

**Genesis 26: 19-25; "The Water is Ours", Sermon # 77 in the series -
"Beginnings", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on July 30th, 2006,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

We have seen how Isaac has sowed in the land and reaped a hundred fold for the hard labor that he and his servants put forth to obtain a rich harvest. We have seen that he worked hard at having good relations with the people of the land, but that there was a great dislike by the Philistines for the wells that Abraham had dug years before, the water that had sustained him during those days of his sojourning in the land. They stopped them up after he died. Isaac, it says, "dug again the wells of water which they had dug in the days of his father Abraham." And it says that "he called them by the names which his father had called them. I told you in the last sermon that these wells of water of Abraham's, that Isaac dug again, represent the spiritual water of life that is found by people today when they drink deeply of the Scriptures and the writings of the Reformers and Puritans on the doctrines of grace and the experience of that grace in our souls. They are the waters of revival that refresh and nourish the believer so that he can go on to do and to be all that God requires and expects him to be; one who lives his life bearing fruit to the glory of God.

But new wells of living water need to be dug in our days as well. There must be new wells dug as well as the old ones re-dug. It says that Isaac's servants also dug in the valley and found a well of running water there. Water is one of the essentials to sustain physical life, and certainly it is one of the essentials to sustain spiritual life as well. It is no wonder that we find men fighting over it in this passage. It is the most precious of substances to sustain life. The situation of the herdsmen of Gerrar fighting with Isaac over the wells of water that he dug is a good picture of what takes place in every generation with regard to disagreements between Christians and those who say that they are Christians, over who has the truth of the gospel which is the water of life. The true Christian digs for the truth and finds it, but those who want the benefits of salvation to be theirs on their own terms will insist that the wells are theirs when they are not. So this morning I want to ask the question, "How are Isaac and his servants different from the herdsmen of Gerrar in the way that they obtain the wells of water?" And we shall see that Isaac and his servants are different from the herdsmen of Gerrar in the following significant ways.

1st- Isaac and his servants dig in the valley and find the springing water, while all that the herdsmen of Gerrar can do is to argue over the possession of it. (Verses 19-21)

"Also Isaac's servants dug in the valley, and found a well of springing water there." Our New King James says, "running water." Several of the commentators that I read translate the original Hebrew, "a well of living water." Adam Clarke says that the original is, "Beer mayim chaiyim, a well of living waters." " This is the oriental phrase for a spring, and this is its meaning both in the Old and New Testaments." He says that, "We find that where it is used in the Scriptures, that it represents an unfailing spring which is an emblem of the graces and influences of the Spirit of God." We need to understand at this point that there is a tremendous difference between men of the world who may profess to be Christians, and those who are true Christians, in regard to this

living water. The difference is, that the true Christian has the Spirit of God, who is the personification of this living water. It says in Romans chapter 8, verse 9, "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you." "Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His." (He does not belong to Him.) He does not have this well of living water from which he can draw. Turn over to John chapter 4. Jesus was now making and baptizing more disciples than John, although it says in verse 2 that Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples. In verse 3 and following it says that "He left Judea and departed again to Galilee." "But He needed to go through Samaria." "So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph." "Now Jacob's well was there." "Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well." "It was about the sixth hour." "A woman of Samaria came to draw water." "Jesus said to her, 'Give Me a drink.'" "For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food." Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, 'How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?'" "For Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." "Jesus answered and said to her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.'" "The woman said to Him, 'Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep.'" "Where then do you get that living water?" "Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?" "Jesus answered and said to her, 'Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst.'" "But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

