

Being Philadelphia

Revelation 3:7



Good Hope
Baptist Church

Living Together In The Love Of God

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FOCAL Read Together Revelation 3:7 ^{KJV} 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;

A friend of mine by the name of Adam Edelstein wrote this poem. The poem is called "The Cold Within". Listen for a moment:

Six humans trapped in happenstance
In dark and bitter cold.
Each one possessed a stick of wood,
Or so the story's told.

Their dying fire in need of logs--
The first woman held hers back,
For of the faces around the fire,
She noticed one was black.

The next man looking across the way
Saw not one of his church,
And couldn't bring himself to give
The fire his stick of birch.

The third one sat in tattered clothes,
He gave his coat a hitch.
Why should his log be put to use
To warm the idle rich?

The rich man just sat back and thought
Of the wealth he had in store,
And how to keep what he had earned

From the lazy, shiftless poor.

**The black man's face bespoke revenge
As the fire passed from sight,
For all he saw in his stick of wood
Was a chance to spite the white.**

**The last man of this forlorn group
Did naught except for gain,
Giving only to those who gave,
Was how he played the game.**

**The logs held tight in Death's still hands
Were proof of human sin,
They didn't die from cold without,
They died from cold within.**

I love that poem, because it is so true. Where hatred and dissension and selfishness abound, darkness abounds. Our world is getting darker and darker by the moment, because the world has rejected the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said:

John 3:19 ^{KJV} ... light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

The world rejects the Lord Jesus Christ because the world loves darkness. The world loves to put itself first, to do the wrong thing, to be evil, to sin. The liar, the sexual sinner, the thief, they do the things they do because they *rejoice in it*. Their **deeds are evil, and they love it**. So they reject Christ, not knowing nor caring that

the wages of sin is death and that what you sow you will reap. The Bible says of the world that:

1 Corinthians 2:14 ^{KJV} But the natural man (the person who does not have a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know [them], because they are spiritually discerned.

The natural person - the son of Adam - looks at the things of God's Word and says "this is foolish". But the *supernatural person* - the person who has met the Savior and given their lives to Him - they have been given new eyes. The Christian looks at things differently. The Christian operates differently.

There Is No Rebuke To Love

Of all the Churches mentioned in the Book of Revelation, only two received *absolutely no rebuke from the Lord*. If you remember the suffering **Church of Smyrna** was actually named after a herb that was used in the preparation of the dead, **myrrh**. When Jesus spoke to the suffering Church of Smyrna every word was a consolation and an encouragement. Jesus wanted Smyrna to know that her suffering was only temporary, and that **as a Church they were one and all headed toward the Crown of Life**.

External Suffering draws a Church together, whereas internal bickering and anti-Christian behavior tears a

Church apart.

Jesus commended Smyrna and encouraged His Bride. In the same way **Jesus had absolutely nothing negative to say about the Church of Philadelphia.** Why is that?

Word Study Let's start with the NAME of the Church. The Church is called "**Philadelphia**" (φιλαδελφεία pronounced *fil-ad-el'-fee-ah*), which literally means "**Brotherly Love**". This Church was distinguished by the love that it's members had for one another.

Illustrate I have been, as a pastor, privileged to preach in many local Churches who have professed to be loving Churches. Sadly what many Churches mean when they say "**loving Churches**" is that they "**selectively love one another**". When someone comes into the assembly of the Church that is an unknown guest the people say nothing to that person. When people meet and greet one another, old acquaintances take time to speak, but those who are visitors are not spoken to. I remember when I was scheduled to preach revival in one Church in Ray City, Georgia, I did what I always do. Sherry and I came to Sunday School, found a classroom, and sat down. People came in, gave us the sideways looks, and said nothing to us. The teacher came in and asked who we were. When I mentioned I was the Revival Preacher suddenly they all jumped up and nearly ran to Sherry and I, ready to shake our hands. This isn't an isolated incident. I've pastored Churches and watched visitors come in. I've had leaders in the Church come up to me afterward and ask, "**Say, who was that person that**

came today?" My question is, **why don't you go and talk to them?**

Do you know that people visit a local Church because they have a need drawing them toward the Lord? **They are looking for love.**

Love is what was found at Philadelphia. **It was a Church of Brotherly Love.** Jesus addressed Philadelphia by saying:

Focal Revelation 3:7 ^{KJV} ... **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;**

1 Jesus told Philadelphia, "**I am holy**". Why is this significant? **Because God ALONE possesses holiness within Himself.** God alone is without sin. The Bible says ...

Romans 3:23 ^{KJV} **For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;**

Every human who has ever been born from the seed of Adam is a sinner. **"By one man - Adam - sin entered into the world, and death by sin ... for all have sinned" (Romans 5:12).** We are all sinners. We die because we are sinners. We sin because we are sinners. **But Jesus Christ is holy.** He is without sin. This means that Jesus Christ is God! The angels cry out to God that He is:

Isaiah 6:3 ^{KJV} ... **Holy, holy, holy, [is] the LORD of hosts: the whole earth [is] full of his glory.**

Jesus Christ is Holy God in sinless human flesh.

