

# Praying Christ in Philadelphia

*Just a Prayer Meeting*

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**Bible Text:** Revelation 3:7-13  
**Preached on:** Wednesday, September 20, 2017

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Together, Revelation 3:7.

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. 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. 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. 11 I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown. 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. 13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

We are not going to really give an exposition of this. If you're really interested in this, we have that Sunday school series that I did on sermonaudio.com under "The 7 Churches of Revelation," and that will give you more information as far as the key of David and what it is, the pillar, and how can you be a pillar in the temple of my God when there is no temple in that heavenly city. So I answer questions like that in that series, but we are looking at this passage from the viewpoint on how this church would, what? Pray in light of who Jesus is.

Now first of all, we want to look at the characteristics that are mentioned here. They are all listed here in verse 7 and the interesting thing about these characteristics is that this description of the Lord is not mentioned in Revelation 1. So with all the other churches and the description of Christ, you have those descriptions mentioned in the garments that

John sees on this Judge, the Lord Jesus Christ himself, in Revelation 1, but this description is not mentioned there.

We know from other passages of Scripture, 1. Jesus is holy. Does everybody see that? That means that he is the unique one. Certainly he is sinless, right? But here it's referring to his uniqueness, his one of a kind. He is human, fully human just like you and I are, except without sin, but he's also the God-man in whom the Spirit of God, the second member of the Godhead, dwelt bodily or as Colossians says, the fullness of God dwelt in him bodily. So that makes him unique, doesn't it? So here he is holy.

Secondly, he is true. This is probably referring to the fact that he is the only genuine one. There are a lot of gods, aren't there? And there are a lot of so-called deities that are out there but there is only one that is true and that is the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ himself. He is called the true one.

Now, brethren, just those two descriptors give us some insight on what is going on here. There are those who deny the trueness, the genuineness, of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. They will make him just like any other man. They will just call him a prophet like Allah or someone else is just a prophet. They don't own up to his genuineness and they don't own up to the fact that he is unique. They'll say, "Well, he was a good teacher. Or he was a good man. Or he set the example." He was a good man and he was a teacher but he was far more than that, wasn't he, brethren?

So here is a church that is being reminded of this, I don't think because they didn't know this, I think they are being reminded of this because the culture is against this. And you'll see in verse 9, look at this it says, "Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan," now who are these people, "who say that they are Jews and are not, but," what? "But lie." So here you've got this alternative religion that is minimizing the person and work and uniqueness of the Lord and the Lord himself reminds this church at Philadelphia who is standing, aren't they? He says, "You have a little strength but you are holding fast to my name. Hold fast." So they are genuine themselves and so he reminds them of those two things.

Then in verse 7, you also have this: he has the key of David. Now, what's important about that key is his description on what this key does and that is he possesses this key, look at verse 7, and when he opens, now what is he opening? Well, he's opening a door, right? So when he opens that door, who can shut it? Nobody. No human being. No angelic being can do this. No one. No animal could open that door. There is not one single thing. If he opens the door, the door is open, amen? He also says the opposite. If he shuts the door, no man, what? Nobody can open it. So this shows the fact that you and I, whatever this door and this key involves, you and I have no strength, have no ability to be able to open that door if it's shut, and we can't shut the door if it's, what? If it's open.

Now, this key of David is referring to a situation that is back in the book of Chronicles. It refers to the fact of a man who possessed a key and he was the treasurer of the city. You know what a treasurer does, right? He's the one that is safeguarding the wealth, the riches,

of that city. So he refers to this again, look at verse 8, he says, "I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door," now if that was all that he said we would know, what? You can't shut it, but he says the same thing, "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."

And of course, the controversy is what is the door that is opened? The popular understanding of that is that Christ has opened the door of evangelism and that that door is there and Christ opens that door and exhorts them, "Look, I've opened up to you a door of evangelism so be aggressive." I don't think that's what's going on here and the reason why I don't think that's what's going on here is because this church was confessing his name, this church did have deeds, right? There is no correction of this church. The whole point of these verses is to strengthen them to hold fast to what they were doing and holding.