Will you notice several things with me from this amazing conversation? Jesus has a literal physical thirst, because He was a real man with a real human nature. He was hot and wearied and needed a drink. But all the while He has a greater purpose in his need to have His thirst be satisfied that will be accomplished in His bringing the gospel of His salvation to the Samaritan people that day. The way that he will do this is through this revealing conversation over a well and the kind of water that will be drawn. This well, before which Jesus sat, was Jacob's well. The Samaritan woman does not realize who Jesus is, she only knows that He is a Jew, and that she is a Samaritan. This is how it often is with people of this world, and with people who are trying to be Christians and are not. All that they can think about and all that they are able to see is the earthly physical needs that they and others have, and the earthly distinctions that men make among themselves. But this is not true Christianity until and unless the living water which Christ alone can give is given to the person whom Christ would save from their sins. It is the gift of God. This woman was asked by Christ for a drink from Jacob's well, and she could not understand why He, a Jew, would ask her, a Samaritan for a drink. He says, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." You see, Jesus Himself is the well of living water." But the woman does not yet understand. She still thinks that Jesus is speaking of the earthly stream of running water, springing in an earthly sense. But the Lord Jesus is interested in meeting the needs of both the body and the soul, whereas a worldly Christianity is only concerned with the physical and the temporary thirst being assuaged. She believes that knowing God is just a matter of upbringing and geography. She is going to find that it is much different. It is a matter of the heart thirsting for God. "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul

for You, O God." "My soul thirsts for the living God." (Psalm 42: 1) Jesus helps her to see the difference. He says, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I give to him will never thirst." "But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." Now that is true Christianity. And that is why people fight over these wells. A true Christian will dig to find these wells, these springs of living water, these truths of the water of life found in the gospel and found in the Words of Christ Himself. A true Christian is sustained and refreshed and filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit of Christ. He is given spiritual life not only in the initial sense of the Spirit's producing a change in his heart and life, but in the on-going sense in which spiritual life that is given is nourished, cultivated and sustained. A spiritual thirst is a thirst for eternal things, for the forgiveness of our sins and the power and ability to be a righteous person by the water of life that Christ will supply. The true Christian digs to find these wells.

The herdsmen of Gerrar will contend over the wells. The people who do not have the Spirit will contend with those who have dug the wells, for possession of them. People who do not have the Spirit, who do not dig for the water of life nevertheless would like to think that they possess it, that they have a right to the water of life without their seeing their sinfulness, their selfishness, their pride, their foolishness, their despising of the truth of their need of salvation. They want all the blessing and benefit of what true Christian's have and experience without their turning from their sin and without their being converted to Christ, and without reading and living according to the truth of the Bible. These herdsmen of Gerrar did not want to know the God who gave them the water. They simply wanted to have the rights to the wells because of their having taken possession of this land and feeling threatened by the promise given to Isaac that his descendants would one day inherit the land. They wanted control of their own land and this is how they thought that they could best stop Isaac's advance. Many people want to say that salvation and the blessings of eternal life are something which we deserve and have every right to, simply because we have been created by God. But they forget that sin has come between God and men and separated them from God, and that it is only by drinking from the well of eternal life which is found in Christ that it will come to pass. This is why Jesus in John 7: 37 on the last great day of the feast, He stood and cried out saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink." "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." "But this He said of the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." Jesus would be glorified after He died on the cross for our sins, by being raised from the dead and ascending up on high to the right hand of the Father, and then sending His Spirit to give believers the water of life. Will you not believe this day? Do not be like the herdsmen of Gerrar and believe that simply in having earthly water to be baptized in, that that will bring you eternal life. The herdsmen "quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, 'The water is ours.'" The living water of life is from God alone, through Christ alone. The waters of infant baptism will never save anyone. Do not quarrel over the gospel and the truth of the Bible; receive it from those who have come to know the truth of it. You need to have water, the living water which Christ alone can give.