2 Jesus Christ is also "**He that is true**". As Eternal God He is the Source of Spiritual Truth. The Pharisees were continually attacking the Lord Jesus because He did not compromise with them. They were arrogant, selfish, puffed up and prideful. Jesus told His followers:

John 8:31-32 ^{KJV} ... **If ye continue in my word, [then] are ye my disciples indeed; 32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**

His followers said, "**we are Abraham's children, and have never been in bondage to any man. What do you mean by 'you shall be made free'**". Our Lord replied:

John 8:34-36 ^{KJV}... **Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. 35 And. 36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. the servant abideth not in the house for ever: [but] the Son abideth ever**

Illustrate I walked out on my back porch the other day and walked right through a huge *spider web*. Spiders creep me out! When I walk through a web like that I'm always quickly looking around to see where the SPIDER is. Is it in the broken web, or in my hair, or on my back? When you walk through a web it takes time to get it off

of you, especially if you wear glasses. Sin, like a spider web, traps that which walks through it. Churches and Christians that ignore the teachings of Christ to **be Philadelphia, to love one another and forgive offenses**, these Churches in time die in a web of sin. Churches that **continue in Christ's love, doing as He has commanded**:

Romans 12:9-10 ^{HCSB} **Love must be without hypocrisy. Detest evil; cling to what is good. 10 Show family affection to one another with brotherly love. Outdo one another in showing honor.**

The Philadelphia Church stands because it stands in truth. It stands because it stands in Christ!

Focal **Revelation 3:7** ^{KJV} ... **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;**

3 Continuing in our text, we see that **Jesus has the key of David**. What does this mean? In the Old Testament God told the faithful servant **Eliakim**:

Isaiah 22:22 ^{HCSB} **I will place the key of the House of David on his shoulder; what he opens, no one can close; what he closes, no one can open.**

The one who received the **Key of David** was given authority by God the Father to distribute all blessing and cursing and He saw fit. Jesus Christ has the Key of

David. **What Jesus opens, no man can close. What Christ closes, no man can open.** The Lord promised that His Church Philadelphia would stand in the pool of God's blessing no matter what might come.

The Church that loves God and loves one another cannot be harmed by anything that the natural and fallen world might throw at it! **All the resources of God are at its disposal.**

Love Always Wins

Context Revelation 3:8 ^{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.

Love always wins. Why? Because when we do what Jesus said, then He will set before us an open door that no man can close.

1 Human strength may win out for a while, but God's arms never get tired. Jesus told His Church at Philadelphia "**thou hast a little strength**". We have a tendency as humans to count and number things, then to base success on how much we have.

Illustrate A man who has a hundred dollars in his bank account is little regarded by the world in comparison with the man who has *billions* of dollars. We say, "**Wow, look at that millionaire. Look at his fine clothes, his \$4000.00 Rolex watch, his fine car.**" Yes,

that's wonderful I suppose. But does he have love? I heard the story once of a certain rich man who scrimped and hoarded and, on hearing that he was about to die from his doctor, called his wife to his deathbed. He said, "**I've lived my whole life acquiring wealth. When I die I want you to cash out my bank accounts and pack that money in the coffin with me. I'm gonna take it with me!**". The man died and was buried. Someone asked his wife later, "**Did you honor his final wish? Did you bury his money with him?**" She said, "**Absolutely! I went to the bank and found out exactly how much money he had saved, and buried a check with him. He can cash it any time he wants!**"

A fool relies on money, but a Philadelphia relies on God. The Church didn't have a large membership. The Church didn't have a large bank account. The Church didn't have a large building, nor a great deal of property. The Church DID have a Big God!

Illustrate God is always in control - we just need to understand that and trust Him no matter what. The Lord used a small **locust** and a tiny piece of **manna** to feed His nation Israel in the wilderness. When Israel quaked in fear at the cry of **Goliath**, a **small shepherd named David picked up five smooth stones** and went out to kill him. When Israel was released from captivity and exile, they returned to the land under the guidance of **Zerubbabel**, and wept when they saw the great amount of work that they had to do to restore Jerusalem. The Lord told them "**not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts**". Our Lord Jesus

Christ put it this way:

Matthew 17:20 ^{KJV} ... **If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.**

2 Little strength does not matter. What matters is have you kept His Word? Jesus told Philadelphia ...

Context Revelation 3:8 ^{KJV} **thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.**

The Church that is strong is the Church that will **keep the Word of the Lord**. Christians become Christians by *hearing* His Word, and by *believing* on Him. The Lord said:

John 5:24 **Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.**

Once saved the Christian is **passed from death unto life, and from darkness and into light**. Once we are saved, though, we are to **continue in His Word**, to keep doing the things that Jesus told us to do. Jesus said:

John 8:31-32 ... **If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; {32} And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**

Philadelphia had freedom from sin, from strife, and from sorrow because the Church loved the Word of the Lord and sought to obey it.