So whatever this is, it's got to be an encouragement to them to strengthen them and I think what he's talking about here, this key of David, is the entrance into the kingdom and the wealth of that kingdom and the riches of that kingdom. Christ possesses that key and, brethren, when we think about him possessing the key so that if he opens the door into the kingdom, no man can, what? No man can shut it, and if he shut the door of the kingdom, no man can? Open it. But remember, Jesus also said, "I am the door," and he is the way and he is the true one. And are you ready for this? He is the King. Amen? And he is the kingdom.

So he is all of that and, brethren, you just think about the fact and we're going to look at the characteristics of the church here in just a few minutes, but you think about a church that has little strength, whatever that refers to, and they are being persecuted and they are being tried and they are being tested, and yet they are a working church and they are not denying the name of Christ and they are holding fast to the trueness of Jesus Christ, to the holiness of Jesus Christ, wouldn't it be an encouragement to you to know that Christ has opened the door unto you? That he is sharing with this church the riches of that city, the city itself. He talks about this in verse 12, about "the temple of My God," that he would "not go out from it anymore," he would "write on them the name of My God, the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven." That kingdom is coming down from heaven to earth and so here he encourages them by saying, "Look, I have opened unto you a door into that kingdom and nobody can shut it." Hallelujah for that! Aren't you thankful that Christ has opened up to you the door into that kingdom? Matthew talks about that kingdom and Jesus being that King.

So this tells us certain things here and, first of all, I think it's important that he's giving them this description on what he has done for them and who he is because they needed to stand on these things and, brethren, we are in a position in our nation today where we need this type of encouragement. Let me ask you this question: has overall the broad church situation in America, are they holding onto the holiness of Christ or have they let it go? They have let it go. Christ says, "I am holy. Hold on. You're holding on to this."

Hold on to it. You're right, I am the unique one." That's encouraging, isn't it? That strengthens you.

Then how many of the broad churches in America are jettisoning the uniqueness and the genuineness of the person of Jesus Christ? That they are just inventing their own Jesus as fast as you can say the name? But he tells this church, "Look, you are holding onto who I say I am and you are in my word. Hold on to that. Don't let it go. And I have opened that door unto you to the wealth of my riches and to the city of my God and to the temple that is there and to the kingdom. I have opened all that unto you that you would have the true riches." That's strengthening and you think about it, if you were going through this and you got a letter from a genuine apostle, I realize you wouldn't get that today, but just put yourself back in John's day. John is on the island of Patmos. He's there being persecuted because of Christ and he sends this letter to this church from Christ, the head of the church, telling them, "Yes, I'm the true one. I'm the holy one. Hold fast. And I have opened this door, it isn't going to be shot. So stand where you're at."

That's so encouraging and it's encouraging because of the characteristics of this church. What are some of those characteristics? Well, in verse 7, I think the name of the city helps you. The name Philadelphia, of course, we've got a city in America named that, right? It means, you know what it means, Philadelphia is called the city of brotherly love. That's what this Greek term means, brotherly love. And it is used six times, this Greek term is used six times in our Bible, five of those times it's referred to as a Christian grace or a Christian virtue, but only here is it a place name. So I think this church was a church that characterized itself by the meaning of the name of the city that it was in. They were a church of brotherly love.

Now, brethren, that's exactly the type of love we ought to have one for another. It's a family love. It's a relational love. It's a kinship type of love. It's a tender love. If I say brotherly love, now if you really think about two brothers, you probably wouldn't think about kindness, okay? But when you say brotherly love, that's what you think about, right? You think about kindness, goodness one to another.

Here's a second characteristic of that church: it was a working church. Look at verse 8, Jesus says, "I know your deeds." He doesn't delineate them. He doesn't say what they are other than they were, look at verse 10, they were keeping "the word of My perseverance." They had not denied, verse 8, Jesus' name. They had kept the word. They were a working church in that sense.

Then in verse 8 we start seeing something that might disturb us a little bit and that is it says this, "I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have," what? "A little power." Now, I don't think that's referring to their spiritual strength. Why? They are holding fast, aren't they? The winds are blowing against them, are they standing, yes or no? They are standing. I don't think this is referring to their spiritual strength. I do think that this little strength is referring to their numbers; that this church from an outward appearance looked weak and insignificant, with very little influence in the culture. But are they standing?

