

Marked Men #1

by Gareth Evans

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being marked by God's love and integrity in the face of spiritual deception in the last days.

Duration: 32:49

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Revelation 3:7-9, Revelation 13:13, Revelation 13:18

Topics: "Revelation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the characteristics of the people of Philadelphia as described in the Bible. These people are known for their brotherly love, their devotion to a great and holy God, and their strong character. The speaker shares a personal testimony of how God opened doors for him to share his faith in a unique and impactful way. The sermon also touches on the promises that God makes to those who exhibit these qualities, including the assurance of His love and protection during times of testing.

Transcript

I remind you, considering our commitment to pray through the month of Ramadan, we are beginning this week to pray for Muslims in Africa. We've had the privilege of working with a number of them, particularly in in Cote d'Ivoire, which is the country we're praying for today. I'll just read to you concerning Canadian Muslims again.

There is a partnership made with the Baptist General Conference, Evangelical Menline Conference, the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. These denominations are actively recruiting Christian workers under the umbrella of Frontiers, working with Muslims in Canada. Praise the Lord for these partnerships, ask that they would be effective for his kingdom.

I'll just very quickly scan the rest. There are 200,000 Muslims in Montreal, half of whom are Arab. No one works among them as yet.

There are 3,000 to 4,000 Iraqis in the greater Vancouver area. Pray for effective study groups and outreach programs. Many Muslims who come to Canada come here to seek asylum, claiming refugee status.

Many of them are single mothers, struggling with few resources and many personal and family problems. Pray for compassionate help from Christians. Several Muslim-born Christian believers are doing organized

outreach to Muslims in the greater Vancouver area.

Pray for them, named Ali, Afshin, Fahim, and two others who minister among the Iranians. Pray for an effective voice. So for those of you who are not good at books, I'd encourage you to join us in praying for them.

But I also pray that you will continue to be faithful in keeping these Muslims upon your heart during these 30 days of prayer for Ramadan. Amen. There are many books on the market today and many tapes that people purchase concerning the last days.

There are many videos concerning the last days, and I know that many Christians enjoy these tapes and books. I hear a lot of talk about people, from Christian people, talking about the Mark of the Beast in the last days, and the number 666. And when I ask them what these things stand for, we get many, many different views from different people, what it might mean.

Is it 666? Is it a Mark of the Beast? Is it a credit card? Is it a physical mark? Is it a computer chip? We get lots and lots of different opinions. And of course, I could join my opinion to those, but I'm not going to do so, okay? I believe that Jesus is coming soon. I'm convinced of that.

As I look at the world, I believe that we're nearing the days that the Prophet spoke of for the second return of Jesus. And so when I think of that, I ask myself, what kind of man should I be? I'm also concerned with the technicalities of how or where or what these things mean, these signs. I leave that to others, but I ask myself the question, what kind of man should I be if truly Jesus is coming soon? If he comes in my lifetime, how will he find me? If you went to the world today, to some of the schools of your city, and you started to talk to some of these students, and you asked them concerning the last days, they would be able to tell you about 666.

They all know about 666, the Mark of the Beast. If you ask them what the number is, they'll tell you 666. They all understand it.

Oftentimes, they understand more about some of these spiritual things of the last days than many of the church do. I'm also concerned about 666. I'm concerned about what is the Mark of God? What is his number? You see, I'm convinced that Satan, whatever he is doing in the natural, he is literally imitating something that God is doing in the spiritual.

Satan is not a creator. Satan is not an inventor. Satan is not one who initiates things.

Satan is a copier. He is a great deceiver, the great deluder, the great liar, the great copier. And he imitates what he sees happening in the spiritual.

In the last days, we read in the book of Revelation that he will perform many miracles. He will give life back to the beast that will appear to be dead. He will perform many miracles.

In fact, if you look in Revelation 13, I'll read for you. Do not be deterred to it. I trust you've got your Bibles with you.

If you do not have your Bibles with you, shame on you. In chapter 13, it says there, verse 13, he performs great signs, great miracles. He makes fire come down from heaven to the earth and he deceives those that dwell in the earth because of the signs given to him.

