways of understanding what Jesus is saying about them.

It could just be saying kind of like, well, you have a little strength and that's all it takes, is just a little strength. But because this is dunamis, and by the way, you know, you's turn to why's when words come over in English, so this is where we get dynamic. We say, oh, he's got such a dynamic presence or a dynamic personality or that's a dynamic church, dynamic.

You're saying dunamis. They have a lot of, they have an effect. They have the ability to do a lot of things.

But this also may be sometimes in a situation you don't have the ability to do much. You can be in an environment where you are not able to accomplish a great deal. There have been missionaries who go to a mission field.

There have been pastors who go to churches. There have been individuals who live in a family that is largely apathetic and indifferent. They may be the only one in the family that has a yearning for the things of God.

And your scope, your ability, your dunamis when it comes to being able to produce visible fruit is very limited. You don't have the opportunity. You don't have the ability because there are not many opportunities.

And your faith and your desire may not be able to be manifested because there's just not a scope for it to function. It reminds me, I've often thought about this system of medals in the military. And you have men who are in a situation at a certain point in time in a critical battle and they jump on a grenade or they charge up the hill and take a machine gun nest or they carry several wounded men to safety and they wind up being written up in a citation and given a medal of honor or a

silver star or a bronze star.

Are these men the only ones who are brave? Are they the only ones capable of doing that kind of thing? They not only had the courage or the desperation or whatever motivated them, but they also had the opportunity and the ability. They didn't get their kneecap shot off before they had a chance to do their heroic deed. You can have the heart of a lion.

You can have all the courage in the world but you don't always have the ability to demonstrate it. And there are many who quietly and faithfully, there are many who do their thing and it's never seen. All of the witnesses were killed along with them.

So it's sort of happenstance or luck of the draw that certain ones get singled out and get rewarded. And sometimes there's someone who has all of the courage and all of the desire and all of the willingness in the world and just that opportunity never comes up. Maybe they spend their whole career in peacetime.

Had there been a war, had there been a crisis, you would have seen this amazing courage. They would have been like the men at the Alamo. I was reading Dr. W.A. Criswell's family history and he had a great-great-grandfather and some of the men who were at the Alamo stopped at his great-great-grandfather's home.

I think his name was John Yancey Criswell down there near San Antonio. They had their last meal and they wrote in their diary, it's written up in the diary, these men who died at the Alamo and they said, we stopped at the farm of John Y. Criswell Sr. and we had a wonderful meal and he took such good care of us and everything. Well, that John Criswell might have been a very heroic man.

If he had been with them, he might have been covered in glory at the Alamo and been remembered as one of the martyrs down there. But he was on a farm many miles distant and he just provided some meal and comfort for the men who did go and do that. So I think it is possible here that the church at Philadelphia, they don't have the works and the manifest fruit that you see in some of the other churches like Ephesus.

Remember up there in chapter 2, what did Jesus say about the church at Ephesus? He says, I know your works, your labor, your patience. You cannot bear those who are evil. You've tested those who say they are apostles and are not.

You've found them to be liars. You've persevered and have patience. You've labored for my name's sake and have not become weary.

And they receive that commendation. You go to the ones at Smyrna and he talks about them. Well, here at the Philadelphia church, Philadelphia was kind of a backwater town.

It wasn't really famous for anything. We've had a lot of biographical details about some of these

other cities. Very little is known about Philadelphia.

It wasn't a great capital. It wasn't a great center of pagan worship. They can't even substantiate the Jewish community.

They've been able to find the people who may have constituted the synagogue of Satan at Smyrna and some of these other places. They found inscriptions and Jewish names and things. They can't even verify that any Jews even lived in Philadelphia.

The way we know that they were there is because Jesus says they were. But what's the point? We said in our first lesson tonight that in different areas of life and in different phases of our life, we may find ourselves fitting one or more of these seven churches. And all of us have times when we may have a great burning desire.

We may have a great willingness. Sometimes you see things in the word of God and you see what God has done for you and your heart just feels like it's overflowing with the desire to do something, to have an outworking of what God's doing in your soul. And there just doesn't seem to be an outlet.

There doesn't seem to be the opportunity or the ability to do much about your faith, to demonstrate your faith, to work out your faith. Your circumstances, you're sort of hemmed in. I think about people who may be physically limited because of age or disability or whatever and may love the Lord dearly and would be willing to go eat caterpillars in Borneo and witness to the pygmies and just don't have that chance.

