



THE PRAYER CLOSET

ENCOURAGING & EQUIPPING BELIEVERS IN PRAYE

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PROMISES TO A STRUGGLING CHURCH

As I've read and studied through **Revelation 2-3**, it strikes me, that Jesus addresses a variety of churches. He speaks to different churches in different locations. Jesus' vision penetrates to the core of the church, seeing and knowing all about the church. It's amazing to see Jesus' evaluation of each church. It is His right and prerogative as Lord and Head of the church.

The most striking evaluation is the one He makes concerning the church of Philadelphia. Jesus does not point out any factions in the church. He does not bring up any heretical doctrines that had infected the church. The enemies of this church came from the outside – they were not inside the church.

Philadelphia was a small, struggling church. Jesus says that this church had "little strength" (**3:8**). This small congregation labored hard in a hostile environment. They faithfully proclaimed and stood for Christ even though it didn't appear their influence was making much impact. In spite of their circumstances, they didn't give up and remained faithful to this church.

Amazingly, Jesus has no harsh announcements against sin or threats of holy judgment. Jesus has nothing but commendation and encouragement for this struggling church. In a day when churches are judged by their attendance, budgets, and buildings, Jesus blesses and reassures this small church.

In this issue of *The Prayer Closet*, we will examine the promises that Christ gives to this church. We will also see how this text should shape the church. Along with this, we will examine how to use this passage to pray for our churches and others.

The Promises Of Jesus

The message of Jesus to the church of Philadelphia is saturated with promises. Jesus sought to encourage and fortify this church with these assurances. We today can receive and rejoice in these same promises. What promises does Jesus make in this text?

The Promise Of A Real Savior

In this text, Jesus refers to himself as "he that is holy, he that is true" (**3:7**). These titles emphasize that Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior sent by God. "Holy" refers to deity; it is a title that is often attributed to God. He is the Son of God, set apart by God to be the Savior of sinners. When he refers to Himself as "true," He makes known that He is wholly trustworthy. He is reliable in His words and actions.

These titles that Jesus Christ is the true Messiah sent by God. Many in Philadelphia were denying that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, the Son of God. They opposed the teaching that Jesus is the only way to God. They vehemently rejected the church's proclamation of Jesus as Son of God and Savior.

However, Jesus drives home the truth that He and He alone is the true Savior. He has been sent by God. He is the true One – wholly reliable and trustworthy. Regardless of what anyone said, Jesus is the authentic Savior sent by God. He reassures them of His identity – He is the genuine Savior of sinners. He is the real Son of God and Savior!

The Promise of A Certain Salvation

Jesus also says, "he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth" (**3:7**). The key that Jesus speaks of is the one that opens and shuts the door to His kingdom. When Jesus opens the door to His kingdom, no one can shut it. In other words, when a person trusts in Christ, He opens the door to His kingdom to that person. No one can prevent that person from entering Christ's kingdom. He opens the door to it and no one can shut it.

This was especially encouraging to these believers. In Philadelphia, they were being told that they would never inherit the kingdom of David, the kingdom of the Messiah. People were saying that as followers of Jesus, they were excluded.

However, Jesus assures them! He is the Messiah, the Son of God. He is the reliable and

trustworthy Savior. When He opens the door for a person to enter into salvation and His kingdom, nobody can shut it (3:8). No one can hinder that person who trusts in Him from entering His kingdom and experiencing His salvation. They had a certain salvation! It rested in the Son of God who holds the keys to that kingdom. Because they trusted in Jesus Christ, they had a sure entrance into His kingdom and His salvation.

The Promise of Coming Vindication

The primary enemy of this church was the “synagogue of Satan” (3:9). This refers to unbelieving Jews who had rejected the gospel and were still in their sins. They opposed the church by denying that Jesus is the Messiah. They ridiculed this church, saying that they could never enter the kingdom of David – the Messiah’s kingdom. They actively persecuted those who claimed Jesus as Messiah and Savior.