And he tells them to make an image of the beast. And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast. He does these miracles.

And he causes all the small and the great, the rich and the poor, the free and the slaves to be given a mark without which they cannot do anything. Here is wisdom. Let him who understand calculate the number for the number is that of a man.

His number is 666. You know this. He does many miracles.

When he does miracles, it is simply because he's imitating what God is doing in the last days. For I read in the prophecy of Joel, and in the last days, God said he would pour out his spirit upon all flesh and there would be miracles. There is an advance of miracles even in the world today.

If you hear of the church growing in Africa, in Latin America, you will hear many, many, many stories of miracles happening. Even among Muslim peoples today, there are many recorded miracles of visions of Muslims are seeing through which they come into faith in Christ. These are days of miracles.

We may not be seeing them here. We pray for a miracle for Jennifer. Amen.

God is able to do that. Let's not deceive ourselves. He's able to do that.

But in the world today, there are many, many miracles happening. I believe it's one of the signs of the last days. But certainly we read in the prophecies that in the last days, there's going to be an outpouring of God's spirit and great miracles.

And Satan will imitate that. And he will deceive many because of the miracles he will perform and many will follow him and he will give them a mark. And without that mark, they cannot buy or sell.

I'm not so concerned about that mark. I'm concerned about what it is he's trying to imitate. So when I thought of this, I began to ask myself, what is the mark of God? If Satan's putting his mark upon his followers, what is God doing about his followers? What is Satan imitating? And if Satan's number is 666, does God have a number? They're the questions I asked myself.

And I came across a portion of scripture I'd like you to turn to with me in the book of Revelation chapter three. For those of you who like to read new scriptures and to read Revelation, you will know that chapters two and three contain seven letters that Jesus dictates to John to be sent to the seven churches of Ishmael. And this is one of those letters.

I'm going to start reading chapter three of Revelation at verse seven. This is the letter to the church at Philadelphia. To the angel of the church in Philadelphia, write, he who is holy and true, who has the key of David, who opens that no one can shut, and who shuts so that no one can open, says this.

I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power. You have kept my word.

You have not denied my name. 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.

Because you have kept the word of my perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, the great tribulation, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth. I'm coming quickly. Hold fast to what you have so that no one will take your crown.

He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he will go out from it not anymore, and I will write on him a threefold mark. I will write on him the name of my God, the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down to heaven from God, and my new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

These seven letters are often interpreted as dispensational, meaning that they represent seven ages of the Christian church from the time of Jesus to the time of now. For example, the first letter from Ephesus is a church as characterized by its loss of its first love. This represents the church from the time of Jesus until the end of persecution, until the beginning of persecution in about A.D. 60.

This is dispensational teaching. The next church is the church of Smyrna from about A.D. 70 to the third century, the beginning of the fourth century, when Rome made Christendom practiced and recognized in the world. It's the persecuted church.

The third letter is to the church of Pergamos. Pergamos church represents the buildup of the Roman church with its compromising politic in ways, compromising the gospel. The fourth message was to Thyatira, and here it is represented with Jezebel, a prophetess.

It is the scheming, political, worldly agenda, manipulative church of the Middle Ages. And then we come to the message to Sardis. This represents the church from Reformation, the 17th century, up until the middle of the 19th century, a church noted for its historical drift, those things that Martin Luther believed and preached.

If they came back today and saw the Lutheran church, he'd be appalled. If John Wesley came back today and saw the Methodist church, he'd be appalled. If A.B. Simpson came back and saw the Alliance church, my denomination, he'd probably be appalled.

We have historical drift in church. We drift away from those things that formed those churches. And then we come to this letter, the letter to Philadelphia, which represents the missionary church from the middle of the 19th century up until near the present day.

And then the last one, the Laodicean church, the lukewarm church, which represents the present-day church. That is dispensational teaching. I believe, however, that all these churches are present today.

