

Will you take your Bibles and turn with me this morning to Revelation chapter three. We will be examining verses seven through 13 this morning. I have entitled my discourse to you, “Philadelphia: Promise through Perseverance.” This is the sixth of the seven letters and Philadelphia, like Smyrna was a wonderful church that required no reproof from the Lord. It was a model of purity and steadfast devotion to Christ even amidst great persecution.

Imagine, now, if you were the messenger or the pastor that had gone to the isle of Patmos with six other men and you had received this scroll, the *Apokalypsis Iesou Christou* (ap-ok-al'-oop-sis ee-ay-soo' khris-too'), which would be the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ, this entire book of Revelation. You received that scroll and, no doubt, as quickly as you could you all read through it. And as you went from church to church you made copies of it and by now the messenger to Philadelphia—which was probably the pastor—certainly read the letters to all of the churches including the entirety of the book of Revelation. And I am sure that he was deeply encouraged with what he read about his church, information that God gave not only to them, but to churches universally as we quickly sense the distinctly eschatological nature of this epistle that catapults us far beyond the historical period of the church of Philadelphia. The promise of divine blessing for those who hear and read and heed the words of the prophecy that we read about in verse three of chapter one are now proving to be so profoundly true in the heart of this messenger as he experiences afresh the mercies of God as he reads this letter.

And for me, personally, this letter more than any other contains the most exhilarating promises to believers because, dear friends, here we will marvel at the transcendence of God, the holiness of God. We will marvel at his sovereign authority over all things. We will marvel at Him, once again, as the Lord of the Church, that is, in control of the Church. We will rejoice in the promises that He gives us, that just prior to the Lord's physical return the Church we will be kept safe in a place away from a period of unimaginable testing upon the whole inhabited earth and all who dwell upon it. We will be sobered here by the doctrine of the imminent return of Christ, that the Lord could come and snatch away his bridal church at any time, a doctrine that heightens our expectancy and motivates us to holiness. We will weep with tears of joy as the Lord reaffirms, once again, the oneness that we have in Him, the unity that we have in Him that makes separation an utter impossibility, affirming, once again, our absolute security and the assurance of eternal life that we have in Christ. So with great anticipation let's read this letter and get lost, once again, in the wonders of it all.

Revelation three beginning in verse seven.

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: “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. Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews, and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them to come and

bow down at your feet, and to 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, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth. I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, in order that no one take your crown. 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 upon 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. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”¹

Let me give you some history of Philadelphia, the city where this church existed in the first century. In 140 BC Attalus II founded the city and he chose to name it Philadelphia, which means *brotherly love*, in honor of his brother Eumenes II whom he loved. It was located about 25 miles southeast of Sardis in the valley of the Cogamus River.

This was a volcanic region that was called *the burnt land* due to the volcanic ash that had fallen upon it. And this, of course, made the land extremely fertile and an excellent place for vineyards. It was a magnificent city that sat high on a hill that was about 800 feet high making it easy to defend, and a strategic highway ran through the city from Asia to Europe making it a bustling center of trade and commerce. This was also the imperial postal road during the first century AD making it a strategic location for trade and for communications from Rome to all points east. But all was not well in Philadelphia.

There were lots of volcanoes in the area, a lot of volcanic activity. And, of course, this posed a constant threat to those who lived in that region. In AD 17 the worst earthquake recorded in history up to that time absolutely devastated 12 cities in the Lydian Valley including Philadelphia and Sardis. Historians of that day tell us that the constant after shocks from that quake served as a perpetual reminder of the dangerous place in which they lived. And so, as a result, many of the people did not live in the city, but chose, instead, to live out in the hillsides around them living in huts for fear that another quake would come and destroy their house and, perhaps, their families. In AD 60 the neighboring city of Laodicea was absolutely destroyed by another quake, reinforcing their fears of further disaster. It is highly doubtful that Philadelphia had been fully rebuilt and had recovered from this disaster by the time the Apocalypse reaches the saints who lived there.