2ndly- Isaac and his servants are different from the herdsmen of Gerrar in that they are willing to move in order to live in peace and drink from the wells that belong to them. (Verse 22)

"And Isaac moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. It is not a good thing to be always contending over the gospel and the water of life. The herdsmen of Gerrar quarreled with Isaac's servants over this well and so Isaac named it "Esek" which means contention. Isaac had his servants dig another well, but they quarreled over that one also. So he called the name of that well Sitnah which means enmity. So Isaac felt that it would be the better part of wisdom to move from there to stop the contention. A Christian is a peacemaker. "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God." We are to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints," as it says in Jude 3. But we are not to contend for the outward blessings of that faith with unbelievers. "The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." "Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace." In Proverbs 20, verse 3 it says, "It is honorable for a man to stop striving, since any fool can start a quarrel." It is honorable to stop, it doesn't do any good, it doesn't lead to bringing about a good result when a man quarrels. This Isaac knew because he had been taught by the grace of God. In Proverbs 17: 14 it says, "The beginning of strife is like releasing of water; therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts." This is the wrong kind of water to drink from, the water of contention, the waters of strife. Proverbs 18: 6 says, "A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calls for blows." "A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul." Isaac knew better than to engage in this kind of contention. It is a lesson that every Christian must learn at one time or another in his life. It is better learned early than late to learn to overcome evil with good and to leave off striving. He was like the man who wrote Psalm 120 where it says, "Woe is me, that I dwell in Meshech, that I dwell in among the tents of Kedar!" "My soul has dwelt too long with one who hates peace." "I am for peace; but when I speak they are for war."

Isaac will move and in his moving he will find peace. I like what it says in our text in verse 22. "And he moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it." (The contention ceased.) "So he called its name Rehoboth, because he said, 'For now the Lord has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.' Rehoboth in the original Hebrew means, "Spaciousness." This is what the Lord will do for his people who are willing to cease striving with others. It says in Psalm 18: 16, "He sent from above, He took me; He drew me out of many waters." "He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me, for they were too strong for me." "They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the Lord was my support." "He also brought me out into a broad place; He delivered me because he delighted in me." This certainly is a good thing, to have the blessing of the Lord upon us to bring us into a broad place, a spacious place in which we will have peace.

3rdly- Isaac and his servants differ from worldly men in that they link the digging of their wells with God's worship. (Verses 23-25)

It says in verse 23, "Then Isaac went up from there to Beersheba." "And the Lord appeared to him the same night and said, I am the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I am with you." "I will bless you and multiply your descendants for My servant Abraham's sake." "So he built an altar there and called on the name of the Lord, and he pitched his tent there; and there Isaac's servants dug a well." Isaac was troubled by men but He was comforted by God. Truly He is the Father of Mercies and the God of all Comfort. Worldly men do not know this kind of comfort, the comfort of having God

draw near to them to give them peace, and renew His promises to them. They do not understand what a great a privilege it is for God to draw near to us and to show us that to worship Him and to be saved from our sins by Him and to be helped by Him in everything that we do, is the greatest of gifts. God comes to Isaac and delivers him from all his fears. What is it that you and I should do when God blesses us in such a way? It is to do what Isaac did. He worshipped God. "He built an altar there and called upon the name of the Lord." Building an altar was an act of worship in that day. In our New Testament days you do not find true Christians who understand their Bibles building literal physical altars. We have another altar that we build and place our sacrifices on. It is our relationship with Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus and His work on the cross is our altar. Hebrews chapter 13, verse 10 says, "We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat." "For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp." "Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate." "Therefore let us go forth to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach." "For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come." "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name." This was what Isaac was doing in an Old Testament sense. He worshipped God, He called on the name of the Lord, and He pitched his tent there in the place where God revealed Himself to Him for the last time in his life upon the earth. And then it says, "And there Isaac's servants dug a well." Isaac knew that in all the places that he had lived he needed water. And he knew that it was because of his relationship with his God that he was so well provided for. This was the reason that he had been able to find a river of living water. God would have it to be so. And He will have it to be so in a spiritual sense as well for all those who have been born again by the Spirit of God, for all those who thirst for the living God. They will find Him through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Revelation 3: 7-9; "I have set before you an Open Door", Sermon # 24 in the series - "The Faithful and True Witness", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on July 23rd, 2006 in the Afternoon Worship Service.

