

Revelation 3 7-13

by Tim Conway

This sermon delves into the message to the church in Philadelphia from Revelation 3, emphasizing the significance of surrendering to God despite having little power. It highlights the importance of faithfulness, obedience, and holding fast to Christ's name and promises. The sermon explores the concept of open doors for ministry, being loved by Christ, and the assurance of eternal fellowship with God. It concludes with the encouragement to overcome challenges and embrace the new revelations of Christ's character in eternity.

Scripture: Revelation 3:7, Revelation 3:9, Revelation 3:11, Revelation 3:12, Revelation 3:13

Topics: "Faithfulness", "Open Doors for Ministry"

Description

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Transcript

Revelation 3.7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, the words of the Holy One, the True One, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens. I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door which no one is able to shut.

I know that you have but little power, and yet, you've kept My Word and have not denied My name. Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie, behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet and they will learn that I have loved you. Because you have kept My Word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world to try those who dwell on the earth.

Now, I'd stop right there and just make this comment. The last verse I just read, that's the kind of verse that our premillennial dispensational friends like to latch onto and say, see, there's a seven-year great tribulation coming and there it is right there. And what Jesus is saying is that He is going to eradicate the church prior to the rapture so they won't have to go through this.

You don't want to read it that way. Our Lord's warnings all the way through these churches, are warnings of I'll come to you like a thief in the night. They're warnings like I'll kill her children.

They're warnings like I'll remove your candlestick. They're warnings like I will spit you out of my mouth. I will throw her into a deathbed.

What we want to see here is when this talks about trial, we're not just talking about some difficulties that are coming through a period of time. You want to see this trial like a courtroom trial. What He's talking about is there's a day coming when the whole world is going to be brought to give an account.

I'm coming as a thief in the night. That's what He says to the church right before this. He's going to come.

And it's an hour when we don't expect. And when He comes, what's going to happen is those who have been faithful and those who have been overcomers are not going to fail and fall to this resurrection of judgment. He's going to protect us in that hour.

That's the picture here. So anyway, let's resume. I am coming soon.

You see, that's the issue. You see the connection. This is when He comes.

When He comes, it's the end. It's like the parable of the ten virgins. You've got five that are wise and five that are foolish.

And when the bridegroom comes, it's over. The door's shut. And it's the end.

And what happens? You have five foolish ones that are kept on the outside. You see, they're the ones that are going to be facing this trial that's coming upon the whole world. When we think about tribulation, tribulation is one of the words that He mentions to actually the church right before this, the first one in chapter 3, namely Sardis.

But He talks about tribulation coming. This is the tribulation that's talked about in Romans 2. This is the tribulation of punishment and damnation and hell. And He's coming and it's all over.

He's coming. We know what happens. He comes and He divides.

And basically what He's saying is He's going to protect these people from being on the left. He's going to protect these people from that. I'm coming soon.

And He says this, Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God. Never shall he go out of it.

And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from My God out of heaven and My own new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Okay, so let's dive in.

First thing I want us to do is try to go back and actually visualize what we have here. Now, I'll tell you right up front. I've gone to Wikipedia and I've done searches on ancient Philadelphia online.

And various things come up. And I've seen pictures. I've seen pictures of what it looks like today.

I see the amphitheater that was actually there back in these days. It's a great big thing in the side of the mountain there. You can see the ruins.

You can see old pillars from buildings. I was in Izmir a couple times years ago. It was once or twice.

I forget how many times I went over there. I think twice. But Izmir is Smyrna.

And there's a road, I believe it's 67 miles, a highway that goes straight to Philadelphia. I didn't take that. If I was there longer, I would have loved to have gone up there and seen that area.

And the beauty is that these are the two churches. They're connected by a 67-mile highway. These cities were the only two among the seven that had nothing negative said about them.

So, imagine with me. I got to looking at pictures. The city of Philadelphia sits at the base of a great big mountain.

It's called Mount Tomolis. And don't think about a peak like this or like your typical volcano-looking mountain. It's more like Mount Massive that Joshua and Evan and I climbed this past summer.

It's a massive wall of a mountain. Just huge. And this city sat down at the base of that.

And then looking the other way, it went out onto a great fertile volcanic plain. And what we do know about it is it was very fertile and it was a tremendous place. Being close to the Mediterranean, it's the Aegean Sea area.

It's in what today is western Turkey. And it was fertile. And what we know for a fact is they grew grapes out there.

We know that raisins and wine were a big deal there. And so, imagine, Roman days, one of the chief commodities, and it was a wealthy city. I understand it was on a major Roman road, east to west road.

And it was a place of commerce. It was a place of wealth. Well, you can imagine, if it's the Roman days and your big thing is grapes and wine, what God they probably worshipped.

And it's true. They worshipped Bacchus. You all remember Bacchus? He's the Roman God.

C.S. Lewis puts Bacchus in his chronicles. You may remember him. He had leaves in his hair and grapes in his hair and went around carrying a glass of wine.

That was the Roman God Bacchus. Now, we look at that today and we read C.S. Lewis and that's basically a parable. And we can kind of take it as fictitious and mythology.

But you remember, these people worshipped Bacchus. They were deceived by this. The other thing that we know about it is that they were very close to Rome.

Even though they were off in what's western Turkey, they were fairly far away from Italy and Rome. The fact is that they were very close and they were very committed. And we know for a fact that they had imperial cult worship.