Now there are a few more significant pieces of history that are necessary for us to understand in order to grasp what the Lord is telling us in this letter. After the AD 17 earthquake, the emperor Tiberius sent financial aid to help Philadelphia rebuild. And in order to honor him they adopted a new name, *Neocaesarea*, which means *the city of the new Caesar*, a name that was popular for about 30 years. And about 50 years later they wanted to honor Emperor Vespasian whose name was Titus Flavius Sabinus Vespasianus. So they adopted another new name and fortunately they shortened it and they called their city *Flavia* and they even had a temple there to worship him. And he

¹ Revelation 3:7-13.

reigned for about 10 years between AD 69 and 79. So by 96 AD when this letter arrives at Philadelphia, the Lord's words are very meaningful to them when he promises them in verse 12 to write upon them "the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem....and My new name."² All of this fit well into the context of their understanding.

Now with all this, let's examine this letter more closely and allow the Holy Spirit to ignite our hearts afresh with the majesty and the excellencies of Christ and all that He has planned for those who love Him.

Notice His introduction to them in verse seven. "And to the angel..."³ or it could be translated the messenger or even pastor, "of the church in Philadelphia write."⁴

Now, friends, here He does not draw from earlier descriptions recorded in the vision to John 1:12-17 as He has in the other letters. But He says, "He who is holy, in other words, the One whose character is utterly set apart from sin, the One who is utterly transcendent beyond our ability to grasp, He who is holy, who is true," which means authentic or real, in other words the true One, the true Messiah, the genuine Messiah. And then He says, "Who has the key of David."⁵

Now we know as we study Scripture that a *key* symbolizes authority and control and access. And, of course, the name *David* symbolizes the messianic office. David is the symbolic one that really helps us understand the supreme ruler of the theocracy of Israel. So the phrase, "Who has the key of David,"⁶ is emblematic of the lineage of Jesus Christ, the true Messiah. Of course this is something that the Jews violently contested. And here the Lord draws upon the story of Eliakim in Isaiah 22:22. There we read, "Then I will set the key of the house of David on his shoulder, When he opens no one will shut, When he shuts no one will open."⁷ Eliakim was the highly honored steward or prime minister who, next to the king, had supreme authority under the king's oversight to admit or refuse admittance into the king's presence.

So we have the same language used here in verse seven. The Lord identifies Himself as the One, "who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens."⁸

In other words, He is saying that He alone is the One who allows access into the messianic kingdom; a reward of grace through faith validated by purity of life and faithfulness to the Lord, not hypocrisy, not by works like those of the synagogue of Satan.

² Revelation 3:12.

³ Revelation 3:7.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Isaiah 22:22.

⁸ Revelation 3:7.

So to summarize what the Lord is saying here in His introduction, He is saying, “I am the holy One, the true Messiah who alone possesses absolute regal authority over the Davidic kingdom to allow or deny access into David’s house which is the promised messianic kingdom on earth.” You might understand from your reading of Scripture that the royal Davidic dynasty has been set aside during the Church age, but it will be reestablished when King Jesus returns in His Second Coming and He will reestablish that kingdom, a kingdom that will bridge the eternal state, the everlasting kingdom that is promised to David in 2 Samuel seven. And there the Lord Jesus will reign upon the earth upon His throne in Jerusalem for 1000 years as the rightful heir of the throne of the David. In fact, Isaiah nine and verse seven reads, “There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness, from then on and forevermore.”⁹

What an exhilarating introduction this must have been to the saints there in Philadelphia, those who had been battered and bruised by the ongoing persecution from the Jews who were convinced that *they* would inherit the kingdom, not those followers of Jesus of Nazareth.

Now, following his introduction the Lord addresses three things: His praise, His promise and His prescription; notice, first of all His praise, verse eight. He says, “I know your deeds.”¹⁰ Now here the holy, genuine, omnipotent Sovereign now adds omniscience to His self-description. He is saying to them, “I am intimately aware of all your works.” He goes on. He says, “Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut.”¹¹ The implication here is an open door to the kingdom.

