

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **THE FAITHFUL CHURCH Revelation 3:7-13**

This weekend is the 232<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of our nation's independence. It was 232 years ago in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania that many leaders in our country assembled together to sign a document declaring the independence of the United States of America.

Over the 232-year history of our nation, many faithful men and women have given their lives for our freedom.

One case in point, was a terrible tragedy that took place during the presidency of Ronald Reagan, when the Marine Corps barracks in Beirut, Lebanon was bombed and hundreds of American soldiers were either wounded or gave their lives.

Marine Corps Commander Paul Kelly visited a Frankfurt, Germany hospital a couple days after the attack.

One injured corporal, Jeffery Lee Nashton, was severely injured during the incident. Witnesses say he looked more like a machine than a person; there were so many tubes and wires hooked to him.

As Kelly neared him, Nashton, struggling to move and racked with pain, motioned for a piece of paper and a pen.

He wrote a brief note and passed it back to the Commander. On the slip of paper was but two words—"Semper Fi," the Latin motto of the Marines meaning, "always faithful."

With those two simple words Nashton spoke for the millions of Americans who have sacrificed body and limb and their lives for their country—those who have remained always faithful.

This morning as you turn in your Bibles to Revelation 3:7-13, we will examine a letter to those in a church who remained faithful, always faithful to Christ. We will look at the message to the faithful church in Philadelphia.

**This morning we will examine 4 aspects of the message to the church in Philadelphia so that we might understand the characteristics which Christ desires His church to possess.**

**1. First, we must understand the commission to write to the church in Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7).**

There are four points of interest mentioned here in this commission to the church in Philadelphia.

*a. First, in this commission, there is mention of an angel.*

Remember that the term angel here is not a reference to a literal angel, but the Greek term literally means *messenger* and is referring to the messenger in the church at Philadelphia.

**Valley Bible Church  
3347 West Avenue J  
Lancaster, California 93536  
[www.valleybible.net](http://www.valleybible.net)**

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

Remember that in **Revelation 1:20** the reference to the angels of the seven churches are references to the messengers or pastors of the seven churches.

So, the angel or messenger is none other than the message giver or pastor of the church in Philadelphia.

### ***b. Second, in this commission, there is mention of the church.***

Just like previous churches that we have encountered here in the book of Revelation, there is no mention in the Scripture of the founding of the church at Philadelphia.

The church at Philadelphia was likely founded during the apostle Paul's ministry at Ephesus as mentioned by **Acts 19:10**, which states, "*all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.*"

So the church in Philadelphia is a result of Paul's Ephesian Ministry.

Although there is no particular mention of the founding of the church, it is mentioned in early church history up to the fourteenth century.

### ***c. Third, in this commission, there is mention of the city.***

The city of Philadelphia was founded to spread Greek language and culture to the eastern part of Lydia and Phrygia.

This is why it was situated on two main east/west roads. One was the imperial post road, which was a major thoroughfare from Rome to the east.

The other was a major trade and communication route connecting the regions in the east to the harbor at Smyrna.

Because of past volcanic activity, the region around Philadelphia had very fertile soil resulting in strong agriculture, especially the grape industry. The city was also strong in textiles and leather goods.

While the fertile soil was a positive, there was a negative aspect to their location. Philadelphia endured many earthquakes forcing many people to live/flee outside of the city in huts.

The main religion was Anatolian in character and included the elements of confession of sin, punishment for sin by a god and thanksgiving offered to a god, all of which assisted in the acceptance and spread of Christianity in the area.

### ***d. Fourth, in this commission, there is mention of the author.***

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

The author of this letter is further identified in verse 7. It says, “*from 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...*”

Who is the author of this letter? The Lord Jesus Christ!

He is the divine author of all seven of these letters and He always introduces Himself with a description reflecting His character.

In the previous five letters, those descriptions had come from the vision of Christ in Revelation 1:12-17, but this description is unique in that it is not drawn from that earlier description.

The picture of Christ here in Revelation 3:7 highlights three of Christ’s attributes.

*Attribute #1-Christ is identified as Pure in holy character.*

In verse 7, Jesus is identified as “He who is holy.” The Greek term [HAGIOS] means, “to be set apart.” It speaks of one who is utterly set apart from sin, and possesses a character that is unblemished and flawless.

Christ is often described as the Holy One in the New Testament (Mark 1:24; Luke 1:35; John 6:69; Acts 3:14).