They were very given to worshipping the Caesar. Now, like most of the Roman cities, they worshipped the plethora of gods, but they were really given to Bacchus. They were really given to Caesar worship.

We know those things about that. And among the Roman population, we know that there was a population of Jews. We know that from the very letter.

Look at v. 9. Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say they are Jews and are not. Understand this. Jesus puts the proper name on everything.

People call themselves the synagogue of God. Jesus comes along and says it's the synagogue of Satan. The thing about Jesus is He puts everything in the true perspective.

Scripture does that. And the God behind Scripture does that. He puts the proper names on everything.

And you believe it, on Judgment Day, the proper names are going to be put on everything. If anything is true about these seven letters, it's a picture of Judgment Day. Because what you find is the Lord who has these eyes that are like fire.

That's how He's described in these letters. A little later in Revelation, He's described as having seven eyes. The Lamb had seven eyes.

Those seven eyes are the seven spirits of God that go out into all the world. These are eyes of fire. They see in the dark.

Seven eyes. That's perfect discernment. He sees everything exactly as it truly is.

Somebody says, I'm a Jew. He says, you say you're a Jew. You're not.

You're a liar. In other words, a Jew is one inwardly. It's not just enough.

Not all Israel is Israel. And that's what's being called out here. These people, were they physical descendants of Abraham? Certainly.

And they lived here. And He knows they did. And He knows that the Philadelphians in this church, they knew about these people.

So, the Jewish people tended to be industrious. Here's what we know. The Jewish people, they typically have wealth.

This is one of the things that really bugged the Nazis about them. Typically where they go, they're industrious. They're involved in the commerce.

And because of their industriousness, they would have migrated to places where money was to be made. And this was a place for money to be made. And the thing is, okay, you've got Romans, you've got Jews, and in the midst, you've got this church.

A church that Christ has planted. One of His candlesticks is in the midst of this whole thing. Now, they're hated by the Romans.

Why? Oh, the Romans said all sorts of things about them. They're incestuous. They're cannibals.

Why? Because we supposedly eat Christ's flesh. We're incestuous because brothers and sisters marry each other. They call them atheists because they didn't believe in their gods and wouldn't fall down and worship their Caesar.

And so they were hated. The Jews hated them. Why? Because they had all their Judaistic, Mosaic law-keeping as being the proper way to get to heaven.

And the Christians came along and said, you can't be saved by law-keeping. And they said, oh, these people, they're denying Moses and they deny all the Old Testament worship. So they were hated.

And here, you have a church. They found themselves as light in the midst of this darkness. So, if we got on our time machine and we went back there, and suddenly you were out in the midst of the city.

I saw these old Roman streets and they still have pillars and stuff. There was fantastic architecture there. But don't think this.

Don't think that you would have gotten out and you would have gone up and seen this massive cathedral that said Church at Philadelphia. It wasn't like that. You would have got there and you would have seen all the impressive things that the Romans did and all their engineers and laid the roads and built these massive structures and there were the Jews and undoubtedly in the marketplace, they were the ones controlling the sale of this and that.

They probably owned parts of the great... I mean, you can just imagine how it was. But, you know what we're told? We're told this. Verse 8, I know that you have but little power.

And we know, we've heard this, probably you've heard this. It's the Greek word *dunamis* and dynamite comes from it. It's the word that has to do with power, strength, ability.

Basically, what Jesus is saying is you're not very impressive in the eyes of the world. You don't have much. That's what He's saying.

You don't have much ability. What we would find is a church with little strength. Now, think about that.

Think about what a church with little strength looks like. We know all about that. I think we're a church with relatively little strength still.

But, I mean, you imagine when there were 10 of us and we're meeting over in a little house over on Hackberry. I mean, what's that? It's pretty pathetic. We met in a burger place.

Mark, I'm not knocking your burgers. But we met in this little burger place just on the east side of San Antonio, not incredibly impressive. And you know what? The fact is there's a lot of churches like that.

They don't have these incredibly impressive edifices and St. Peter's Basilica. And it's not that kind of thing. Even here, we've got the UPS driver, the FedEx driver, who calls James and says, you know, I'm looking for a church, but all I see is an abandoned warehouse.

You know, am I even in the right place? Not altogether very impressive. That's what you would have found if you would have gone back there. You wouldn't have even seen these people standing out in any kind of notable way, unless some of them were being put to death in the amphitheater or something, and there was some kind of gathering for that.

But these people, what's that mean? What's it even mean to be of little strength? What does that look like? I'll tell you one thing it looks like. It looks like that thing that Jesus Himself notices about these people beyond everything else. I think He's got these eyes of fire, which later are called seven eyes, the seven

spirits of God.

He's all discerning. His judgment is perfect. His evaluation of things is spot on.

I mean, when it comes to analysis and His estimation of things, it's perfect. And you know what happens when He looks at this church? He says, the first thing that stands out to Me about you is you have little power. Little power.

They had very limited ability. Now, I just thought, okay, wait a second. One thing that I want to do right here that I know 10 years ago when I was going through these, I didn't specifically do, is I want us to think about a theology of ability.

I'm not talking about God's ability. We know His ability. He's almighty.

Infinite power. With God, nothing is impossible. I'm talking about our ability.

You know theology. Theos, God. Theology part is basically we're dealing with the science of God or the study of God.