In keeping with this theme of the messianic kingdom, access to which He alone controls, He assures them here that *they will* enter the kingdom on the basis of their deeds that prove the genuineness of their faith; unlike the blaspheming Jews that are serving Satan because they have rejected Christ, unlike those Jews who are constantly telling them otherwise saying that “you will never enter the kingdom.” Unlike all of that the Lord says, “I know your deeds [and] Behold, I have put before you an open door which no [man] can shut.”¹²

Then He lists three observations that really validate the substance of their faith and, thus, guarantees their kingdom citizenship. First he says, “Because you have a little power...”¹³ *Power* could be translated strength or might or even ability. This is a reference to their small numbers. Numerically this would have been a small church, especially in comparison to the massive Jewish presence there in Philadelphia and the thousands of pagan idolaters that worshiped all around them. Given their limited size and resources no one would regard them as even being worthy to be noticed, much less respected. So, indeed, their influence would have been limited. Nevertheless, the Lord says that you

⁹ Isaiah 9:7.

¹⁰ Revelation 3:8

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

have *some* power to maintain your testimony and to impact others. This reminds me of Jesus' words in Luke 12:32. He said, "Do not be afraid, little flock,"¹⁴ speaking to the church. "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom."¹⁵ And, indeed, we are a little flock in comparison to the world, are we not?

He also notices that they have, secondly, "kept My word."¹⁶ *Kept* means to watch over or to guard, to give heed to, to pay attention to. You see, friends, this was the secret to their power and the source of their strength to endure. Here I am reminded of Proverbs four verse 20 where we read:

My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your sight; Keep them in the midst of your heart. For they are life to those who find them, and health to all their whole body. Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.¹⁷

So He praises them because of their little power, because they have kept His Word and then, thirdly, "not only have you kept My Word," but He says, and you "have not denied My name."¹⁸ The aorist, or past tense, of these two verbs—*kept* and *not denied*—indicates that there was at least once, if not several occasions in the past whereby these people had been forced to forsake the Word and deny Christ. But obviously they refused. This probably occurred at the hands of the Jews. So the Lord encourages them by acknowledging their faithfulness. "Behold, I have put before you an open door,"¹⁹ implied here to be the kingdom, "which no one can shut."²⁰ Why? "Because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name."²¹

So we move from the *praise* to the *promise*. Notice in verse nine he says, "Behold."²² In other words, look closely with excitement. "I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews, and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them to come and bow down at your feet, and to know that I have loved you."²³

Now here the Lord acknowledges that He is aware of the persecution that they are experiencing at the hands of the Jews, a condescending persecution that will one day be reversed, a persecution that denied that God even loved these Philadelphian Christians. These were Jews who rejected Jesus Christ as their Messiah and therefore the Lord says that you are of a synagogue that belongs to Satan, not Christ.

¹⁴ Luke 12:32.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Revelation 3:8.

¹⁷ Proverbs 4:20-23.

¹⁸ Revelation 3:8.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Revelation 3:9.

²³ Ibid.

Again, you must understand that these would have been Jews *outwardly*, but not true Jews *inwardly* or *spiritually* as Paul defines it in Romans two verse 28. There the converted rabbi said:

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.²⁴

This is a fascinating promise here in verse nine, one that we should all hold dear as believers. What He is literally saying here, friends, is “I will give some of these Jews in this synagogue to you as converts.” You see, here in verse nine the Greek grammar borrows a feature from the Hebrew language, a Hebraism with a future sense of the verb that literally reads, “I am making,” or “I will make” or “I am giving some of the synagogue to come and bow down at your feet and to know that I have loved you.”

Now this is an allusion to Isaiah 60 and verse 14 that speaks of Gentiles bowing in remorse to Jews in the millennial kingdom. But here in verse nine, in keeping with the Lord’s eschatological theme, the Lord promises these saints that some day ethnic Israel will come to repentant faith in Christ and bow down at *your* feet. So there is a reversal here of what is said in Isaiah 60:14. Literally He is saying that they will come and render homage to the members of the body of Christ whom they have persecuted. The apostle Paul tells us in Romans 11:25 that when Christ returns the mystery of Israel’s spiritual hardening that we witness even to this day, which began when they rejected their Messiah, it will end at a specific time in history, a specific point in history. It will last only until the “fullness of the Gentiles has come.” And then, in verse 26, He says, “All Israel will be saved.”²⁵

Indeed, one day they will weep bitterly over their past rejection of their beloved Messiah as we read in Zechariah 12. And on that day they will recognize that, indeed, Gentile Christians were also the objects of God’s love. “I will make them to come and bow down at your feet, and to know that I have loved you.”²⁶ What a magnificent promise this is to all believers, to all who love Jewish people despite their hostility towards their Messiah. Now for the saints in Philadelphia this would have only increased their love for God’s beloved enemy the Jews despite the mistreatment that they constantly experienced from their hands.