That's Philadelphia. And it's a wonderful encouragement to me because Jesus says, I see you, I know that you've been faithful. You've not denied my name.

Even though you only have limited, you have a micron, you just have microscopic ability. You don't have the ability to show. This is, you know, strengthen the sense of being able to work something out and they don't have that ability.

But Jesus says, because you have been these invisible things, because you have not denied my name and you have had this persecution and you've been sort of on the defensive, you haven't been able to take the offense and go out and do a lot of works, you've been on the defensive. You've got the synagogue of Satan out there who say they are Jews and are not and they are evidently putting some sort of pressure trying to draw these people away and they've not let themselves be drawn away. They've just stuck.

They've been faithful. They haven't let themselves get distracted or diverted. And look at what Jesus says.

He says, I have put in front of you an open door. He doesn't say I've put before you a field of

ripened wheat. Grab your sickle and reap.

That would be evangelism perhaps. Although we've seen that parable look upon the wheat as ripe for harvest and that's really the righteousness of God by faith that's ready to be reaped. Pray that God will send workers into that harvest.

That's not a harvest of souls. It's a harvest of righteousness. It's the grain that goes into God's storehouse.

It's the faithful. It's the obedient. It's those who are called according to his purpose who work out their deliverance.

Sometimes that's visible and manifest and other times it's not. So here's the bottom line. Don't be discouraged if you find yourself trotting down a road and you're not in a big church that's got a program where you can see fruit.

You're not in a place where you can have an influence on a lot of people. Maybe you don't have an opportunity to teach or you don't have an opportunity to witness or you don't have an opportunity. It seems like even in the area of prayer you've got limited things that need prayer that you can see and pray intelligently about.

But it's not like being in a Sunday school class of 35 or 40 people and they pass around a prayer list. It's not like there are great opportunities for all different kinds of variety of function of spiritual gifts and so on. You just seem to be doing a routine day by day by day.

You have little ability, little dunamis. You may have little power over your situation. You may be under authority.

You think of the slaves like Onesimus that were in some of these households. What ability, what dunamis did a slave have? Even if he was a believer, he just had the ability to try to do well as a slave. Try to do what his master required.

Consider himself to be an unprofitable servant and just keep going and doing the best that he can. Little ability. But Jesus says, I have seen your faithfulness.

You have kept my word. And this is tereo, guard. You've guarded my word.

Have not denied my name. These that are putting pressure on you and trying to draw you away, he says, I will make them come and worship before your feet and to know that I have loved you. This has the idea, these are people that are holier than thou, that are looking down on them and belittling them and thumbing their nose.

You remember the man that was healed by Jesus and then the Pharisees called him in and said, he says, all I know is once I was blind and now I see. And they said, you were altogether born in

sin. Are you going to start telling us? He says, who can do this but God? It's obvious to me the power is from God.

And they said, how can you try to tell us anything? And they just looked down on him. These of little ability, Jesus says, these that seem to be so influential and powerful and well healed and a big group that's putting you down, they are going to fall at your feet. I will show them that I love you.

That they are not the Jews they think they are. They are not the righteous people they think they are. They are in fact the synagogue of Satan.

They will fall at your feet. I would submit to you also that these are, we're talking about all believers. Because once again, if these are unbelievers, they're not going to be around in the millennial kingdom.

And this is a millennial promise. And you don't have unbelievers falling at your feet in the millennium because they have not been raised yet. They don't get raised to the great white throne.

So these are just like the Pharisees are going to be falling at the feet of the people like Lazarus and Mary and Martha and the others who faithfully followed the Lord. John Mark. I will make them come and fall at your feet.

It says worship, but proskuneo means prostrate themselves. It is used for worship, but it doesn't mean worship in the sense that they're going to, you know, we don't worship men. The same book rebukes John.

John records his own rebuke when he proskuneo in front of the angel. Don't worship me. Worship God.

But he says they will prostrate themselves. They will kneel and do obeisance as a slave does his master, as a vassal does his king. They will kneel before your feet.

They will prostrate themselves before your feet and will know that I have loved you. Verse 10, because you have kept my command to persevere, I will also keep you. And there's a wordplay here because it's all tereo.

