

**Day of Small Things**  
**Series: Between a Rock and a Hard Place**  
**March 21, 2021**  
**Revelation 3.7-13**

- I. **The Age of the Mega-Church**
  - A. Cf Age of the Great Preacher
    - 1. England
      - a. Spurgeon
      - b. Lloyd-Jones
      - c. John Stott
    - 2. America
      - a. Moody
      - b. Simpson
      - c. Tozer
      - d. Barnhouse
      - e. Graham
  - B. Age of the Great Church
    - 1. Examples
      - a. Coral Ridge Presbyterian
        - (1) D. James Kennedy
        - (2) Evangelism Explosion
      - b. Willow Creek
        - (1) Bill Hybels
      - c. Calvary Church
        - (1) Chuck Smith
    - 2. Multiple Examples
      - a. First Baptist – Orlando
      - b. Christ Community Church – Omaha (CMA)
      - c. North Point Community Church
        - (1) Andy Stanley
      - d. Grace Church
        - (1) John MacArthur
    - 3. Typified by facilities and services
      - a. Nurseries
      - b. Schools
      - c. Outreach ministries
        - (1) Maternity homes
        - (2) Abortion counseling
        - (3) Food programs
      - d. Counseling
      - e. Recreation
      - f. Full service church
    - 4. Resemble American malls
      - a. Calvary Presbyterian – Charlotte

- (1) Escalator
    - b. Bookstores
      - (1) Sometimes they even have books!
  - 5. Fueled by the Church Growth Movement
    - a. Founded by Donald McGavran
      - (1) Missionary
      - (2) Believed in worldwide evangelism
      - (3) Studied the sociological patterns which enabled church growth
      - (4) Advocated using those patterns
    - b. Perpetuated by C. Peter Wagner in US
      - (1) Every church should be growing
      - (2) We know how to make churches grow
      - (3) If not growing, don't want to grow
  - 6. Legacy – Mixture of good and bad
    - a. Exceptional resources for American Christianity
    - b. Increased presence and influence in the culture
    - c. Get the idea that churches grow more like Burger King franchises are multiplied
- C. Difficult to be a small church in this age
- 1. Negative self-image
    - a. Don't have the resources that others do
    - b. Often lose people to the mega-churches
    - c. Can't compete for the best pastors who often are "called" to the biggest churches
  - 2. This message is for the small church

II. Text

A. **Revelation 3:7–13** (NASB95) —

- 1. 7 "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this: 8 'I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.
- 2. 9 'Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you.
- 3. 10 'Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.
- 4. 11 'I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.
- 5. 12 'He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; 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 out of heaven from My God, and My new name.

6. 13 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’”

### III. Philadelphia – A Small Church

#### A. Context

1. City founded by Eumenes, King of Pergamum, 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BC
  - a. Brother – Attalus
    - (1) Loyalty earned him the name **Attalus Philadelphus**
      - (a) I.e., brother love
  - b. Named after Attalus
2. **Commercially prosperous**
  - a. Head of great valley leading to Sardis to the sea near Smyrna
  - b. Gateway to rich plateau area
    - (1) Well endowed agricultural land
    - (2) Supplied textile industries
3. **Unstable existence – earthquake prone**
  - a. BC 17 – destroyed the city
  - b. Aftershocks continued for years
    - (1) People began to live outside the city
4. **Adopted new names** on a couple of occasions
  - a. After imperial assistance helped earthquake recovery, Neocaesarea
  - b. Later, under Vespasian, Flavius
5. Known for its religious festivals and athletic contests

#### B. Small church

1. V 8 – “a little power”
  - a. More properly, “little power”

#### C. Church with enemies, little political power

1. Synagogue of Satan
  - a. Claimed to be true Jews
  - b. Lied about that
2. Source of persecution, rejection
3. Contributed to negative self-image
  - a. Easy to believe that God had rejected them

#### D. Basic message – don’t have to be big to be a true, faithful church

1. Sometimes the opposite is true
  - a. **1 Corinthians 1:26–31** (NASB95) — 26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; 27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, 29 so that no man may boast before God. 30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, 31 so that, just as it is written, “LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.”