Now, unfortunately, this is not always the attitude of many Christians today who would insist that God has permanently abandoned His elect people and permanently replaced them with a more deserving group, the Gentile Church. Such is the sad legacy of Augustinian or Roman Catholic eschatology sometimes known as *replacement theology* where Israel, they believe, has been replaced by the Church. This is unlike the undiminished love the apostle Paul had for the Jewish people, his kinsmen, who said in Romans 9:2:

²⁴ Romans 2:28-29.

²⁵ Romans 2:26.

²⁶ Revelation 3:9.

I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises.²⁷

But Paul was not without hope, nor should we be with respect to God's covenant people Israel. In Romans 11:1 he says, "I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be!"²⁸ Then in verse 28 he says:

From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake [Gentiles], but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers [the patriarchs] for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.²⁹

Back to verse 10 the Lord continues His words of praise. Notice, He says, "Because you have kept the word of My perseverance..."³⁰ In other words, "because you have emulated My endurance, 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 upon the earth." This promise is in keeping with the eschatological tenor of the Lord's words of encouragement, a promise that extends far beyond the church at Philadelphia to include the church universal as we see in verse 13, of the church that will be *kept from*, *tereso ek* (tay-reh'-so ek), the preposition *ek* (ek) means *from* or *out from* or *away from*. The Church will be *removed* or *delivered from* the "hour of testing . . . that hour which is about to come upon the whole world." "About to come" refers to an imminent, sudden, unexpected event that could happen at any moment.

And what is this "hour of testing that will come upon the whole world to test those who dwell upon the earth?" It is a reference to the seven year tribulation that the Lord will go on to describe in detail in chapters 6 through 19. It is also known as Daniel's 70th week, Daniel 9:25-27, and "the time of Jacob's trouble" as we read in Jeremiah 30 and verse seven.

This promise supports a pretribulational rapture, a snatching away or translation of the Church from that time of judgment described in John 14:1-4 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-54 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17. Indeed, "God has not destined us for wrath" as we are told in 1 Thessalonians 5:9. So, verse 10 says, "I also will keep you *from* the hour."³¹ And the context here in Revelation is *that hour of divine judgment* described in Revelation 6 through 19, designated specifically in chapter 14:7 as "the hour of His judgment."³²

²⁷ Romans 9:2-4.

²⁸ Romans 11:1.

²⁹ Romans 11:28,

³⁰ Revelation 3:10.

³¹ Revelation 3:10.

³² Revelation 14:7.

Now I have dear friends who will insist that the Church will go halfway through the tribulation and then it will be snatched away. I have others who believe that it will go almost all the way through the tribulation and then will be snatched away. And some even move it a little bit closer to the Second Coming and say *that* is when it will be snatched away. But on the basis of this text—as well as others, I believe, this would argue against that—when we look here it says *from, tereso ek* (tay-reh'-so ek). It says, “I will *keep you from* the hour of trial.”³³ He did not use the preposition *en* (en) in Greek, which in English would be spelled I-N. Nor did He use the preposition *dia* (dia) which means *through*. Now if He had used either of those that would clearly indicate *preservation through* or *in the midst of* this hour of trial. But that is not what the text says. And I am constrained by the text. Moreover, I would submit that the Lord here is giving them a promise to comfort them and encourage them, not a threat to discourage them.