As we begin our study of Christ's message to this church, let us consider first the fact that there is no word of rebuke or reproof given to them about sins that they were committing or false doctrines that they were tolerating; they were a church which the Lord Jesus was pleased with. I am sure that this does not mean that that they were sinless. Rather it means that they were walking blamelessly before Him. They had kept His Word. We should understand that not all churches are alike in the sight of our great God and Savior. Some churches and believers are more pleasing to Him than others. I did not say that some are more acceptable than others for that would do violence to the doctrine of justification by faith alone on the basis of Christ's finished work. Each one who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is accepted in the beloved, none more accepted than another. But there are some believers who are more pleasing to God in their walk with Him than others are. We are not in competition with each other in this matter, rather we each ought to be conscious of God's holiness, and to study to learn what is pleasing to the Lord and when we do this we will find that the Lord will reward our faithfulness. Then being united in our desire for holiness we can together find the blessing of our text. The message to the church in Philadelphia shows us that the Lord Jesus had determined to reward his faithful church with an open door of success for preaching the gospel. This afternoon I want to open up this truth so that we will appreciate it and so that we will live in such a way that the Lord will know that we are seeking the same blessing in our own church here in Tama. What does it mean when the Lord Jesus says that He will open a door for the church of Philadelphia, a door that no man can shut? I think that we can find 2 answers to that question.

1st- It means Christ's showing them the key to the door, which is His own ability to promote them to this blessing. (Verse 7)

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, "These things says He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts, and no one opens: I know your works." There are some blessings which the Lord Jesus takes his time bestowing because he knows that it is for our good that we be rewarded for faithfulness. These are blessings which are related to our faithfulness here in the ministry and in serving in the church. He says, "I know your works." I know what you have done or have not done. I know what your desires are and what they are not. But He wants to remind the church of Philadelphia of the purpose for which they have been called, and that is that they might be conformed to His own blessed image. He says to them, "He who is holy, He who is true," before he ever tells them what He thinks or what He intends to do for them. He, of course, is referring to Himself. He wants to show them that from His standpoint, that everything that He does for them and in them and with them by His grace is based upon his holiness. Everything that He would do for them would be based upon His being holy and true as well. He had to be holy in order to become the sinless sacrifice for the sins of His people. It was a holy purchase that He made there on the cross for us His people. And now that He is raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of the Father, He continues the Risen, Living, Holy One of Israel. His judgment is pure and perfect and true. He is the "Genuine One." This is

what the Greek word in the original which is translated "true" means in this place. Lenski says, "The Genuine One" is an independent designation (from His being holy) and includes all that our Lord is: in all that He is, He is genuine, in nothing is there mere empty claim or pretense." This reminds me of the verses in 2 Corinthians 1: 18-20 where it says, "But as God is faithful, our word to you was not Yes and No." "For the Son of God Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us- by me, Silvanus, and Timothy- was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes." "For all the promises of God in Him are Yes and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us." His faithfulness to do what is good and right in the providential blessing of His people is always based in the primary sense upon Himself and not upon us. "For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him." "If we endure, we shall also reign with Him." "If we deny Him, He also will deny us." "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself." That is the way the Lord Jesus is; He remains faithful, ever faithful in every situation.