I want us to think about the study of God, the study of Christ. You might call it a Christology of ability. I want us to think about Christ and our ability to do anything.

Now, notice this. He doesn't bring any fault against this church. When He says you have little power, He's not faulting them for that.

In this world, people get faulted for that. You're a football player. You can't do what you're supposed to do.

You get faulted. You go to work in a certain place and you can't perform. You get faulted.

He is not faulting them. He's simply pointing out a reality. He's simply assessing them.

Here's the thing. Here's the thing scripturally. Think with me.

If I have anything spiritually speaking, even physically speaking, where did it come from? Now you remember John the Baptist. You remember him? Remember that guy? There he is in John 3. These guys are coming to him and saying, hey, John, you know that guy you baptized? Yeah, I know him. He's over there and he's baptizing more than you are even though he's not baptizing.

His disciples are baptizing is what we're told. You remember what he said? He said no man can receive anything unless it's given to him from above. You see, that's the truth.

Without me, nothing. You have no abilities. Now, he's talking specifically spiritually right there, but look, the reality is this, because he's talking about Christians, he's talking about bearing much fruit over against the branches that don't do anything.

But you know, even branches that get thrown into the fire, they can do lots of physical things. They can go off to a job and they can perform different things and they may have skills and they may be able to drive a race car or they may be able to do a computer program or whatever. Even those things come from Him.

He is the Giver of all of these things. You know, the Apostle Paul said this in 2 Corinthians 3. He said this, he said it's not that we're sufficient in ourselves. He said our sufficiency comes from God.

In other words, our ability to do anything is not found in us. It's found in the Lord. Look, I'm stressing this because I want you to recognize that if somebody only has a little bit of power, it's not Jesus faulting them for that.

It's Christ who's responsible for it. He's the one in control of it. He's the one who measures out what everybody gets.

And one of the great places where we see this is the parable of the talents. So if you've got your Bibles in front of you, turn over very quickly to Matthew 25. Matthew 25.

We also get a similar parable in Luke 19. We won't pay particular attention to that right now, but I do want you to see the parable of the talents as we find it here in Matthew 25. Now notice with me, I'm going to begin reading in v. 14.

For it, I'm reading from the ESV, it, the Kingdom of Heaven is what he's speaking about. That's the it. He's saying the Kingdom of Heaven will be like a man.

Now we know this parable. We know who the man is. The man is Christ.

Going on a journey. We know what that is. He's gone away.

Where? To glory. Until when? Until He returns. So He's away right now.

And what's He done? Well, He called His servants and entrusted to them His property. Now this is important, because everything that we get given, now remember these servants, one in the end is wicked, and two, well done, good and faithful. So, I mean, this clearly is a picture of what's being given to everyone.

Not just the elect. This is what's being given to everybody. And it's not ours.

It comes from His resources. That's what it says. It says entrusted to them His property.

To one, He gave five talents. Okay, stop right there. When he talks talent here, this is not like the musician who's talented and can play the violin.

That's not what he's talking about. Talent is a word that we don't often use. It's a measure of weight that was used to measure precious metals.

So a talent is roughly equal to 70 pounds. So, a guy gets five talents. Well, you can do the math.

70 times 5. What's that? 350, right? 350 pounds of precious metal. Let's say gold. That's the picture here.

One guy gets 350 pounds of gold. Then he goes to the next guy. He gets two talents.

Two times 70. You have 140. 140 pounds of gold.

A third servant gets just one talent. 70 pounds of gold. This is Christ.

And notice what He's doing. He's distributing His resources. And what does He do? Obviously, it's in this world.

This isn't eternal. This is in this world. Because it's the things that we get now where there's faithful and unfaithful.

It's the place we're at while He's away on His journey. And what's happening is when He comes back, He is going to take an account on how we used what was given to us. And that's the picture that we see here.

He bestows. He distributes. Now, here's the thing.

Can you see the folks over in Philadelphia? As He gives 350 pounds over here and He gives 140 pounds over here, He says, ah, you at Philadelphia, what am I going to give you? I'm going to give you little. Is that just 70 pounds? Or is it 10? Is it just a partial talent? I'll tell you this, He didn't give them as much as He gives to others. He gave them very little.

And He's the One who does it. He is the One responsible if we get little power. Think with me.

Power. Christ gives us the power to win souls. He gives us power.

This is what we're praying for right now. He gives us power to pray effectual prayers, to lay hold upon Him for the sake of our children. We'll know if He gives us more power to accomplish that by the fruit.

What happens in our children? He gives us power to be involved in missions. He gives us power to evangelize. He gives us power to get money.

He gives us power to excel in any aspect of life. He gives us power to exercise spiritual gifts. If one guy can preach or if one sister especially has a gift of mercy, that's Christ.

He's totally responsible. That is not left up to us. This is something we really need to grasp.

Because sometimes I get the feeling that you've got people who think, well, I can be mentored into getting more. Or if I just go to seminary, then I'll get that extra... Now look, there are things we can do to stir the gift we have, but you can't produce more than what Christ has given to you. That's the issue.

He gives us power to be wise. He gives us power to be discerning. That's what a talent represents.

It's a weight of that which is precious metal. It's the gracious weight of the silver and gold that Christ entrusts to us individually and to us corporately as a church when you put it all together. Because that's how He's talking.