We still have Ephesus Christians who have lost their first love. We still have scheming political Christians. We still have historical drift Christians who have drifted away from what they once believed.

We still have a persecuted church today. We still have a lukewarm church today. And we still have a Philadelphia church today.

Of these seven churches, two of them, the persecuted church of Smyrna and the missionary church of Philadelphia are the only two that receive no condemnation from Jesus. To the other five, he says these words, but this I have against you. Laodicea, you're lukewarm.

I'll spit you out of my mouth. Ephesus, you've lost your first love. Return again to your first love.

He speaks this to five of the churches, but to the Philadelphia church, there is no word of condemnation. And I asked myself, what's so particular about this church that it receives the affirmation of God and this mark of his name, the city of God and his own name, his own character. So let's have a look at it.

What do you consider first their name? Philadelphia. The word Philadelphia means brotherly love. It's a church whose name tells me that there are people who love one another.

The characteristic of this church is that they are the people who are committed to love one another. And since I've been with you these precious two months that I've enjoyed so much, I've emphasized over and over again, the number one call of us as Christians is to serve one another, to love one another, and to obey his word. These are the people who are known by their name.

They're Philadelphia Christians. They're people of brotherly love. Second thing I want you to consider about them is the God that they know.

It has been said, if you want to know a people, look at the God they worship. Whether it's the God of materialism or it's humanism, or any of the religions of the world, what is the God, who is the God that they worship? Islam today worships the God that cannot be known personally, who is a God of judgment. And so they are a very harsh, judging people.

Who is the God you know? The people of the Philadelphia church, this is the God that they know. Jesus describes himself this way. He who is holy and true, and who has the key of David, who opens and no one can shut, and who shuts so that no one can open.

This is the God who speaks to you. These are the people who know a God who is holy and true. These are the people who honor holiness and integrity.

I'm called to be a man who honors holiness and integrity. When I hear the Lord say to me, be thou holy as I am holy, I commit myself to be in that kind of man. That means that I should be whole in body, soul, and mind.

It means healing for the wounds of my soul. It means a spirit that's in tune with God. It means trying to live this life in the fullness of all that God intended me to be.

That's what holiness means. And integrity, of course, speaks to me of honesty. It speaks to me of acts and words and deeds that have integrity, that are honest.

He said of Jesus that no guile was found in his mouth. He was a man of integrity. He said what he meant, and he meant what he said.

He did what was right because he knew it was right. He did not do anything underhanded. That's the God of integrity.

And it is this God who speaks to the Philadelphia church who reveals himself as a God of holiness and integrity. And these people honored such a God. Not only were they a people committed to love one another, they were a people who were committed to holiness and integrity.

They were the people also who knew that their God was a God who opened doors and shut doors. They were people who walk the walk of faith. I taught you two or three weeks ago about the walk of faith.

I do not know who holds tomorrow, but I know who holds my hand. And my God is able to open doors that the world would shut and close doors that I might try to open. He's a God who holds my destiny in his hand.

He's a God who cares about my destiny. He's a God who guides and keeps and leads, safeguards me from harm and leads me into blessings. A God who opens doors.

I mentioned in a Sunday school class today, and maybe over the time here, I'll have opportunity to share with this. I was appointed as head of science department in a Hebrew academy in Toronto. When I went for the interview, I applied for the position there because it was advertised.

I had no expectation of getting the position at all. But when you're applying for posts as senior teachers, you apply for every post going on that they pass your name on to any other place needing a teacher. So I went without any expectation at all of getting this post.

They interviewed me at length. There were eight applicants. And the following Friday, they called me and offered me this position.

I accepted the position of head of science in a Hebrew school. My salary tripled overnight. I was the highest paid teacher in Toronto, other than headmasters for the next couple of years.

Why am I telling you that? Because at the end of those two years, when I decided to leave because I'm entering the pastoral ministry, I'm invited to speak to the senior class, total of 50 students, with absolutely no barriers about my Christian faith, with a rabbi present asking questions. I had an opportunity and the ministry that those over four weeks after, but particularly that first week, that no missionary society could have ever organized. No missionary to the Jews has probably never had such an opportunity.