3 The Church also upheld the "name" or "authority" of Christ. What does this mean?

Context Revelation 3:8 ^{KJV} **thou hast a little strength, and hast not denied my name.**

The Church recognized the Lord Jesus Christ as its authority and it's head. Submitting to His authority Jesus promised two wonderful things:

a Their enemies would be overthrown. Jesus said:

Context Revelation 3:9 ^{KJV} **Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.**

The **Synagogue of Satan** was the Jews - like the Pharisees and Sadducees - who did not love the Lord God but pretended to love Him. The Pharisees loved **tradition**. They loved **themselves**. They did not love God. Jesus said "**I will make these pretenders come and worship before your feet**". They would have to eventually acknowledge that the Christians were the true followers of God. Who are true followers of God? Those who love! Jesus told His disciples:

John 13:34-35 **A new commandment I give unto you,**

That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. {35} By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

The proof that the Christian way of life is the True way of life is **in the love we visibly express to one another**. A fake love is seen as a fake love. Jesus said:

Matthew 5:44-48 ^{KJV} But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; 45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? 47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more [than others]? do not even the publicans so? 48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

The **Publicans or Public Contractors** used love as a **tool**. They were quick to pat you on the back as long as you padded their pockets. They would say nice things about you in order to get you to hire them. Their love, however, was faked.

The love of the Publican was hypocritical, cheap, self serving, given only to promote the giver of that love. The love of the Christian is supposed to be non-hypocritical. It is given to the undeserving.

When the unbeliever looks at a bunch of hypocrites posing as Christians it mocks them. When it looks at

Ephesus, the Church that lost it's love for Christ, or Pergamos, the worldly and compromising Church, or Thyatira, the Church that allows idolatry, or Sardis, the Church that should be alive but is dead, or Laodicea, the Church that is apathetic and man led

then there is no threat nor any incentive to repent. If the Church looks just like the world, then why come to Jesus?

When the Church looks like Jesus in its love, and loves like Jesus in its actions, this is the Church that God will use to change the world.

b These Christians are also assured that they will not go through the Great Tribulation.

Context Revelation 3:10 ^{KJV} 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.

Those who love the Lord Jesus Christ will *not* go through the Great Tribulation that John saw revealed in **Revelation 6-19**. Being on the membership roll of a local Church will not guarantee you do not go through the Great Tribulation. You know what does? **Being the Church of Philadelphia. Being a Philadelphia like Christian guarantees you the promise that Jesus**

made, that "I will keep you from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell on the earth." Those who love Jesus will be Raptured - taken up from this earth by Jesus - when He returns to save His Bride His Church. The pretenders will not go. No sir, they will not! Jesus said:

Context Revelation 3:11 ^{KJV} Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

The testimony of Scripture is that **Jesus will come at a time when we least expect Him.** He will "come as a thief in the night" (1 Thessalonians 5:2). The genuine Christian who loves as Jesus commanded, who practices God's Word God's Way, need not fear the rise of the antichrist nor the fall of America. The Philadelphia Christian and the Philadelphia Church will stand when all else falls, because Christ works through it.

Adrian Rogers once said:

"When will the rapture take place? At any moment. We're not looking for some sign. We're not looking for some prophecy to be fulfilled before Jesus can come for His church. It could happen before you finish reading this sentence!"

Jesus is coming again. Are you ready? Are you ready if death comes knocking at your door tonight? If not, may God convict you to **"Come unto Jesus Christ, and be saved"**.



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John 3:19; 1 Corinthians 2:14

There Is No Rebuke To Love

1 Jesus told Philadelphia, "I am holy". Why is this significant? _____

(Romans 3:23; Romans 5:12; Isaiah 6:3)

2 Jesus Christ is also "He that is true". _____

(John 8:31-32; John 8:34-36; Romans 12:9-10; Revelation 3:7)

3 Continuing in our text, we see that Jesus has the key of David. What does this mean? (Isaiah 22:22) _____

Love Always Wins

1 Human strength may win out for a while, but God's arms never get tired. _____

(Matthew 17:20)

2 Little strength does not matter. What matters is

have you kept His Word? _____

(Revelation 3:8; John 5:24; John 8:31-32)

3 The Church also upheld the "name" or "authority" of Christ. What does this mean? _____

(Revelation 3:8)

a Their enemies _____

(Revelation 3:9; John 13:34-35; Matthew 5:44-48)

b These Christians are also assured that they will not _____

(Revelation 3:10; Revelation 6-19; Revelation 3:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:2)

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