



PHILADELPHIA.

Olives. It is all Jesus in every phase of His life and work. We may pause to ask whether it is with us as it is with the Prayer Book,—Jesus Christ from first to last, the Alpha and Omega of our hopes for eternal joy? May the praise bestowed upon Philadelphia be ours, “Thou hast kept my word and hast not denied my name.”

There next comes the thought of reward. The Lord is mindful of His own. The reward promised to Philadelphia was this: “I will make thine enemies come and worship at thy feet and to know that I have loved thee.” There are some people who laugh at such a thing as the love of God. But why should they do so? Was it not the love of God which first gave them breath? Is it not the love of God which sustains them? And yet they laugh at those who bow in thoughtful submission before the wonderful power and love of God. Let such take courage. Let them do what they can to convert those that scoff; but if they will not listen to them they will yet find out that those who clung to God were right and they were wrong. They will yet “fall down and worship at their feet and know that it was God that loved them.”

And with the reward there is this promise to the Church in Philadelphia: “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth.” When is it, we may ask, that we need the power of God’s protection the most? Is it not in the hour of temptation? We all know our enemies—the enemies to our

spiritual life. We have our weak points; who will help us when they are attacked? This promise to Philadelphia tells us that God will do it for us. Because we keep his words, He will keep us in the hour of temptation. And then there is the victory — “to him that overcometh” — and the reward, the home of the redeemed: “I will write upon him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God which is new Jerusalem which

cometh down out of heaven from my God, and I will write upon him my new name.”

Such was the message to Philadelphia—the only Church which had bestowed upon her words of unbroken praise. But though there was no blame for Philadelphia there is a parting word of caution,—“Behold I come quickly: hold fast that thou hast that no man take thy crown.”

He had told the people of Philadelphia that work still lay before them. “I have set before thee,” he said, “an open door.” It was St. Paul who used this expression to denote his work. “A great door and effectual is opened unto me.” It was the door of work. And it was work that was to win the crown. The crown was the reward of effort, and the final thought in connection with this message comes to us thus: Be no mere idle dreamer in the Church of God, but look for something to do. Make yourself useful. Time, intellect, money—have you them all or any one of them at your disposal? If not, you have something that you can use for God. You can’t put it to a nobler use. It is resting in your hands to-day. It is your privilege coming from your Creator to you. Hold it fast, don’t lose it, the faith that you have in Christ and the crown which will mark the victory—“hold fast that thou hast that no man take thy crown.”

DAILY ought we to renew our purposes, and to stir up ourselves to greater fervour and to say, “Help me, my God, in this my good purpose, in Thy holy service, and grant that I may this day begin perfectly.”