You have guarded the word of my patience is what it literally says. It doesn't say my word of patience. It is the word of my patience.

By the way, I had another thought just as an aside here. When you study the words of Jesus in the gospels, we know that Jesus' language was Aramaic. He thought in Aramaic.

He spoke in Aramaic. He taught in Aramaic. His conversations with the disciples were all in

Aramaic.

It is evident from the word plays and from the careful construction of vocabulary in these letters that Jesus delivered these letters to John in Greek. Greek is the first language of this communication from Christ where all of his communication to Israel was in Israel's language. He came into his own and his own knew him not, John says in John 1. And he spoke their language.

He spoke to them in Aramaic. Who is he talking to here? Churches in Asia. What's the native language? What's the common language? The Koine.

It's Greek. And so Jesus sends his letter to them in Greek. This has not been translated from Aramaic.

But someone who thinks in Aramaic and speaks in Greek will often have sort of an Aramaic construction. And Jesus is, after all, even in his hypostatic union, he is Jewish. And his first language that he learned in his humanity was Aramaic.

And there's a little bit of an Aramaic flavor, Hebrew flavor. Hebrew and Aramaic are just very, very close. And you can tell, like Luke wrote his gospel in Greek, but Luke spoke Aramaic.

You can see some Aramaic underlying his Greek. Same thing here. But he says, you have kept the word of my patience.

You have kept the word of my patience. What does that mean? What is one of the most outstanding features of Christ's earthly life? What about, I mean, it's exemplified and comes to a pinnacle in the trials where they spit on him, they plucked out his beard, they abused him, they beat him. He opened not his mouth.

He endured. If you want a model of patience that is manifested in its ultimate extent, when Jesus looked down from the cross and said, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. That's Christ's patience.

We have the word of his patience. We have the record of his patience. We have the example of his patience.

He was patient with the crowds. He was patient with his disciples. He was patient with Peter.

He was patient with those who abused him and mocked him and scourged him and sent him to the cross. And these believers in Philadelphia know the example of Christ and their patience is so patient that it's Christ-like patience. It's one thing to be patient.

And sometimes we have patience for a while and then we run out of patience. The patience of Christ never runs out. And these Philadelphian believers have not been bitter.

They've not returned evil for evil to the synagogue of Satan, to these Judaizers who are putting

pressure on them and mocking them and belittling them and saying all kinds of bad things about them and probably doing more than that, probably making their lives miserable in commerce and in culture, bad-mouthing them, blacklisting them. He says, you have kept, you have guarded, you have preserved the word of my patience. You have lived consistent with the record of my own patience, Jesus says.

Now that is a high, high compliment. To live with the patience of Christ, that reflects a great degree of spiritual advance. Can you imagine the Lord Jesus looking you in the eye and saying, you have kept the word, the record of my patience.

You have followed in my footsteps. Remember Jesus said, if any man wants to end up where I'm going to end up, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. That whole idea is summed up in keeping the word of his patience.

He doesn't say you've obeyed my command to be patient, that would be one thing. He says, you have preserved, you have been an example of my own patience. It's like when Paul the Apostle says, I share in the sufferings of Christ.

That's a high, high standard. And these are some amazing believers. This letter and the Smyrna letter are the two letters of really high commendation out of these seven.

You've not denied my name, you have kept the word of my patience. I will keep you, and he turns the verb around, it's also to keep or to guard. I will keep you from the hour of trial, which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

Now, what's your first thought? If I handed you a piece of paper, one question on the pop quiz, what is the hour of trial? What would you put down? Tribulation, right? The hour of trial is going to come on the whole earth? That's everybody's answer. But I ask myself this question. When Jesus wrote this letter to the church of Philadelphia, how far away is the tribulation? 2,000 years, give or take, 1,900 years? Why would all these Philadelphian believers have to have any worries about the hour of tribulation that's going to come on the whole earth? I mean, they all died long before the tribulation came, so this would be sort of an empty promise, wouldn't it? What is the hour of trial that is about to come on the whole earth? The other thing that made me a little bit suspicious of that understanding is the fact that many times when it's talking about the tribulation, it is the day of the Lord.

And this is the hour. So I thought, well, let me just go and look up the uses of hour in the New Testament and see where we end up with an hour. What is an hour used for? And what we find is, you think about the Garden of Gethsemane.