And He also has all the power necessary to mediate every single blessing necessary to establish His church in righteousness and to open doors for them to reward them for their faithfulness. "He has the Key of David it says in verse 7. Turn with me to Isaiah 22: 20-24 and we find the verses from which this phrase was taken. God through the prophet Isaiah is reproving a scribe named Shebna who had used his position of wealth and influence to hew out a sepulcher high in the rocks so that he would be remembered for a long time after he died. In verse 17 God says, "Indeed the Lord will throw you away violently and toss you like a ball in to a large country; there you shall die, and there your glorious chariots shall be the shame of your master's house." "So I will drive you out of your office." "And from your position he will pull you down." God is shutting the door on Shebna. And then he says this about his replacement. "Then it shall be in that day, that I will call My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah; I will clothe him with your robe and strengthen him with your belt; I will commit your responsibility into his hand." "He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah." "The house of David I will lay on his shoulder; so he shall open, and no one shall shut; and he shall shut, and no one shall open." "I will fasten him as a peg in a secure place, and he will become a glorious throne to his father's house." "They will hang on him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the posterity, all vessels of small quantity, from the cups to all the pitchers." Now this is speaking of what the Lord would do to an unfaithful scribe; Shebna, taking his responsibility and privileged position away from him and giving it to someone who had been faithful; Eliakim." But the Lord Jesus is applying this phrase, the Key of David to Himself. He is the One who has the key, the authority and the power to grant to the faithful in Philadelphia an open door which no one can shut. The Key upon the shoulder of Eliakim signified that he had complete access to the temple and was given the great privilege to be able to open all the doors to who would enter the temple and participate in the worship and who would be shut out if they were not worthy. He is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ who does the same for the New Testament church in an absolute way. All the glory of His Father's house has been hung upon Him. He has become a glorious throne to His Father's house. All power and authority in heaven and earth has been given to Him. All the offspring and posterity, all vessels of small quantity from the cups to all the pitchers are found hanging on Him. That is everyone who will believe in Him for eternal life. Some Christians are cups in their ability to serve Christ in His house, the church, and some are pitchers who pour forth in their service to accomplish much in terms of His kingdom. The Lord Jesus

has the Key to success in service and the ability to promote them to this blessing. Oh, the importance of faithfulness in regard to service. 2 Timothy 2: 20 says, "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor, and some for dishonor." "Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work." The church of Philadelphia had done this and now the time of the reward was coming.

2ndly- When the Lord Jesus says to this church that He has set before them an open door, He means that He will set before them providentially ordered opportunities to preach the gospel and to see success in them. (Verse 8)

"See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My Word, and have not denied My name." This is certainly not a privilege and blessing given to every church or every individual minister, but a blessing only given to some who it has been determined by Christ that they can handle rightly handle it after He has studied their obedience and tested them as to their character and their works. I would like to turn you to a few passages of Scripture to show you this. Let's look at Colossians 4: 2 and 3 first. "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak." This truly is a very revealing passage. It shows us that we ought to pray for the opening of a door for ministers of the gospel and for the church itself to "speak the mystery of Christ." It shows us that God Himself is the only one who can make His word effectual by the power of His Spirit working in and through a preacher and people to whom the Lord grants providential openings for, through bring them into contact with unbelievers whose hearts are being prepared by His Spirit. He leads both the preacher and those with him to the people, or he brings the people to the preacher, or both. But the opening of a door is a marvelous thing. Paul wasn't at all against asking for a prayer to be opened for him even while he was in prison and in chains. And in the book of Philippians 1: 12 he says, "But I want you to know brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ." Even in prison a door was opened for him.

Let's see how doors opened for Paul in his ministry. Turn to 1 Corinthians 16: 5- 9 with me. Paul wants to come to see the Corinthians and tells them he will "if the Lord permits." He says this. "Now I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia (for I am passing through Macedonia)." "And it may be that I will remain or even spend the winter with you, that you may send me on my journey, wherever I go." "For I do not wish to see you now on the way; but I hope to stay a while with you, if the Lord permits." "But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost." "For a great and effectual door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries." And if we turn over to Acts 16 we will be able to see how the door in Macedonia opened to Paul. Acts 16: 6 says, "Now when they gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. "After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them." This was the Lord shutting a door, at least for a time it was not his will that the door for the gospel be opened in those places. We know that it was later in Asia for all these churches in the book of the Revelation were in Asia. "So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas." And a vision appeared to Paul in the