He's talking about corporately when you take everything that I've given to all the people that make up this church, it's just little. But notice very carefully. Notice, to one He gave five talents, roughly 350 pounds of gold.

The other guy gets about 70 pounds of gold. Now, the truth is, 70 pounds of gold is a lot. But we all have to admit, it's also a lot less than the other guy got.

That's the thing. This church in Philadelphia in certain ways, they got little. And He says you have but little power.

Brethren, here's the thing. This is a reality. This is a reality about churches.

Other churches may be given more power, more ability. That's just true. And others may be given less.

That's true individually. Look, none of us have a problem of looking at Charles Spurgeon, Martin Lloyd-Jones and saying, Brother Tim does not have the same weight of preaching gift that they have. That's true.

That's no illusion. And you can look at John Wesley and you can say, wow, he had a real ability with souls. He evangelized and people came to Christ more than I've been given.

And I recognize that. That's real. He had greater abilities there.

We recognize that those differences exist. It's no illusion. But what's so critical is that we grasp this.

It's all by design. This man who went on this far journey, he allotted to each one exactly what he intended for them to have. And you get what you get.

You get what he gives. But think with me about how the world looks at this. See, now this is key.

Because we are a product of our culture and of this culture's worldview. And we need to think. We need to think different than the way we often think.

And this needs to happen in the church. Think with me about what all this looks like to the world. I mean, from the vantage point of most people out there and their worldview.

What happens when you find somebody who has little? Think about somebody with little money. They're poor. Think about somebody with little health.

Oh, they've got polio. They're scoliosis. Or they're in a wheelchair.

Think about people with little intellect. People with little stature. People with little strength.

I mean, think about that in the world. Little resources. Little athletic ability.

What happens? I mean, what happens when you have a team out there and they're playing and you've got the guy out there that's the most pathetic because he's the weakest? Because he just wasn't endowed with a big frame or quickness. What happens? You know what happens in this world? We pity them. That's exactly what happens.

Now, I don't know if Joshua remembers this, but I remember this. Years ago when Joshua played soccer, I was there at his practice one Saturday and there was a place there on... I think that field was over at Alamo. And they had that field out there and there was only one place where the parents could find shade.

It was down at one end of the field. One day, the coach took Joshua's whole team and there was probably like 20 guys. He took them all the way down to the other end of the field down to the goal at that end.

And he had the whole team line up on the goal line. About 20 guys. And you know, it's one of those classic moments in sports.

I couldn't hear because they were too far away, but I could see. And you could just see this whole thing play out. Well, here's what happened.

Coach says, you, captains. Okay, these guys come out. Coach kind of drops back.

You know how this thing works. The two captains, they start picking teams because coach wanted two teams. So each captain starts picking.

Well, what happens? The first guy looks across that line and he says, ah, I want the guy that I know is capable of the most goals. Or, you know, the guy who's my best friend. Or however that looks.

You know, there's reasons. They say he picks and then the next captain picks. And this goes back and forth.

And you know how this plays out. You know, the guy runs over after he's been picked and he's whispering into the ear of the captain and he's saying, hey, pick Scott over there. Pick Joe over there.

You know, and this is how it's happening. The other guys are whispering to him and they're helping him decide. And this thing was playing out like this until there were like three or four guys left.

And now, you know, it gets kind of hard. These are the guys nobody wants. Why? Well, because they lack what it takes to get picked.

They lack the coordination. They lack the ability to make the goals. They lack the quickness.

And one of the captains points and a guy comes off the line and like he's so happy to be picked and he's going over to the team and the captain's like, no, I was pointing to the guy next to you. And the guy turned around and he hung his head and he walked back to the line of shame. Back to that line of insignificance and unwantedness.

Why? Why are those guys still over there? Well, they don't have an older brother who is friends with the captain saying, hey, pick my little brother. They don't have any of that. And they lack the stuff.

And you know, when you see the guy drop his head and shamefully go back to the line, what do we all feel? As I was watching that, it's like, you know, you feel for the guy. But that's how it is here. We feel sorry.

Why do we feel pity for them? Because that's how things get measured in this world. In this world, if you can't perform, you're a loser. And that's how it is.

That's how it is in the workplace. That's how it is in our universities. That's how it is in our government.

I mean, it's just the way the world operates. If you can't perform, in this world you know. Look, the sports stars out there, there's no great moral character in most of these guys.

But they've got the ability to put a ball through a rim. Or they've got the ability to get another kind of ball over the home run fence. Or they've got another kind of ball across the line.

Then the whole world stands up and applauds them. Or you've got the movie stars. Again, people not known for their moral integrity.

But what? They've got beauty. They've got looks. And they've got money.

So they get applauded. That's what happens in this world. People with money.

People with good looks. People with intelligence. That's in the academia realm out there.

It's in our schools. You know, if you're smart, you get the scholarships. You get recognized.

You excel. If you've got coordination, if you've got skill, that's the measure of success by this world's standards. But what's so striking about this church at Philadelphia is he looks at them and he says, yeah, I know you're pathetic by world's standards.

I know it. I know you don't measure up and I made you that way. But, you've kept My Word.

That's what we want to notice. After pointing out that they had little power, notice what he says next. Verse 8, I know that you have but little power, yet you have kept My Word and have not denied My name.