Peter says in John 6:69, “*We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.*”

Even the demons announce in Mark 1:24, “*What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!*”

Christ is pure in holy character and as the Head of the Church, He exemplifies the purity demanded of the body, just as Paul teaches in Ephesians 5:26-27 that the church is to “*be holy and blameless.*”

Since Christ is holy, we are called to be holy, just as Peter teaches in 1 Peter 1:15, “*but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior.*”

How about you? Do you have a commitment to holy living? Are you striving to be an imitator of Christ, seeking to be set apart from sin, seeking to be holy in all of your behavior?

*Attribute #2-Christ is also identified as Perfect in unblemished truth.*

Christ further refers to Himself in verse 7 as, “*He who is true.*”

In fact, throughout the book of Revelation, the Lord is described in this manner:

- In Revelation 6:10, He is called, “*holy and true.*”

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

- In Revelation 15:3, 16:7 and 19:2, He is called, “*righteous and true.*”
- In Revelation 19:11, “*He is called faithful and true.*”

The Greek term [ALETHINOS] denotes that which is genuine, authentic, and real.

In the midst of falsehood, perversion, and error that fill the world, the Lord Jesus Christ is the truth.

Just as He proclaims in John 14:6, “*I am the way and the truth and the light...*”

Just as the Apostle John proclaims in 1 John 5:20, “*And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.*”

Christ is no counterfeit. He is perfect in unblemished truth.

Do you believe this? I often wonder if we truly believe this with all of our hearts.

If we truly believed that Jesus Christ is the truth, then it should have a greater impact on our daily lives.

We would worship God in truth as John 4:24 instructs.

We would rejoice in truth as 1 Corinthians 13:6 emphasizes.

We would speak to one another in truth as Ephesians 4:25 urges.

We would meditate or think upon the truth as Philippians 4:8 encourages.

If we were truly seeking to follow the example of Christ as He who is true, then truth would permeate our lives.

So the question remains, does truth permeate your life?

*Attribute #3-Christ is identified as Powerful in sovereign authority.*

Christ concludes the description of Himself in verse 7 with the statement, “*He who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens...*”

Christ is speaking of His sovereign authority. He is all-powerful and in complete sovereign control over His church.

A *key* in Scripture represents authority. Whoever holds a key has control (cf. Revelation 1:18; 9:1; 20:1; Matthew 16:19).

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

Also clear from Revelation 5:5 and 22:16, the term *David* symbolizes the messianic office.

Isaiah 22:15-23 provides the background for this imagery. It says in Isaiah 22:22, “*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.*”

In this verse, the promise was given specifically to Eliakim, who was a high official and faithful servant under King Hezekiah.

His predecessor, Shebna, had proved unfaithful in his service, so God was promising to give his position to Eliakim.

The key of the house of David referred to the keys to the treasuries of the kings of Judah, but symbolically it represented the great responsibilities of government, which would be resting upon him in this office.

Eliakim alone, under the king, would be responsible—the government, like the heavy key chain hanging from his shoulder, was to be upon him.

Isaiah earlier had predicted the coming of Messiah and indicated the government would be resting on His shoulders (Isaiah 9:6-7).

As the holder of the key of David, Jesus has the sovereign authority to determine who enters His messianic kingdom (cf. John 10:7, 9; 14:6; Acts 4:12).

Just as he holds the keys to death and hell, He holds the keys to salvation and blessing.

There is no one who can overturn what Christ does. No one can shut the doors to the kingdom or blessing if He holds them open, and no one can force them open if He holds them closed.

Christ is omnipotent and in complete sovereign control over His church, over this world, over our lives, over our own eternal destiny.

What comfort we can take in knowing that the same One who is pure in holy character and perfect in unblemished truth is also powerful in sovereign authority.

What a blessing it is to know that if we face difficult circumstances that Christ our holy, righteous and true God is in control.

### **2. Second, we must understand the commendation given to the church in Philadelphia (Revelation 3:8-10).**

The commendation given to the church in Philadelphia can be broken down into three parts.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### *Part 1—Christ offers an Affirmation of the church’s works (Revelation 3:8).*

Christ begins the affirmation with a bit of encouragement. He says, “*I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut...*”

Christ had examined the deeds of the church in Philadelphia and found nothing to cause Him concern.

Unlike many of the other churches that we have looked at, Jesus does not offer a condemnation to the church in Philadelphia.

In fact, He has put before them an open door, which no one can shut. If we take this phrase with the preceding verse in the eschatological context of the book of Revelation then we can come to only one conclusion.

These faithful believers were eternally secure in their salvation, both in their entrance into the blessings of salvation by grace and into Christ’s future messianic kingdom. This was guaranteed. No one could prevent it.

This must have been a joyous encouragement for this faithful church in Philadelphia.

But all who are genuine believers in Christ can rejoice in this because this promise is for all who are genuine believers in Christ.