Moreover, Jesus used a similar phrase in John 12:27 when He said, “Save Me *from* this hour.”³⁴ You see the same phrase here in Revelation 3:10. Jesus is saying, “Save me *from* this hour of my execution, my crucifixion. Deliver me *out of* it. *Exempt me from* the agony of that suffering,” not help me to survive without consequence as I go through it. The argument that the Church will endure the pre kingdom judgments by some kind of miraculous intervention simply does not stand the test of Revelation 3:10. The Lord Himself promised in John 5:24, “He who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.”³⁵

Now I want to digress for a moment. There are a number of reasons why I am convinced that there will be a *rapture* before this time of tribulation called a pretribulation rapture. And, certainly, this is not a test of orthodoxy. If you differ with me here that's fine. We can still have wonderful fellowship. And I will detail more of these reasons in the future, but I want to add here one significant insight that is in keeping with the Lord's covenant promises to the Jews as we see it implied here. And this gives further insight into this rapture debate.

If you were to go to Daniel chapter nine you will read that because of Israel's constant disobedience God cursed His people in verse 11. And in verse 24 we see that Gabriel announces to Daniel, “Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city.”³⁶ The Jews not only had seven days in a week, but they considered a week to be seven years as well. So seven *heptads*, “Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city.”³⁷ In other words, that would be 490 years of judgment. And when you calculate the biblical data that we find in that text we see that the first 69 weeks of years or, in other words, 483 years concluded at the cross. And, of course, this leaves

³³ See Revelation 3:10.

³⁴ John 12:27.

³⁵ John 5:24.

³⁶ Daniel 9:24.

³⁷ Ibid.

one more week of years, seven years of judgment yet to occur. This is what is called Daniel's seventieth week.

Now, God did not include the Church, His bride, in any of the first 69 weeks because the Church began *after* Christ died which occurred after the first 69 weeks had been completed. Furthermore, God never allowed Israel's laws and ordinances to be incorporated into the Church. That was settled at Acts 15 in the Council of Jerusalem and Colossians 2:16, those things are mere shadows of what was to come. So God never allowed Israel's laws and ordinances to be incorporated into the Church. Therefore, Church ordinances and distinctives will not be allowed to continue into Israel's 70th week of divine preparation for kingdom leadership. God does not use or bless two different programs on earth at the same time. Therefore, the true Church must be removed *from* the earth before Israel's final seven years, just as He has promised here in Revelation 3:10.

Now although God's economy in dealing with Israel finds numerous fulfillments in the Church, nevertheless Daniel's 70th week is distinctly Jewish in its context, pertaining to God's covenants with Israel. It cannot be describing anything in the Church age. So when Israel enters into "the time of Jacob's trouble"—as we are told in Jeremiah 3:7—a period of unprecedented oppression for Israel, the context describes *her* final restoration, *Israel's* final restoration. So "the hour of testing that will come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth" in Revelation 3:10 speaks of that time, of Daniel's 70th week judgments just prior to Israel's Messiah returning as described in Revelation 6 through 19.

Now it is fascinating—if you can bear with me just a little bit more here—it is fascinating that Jesus clearly indicates in Matthew 24 in his Olivet discourse in verses 15 and 16 as well as in Mark 13:14 that the 70th week prophecy of Daniel is to be the template for the chronological sequence of "the beginning of birth pangs." You see, these are pre-kingdom judgments consistent with God's purposes and plans for *Israel*, not for the Church, again, as we see in Daniel 9:24. Now while ethnic Israel as a witness nation has, indeed, been set aside temporarily, as we read in Romans 11:11-15, the normal reading of Scripture would make it clear that they will once again emerge as the object of divine attention.

So the Lord promises His Church in verse 11, "I am coming quickly."³⁸ In other words, "I am going to remove you from this period of judgment that will come upon the whole world." And, again, this is a *promise*, not a *threat*. And it is *not* that He is coming in temporal judgment, as He promised to the other churches that were living in sin, but rather, He is coming in *deliverance*.

Thirdly, we look at the *prescription* or the instruction He gives to the Church. In verse 11 He says, "Hold fast what you have, in order that no one take your crown."³⁹ Here we are reminded, again, that while our salvation is eternally secure, the *source* of our security is

³⁸ Revelation 3:11.

³⁹ Ibid.

the gift of persevering faith that comes from God. Paul reminds us of this in Colossians one and verse 22. There we read:

He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard.⁴⁰

And to those who persevere the Lord promises here in Revelation that “no one will take your crown,”⁴¹ literally, “the crown which is life.” In other words, your reward is safe. What a wonderful truth that is.