Now, brethren, it's not a sin to be a big church, and it's not a sin to be a small church because Jesus is not saying to them, "Look, I'm doing these things because you're small." He's not looking at the numerics, he's looking at their deeds. He's looking at their spiritual strength. He's looking at who they are in Christ and this church is standing, though from all outward appearances it probably looked like they would cease to exist, that the numbers were very small, but Christ commends it, doesn't he? And brethren, I want to remind you of this: don't evaluate churches by their numbers. You know, when the world looks at a church, what are they looking for? Size. Buildings. Property. Impact. Right? What the church has for my family. Have you noticed as we have gone through all seven churches, this isn't what Jesus is looking at. Now, you can be, as it were, a Philadelphia church and run 20,000, and you can be a Philadelphia church and run two or three. Do you know what the Lord said? "Where two or three are gathered in my name." I realized this at a business meeting but, folks, when you are talking two or three in a business meeting, you've got a small church. Don't make judgments about churches the way the world makes their judgments. This church had an all outward appearance of weakness.

Fourthly, they held fast to the word of Christ, the word of his perseverance. Look at what it says in verse 8, it says, you "have kept My word." Look at verse 10, "Because you have kept the word," look at the description, "of My," what? "Perseverance." Now brethren, I want you to stop and think about that description. Do you and I realize that true evangelical obedience will weigh on you? Isn't it interesting that he uses, he takes the New Testament, the Bible, and he says, "This is my word. It is my word of endurance." Does everybody hear that? I think we have this idea, "Oh, I'm just going to accept Jesus and everything is going to be great." If you're going to follow Jesus and be obedient to his word, it's going to bring a weight into your life, into your spiritual life. You're going to have to bear under that obedience because the world does not want that at all.

Now brother, I think, don't raise your hands, but I think if I asked for a raising of hands, how many of you feel pressure from the world? How many of you feel push-back when you make a scriptural decision? I think of very young people, one day they are going to leave home, boy, the winds of pressure even in Christian schools.

Jesus' word is a word of perseverance. It involves bearing under the weight. Jesus said, "The way is narrow and the way is constricting." He said, "The way is cruciform." But this church held fast, amen? They didn't go running from it. They didn't try to change it. They didn't look for the comfort corner. They just stayed there in the game, as it were, bearing under. Hallelujah for a church like that, even though they were small.

Verse 8, they have not denied his name, and that refers, you just may want to put a little note here if you don't have it already, Matthew 10:32-33. We had already seen that in the previous verse but here he says they had not denied his name, which means they were confessing his name. That's what that means, "He that confesses Me before men, him I will confess before My Father which is in heaven, but he that denies My name, I will deny him before the Father which is in heaven." Well, what does it mean to "deny"? It means "not to confess" the name of Jesus Christ.

Then in verse 9, this church is being persecuted by ethnic Jews who claim that they were the true people of God. And I love this, Christ says to this church, "One day I'm going to show the world who the true people of God are." It's not ethnic Jews, it's not ethnic America, who is a true Jew? Romans 3 says he that has been born again in their heart. Who is the true Israel of God? It's not the people that are over there on that piece of land. The true Israel of God are the people of God and Jesus is going to own them because the world makes it all confusing and the world, the culture and the synagogue of Satan was saying to this small church, "You're not the people of God, we are. Look at our numbers. Look at our buildings. Look at our influence. Look at the culture." Don't you think that would be strengthening if Jesus said that to you? "You may be small but you're my people and I will make everyone else come and bow down to you because I will say to you, to the world, 'You are mine.'" Hallelujah for that!

And this church, verse 11, possessed a crown.

So, brethren, how would you pray if you were in this church? Well, I think I would pray something like this, "O Lord, help us, strengthen us to hold fast your name, that we would not deny your holiness; that we would not deny your trueness, who the New Testament describes you, the Lord and Messiah of all; that we would not be ashamed of you; that we would confess your name though all the rest of the world reject it. And Lord, may we stand fast until we see you and hear, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant.'" Don't you think you would have to pray a prayer of perseverance that God would give to us and may God help us to be more and more like that church and may he grant encouragement to us to stand and the strength to pray for it.