However, God promises vindication, “behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee” (3:9b). There are a variety of interpretations concerning when this will take place. I personally believe that it is in the future when Israel turns to the Messiah, Jesus Christ (Romans 11:7-24). However, you interpret it, the bottom line is that Christ will vindicate His church. He will reveal that He loves His church and that believers belong to Him. Christ will make sure that everyone knows who belongs to Him and that He loves him or her supremely. The church may be ridiculed and despised, but Christ loves her and will vindicate her.

The Promise of Continued Preservation

It is daunting and dangerous to confess Christ in this world. Yet, Jesus promises the believer that He will preserve those who do (3:10). Again, Jesus warns them of a coming time of tribulation. There are a variety of interpretations about when this will happen. Space does not permit me to go into detail about this. However, the bottom line is that Jesus promises to preserve His people as the wrath of God falls on this earth. He will “keep” those who confess Him and stand for Him. There is no need to fear; we have all the power of Jesus behind us and His love and grace to keep us.

The Promise of Permanence

The city of Philadelphia had experienced a great deal of change through the years. The Romans had changed the name of the city twice. They had earthquakes that changed the city. Yet, Jesus promises these faithful ones that they would experience some permanent things (3:12):

“A pillar in the temple of my God” – They would have a permanent home in heaven; they would be fixed and settled in heaven forever;

“The name of my God and the name of the city of my God” – They would be forever identified as belonging to God and having a permanent residence;

“My new name” – They are forever identified with Jesus Christ as heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus.

Even though they faced difficult days and times of tribulation, God promises these permanent blessings. He promises to give them strength and to fortify their faith. We can cling to these same promises to help us remain faithful to Christ in the most difficult of moments.

How Should This Text Shape The Church?

As we study this text, one of the questions that we need to ask is how this text shapes the church. In other words, what should the church look like because of what this text reveals. The following are some principles we can glean from the text and can use to pray over our churches.

The church must have an unshakeable commitment that Jesus is the real and only Savior.

In this text, Jesus declares that He is the real and wholly trustworthy Savior. He is the One who opens the door to salvation. He is the One who shuts the door to salvation. We must boldly proclaim this Savior to the lost. We must be firmly persuaded that He and He alone is the Son of God, the Savior of sinners. Even though the world despises and ridicules this, the church must cling to this truth

Ask God to renew your churches commitment to Jesus as the true and reliable Savior. Adore Him for this. Plead that your church will boldly make Jesus known as the Son of God and Savior of sinners.

The church is to confess Christ to the world around us.

In this text, the church of Philadelphia confessed the name of Jesus; they did not deny Him (3:8). How do believers confess Christ to the world? The text indicates that we boldly make Him known. Next, we keep His Word (3:8, 10). If we believe Him to be the Son of God and Savior, we strive to do what He says. We also hold fast to Him (3:11). We are to cling to Christ, trusting Him, calling on Him, and walking with

Him. This is the heart of confessing Christ – declaring His gospel, keeping His Word, and holding fast to Him. *Plead with God to empower your church to confess Christ in your city or area. Call on Him to empower your church to proclaim the gospel, obey His Word, and to hold fast to Him in intimate relationship. Pray that you will not deny but confess His name.*

The church is to have confidence in times of persecution.

In this text, Jesus wanted to reassure this small, struggling church. He wanted to strengthen their faith. He did not want them to be afraid but to have confidence in the times of persecution. He does this in two ways. First, He declares His love for them. He makes it known that He loves them. What a blessing! Jesus loves His church. Second, He will vindicate them. He will make known to others that He loves them. Those who persecute and ridicule them will be forced to see that He loves them and belongs to Him. *Pray that your church will rest and rejoice in the love of Jesus. Ask that your church will not be discouraged or intimidated but confident in Christ and His gospel.*

The church is to focus on her heavenly rewards.