night" "A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.'" This was Christ showing Paul the door and the turning of the key in the lock was not far off. "Setting sail from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony." "And we were staying in that city for some days." Now see how the door is opened for them by the Lord. "And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there." "Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us." "She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God." "The Lord opened her heart to heed (respond to) the things spoken by Paul." "And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.'" So she persuaded us." This is how the Lord opened the door. This was the beachhead established for the gospel in that place. He led Paul and those with him to the place he would have them to preach and then He in His providential ordering of events brings them to a prayer meeting where only women were attending that day. And then He opened Lydia's heart to respond. Whenever and wherever the Lord opens a door, He is also intending to open hearts. The conversion of this woman was the opening of a great door for Paul. Let us learn to see things rightly. The conversion of women and children and households of people is a great door and effectual opening up. This is the kind of thing that we need to take notice of and to pray for and to expect if the Lord judges us faithful. We will be having a vacation bible school in a week and let us pray for this kind of a door to open. We saw it open a crack last year. Let us pray that it will be set wide open this year. Next week we will look at the adversaries that Philadelphia faced and how the Lord would work powerfully to show those who thought that they were the true Jews but were not, just how wrong they were in their understanding. We will see that the Lord is more powerful by far than all of our adversaries and His. Let us learn from this to hold fast Christ's word and keep it and be faithful. When we do so we will find that He will do great saving works in the lives of many people and He will give us success in our labors in accordance with our faithfulness to His word. May we expect great things from Him and attempt great things for Him.

Revelation 3: 9, 10; "And to know that I have loved you.", Sermon # 25 in the series - "The Faithful and True Witness", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on July 30th, 2006 in the Afternoon Worship Service.

As Christians we do not always understand the greatness of the love of Jesus Christ toward His people or how He shows that love to us. We know that the Lord Jesus laid down His life for those who believe in Him. We remember His sacrificial dying love at the cross, and it is right that we should. The agonies that He suffered there are also the basis of the kind of love that He shows to His people when they are struggling to try to glorify Him by a sincere obedience to His commands, when they are trying to advance His kingdom by being faithful to bear witness to the truth. We should understand that there is no way that we could even begin to do this without our Lord having accomplished redemption. But when we as a church have begun to see progress in our sanctification by "keeping Christ's Word and not denying His Name," He will come and "open a door that no one can shut." Certainly this does not mean that persecution will necessarily cease or that there will not be great opposition by many adversaries that would like to see the work fail. But rather it means that that church will come to know His love for them by His powerfully sustaining them through all of the difficulties of that work. And they will see success in the proclamation of the word in accordance with the purposes and plans that He has for the spread of His gospel and the expansion of His kingdom. He will come and communicate His love to a faithful church by powerfully using the ability that He has to subdue all things to Himself; to bless them and help them and reward them in the times of their greatest difficulties. So we want to ask, "What does the Lord Jesus do to communicate His love to His faithful churches?" I believe that we can see from this text that He does so in these 3 powerful and meaningful ways.

1st- He will make their enemies to come and worship before them. (Verse 9)

It says, "Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie - indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you." Now this is a hard phrase to interpret. And the reason ought to be obvious. For no true Christian will ever allow any man to come and "worship before their feet." Worship given to a man belongs to Christ alone because He alone is sinless; He alone is worthy, and He alone is the God-man. We are but men no matter how great we may be, no matter how great we may become, and so the worship of the saints is blasphemous. You will find a good example of a righteous response from the Apostle Peter to man-worship in Acts chapter 10. The Lord had given Peter a vision of how He was opening a door for the gospel to flourish among the Gentiles and so He sent Peter to Caesarea to the house of Cornelius the centurion. It says in verse 24, "And the following day they entered Caesarea." "Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends." "As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him." "But Peter lifted him up, saying 'Stand up; I myself am also a man.'" As for their worship, Peter is going to direct Cornelius and his household to Christ and to God. Worship belongs to God alone. But let me show you where this language is found elsewhere in the Scriptures and perhaps we can make sense of it. In Isaiah chapter 60 we find language similar to this. Speaking in the context of the latter day glory of the church when many of the Jews shall be