But I am utterly amazed that God took me there because God, my God, is a God that can open doors that other men cannot do so. That's my personal testimony. And I can tell you many such stories of a God who opens doors that the world say are closed, and a God who sometimes closes doors when we want them pushed open.

And this is the God whom these people know. I asked myself, is that the God I know? Can I trust my futures into his hand or am I trying to push open doors that he is trying to close? I'm not prepared to go through doors that he is opening. My God is a God of destiny.

This is the God who revealed himself to the Philadelphia church as the one who is holy, the one who is true, integrity, the one who has the keys of destiny. Consider not only their name, lovers of the brethren, consider not only their God, but consider also their character because in verse eight, this is what we read about these people. I have put before you an open door that no one can shut because you have three things.

This is their character. You have a little power. You have kept my word.

You have not denied my name. Now we hear a little power as though it's a negative term. It's not.

It is a positive expression about them because the word for power that these people have is the Greek word dunamis. There are two words for power used in the scripture. Jesus said these words, whosoever believeth God give his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should receive power to become

the sons of God.

That Greek word is the Greek word exousia, power. How many of you have received exousia this morning? How many of you believe in the son of God this morning? How many of you are born again? Amen. I began to worry.

I thought I was attending a meeting of the Rotarians or something for a moment. Not there. Departure.

To them he gave power to receive, to become the sons of God. Every one of us I trust has received exousia, power. If not, I trust that this day will be the day that you will avail yourself of the gift of God.

On the day of Pentecost, he offered them a different power called dunamis, Greek word dunamis. He said, tarry in Jerusalem till you receive dunamis, power. Dunamis, power is the anointing of God upon a man or woman to do the ministry that he has called them to do.

The disciples had to wait for that power before they became the apostles effective. We need to be a people as these people are, who are operating not in exousia, power, but in dunamis, power. Allowing the Holy Spirit to do his work through us instead of doing things by our own efforts and our own strength.

These are the people operated in the empowering of the Holy Spirit. These are the people who have kept his word. They're obedient to his word.

They're faithful to his word. They're committed to his word. Again, I repeat you, in the upper room, the communion table, Jesus commanded us to love one another.

He commanded us to serve one another and he commanded us to be obedient to his word. These are the people who are noted for their character that not only do they operate in Holy Spirit power in the things they do, but they are obedient to the word. They've kept his word.

They've also not denied his name. They've been faithful to him in their testimony. I think of Peter.

Peter who walked with Jesus. Peter who boasted that though everybody else would be offended, he wouldn't be. When Jesus is taken and put upon the cross, Peter goes into Pilate's judgment hall, remember? And he is there and a little girl comes to him and says, you belong to Jesus, don't you? And Peter denies.

Denies three times and the cockerel crows. These are the people who are prepared to face persecution and hurt and even death because they're not prepared to deny his name. That's the character of these people.

If we go down a little bit further into verse 10, it says also consider them that they have kept the word of perseverance. They have been persevering in the work they're doing. They haven't been put aside by disappointments.

These are people committed to serve. So let me gather this together. I ask myself the question, what is it so particular about the Philadelphia Christians that I can glean from this letter that tells me why God does not have a word of condemnation for them as he does for the other churches except Smyrna and why it is that these people are the people upon whom he's going to write a threefold name? I'll repeat to you, catch it.

I say, first of all, there are people who are known because of their brotherly love. That's their very name. Secondly, there are people whose God is a great God, a God of holiness, a God of integrity, a God of destiny.

Thirdly, there are people of character. There are people who operate in God's spirit, allow him to do his work through them. There are people who maintain his word.

There are people who keep their testimony. There are people committed to him. That's the people of Philadelphia.

And to such people, the Lord makes wonderful promises. Listen to these promises he makes. Verse 8, I will put before you an open door.