Were they little in power? Better believe it. But they were big in obedience and big in honoring the name of Christ. Here's the thing that you want to recognize.

Jesus doesn't say to them, I see your spiritual gifts are little. I see that your resources are meager. I don't want you on my team.

That's not what we find here. In fact, if we think back to our parable in Matthew 25, do you remember what happens when the Master comes? He says, well done, good and faithful servant. He says this, you have been faithful over a little.

Luke 19 says, very little. And He says, enter into the joy of your Lord. You see, the issue is not what you get.

That's not it. It's not what you have. You see, what we have to recognize is this, Jesus and His kingdom standards are concerned with this, that you be faithful with what you have.

If you have little, you be faithful with it. If you have much, you be faithful with it. And I'll tell you this, it's probably easier to be faithful with a little than with a lot.

And yet we get people in the church, they like pine away and wring their hands. Oh, it's like they've got this mindset that they can never be what they need to be in the kingdom unless they can preach. They can just never be what they need to be unless they can get to the mission field.

People think like that. We get people in the church from time to time, it's like, oh, I can't teach, I can't preach, woe is me. That's what I really want to do.

That's what I need to do if I'm going to be significant. That's not it. Now look, if God is giving you teaching gifts, you don't want to bury them in the sand.

And the best way you're going to know whether you have those is by the testimony of the corporate gathering of God's people. It's God's people that are going to recognize because they're going to recognize whether you have the ability to impart God's grace to them. But we don't need to have this self-pity.

Oh, I just don't have the money that they have. I can't give like they can. I can't pray like Brother So-and-So can pray.

I lack. I mean, look, be done with that. Be done with that.

And notice, well done, good and faithful servant. It wasn't well done because they had a lot. He says, well done because you've been faithful over little.

That is what it is to please the Lord. And that's what the church at Philadelphia did. And that's why they received nothing but praise.

He finds not a single fault with these people. And undoubtedly, they got to the end, well done, good and faithful servants. You've been faithful over a little.

Because that's what he says they had. And he finds only commendation for them. Brethren, we're so much a product of our culture.

We're so inundated with its philosophies and its mindsets and its methods of measuring success. So I'm about halfway done here. What I want to do in the rest of this is I simply want to point out just five sets of truths that to the world seem contradictory.

But if we know our Bibles, they're not contradictory. One, we can have but little power and please Christ. And you see that.

Notice v. 8. We've already looked at it, but let's look at it again. I know that you have but little power, and yet you've kept My Word. We can so easily fall into that trap.

We need more ability. We need to advance to some greater ministry. We need a greater name.

If only I could attain to a certain level of learning. If only I could learn what the Puritans know. If only I could learn deep theology from the Systematics book.

You see, sometimes people are geared that way. It's always like I've got to have more. I've got to have more.

If I'm really going to please the Lord, if I'm really going to be acceptable in this whole thing, I've got to be able to do what so-and-so does. But just remember this. King Saul, a long time ago, he was a man that had a stature that was head and shoulders above every other man.

He was endowed physically. Big man. Remember, he leads the forces of Israel against the Amalekites? You know, the whole Agag deal.

And what happens? He defeats them. Wipes them out. Yeah, pretty impressive, right? Great power.

Smashes the Amalekite hordes. We're all impressed. The world's impressed by that.

Give me generals. Give me commanders. Give me chiefs.

Give me admirals. Men who've won victories and won these battles. Yeah, here's a man.

He won the battle. Lots of power. Lots of strength.

Lots of ability. But you know, as he comes with King Agag at his side and with a bunch of sheep and cattle, Samuel says this, God is not pleased with you. You see, it's not all that brawn and all that spectacular.

You know what he says? God is not pleased with your sacrifice. God is not pleased with burnt offerings. Because he's saying, oh, we spared the best of the animals because we're going to sacrifice them to the Lord.

When he finally admits he was being a coward and he was going to honor the people rather than God. I have a verse I often think about there in Isaiah 66. You know this.

The Lord says, you want to know the man to whom I look? You want to know who really impresses Me? Who I take really focused attention on? It's this. Humble, contrite spirit, and trembles at My Word. You know how we know that somebody can have very little strength and yet have strength enough to be obedient? It's because Philadelphia did it.

I mean, they're the example. Brethren, this church lacked what other churches had. They were probably small in number, small in spiritual gift, no notable preachers, probably no notable names, no high-ranking authorities had been converted and added to this church, no high-ranking military men.

I mean, this was probably made up of very simple people, maybe a lot of converted slaves. It was just very unimpressive. Probably not great resources spiritually or materially.

Nothing impressive about these folks until what? Until this. Until you look closely at their lives. Oh yeah, they didn't have great wealth.

They weren't the merchants. They weren't the military men. But what did you find when you looked close at their life? What did Jesus see? He's got those glowing eyes.

What did He see? When He looked really close at their lives, outwardly, not impressive. But as He looked at them, what does He see? Well, you see what He sees. When you look at their lives closely, you would have found these are gracious people and these are loving people.

These are humble people. What Jesus did, they imitated. Jesus tells us in Scripture, follow Me.

And see, they heard what He said. They kept His Word. When He said, follow Me, they may have been simple people.

They may not have been very impressive. But you know what? They looked at Him and they said, if that's what He did, that's what we need to do. What Jesus taught, they put into practice.