In this text, Jesus reminds these believers of their heavenly rewards (3:12). Why does He do this? The permanence and the rewards of heaven anchor us now in this life. They stir and motivate us to be faithful and overcome in the here and now. The devil and the world will seek to entice us away from faithfulness to Jesus. The antidote to these enticements is to reflect on the future blessings and permanence of heaven that is coming one day. The way to overcome now is to focus on what's ahead in heaven. *Pray that your church will not be lured away from faithfulness to Christ by the enticements of the world. Ask that your church will remember the blessings that are coming in heaven. Ask that your church will be delivered from worldliness.*

How Can I Pray This Text For Myself?

- ✓ **This text teaches me that I can have confidence in Jesus.** He is the real Savior who is wholly reliable and trustworthy. He is the One who has the key to the kingdom. I don't have to doubt Him or His ability to save and secure me. *Adore Jesus as the genuine, trustworthy Savior. Confess to this to Him. Reaffirm your commitment to Him as Savior. Pray for boldness to make Him known.*

- ✓ **This text reminds us that Jesus' word is worthy to be kept and His name to be confessed.**

In **Revelation 3:8**, He acknowledges and commends this church for keeping His word and for not denying His name. They labored to obey Jesus. They sought to confess the name of Jesus with their lips and their lives. It's a powerful reminder to us that the word of Christ is worthy – worthy for us to live it out day by day. His name is also worthy – worthy for us to confess and exalt among men. We are not to deny that glorious name but to make it known by confessing it before men.

Thank God for the word and name of Jesus Christ. Pray for the grace and power to keep His Word and to confess His name.

- ✓ **This text reveals that Jesus loves you and will make this known one day.**

Christ openly declares His love for His people (3:9). Your Savior loves you. Your Savior loves your church. Even more than that, He will make it known one day. The world may not believe it and may ridicule you for it. However, Jesus promises to reveal His love for His people in a clear and tangible rest.

Thank Jesus for loving you. Praise Him for His love for you and for your church. Rejoice in that love. Rest in that love. Find hope today in that love for you.

- ✓ **This text shows that Jesus will keep His people in the midst of tribulation (3:10).**

Jesus will honor your trust in Him. He will stand with you as you confess Him. Don't be afraid or intimidated. Jesus will walk with you, sustain you, and encourage you.

Thank Jesus for His preserving power. Ask Him to sustain you, especially when your faith and witness are challenged.

- ✓ **This text calls us to remember the return of Jesus.**

Jesus declares that He is coming. He is coming quickly. We must remind ourselves of this. We need regular recollection of this. It is one of the great doctrines of our faith. However, it has a practical value. This doctrine stirs us to hold fast. We cling to Christ and His Word because He is returning in judgment and vindication. The reason we hold fast is because He is returning to judge the wicked and vindicate believers.

Rejoice in the coming of Jesus. Confess to Christ your belief in this truth. Pray that you will hold fast to Him and His Word because He is coming.

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Praying This Text For The Lost

This text also provides insight on how to pray for lost people. This text reveals some prayer points that we can pray for unbelievers:

- Pray that the lost person will come to see Jesus for who He is – the authentic, reliable Savior who opens the door to salvation (**3:7**).
- Plead that the Holy Spirit will destroy any lies that the lost person has about Jesus (**3:8**).
- Ask that the lost person will not be hindered by the blasphemy and rejection of others (**3:9**).
- Pray that the lost person will know that if he or she will trust Jesus, He will love, preserve, and vindicate him or her (**3:10-11**).
- Plead that the lost person will come to see and know that heavenly reward is greater than temporary worldly pleasure (**3:12**).

Prayer Closet News

I'd like to take this opportunity to invite you to our websites. We have developed these sites to encourage you and help you in prayer. Our primary site

is www.prayerclosetministries.org. This site contains a variety of teachings and prayer guides. Our site dedicated to prayer evangelism is www.kingdompraying.com. This site offers prayer guides to help believers pray for the lost, missionaries, and for the nations of the world. You can also download our other newsletters, *Prayerwalking* and *Biblical Manhood* at this site.

Please continue to pray for this ministry. We are pressing ahead in faith, trusting God to use and sustain the ministry. We would also ask you to consider prayerfully giving to this ministry. Your donations go straight to ministry. We rejoice in your prayers and support. May God bless and help you. To God be the glory!

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