- b. **2 Corinthians 12:10** (NASB95) — 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.
- c. **2 Corinthians 13:4** (NASB95) — 4 For indeed He was crucified because of weakness, yet He lives because of the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, yet we will live with Him because of the power of God directed toward you.

2. **OT example – Zerubbabel**

- a. Following the Babylonian exile; return of Jews to Palestine
- b. Returned in 537 BC with Sheshbazzar
  - (1) Rebuilt the temple, beginning with foundation
- c. Work was hindered through much opposition of those in the area
  - (1) Discouraging for small band of Jews with few resources
- d. Eventually, after fresh start, the project was completed
- e. Zechariah’s prophecies encouraged the work when in difficulty
- f. **Zechariah 4:1–10** (NASB95) —
  - (1) 1 Then the angel who was speaking with me returned and roused me, as a man who is awakened from his sleep.
  - (2) 2 He said to me, “What do you see?” And I said, “I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold with its bowl on the top of it, and its seven lamps on it with seven spouts belonging to each of the lamps which are on the top of it; 3 also two olive trees by it, one on the right side of the bowl and the other on its left side.”
  - (3) 4 Then I said to the angel who was speaking with me saying, “What are these, my lord?” \
  - (4) 5 So the angel who was speaking with me answered and said to me, “Do you not know what these are?” And I said, “No, my lord.”
  - (5) 6 Then he said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, **‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts.**
  - (6) 7 ‘What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain; and he will bring forth the top stone with shouts of “Grace, grace to it!” ’ ’
  - (7) 8 Also the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 9 “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will finish it. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.
  - (8) 10 **“For who has despised the day of small things?** But these seven will be glad when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel—these are the eyes of the LORD which range to and fro throughout the earth.”

3. Message

- a. Don't despise the day of small things
  - b. Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit
- IV. **Philadelphia – a Good Small Church**
- A. **Keeps the word of Christ**
1. **Revelation 3:8** (NASB95) — 8 'I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, **and have kept My word**, and have not denied My name.
  2. More than merely preserving the text like medieval monks
  3. Knowing the Word; obeying the word
    - a. Cf: **Revelation 1:3** (NASB95) — 3 Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.
  4. Cf: **Psalm 119:137–144** (NASB95) —
    - a. 137 Righteous are You, O LORD, And upright are Your judgments.
    - b. 138 You have commanded Your testimonies in righteousness And exceeding faithfulness.
    - c. 139 My zeal has consumed me, Because my adversaries have forgotten Your words.
    - d. 140 Your word is very pure, Therefore Your servant loves it.
    - e. 141 **I am small and despised, Yet I do not forget Your precepts.**
    - f. 142 Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Your law is truth.
    - g. 143 Trouble and anguish have come upon me, Yet Your commandments are my delight.
    - h. 144 Your testimonies are righteous forever; Give me understanding that I may live.
  5. Origin of their faith is the word of Christ
    - a. **Romans 10:17** (NASB95) — 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.
  6. **Colossians 3:16–17** (NASB95) —
    - a. 16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
    - b. 17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.
- B. **Don't deny the name of Christ**
1. **Revelation 3:8** (NASB95) — 8 'I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, **and have not denied My name**.
  2. People who keep the word of Christ know who Christ is
  3. Temptation in the midst of opposition is to deny Christ
    - a. Jews rejected this church because the church believed in Jesus
    - b. Example – John 9.13-34 and the man born blind, put out of the synagogue