I'm going to lead you into a destiny. Do you want to see Departure Bay Baptist Church going through God's open door? You're seeking a new pastor. Do you want a pastor to come here who will walk with you through God's open door? Or do you want a pastor who's going to take you down his own little private pathways? My prayer for you is that you will be a people who will walk through God's open doors.

Where he is going. He said to the people of this character, people of this God, people of this name, this is his promise. I put before you an open door that no one will be able to shut.

Then he goes further and he says this, verse 9, I'm going to cause unbelievers, those of the synagogue of Satan, to bow down before you, acknowledging that you are a people loved by God. That's called revival. That's what happens when God comes to town.

Do you want to see God do revival in Victoria, in Nanaimo? Amen, I do. He's looking for a people who satisfy these criteria so that he can open a door before them, go before them and bring the lust to come to them and say, I want to be part of your church because obviously God loves you. I pray through your testimony with Jennifer and Tom.

I pray through your testimony with Wendy's friends that your love is going to reach these people and Tom and Jennifer's daughters that they're going to know a people who love them and know that God loves you. God says the promise to these people is I'm going to make them come and bow down to your feet, make them know that I have loved you. The third part of the promise is this in verse 10.

I'm going to keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which will come upon all the world to test it. I do not know if this is the great tribulation that we often talk about, the seven year tribulation. I do not know.

I know this, that right now the church of Jesus Christ, many of his people are going through great tribulation right now. They're not waiting for a seven year period. They are experiencing tribulation right now.

I do not ask you what your theology of the second coming of Jesus is, but you are aware that there are people who hold to a pre-tribulation position believing that we will be raptured out of this world before Jesus comes. There are people who hold to a post-tribulation position that believe that we will go through tribulation and there's no question that America and Canada need to be shaken and then we will be raptured. There are people who believe that there will be three and a half years of moderate tribulation, we'll be raptured out and then the great tribulation.

There are all sorts of opinions and facetiously there are those who believe in pan-tribulation. They'll all pan out in the end anyway. Now I don't know what position you hold and I've said this to you before.

If you came to me or if I told you my position and I have a leaning, I have a leaning. If I told you my position I know that some would come up to me and correct me and then I can tell you exactly what books you read or what videos you watched because I've been around long enough to hear all the sides and I've come to a position and I've also learned to be wise enough not to preach my position as the absolute truth because I do not know. I know this, that Jesus is coming soon and I want to be ready.

Amen. And if I go through the great tribulation I want to take this verse as my promise. Behold, I will keep you during that great tribulation.

Now I don't know whether you want to be raptured out before and then you can sit in heaven, enjoy yourself and look down upon your unsaved loved ones and the Jews and the rest of the world going through great tribulation. I don't know if that is going to please you. I tell you what I'd prefer.

I'd prefer to be here in the tribulation knowing that my Lord is going to keep me because I sure don't want to go through it without him keeping me. But his promise to the Philadelphia church is this. Part of his promise, I'm going to keep you during the great tribulation that's coming upon the whole world.

Now you all know as I know that there are 144 people marked in the book of Revelation. 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes who are being marked and kept by God as the great evangelist during the great tribulation times. They're all Jews.

That's not you and me. But you are a people who will be marked by God to be kept during the great tribulation. Whether that is the tribulation of the seven years or whether it is tribulation that's now going on, I really do not know.

I believe it's probably the great tribulation and I know this. If I'm here, I want to be one of those that's kept. How awful it must be to be a man or woman who calls himself Christian but does not know they're being kept by God.

To these people of Philadelphia church, he said, I'm going to keep you. I'm going to keep you. Can you imagine what it must be like during the great tribulation times to be a people kept by God before whom the lost come and say, we want to come to know your God because it's obvious you love him and he loves you.

They will fall down at your feet. That's the promise given. I tell you, I think it's rather more wonderful than sitting in heaven with a little harp playing, waiting while the rest of the world is going through tribulation.

Maybe I'm a little facetious, maybe, but it thrills me to know that this is a promise given to these people. Verse 11, I'm coming quickly. My coming is always expedient, is always nearby.

