

Revelation 3:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

Analysis

I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.... This verse from Revelation's vision of letters to sardis, philadelphia, laodicea - dead religion, faithful witness, lukewarmness employs apocalyptic imagery rich with Old Testament allusions and symbolic meaning. The Greek text uses vivid apocalyptic language characteristic of Jewish prophetic literature, drawing heavily from Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Zechariah.

The symbolism must be interpreted within its first-century context while recognizing timeless spiritual realities. The imagery would resonate powerfully with persecuted believers facing Roman imperial cult worship, providing hope that despite present suffering, Christ reigns sovereign and will consummate His kingdom. The apocalyptic genre uses symbolic numbers (seven, twelve, 144,000), colors, beasts, and cosmic imagery to convey theological truth rather than photographic descriptions.

Christologically, Revelation consistently exalts Jesus as the victorious Lamb, the faithful witness, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Every vision ultimately points to Christ's supremacy, His finished redemptive work, and His certain return to judge the living and dead and establish the new creation.

Historical Context

John received this revelation circa AD 95 during Domitian's persecution, exiled on Patmos for his testimony. The seven churches of Asia Minor faced increasing pressure to participate in emperor worship and pagan religious practices. Refusal meant economic hardship, social ostracism, and potential martyrdom. Understanding this context illuminates Revelation's encouragement to faithful endurance.

The apocalyptic genre was familiar to first-century Jewish and Christian readers. Rather than newspaper-style predictions, apocalyptic literature uses symbolic imagery to reveal spiritual realities behind earthly events, encourage the faithful, warn the unfaithful, and assert God's ultimate sovereignty over history. Parallels with Daniel, Ezekiel, and intertestamental apocalyptic writings would help original readers decode the symbols.

Rome's imperial cult demanded worship of Caesar as divine, placing Christians in impossible situations—compromise their faith or face persecution. Revelation identifies Rome as "Babylon" and assures believers that despite appearances, the Lamb conquered through His death and resurrection, and all earthly kingdoms will submit to His reign.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does Revelation 3:8 reveal God's character, particularly His sovereignty, holiness, and justice?

2. What specific encouragement or warning does this verse offer for maintaining faithful Christian witness amid cultural pressure?
3. How does this passage point to Christ's victory and the hope of new creation, and how should that shape your present priorities?

Interlinear Text

Οἶδά	σου	τὰ	ἔργα	ἰδοῦ,	δέδωκα	ἐνώπιόν	σου	θύραν
I know	thee	G3588	works	behold	I have set	before	thee	door
G1492	G4675		G2041	G2400	G1325	G1799	G4675	G2374
ἀνεωγμένην,	καὶ	οὐδεὶς	δύναται	κλειῖσαι	αὐτήν	ὅτι		
an open		and	no man	can	shut	it	for	
G455		G2532	G3762	G1410	G2808	G846	G3754	
μικράν	ἔχεις	δύναμιν	καὶ	ἐτήρησάς	μου	τὸν	λόγον	
a little	thou hast	strength	and	hast kept	my	G3588	word	
G3398	G2192	G1411	G2532	G5083	G3450		G3056	
καὶ	οὐκ	ἡρνήσω	τὸ	ὄνομά	μου			
and	not	denied	G3588	name	my			
G2532	G3756	G720		G3686	G3450			

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 16:9 (Parallel theme): For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.

Colossians 4:3 (Parallel theme): Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:

Revelation 3:7 (Parallel theme): And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

Acts 14:27 (Parallel theme): And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

2 Corinthians 2:12 (Parallel theme): Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord,

Philippians 4:13 (Parallel theme): I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Revelation 2:13 (Parallel theme): I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

Luke 12:9 (Parallel theme): But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.

John 17:6 (Word): I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

Revelation 3:15 (Parallel theme): I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.