There are many, many. You can look it up in your own concordance. Just look up the word hour and look at the New Testament references.

And some of them are just annotations. You know, it was about the third hour. But what does Jesus say to the disciples in the garden, Peter, James, and John? Could you not watch with me one hour? It was a test.

It was a test to see if they could. I mean, it's nothing like the test Jesus is about to go through, but they couldn't even stay awake for an hour of prayer. The idea of an hour of testing has the idea of a short duration.

It is the time. When you find the word hour used in Greek, it means the time. Now is the appointed hour.

Now is the day of salvation. It's the time. There is a time of testing that comes on the whole earth.

The other thing to think about is, the tribulation is not really a perazzo type of test. The other thing you can do is look up what is testing. Perazzo is testing.

And it's often used for tempting, to tempt or to test. And it actually means to try. If you think about the English word try, they say, he tried to enter and was not able.

Well, trial and trying, perazzo has the exact same locus of meaning. You can find it in the Greek New Testament where it is used for someone trying to do something and not being able. It's used for someone, it is written when Jesus was tested by Satan in the wilderness after the 40 days and the fasting and turned these stones into bread.

That's perazzo. And he says, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. And it's perazzo.

You will not put him to the test. It's not really possible to tempt God, but to put him to the test. In Galatians chapter 6 and verse 1, Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness, considering yourself, lest you also be perazzo, lest you also be tested.

When is the... My point is this. The tribulation is not the hour of testing. The tribulation is the hour of judgment.

Look at Revelation chapter 14 and verse 7. And you have to actually look. Revelation chapter 14 and verse 7. There is an angel flying in the midst of heaven. He has the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth.

Every nation, tribe, tongue and people saying with a loud voice, remember this is Revelation 14, smack in the middle of the tribulation, seals, vials, bowls, trumpets, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment has come. Now you test something to find out what it's made of, to find out if it will yield or not. You try to go in, and when you try, something either lets you in or it doesn't.

It shows how strong it is. I tried to go into the courtroom, but the bailiff would not let me. I tried.

I tried the security. The security held. They didn't let me in.

I tried to call you, but I couldn't get through. I tried to make the phone system give me a connection, and it didn't let me. Here it says the hour of his judgment has come.

God is not trying people. God is not testing people in the tribulation. God is judging people in the tribulation.

God is judging nations in the tribulation. God is judging the world in the tribulation. He's not testing the world.

He's not trying people out. He's not trying them to see how they do in a trial. He's not evaluating them and seeing how they handle the pressure.

That's over with. This is not the hour of trial. This is the hour of judgment.

Turn a page over to Revelation 18.10. And again, think about where you are in Revelation here. Revelation 18.10. You have the kings of the earth weeping and lamenting over Babylon, seeing the smoke of the burning, standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city, for in one hour your judgment has come. Babylon was not tried.

Babylon was judged. People on the earth are judged, and the tribulation is a time of judgment. So, if that is the case, then what does it mean I will keep you from the hour of testing that is about to come on the whole earth? Well, it has to do with this about to.

And the fact that the Koine Greek of Revelation is later than any of the other Greek, it was the last book to be written. Greek was already drifting away from the use of the future tense and the use of the infinitive to reflect things were coming in the future and started slipping into a usage where *melon*, this word that means about to, came to be used for something that was in the future. And it basically means the hour of testing that will come to the whole earth.

The hour of testing that will come. The sense of immediacy used to be in Greek. It used to mean this is just about to happen.

This is imminent. Kind of like it's one thing. But later Greek, and really even by the time of John writing Revelation, if you look at contemporary Greek that was written around this same time, they're using this term as a simple future.

This is an hour of testing that will come on the whole earth. Everyone who dwells on the earth is going to be tested. And we know this is true.

The Holy Spirit comes and convicts the world. People are tested. What are you going to do? You're confronted.

You are put to the test. If you're a believer, you're going to be put to the test. How strong is your faith? Jesus said in this world you will have tribulation.

Be of good cheer. I've overcome the world. You will never be tested above what you're able to bear.

There will be a way of escape. Now does the way of escape open up when the test is just at 2 on a scale of 10? When does the way of escape open up? That's when you're up at the limit of what you can bear. You have a scale of 1 to 10.