converted to Christ and brought into the church, it says in verses 13 and 14, "The glory of Lebanon shall come to you, the cypress, the pine, and the box tree together, to beautify the place of My sanctuary; and I will make the place of My feet glorious." "Also the sons of those who afflicted you shall come bowing to you, and all those who despised you shall fall prostrate at the soles of the your feet; and they shall call you the City of the Lord, Zion of the Holy One of Israel." "Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, so that no one went through you, I will make you an eternal excellence, a joy of many generations." "You shall drink the milk of the Gentiles, and milk the breast of kings; you shall know that I the Lord, am your Savior and your Redeemer the Mighty One of Jacob." We need to note that in matters of prophecy that verses like these, although they may have one specific and great fulfillment in the time of the millennium, that there can be and are fulfillments by way of spiritual principles and applications made to every generation in the church. In other words, both the A-Millennial and Post-Millennial as systems of interpretation have aspects of truth in their systems of eschatology that every Christian should be able to embrace. I hesitate to include the pre-millennial dispensational system because of their wooden literal interpretation of prophecy. It does not allow Biblical prophecy to have its God-intended scope of application that is needed to minister to every generation. Neither does it allow for the Jews to come to their intended place in the Church itself, either now or in the later day of Church history. Here in these verses we see that the light of Christ will come to the Jews. It will come to them as it says in verse 1 of the chapter. Christ's glory will rise upon them, and the nations, the Gentiles will come to their light, and kings to the brightness of their rising. In verses 14-16 it is apparent that those who will have afflicted and persecuted the Jews of that day "shall come bowing to them, and all those who despised them shall fall prostrate at their feet." I believe that this means that their enemies will be forced to acknowledge that the God who had shown mercy to them in saving them and giving them gospel light, is the true and living God and His worship is the only true worship. The power of what Christ shall do for the Jews in that day will be so great that those who despised them will be forced to acknowledge that "God has been with them of a truth." It is not that they are worshipping the Jews of that day, it is that they are acknowledging God, and in some cases coming to be true worshippers of the living God through their having been brought to Jesus Christ and having been shown the greatness of His power put forth on their behalf. He will have "opened a door which no man can shut."

Here in our text in Revelation a very similar thing happens on a smaller scale. A persecuted church which has a little strength is able to so bear witness to the truth of the gospel that their persecuting enemies are forced to come to terms with it. Some are truly converted and become worshippers of God through Jesus Christ and others acknowledge the truth that these in the church of Philadelphia are being powerfully supported by the grace of Christ. They recognize Christ by a feigned submission to Him. Psalm 66: 3 shows us this truth. It says, "Make a joyful shout to God, all the earth!" "Sing out the honor of His name; make His praise glorious." "Say to God, 'How awesome are Your works!'" "Through the greatness of Your power Your enemies shall submit themselves to You(they shall yield feigned obedience to You)." "All the earth shall worship You and sing praises to You; they shall sing praises to Your name." This can take place, as I have said at any time during the church age, the greatest application of it will take place in the Millennium. This ought always to give Christ's people in every

generation until the end of the world great hope, and show them the greatness of His love. Christ has all power in heaven and earth and He can and will at times show His love in this way. Will we not look for it? Those who are now a synagogue of Satan can be brought by the greatness of Christ's power to be saved and come and worship with us. And if not, at least they will be forced to acknowledge that our God is the true God before Whom they will bow and submit, even if it is a feigned submission, because they see how powerfully He acts to preserve, sustain and keep His people.