Then He adds four more promises to them in verse 12. He says, “He who overcomes,”⁴² in other words, who believes, first of all, “I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore.”⁴³ Unlike the ridiculous idols that they carved into the pillars of those pagan temples that collapse in ruin with earthquakes and disappear over time because of erosion, unlike all of that, you are going to be honored permanently. And you won’t have to run for safety anymore every time the earth shakes because the earth is not going to shake anymore. Like you were so accustomed to doing, you won’t have to run anymore, for you will be forever safe and secure in your eternal home.

And then, secondly, He says, “And I will write upon him the name of My God.”⁴⁴ The idea here is I am going to stamp on you my ownership. You belong to me. Friends, this is an expression, once again, of God’s intimate love for His own.

And then, third, He also promises to write upon him, “the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God,” denoting our citizenship in the glorious capital city of heaven that descends from God after the *great white throne judgment* and the creation of the new heavens and the new earth, all of which are described in Revelation 21.

And then, fourthly He says and I will write upon him, “My new name.”⁴⁵ Won’t that be wonderful? I have no idea what that will be. Of course, they were all too familiar with new names for their city, new names that were always honoring men. But not so here, this new name is going to honor the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, a name that will somehow express the fullness of His glorious character. And I hope all of us can grab hold of this. Don’t miss this, beloved, because here we are reminded again of the glories of the eternal state. Here we marvel at the heavenly city of God, the new Jerusalem. Here we see the staggering implications of Christ’s new name

⁴⁰ Colossians 1:22-23.

⁴¹ Revelation 3:11.

⁴² Revelation 3:12.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

that will help us to some day fully grasp the implications of the incarnation and the glory of Christ. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 13:12, “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known.”⁴⁶

Can you imagine what it is going to be like to see the Lord face to face? I can't. When, as John tells us in 1 John 3:2, “we will see him just as he is.”⁴⁷ See, obviously, right now we don't see Him just as He is. Oh, we can see Him at a distance. We can see Him in the symbols and the types of Scripture. There is a partial vision that we have of Him and we can somehow see through the clouds, even of our own sin and this world, glimpses of the glorified Christ, even as we view Him through the lens of Scripture. But I would submit to you even when we look upon Him through Scripture we see glory, but nothing like we are going to see some day. In fact, I would submit that I have never looked upon Christ in this life without receiving a great blessing from my gaze. Have you?

I am convinced, dear friends, that there are things missing in our life that we are unable to even comprehend. But someday faith is going to become sight. There can be no greater satisfaction to our soul than when we see Christ and when He puts the new name upon us. And I believe that suddenly, in ways that we could never before fathom, the deepest parts of our being will experience a final completeness and joy the likes of which we have never before experienced. This is why the psalmist said in Psalm 17:15, “As for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Thy likeness when I awake.”⁴⁸

Beloved, when we see Christ face to face He will be more than we have ever imagined. What magnificent promises we find in this letter where the Lord reveals even more about the inconceivable intimacy He has for us, and the blessings He has in store for every overcomer. So he concludes, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”⁴⁹

Beloved, knowing the glories that await us, may each of us trust in Christ as our only hope of salvation and may we, as we think about this letter, be stirred to a new level of love and devotion to him.

Let's pray together.

Father, we thank You for these eternal truths that stir our souls. We thank You for the hope that we have in Christ. We thank You for the practical things that we learn even when we read this epistle to this dear church. And, Lord, what a joy it will be to meet our brothers and sisters in Christ that lived in Philadelphia. Lord, I pray that You will take what we have learned today and cause them to grow. And, Lord, I pray that we would live consistently with these truths and experience the blessings that You have promised

⁴⁶ 1 Corinthians 13:12.

⁴⁷ See 1 John 3:2.

⁴⁸ Psalm 17:15.

⁴⁹ Revelation 3:13.

for all those who read and hear and heed the Word of the prophecies in this book. And, Lord, finally, I pray for anyone that does not know Christ. I pray that by Your grace You would cause them to see that which, perhaps, they have never seen before. May today be the day that they experience the miracle of the new birth, for it is in Jesus' name that I pray. Amen.

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