If you have turned from your sin and embraced Christ as your Lord and Savior; recognizing that He paid the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross and rising from the dead then you have the same guarantee; a guarantee of future reward in heaven, a guarantee of entrance into Christ’s messianic kingdom.

Other than offering this word of encouragement, what works/deeds of the church in Philadelphia did Christ affirm.

*a. First, they possessed Christ’s Strength.*

He says, “*you have a little power.*”

From the world’s perspective the church at Philadelphia may have appeared weak.

They faced persecutions, trials and difficulties on a daily basis.

But from God’s perspective it had a little power. This was not intended to be a negative comment or it would not have been placed in the commendation of their deeds.

Rather it is a statement regarding their spiritual strength. They had a little power.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

They could identify with Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, "*My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore, I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.*"

They were sufficient in Christ. They were not relying on self. They were not relying upon the world. The members of the church in Philadelphia were relying completely on the strength of Christ. They were dependent completely upon Christ. They had a little power!

*They could echo Paul's words in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."*

You may be going through difficult times. You may be facing trials, persecutions, job loss, sickness or whatever. But if you are a genuine believer in Christ,

- Remember, you have a little power.
- Remember that God's grace is sufficient for you.
- Remember that power is perfected in weakness.
- Remember that you can endure any circumstances through Christ who strengthens you.

The believers in Philadelphia not only possessed Christ's strength, but they...

*b. Second, they pursued Christ's Word.*

Christ moves on to commend the church in Philadelphia for their obedience to His Word. He says, "*You have kept My Word.*"

The Greek term for keep [TEREO] means, "to keep, watch over, guard, preserve, give heed to or observe."

The church at Philadelphia observed and obeyed God's Word.

Jesus said in John 14:23, "*If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him.*"

The apostle John also instructed in 1 John 2:5, "*but whoever keeps His Word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected.*"

Because of their obedience to His Word the church at Philadelphia had proven the genuineness of their love for Christ.

- How about you? Have you kept His Word?
- When was the last time prior to this morning that you picked up your Bible?
- When was the last time you read a chapter out of the Bible?

**Valley Bible Church**  
**3347 West Avenue J**  
**Lancaster, California 93536**  
**[www.valleybible.net](http://www.valleybible.net)**

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

- When was the last time you spent any significant time studying the Word of God?

If it has been any longer than a day or two, it has been too long.

Let us follow the example of the believers at Philadelphia and demonstrate our love for the Lord by observing His Word.

*Third, They Prized Christ's Name.*

Jesus also commends the believers in Philadelphia for their commitment to Christ. He says, “*You have not denied My name.*”

Rather than denying the name of Christ, they prized the name of Christ. They were not secret Christians. They were eager to openly be known as Christians.

They did not fear the possible consequences for their faith, so they were not afraid to acknowledge the One in whom they believed.

They heeded Christ's instructions in Matthew 10:32, “*Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.*”

Despite the pressures they faced, the church in Philadelphia remained loyal to the Lord and did not deny the name of Christ.

I hope this commendation drives us to prize the name of Christ, to live for Him, to confess Him before men and not to deny His name.

***b. Part 2—Christ offers a vindication from the church's enemy (Revelation 3:9).***

He moves on to say in verse 9, “*Behold, I will cause 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.*”

What are these synagogues of Satan?

They were those who gathered in the name of God as Jews. They may have been Jews racially, culturally and ceremonially, but not spiritually.

Just as Paul taught in Romans 2:28-29 a true Jew is not one who is Jewish outwardly, but rather inwardly. It is a matter of the heart not the flesh.

Because of their rejection of Christ as their Messiah, they were not a synagogue of God, but a synagogue of Satan.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

They claimed to be the true assembly, but in fact were counterfeits. And thus, Christ appropriately refers to them as liars.

These Jewish unbelievers will be utterly humbled and defeated. They will be made to recognize that God loved the genuine believers at Philadelphia.

No matter what any other religious group may say, true believers in Christ will have the ultimate victory through Christ our Lord. All someday will be humbled to acknowledge Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords.

### *c. Part 3—Christ offers a proclamation for the church’s protection (Revelation 3:10).*

After affirming the church’s works and vindicating the church from its enemies, Christ pronounces a promise of protection for the church in Philadelphia.

He says, *“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.”*

The believers in Philadelphia had patiently endured many trials. The phrase, *“because you have kept the word of My perseverance,”* is rendered in the NIV, *“Since you have kept my command to endure patiently.”*

It was for their patient endurance that Christ offered them this glorious promise.

You see, their patient endurance of trials demonstrated who they were. It demonstrated that they were genuine believers in Christ.

And because they were genuine believers in Christ, faithfully and patiently enduring the trials and tribulations of the world, Christ offered them a promise of protection.