What Scripture commands, they took it seriously. They may have been simple people, but I'll tell you this, in their simplicity, they simply believed that if the Lord said it, He meant it, it matters, and we should put it into practice. They didn't play footloose and fancy with Scripture.

In all their weakness, their lack of gift, lack of resource, lack of ability, it was never an excuse for them to do anything but trustingly obey their Savior. See, we can imagine. We often imagine.

You know what happens here. What happens here is people like John MacArthur get applauded. It's not primarily because people know his personal life.

It's primarily because he has a great gift. Spurgeon. Most people, we don't know him personally.

We didn't know his personal life. You know why he gets applauded? Because of his gift. Sometimes we look at... We don't know Whitefield's life.

We don't know Calvin's life. We don't know Luther's life. But these are the guys that get applauded.

Why? Because they had tremendous gift. That's how it is in this world. If you have great gift, you get applauded.

But heaven is not like that. I'll tell you this, these simple, normal, average people, pathetic maybe in some ways in the eyes of the world, I'll tell you this, you know what's going to happen in heaven? They're going to be exalted on such a high pedestal that people are going to come and fall down before them. That's how it is.

Don't misjudge and don't miscalculate. The people who are going to be most applauded, the people who did the most good and well to receive the good and faithful servant, well done, commendations from the Lord, they're the people that didn't necessarily have the greatest gift. Oh, you can have a great gift and be very faithful with it and you'll be highly commended in the end.

But listen, the measure of things is not how much you get. The measure of things is how faithful you are with what you have. That's what we find here.

Success in this world is not necessarily an indication of what Jesus counts as true success. These people had. So, smallness of power, you can still be obedient.

The next thing is, number two, smallness of power, you can still own Christ's name. You see that again in verse 8. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept My Word and have not denied My name. Now look, there are a number of ways we can deny Christ's name.

How? You can speak against Him. You can curse Him. You can use His name as a blasphemy.

Of course, there's that way. Or you can reinterpret Him. John says that Jesus is denied when you deny that He is the Christ.

You can believe a lot of things about Jesus. You can believe He's true, He's historical, you can believe many facts about Him. But if you deny the things that Scripture says about Him, you deny Him.

And to deny Him is to deny the Father. That's basic argumentation of 1 John. But we can deny Him by our life, by our works.

Isn't this what Paul told Titus? By their works they deny Him. There are many ways to deny. We can deny by silence.

It's such a time when we ought to speak. We don't speak. That's another way.

You know another way we can deny Him? We simply detract from the cross. It's like we just tone it down to where it's not so important. Because that's primarily what He came to do.

He came to be the Savior of the world, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. And you can deny Him by just simply denying the necessity that mankind has to be saved by Him alone. There's only one name given among men under heaven whereby we must be saved.

That exclusivity, we can deny Him when we just tone that down. Brethren, what's the opposite of denying Him? It's owning Him. It's speaking of Him.

It's counting Him precious. It's speaking up when others blaspheme. Don't tell others you're a Christian.

Don't tell others you know Christ and then you live life like the lost man out in the world. Don't deny Him that way. Don't say, I know Christ.

I've been saved by Christ. And then do the things that dishonor Him and are contrary to His name. Listen, this is the point of all of this.

Even if you have little power, even if you have little influence, little gift, can you not speak of Christ? You know, Peter talks somewhere about us being a royal priesthood. And the thing is, all of us are called to proclaim the excellencies of Christ. Here's the thing.

If my gift is small, is He any less excellent? No way! No matter how little my gift is, even if I can say, hey, there's 100 other guys right there that can speak more fluently and more powerfully about Christ to people than I can. So what? Is He any less beautiful or any less glorious because your gift is little? Certainly not. Is the cross any less necessary? Even if your gift is little, can you not be fully captivated by the cross where you come to recognize, oh, I'm broken.

I'm wretched. I'm helpless. I'm a miserable failure.

I'm a hopeless sinner. I can't do anything. And you see yourselves as just miserable failures in light of the fact that Christ, we are failures.

We're sinners. We are hell-deserving sinners. And you recognize we need the cross.

Isn't there something beautiful in His person? His sacrifice, His love, even if you stutter, even if you choke, even if your abilities are not real fluent. Some people are very dynamic in the way they speak. Some people articulate extremely well.

Some people just have the gift. But our realm of influence may be small. Our gift may be little, but there are no fewer glories to be found in Christ because that's the reality.

And even if you never have the gifts that take you to the mission field, can you not proclaim? See, that's what they did. He comes to them and He says, you guys are little in power, but you've not denied My name. I mean, they took advantage.

God gave them a mouth. God gave them tongues. And even though their gift may not have been like it was in other places, even if others do have greater gift and greater influence, you can still honor Christ's name just like they did.

Here's a third thing. This is big. We can be of little power and yet go through an open door.

And you see that here. Look at chapter 3. He talks to them about the fact in v. 7 that He has the key of David. He opens and no one will shut.

He shuts and no one opens. I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door which no one is able to shut.

Now think with me here. I don't care how weak you are. You can be an invalid.

You can be a little bitty child. Have you ever seen a little bitty child who's just learning to crawl? He can crawl through a door if the door's open. Now if that door's shut, he can't get through it.

He can't reach. He's of little power. He can't do it.

He doesn't have the ability himself. But if somebody comes along and they open the door, he can go through. And here's the thing that I would say.