4. Salvation depends on confessing Christ
    - a. **Romans 10:9–10** (NASB95) — 9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.
    - b. **Matthew 10:32–33** (NASB95) — 32 “Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. 33 “But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.”
    - c. **Luke 12:8** (NASB95) — 8 “And I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man will confess him also before the angels of God...”
  5. Discernment of true v. false believers depends on confessing Christ
    - a. **1 John 4:2–3** (NASB95) — 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.
- C. **Keep the word of Christ’s perseverance**
1. **Revelation 3:10** (NASB95) — 10 ‘Because you have **kept the word of My perseverance**, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.
  2. Continuing in Christ is the mark of true discipleship
    - a. **John 8:31–32** (NASB95) — 31 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “**If you continue in My word**, then you are truly disciples of Mine; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”
    - b. **Matthew 24:9–13** (NASB95) — 9 “Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. 10 “At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. 11 “Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. 12 “Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold. 13 “**But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.**”
  3. Willingness to suffer for Christ is the great witness of the small church
    - a. **Philippians 2:5–8** (NASB95) — 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
    - b. **Colossians 1:24** (NASB95) — 24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings

for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

- (1) Nothing lacking in Christ's afflictions as far as the atonement is concerned
  - (2) What is lacking is the personal demonstration of Christ's sufferings to a watching world
- c. Synagogue of Satan will bow down at their feet and know that God loves them
- (1) Might indicate a conversion of many Jews
  - (2) Reason – they see the personal demonstration of the sufferings of Christ in them

V. **Christ of the Small Church**

- A. **Revelation 3:7** (NASB95) — 7 “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this:
- B. **Holy**
1. Devotion to God alone; set apart; consecrated
  2. **John 8:28–29** (NASB95) — 28 So Jesus said, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. 29 “And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.”
  3. Being small is no impediment to being holy
- C. **True**
1. In Revelation
    - a. Either holy and true, faithful and true, true and righteous
    - b. Either referring to Christ, God, or His word
  2. Trustworthy; can count on Him
    - a. Can't count on the Jews
    - b. Can't count on the ground that moves (earthquakes)
    - c. Can count on Christ and His word
  3. The small church is tempted to believe someone else who purports to help grant influence, strength
    - a. Don't be tempted
- D. **Authority**
1. Philadelphia: weak, powerless, with no authority
    - a. But the Lord has authority – all authority!

VI. **Promises to the Small Church**

- A. **Revelation 3:8** (NASB95) — 8 ‘I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.’
1. **Open door**
    - a. Not a gateway to rich agricultural lands
    - b. Gateway to the kingdom of God

- B. **Revelation 3:9** (NASB95) — 9 ‘Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you.’
  - 1. **Vindication from enemies**
    - a. Relief from the oppression of the Jews
- C. **Revelation 3:10** (NASB95) — 10 ‘Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.’
  - 1. **Keeping from tribulation**
    - a. They have persevered in the everyday tribulations
    - b. They will be spared in the great tribulations
- D. **Revelation 3:11** (NASB95) — 11 ‘I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.’
  - 1. **Assurance of the crown**
    - a. Not just a crown won at games
    - b. Eternal crown
- E. **Revelation 3:12** (NASB95) — 12 ‘He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; 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 out of heaven from My God, and **My new name**.’
  - 1. **Stability – Pillar in the temple**
    - a. Not the unstable pillar in a building subject to earthquake
    - b. Not even a pillar any a physical temple
    - c. But the unshakable tower of strength in the Kingdom
  - 2. **New names** from the Lord that mean something
    - a. Not new names given by human emperor as occurred with Philadelphia
    - b. Names which bear the very nature of the Deity and His church and His Savior

## VII. Conclusion

- A. **Zechariah 4:6** (NASB95) — 6 Then he said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts.
- B. **Zechariah 4:10** (NASB95) — 10 “For who has despised the day of small things? But these seven will be glad when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel—these are the eyes of the LORD which range to and fro throughout the earth.”
- C. **Psalms 119:137–144** (NASB95) — ... 141 I am small and despised, Yet I do not forget Your precepts. 142 Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Your law is truth. 143 Trouble and anguish have come upon me, Yet Your commandments are my delight. 144 Your testimonies are righteous forever; Give me understanding that I may live.
- D. Can we be the church, the people of God, when we don’t have power and influence
  - 1. In US, we have been spoiled



- a. Our influence has not always been beneficial for the church
2. In China – church was outlawed following 1949
  - a. Missionaries deported
  - b. Grew underground from thousands to 90 million
3. “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit...”