He says, *“I also will keep you from the hour of testing, which is about to come upon the whole world...”*

As we examine this verse, notice the characteristics of this hour of testing:

- 1-This test is some future testing.
- 2-This test is for a definite, limited period of time described as an hour of testing.
- 3-This test is worldwide in scope, since it will come upon the whole world.
- 4-Finally, this test is for the purpose of testing those who dwell upon the earth, a phrase that is used as a technical term in the book of Revelation to refer to unbelievers (Cf. Revelation 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8, 12, 14; 14:16; 17:2, 8).

This *hour of testing* is none other than Daniel’s Seventieth Week mentioned in Daniel 9:25-27, The time of Jacob’s trouble mentioned by Jeremiah 30:7 and the Tribulation Period mentioned by Revelation 6-18.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

The phrase *keep from* in the Greek [TEREO with EK] implies a continuous existence outside. The only other place where this phrase occurs is in John 17:5 where it takes the meaning to be kept completely out of.

Essentially this is a promise of protection where genuine believers in Christ will be kept completely out of the Tribulation Period, when that awful hour of testing comes upon the whole world.

This is a significant passage in that it argues strongly for a Pre-tribulation Rapture of all believers.

True believers in Christ who are still alive at the end of the age will not go through the tribulation period, rather they will be protected from it just as 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 teaches.

Jesus concludes this proclamation by emphasizing that He is coming quickly. This term emphasizes the imminency of Christ's coming. He could come back at any time to remove His church out of the world prior to the pouring out of judgment upon the world.

What a blessed promise to true believers in Christ! What comfort and hope this provides for us as we face the daily trials and tribulations.

Let us take comfort and hope in this promise of protection! Let us look forward to the return of Christ with great anticipation!

### **3. Third, we must understand the counsel given to the church in Philadelphia (Revelation 3:11).**

Christ's counsel to the church in Philadelphia is brief. He says, "Hold fast what you have, in order that no one take your crown.

Unlike many of the other churches they are not commanded to repent, but to hold fast what they have!

They had remained faithful, obedient and loyal to Christ, thus He exhorted them to continue to do so.

The verb, *hold fast*, emphasizes a continual action of holding fast. They were to continually hold fast remaining faithful, obedient and loyal to Christ through trials and persecutions.

Why were they to hold fast? First because Christ's coming is imminent. Second, so that no one would take their crown.

This is not speaking of a loss of salvation, but rather a loss of reward. These were true believers in Christ, who were going to be protected from the hour of testing.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

However, if they did not hold fast there would be a loss of reward.

Just as the apostle John refers to in 2 John 8, when he says, “*Watch yourselves, that you might not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.*”

The believers in Philadelphia were to keep on keeping on. They were to hold fast remaining faithful, loyal and obedient to Christ regardless of the trials that they faced.

We too, should heed the words of Christ’s counsel here and strive to hold fast, remaining faithful, obedient and loyal to Christ our Lord.

### **IV. Fourth, we must understand the Challenge given to the Overcomers in Philadelphia (Revelation 3:12-13).**

Christ concludes His letter to the church in Philadelphia as He does His other letters in Revelation 2-3. He offers a challenge to the overcomers.

Christ concludes this letter by challenging, “*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.*”

Remember that in each of these letters this challenge to the overcomers is a promise given to those who are true believers and each promise highlights some aspect of eternal life.

The promise to the church in Philadelphia is two-fold:

**First, there is a promise of security.** He says, “*I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore.*”

A pillar represents stability, permanence and immovability. Pillars can also represent honor. This marvelous promise of Christ is believers will have an eternal place of honor in the temple of God (Heaven).

For people used to fleeing their city because of earthquakes, this promise that they will not go out from heaven was understood as security in eternal glory.

**Second, there is a promise of ownership.** He says, “*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.*”

The promise of the signature of God, the city of God and Christ’s new name depicts ownership and citizenship.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

All true believers belong to God and have an intimate personal relationship with Him.

They will be ensured an eternal citizenship in heaven.

What a promise! What a blessing! This should motivate all of us to keep on keeping on! This should motivate all of us to remain faithful, loyal and obedient to Christ.

We have an eternal reward waiting for us! We are secure in Christ! We are owned by God! We are citizens of heaven!

As we conclude our 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebrations this weekend, let us as true believers in Christ not only celebrate our nation's independence, let us celebrate our independence from sin through the sacrifice that Christ made on our behalf.

And as we reflect on the faithful church in Philadelphia, I pray that we will heed the counsel of Christ and hold fast remaining faithful, loyal and obedient to Christ through whatever we may face in this life.