10 is the worst test you can undergo. That's the limit of what you can bear. We have tests of 2. We have tests of 4. We have tests of 7. We have a test of 9 on a scale of 10.

It's kind of like how much weight can you lift? Well, I can bench press, let's say... I don't even know what I can bench press. We'll fantasize and say I can bench press 200 pounds. I don't know if I can or not.

Let's say I could. Well, I could go and pick up a bar with 180 pounds and press that. I could pick up 170 pounds and press that.

If I picked up 210 pounds and got a part way up, I might need somebody to come grab that so that I don't drop it on myself and break a rib or snap my neck or something. When is it that there is a way of escape? You will not be tested above what you are able to bear, but with that test, the I almost can't bear this or I'm afraid I can't bear this or I can't bear this, there will be a way of escape. What does the Philadelphian church have? There is an open door.

You have already demonstrated your faithfulness. You have demonstrated the word of my patience. I am going to open this door in front of you and I'm going to guard you from the hour of trial.

I don't need to test you. I was giving my daughter a piano lesson a few days ago, going through her piano book, songs that she's been working on. We came to a song and I had her skip it.

I shouldn't have because I think she really wanted to play it for me and I didn't think of that, but I knew she could play it. I thought I won't make you drudge through that song. We'll skip on and go to something new and something different.

And so I said, you don't have to play that song for me. I know you can play it. Jesus is saying to the Philadelphian believers, I'm going to remove you from this testing.

You've already demonstrated what you're made of. I'm going to put this open door in front of you.

You walk through it and you're not going to have to go through this test.

There are places in our life. Go back up to Smyrna. We're getting a preview of coming attractions here, but go back up to Smyrna in Revelation chapter 2. I know your tribulation, your poverty, the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not.

They were a synagogue of Satan. That sounds real familiar, doesn't it? Do not fear those things which you are about to suffer. The devil is going to throw you into prison.

You will be tested. You will have Philippians, tribulation, 10 days. Be faithful.

Now, here's a poor church. I know your poverty, but you're rich. They're rich in what? They're rich in opportunity.

They are rich in dunamis. They're going to have the power to demonstrate what they're made of in a test. Sometimes you say, you know, I know this so well.

My daughter knew that song and she wanted to show. She wanted to demonstrate how well she could play it. And I goofed.

I missed giving her the chance. I should have put her to the test. And let her play her song.

And I didn't. There are other times when you've worked on something and you've done it a million times. And if somebody says, it's like when I was taking boxing at the academy.

I got through boxing. I learned it really well. Didn't like boxing.

And the guy said, you don't have to come back for the second semester of boxing. You've demonstrated that you can box really well. You can give it a miss.

We'll give you a credit in boxing and you don't have to come. And I was so relieved. It was great.

It really helped me because I had an hour to work on my academics. Sometimes a test is good because you demonstrate what you're made of. Here's the Smyrnans.

They look poor, but they're rich. And they're going to get to show the riches in their soul by going through that test and demonstrating their faith. You get to a very similar situation in Philadelphia.

The other commended church. But they've already, he says, you have kept the word of my patience. You've already shown what you're made of.

And he says, I'm going to open a door for you. You walk through it. And I'm going to keep you from the hour of testing.

You don't have to go through the test. You're validated. You're credited.

You're good to go. You've kept my word. I'm going to keep you.

I'm going to exempt you from the test. You don't need it. You've already demonstrated what I needed to demonstrate with you.

We find that in our lives. Sometimes God puts us to the test to demonstrate, to show us as much as to show anybody, what he has put into our soul and what he's done by way of transformation. There are other times when he just delivers us out.

He says, I know you're faithful. You don't need this test. I don't have to bereave you.

I don't have to challenge you. I don't have to put you in a difficult circumstance that you may see some other believer going through. I don't have to do it.

You've already demonstrated your faithfulness in so many little things. I know you would be faithful if I put you in this, that which is much. He that is faithful in that which is least will be faithful in that which is much.

And we can save ourselves a lot of testing by being faithful in small things. And God says, I've seen you be faithful in these small things. I don't have to give you a big test.

I'm going to open a door in front of you and just let you walk through, walk right away from the hour of testing that is going to come on everybody that's dwelling on the earth.