2ndly - The Lord Jesus communicates His love to His faithful churches in a powerful way, in that He will keep them from the hour of trial which comes upon the whole earth. (Verse 10)

"Because you have kept My command to persevere(Or - because you have kept the word of My patience), I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth." The Word of Christ's patience is the truth of the gospel itself and the patience that following Christ's Word in humility requires if we are to be faithful to Him. It is expected of the true believer by his Master that he will persevere in holding fast the truth of the gospel, and that he will still hold forth the Word in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. When he does so, then in His doing so, Christ keeps the believer from being overcome by his own temptation to cave in to the pressures that he feels to give up and leave off following Christ. They are "kept by his power," as Peter says in 1st Peter 1: 5, "through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time, through now for a little while," he says, "if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ." This is what I believe that it means when it says in our text that "Christ will keep them from the hour of trial." It is again another phrase which is perplexing to us if we simply take it in the sense of one ultimate fulfillment in the future. No, Christ is speaking to the church in Philadelphia in the 1st place, and then by way of application of the principle to every faithful church in every generation until the end of the age. It is not that the Lord is saying that a faithful church will escape tribulation. It is that if they are faithful that the Lord will keep them from the hour of testing, the hour of temptation to apostatize, that other people who compromise with sin will fall prey to. "Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil," is our Christ-commanded prayer. The people that fall prey to this deception of the hour of temptation are named here, "the whole world." In 1st John 5: 19 John says, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one." This is the sense of the word, I believe, in this place as well. This is the kind of temptation that could take place at any point, and in any generation in church history. But Christ will keep the church who "holds fast the word of His patience." In 2 Thessalonians 2: 6 when Paul is speaking of the Antichrist, he says, "And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time." "For the mystery of lawlessness is at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way." "Then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming." "The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved." "And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that should believe the lie, that they all may be

condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Although these verses may have one climactic fulfillment in a final Pope or deceiver who will deceive the whole world, the unbelieving world outside of Christ; the principle of being deceived by "having pleasure in unrighteousness" deceives in the same final fatal sense in all generations. We need to see this. There is a mystery of iniquity that is already at work and whether it is in the Roman political system of emperors that kept the final great form of Antichrist from being revealed in the Papacy, or whether it is Christ's faithful people in churches like this one in Philadelphia facing opposition from Jews who were a synagogue of Satan; yet we know today that Christ's word is always true to every church in every generation being tested to see if they will hold fast. If this is their resolution, then Christ will keep them from apostasy. We are living in a day where the errors of Roman Catholicism and the errors of false Judaism are still prevalent. We, in the churches of Jesus Christ also face the errors of those who say that they are Christians and yet they are not. Rather they are "synagogues of Satan" if they deny His Word as being infallible and inerrant, if they preach salvation by ceremonial works and sacraments. We must have the grace of Christ to persevere. We must hear the word behind us saying, "This is the path, walk in it." We must come to know the love of Christ which will keep us in the hour of trial which will come upon the whole world.

3rdly - The Lord Jesus communicates his love to the church in Philadelphia by telling them of the blessings that they may look forward to in this life and the next.

(Verses 11-13)

"Behold, I am coming quickly!" "Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown." He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple(or the house) of my God, and he shall go out no more." " 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 out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name." And since there is so much truth to be found in these words I will rather save them until the next time that I speak to you on this text. Let me ask you in closing whether you have come to know this kind of love of Jesus Christ to your soul? It is not just an acknowledgment that you have come to believe in the gospel love of Jesus Christ. That is the greatest love, that He laid down His life for you, so that your sins could be forgiven and so that you could go to heaven. But I am asking you how much you have come to understand the love that flows from that greatest love, the love that so keeps you and preserves you so that even your enemies come to recognize that Christ loves you, and they come to worship Him because they have seen His grace support and keep you. This is something which must be proven by you before you ever come near to the hour of trial, otherwise how could Christ ever keep you? But indeed he will keep you and indeed you will prove it to yourself if even you have a "little strength and have not denied His word."