So always be prepared. Hold fast to what you have. Don't let anyone take your crown.

This is perseverance. This is holding on. This is what the Lord Jesus is saying to the Philadelphia type Christians.

Verse 12, he who overcomes, to him I will, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. When Jesus comes to reign upon this earth in the millennium reign for a thousand years, I do not know where he'll be.

Well, I do know he's going to be in Jerusalem.

He's going to be reigning there. But these people are going to be pillars, unmovable in the presence of God during that time. I can think of no greater privilege than to be in his presence, close to him, during the time of his reign.

They will not go out anymore. They shall be with me. And I will write in him my threefold mark, the mark of God, the mark that I believe Satan tries to imitate during the tribulation.

He calls it 666. I do not know what the number of this mark is, maybe 777. The numbers of perfection, who knows? But this is the mark.

I will write on him the name of my God. The name speaks of ownership. When I was a schoolboy in Wales, we had to wear caps at school.

And in my cap was a name written so that I would never, I always lost my cap, but if it was lost, my name was in it to show ownership. And Jesus says to these Philadelphia Christians, I'm going to write my name upon them. So I'm going to write the name of God upon them.

They belong. I'm going to write upon him the name of the city of my God. This speaks of destination.

And I'll write upon him my new name. This speaks of character. And of the Philadelphia Christians that God is going to keep, that he is going to use and bless, that he's going to bring to dwell with him in his own houses, pillars that will not be removed.

These people he marks as his possession, the people who have a destination in his presence, the people who are marked by the very character of God. I think it's rather wonderful to be marked so. I think it's rather wonderful that God has a people that he marks as his own, that he marks as having destination with him, that he marks as having his character.

These are the people of Philadelphia. The mark. To such people, God puts his mark upon them.

And if it is during the tribulation, this mark, I believe, is that which Satan tries to imitate by putting his mark upon his people and his worshipers. God puts his mark upon those whom he calls into his presence to live and dwell and reign with him. The last verse says, let him that hath a year to hear, hear what the Spirit says.

I've said a lot of new things this morning, probably. I think it's good for you to go away and read through yourself. Then ask yourself, am I a Philadelphia Christian? If we're in the last days, what kind of man should I be? What kind of woman should I be? Am I a Philadelphia Christian? Do I satisfy the criteria? Am I a man or woman who is known for my love for the brethren? Am I a man or woman who is known because I love a God, because I love holiness and integrity? That's my God.

I trust in a God of destiny. Am I a man or woman faithful to the word, faithful to my testimony, operating in the Holy Spirit, allowing him to have his way in me? Am I such a man that the Lord himself would be pleased to put his mark upon me, his mark of ownership, his mark of destiny, his mark of character? Am I such a man or woman that should tribulation come shortly during my lifetime, I will be able to stand because I'm kept by the Lord? That's the kind of man I want to be. That's the kind of man I'm committed to be.

In my devotions, in my prayer life, in my studying, in my reading, that's what I aim for. I want to be that kind of man so that my Savior will be pleased with me and keep me. If you find, if you look at yourself and say, no, maybe I'm not.

Maybe I'm like that Ephesus Christian who has lost their first love. Well, today's the day to change churches. I don't believe Departure Bay Baptist Church.

Leave the Church of Ephesus and become a member of the Church of Philadelphia. Leave the Church of Pergamos with its historical drift, drifting away from the truth. And again, pledge yourself to become a Philadelphia Christian.

Leave the Church of Thyatira with its politicking and scheming and join the Church of Philadelphia. Leave the Church of Laodicea with its lukewarmness and join the Church of Philadelphia. And we will become people after God's own heart that he would have no condemnation but only commendation.

And we'll be glad to pour out his Spirit upon us and open doors before us that no man can shut. That we might be a people, Departure Bay Baptist Church might be known as a people who walk with God, who see God's power operating in their lives. That the world will look at us and say, they love God.

And they will come as the people of these verses and fall down before you, longing to know your God also. That's my heart for me. I praise your heart for you and for your church.

Amen. Amen. God bless you.

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