What sort of doors does Christ open? Well, here's an interesting thing. All you've got to do is... I have the ability to search every place that this Word is found in the New Testament. And guess what I found? That every single place where a door is used in a spiritual sense, like it is here, a door that gets opened for access to something, every single time it's the same.

Listen, Acts 14.27. Don't turn there, but listen. When they arrived, this is specifically speaking about Paul and Barnabas. Paul and Barnabas had been on their first missionary journey.

They come back to Antioch. When they arrived, they gathered the church together. They declared all that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith among the Gentiles.

Again, 1 Corinthians 16. For a wide door for effective work has opened to me. And there are many adversaries.

2 Corinthians. When I came to Troas to preach the Gospel of Christ, a door was opened for me in the Lord. Colossians 4.3. At the same time, pray also for us that God may open to us a door for the Word to declare the mystery of Christ.

You know what? In every place, open doors in the New Testament are the same. They have to do with an open door to preach and see conversions. That's what an open door is.

It's this idea of the door opening for them to preach and there is faith as a result. Open doors to declare the mystery of Christ. And here's what I would say.

What better way to know if a door is open? It's like I picture ourselves this way. I picture us in a room that has doors all the way around it. And that's San Antonio.

That's the world. And we're in the middle of it. I think one of the best ways to know if a door is open is to go over and push on them.

Just push on the doors and see. Ah! You push on it. We may find, oh, that one's locked.

There are different things we strive to do as a church. We've got our brother Daniel Alcala. He's kind of pushing on that door up in the medical center, the Muslim community.

Ah! Is the door going to open? You know what will happen if it opens. We've been testing that door on the Ebenezer house. Is this an open door or is this not an open door? You see, if He opens a door, things happen.

Because you go through. If they're kind of open doors, there's liberty. There's faith as a result.

Things happen. There's an opportunity to proclaim the truth and there's fruit. And so this is the kind of thing.

And that's how we know if a door is open. And what does it matter if we have but little power? What does it matter if I hardly have any power? I can be old and decrepit, but if somebody else has the key, somebody else has the combination, and somebody else opens that door for me, then it's open. And this is the one who opens and no one can shut.

Now listen, if He opens a door for us, it doesn't matter how weak we are. And then there's this. We can be of little power and be loved by Christ.

Now, you see this in verse 9. Verse 9, "...Behold, I will make 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 before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you." Okay, love. Let's imagine the Lord's love for a second.

Okay, think with me here. What I want to look at first is Jacob's love. Jacob has a coat of many colors.

He says, Joseph, come forth. And he bestows it on him. There's 11 other brothers.

11 other brothers didn't get a coat of many colors. So, in this world, we look at that and we say, hmm, we are led to believe that father has a favorite. Right? Isn't that how it goes? I mean, I've got four children.

If I just suddenly feel very generous, and I give my three girls \$100 each, and then I go to Joshua and I give him \$1,000, do you think any thought would rise in their minds? Yes. That's what happens in this world. When a father does that in this world, it is seen as he's playing favorites, and he must love one more than the other.

That's how it happens. And you know what happens in the spiritual realm? We can tend to think exactly the same way. And it happens, and we need to correct our thinking here, because you can look over at somebody else and you can see they've got more than you, and you can feel like God must love them more than me.

Uh-uh. See, that's not... This little church, Jesus is saying, don't look at it that way, because I want you to recognize there is a day coming when I'm going to show how much I love you. What you get in this world is no measure of how much love He has for you.

It is not. Don't think that way. That is wrong thinking.

No indicator. This place here and now is the proving ground. This is where we're shown to be faithful or not with what we have.

There's no indication of His love for us. These little nobodies, little-powered Philadelphians, they're one day going to have the Jews fall down at their feet and be made known before all that Christ loved them. Now, here's the thing.

Here's the thing that you've got to recognize. This is fantastic. Maybe some of you know about this.

Maybe some of you have seen this. Maybe some of you have made this connection. But I have a feeling most of you have not.

And it took me studying the church in Smyrna a number of times before this actually was revealed. And I don't remember how it was revealed to me, but it's really a fantastic truth. This statement is not coming out of a vacuum.

Actually, the prophet Isaiah said... Now, if you know Isaiah, Isaiah 60 is a magnificent description of the church of Christ. It is the new Jerusalem. It is the true Israel.

It is a magnificent picture of that. And here's what's said. Isaiah 60.

Just listen to this. It's verse 14. Isaiah says, "...The sons of those who afflicted you shall come bending low to you, and all who despised you shall bow down at your feet.

They shall call you the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel." Now, if you look at that with Old Testament lenses, if you went to your typical Jew in the Old Testament and you said, who's that talking about? It's talking about Israel. And we're Israel. It's talking about us.

Who afflicted us? Well, the Philistines, the Edomites, the Moabites, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Egyptians. Ah, we see it here. It's the pagans, the Gentiles, the people that afflicted us.

They're going to come and bow down before us. Israel. We are the Zion.

And you know what happens in this little epistle to Philadelphia? The whole thing gets turned on its head. You see it for real? It's not the Jews who are being bowed down to. It's the Jews who are bowing down.

And it's these Gentile Philadelphians who are being bowed to. You see who the true Israel is here? Everything gets put right by Christ. This is fantastic.

If you're an overcomer here, you can come from pagan stock. You can be the most broken, desperate sinner. If you find your confidence in that cross of Christ and you look, you know yourself destitute.

You know yourself broken. You know yourself a miserable failure. But you cling to that.

You may be ever so weak in your weakness. You take all your weakness and your bankruptcy to Him. And you find you're all there.

These people are going to be bowed down to. These poor, pathetic folks. The day is going to come.

And listen, it says we're going to judge angels. You can imagine it. Angels.

Can you imagine the fallen angels? Can you imagine Israel? All those wicked kings in Israel? Wicked kings in Judah? They're going to be there bowing down. Can you imagine these poor, pathetic people? They're in Philadelphia and here in San Antonio. And you have angels.

You have kings. You have the people who prided themselves in being the people of God. And they're bowing.

And Christ owns us. It says He's going to declare our names to His Father. Father, these are Mine.

Well done, good and faithful servants. I gave you little. You had but little power, but you were faithful.

Well done. And now the whole universe is going to know how much I loved you. Don't think that because you didn't get a coat of many colors in this life, that I didn't love you.

And then there's this truth. We can be of little power and still hold fast our crown from being seized. And you see that in verse 11.

I'm coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. Now look, whatever little power these folks had, Jesus felt them strong enough to hold fast their crown.

And I think that's very interesting terminology. Because He doesn't say, don't lose your crown. He doesn't just simply say, don't let it fall off your head.

Don't neglect it. He says this, that no one may seize it. I mean, what kind of picture is that? That's a picture of you better stay on guard because somebody is moving and stalking and reaching and wants to take it.

What is it? Undoubtedly, it's the crown of life. It's the victory crown. Don't let anybody take it.

Don't let anybody seize it. Brethren, this is not a day for getting lazy. This is a day for doing what they did.

What did they do? They kept His Word. They honored His name. And they went through the open doors that He opened for them.

This is not a day to fall asleep. There are crown grabbers and crown stealers and crown seizures out there. Now look at the final promises and we're done.

The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Now the temple is always known as the place where God dwells. It's the place where His unique presence is.

That's what a temple is. And you know when you go further in Revelation, where is the dwelling place of God? The dwelling place of God is with man. We're no longer talking about buildings.

He says He will make us a column in the temple of His God. In fact, you read there at the later chapters, it actually says of this new Jerusalem that there is no temple. It says, I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.

And He says in verse 12, you shall never go out of it. That's perhaps one of the most precious promises of all given to the overcomer. Because what does this relate to? It relates to being where God dwells.

It relates to fellowship with Him. No separation, no broken communion. Never will you not see His face.

And then He says in verse 12, notice this, Jesus writes names, three distinct names on every overcomer. I will write on him the name of my God, the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which comes down from God out of heaven, and my own new name. Now I just think about a child writing his name on something.

Why does a child do that? Toy over there says Scott or Susie or Selah. What's with this? Well, they do it for ownership. Papa writes his name on the back of his phone on a piece of masking tape.

I don't know if he's done it on his new phone. Why do people do that? Ownership. I mean, think about it.

People in this world, they wear their favorite sports team emblem or name on their hat. Why do they do that? Identity? Union with? I mean, that's what happens. There's significance there.

And remember, when you go to the book of Revelation, do you know what the lost have written on their forehead? Do you know what's written on them? 666. There's so much significance. There's seven churches, seven lampstands, seven stars, seven angels, seven eyes, seven spirits of God.

You get this significance of seven. It keeps coming, it keeps coming, it keeps coming. And you know what happens? The lost in this world, do you know what they have written on them? Six.

And then take it to the second power. Another six. Another six.

It just keeps falling short. Falling short of seven. Falling short of perfection.

We've sinned and fall short of the glory of God. That's man to the third power. He's just a failure.

He falls short of this perfection. And yet, to those who overcome, the name of my God, the name of the city of my God. The city.

We know what Scripture says. It says, I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. You're a partaker.

That's what the name means. I belong there. It's kind of like you show a passport today.

When I pull out my passport, it's got United States of America. When I'm standing in line, oftentimes, you're going through customs, you see other people bring out their passports, and you say, I can tell, theirs is red and theirs is green. That means they're from somewhere else.

You see the guy with the blue one, and it's got that certain emblem on it. See, there's identity there. It's like we're going to have the passport of New Jerusalem.

It's permanent. It's good. And then he says this, I'm going to write my own new name.

Wow. You know what that means? Names in Scripture have meaning. When we're told that Christ is Emmanuel, guess what? That shows to us a characteristic of Christ.

He's God with us. Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins. He's called the branch.

He's called the stem. He's called the door. He's called the shepherd.

You think about all the things He's called. Divine. These all portray a reality.

He's the Good Shepherd. They all portray realities about who He is. And you know what He's saying? I'm going to write a new name on you, which means I'm going to reveal things to you about Me you never knew.

Don't think heaven is static. It is a place where we are going to have such glories revealed to us. A new characteristic, yet unrevealed aspects of the character of Christ that we have not come to know and we will know.

There's depths and there's treasures to span that we have not even conceived of to those who overcome. Be faithful. Let he who has an ear hear what the Spirit says for the churches.

Amen. Father, I pray, would You please help our sisters who gather together to pray now on Zoom, Lord, hear their prayers. I pray that You would use these words to good effect among the brethren.

I ask in the name of Christ, Amen.

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