



Sermon Series Notes

“A Door of Opportunity” (Rev.3:7-13)

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Read the text.

The church of Smyrna and the church of Philadelphia are the only two churches in these seven letters that Jesus had no rebuke for.

This ancient city of Philadelphia was founded in 189 B.C. by a man named Eumanes II. When he died, he was succeeded by his brother, Attalus II. Attalus talked about his brother constantly. He named buildings after him. He even minted coins with his brother’s image on them. Attalus loved his brother. And so people began to call the city “Philo-delphia,” the city of brotherly love. But a group of Jews akin to the Pharisees were not at all loving toward the Christians in Philadelphia. They were mockingly saying that even God didn’t love them, because if He did why would He let them suffer as they did. Whatever it was they were going through really took its toll on them – they were at a point now where they had “little strength” (little = mikros).

Jesus promises that He will one day make these mocking Jews fall at the feet of these Christians and acknowledge that he had indeed loved them. When would that happen? Some commentators suggest it would happen when they became Christians themselves, and they link this to the open door of opportunity. I’m not so sure that view is correct.

Rom.14: 11 It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'"

Phil.2: 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Despite their little strength, they had remained faithful. As a result of their faithfulness, Jesus promises to keep them from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world. This seems to refer to the time of The Great Tribulation. And of course these believers did not have to endure the Great Tribulation, because they are now with the Lord.

On the surface v.11 sounds like Jesus is telling them to do nothing, to just “hang on” until Jesus comes. But to “hold on” is not to do nothing. The Greek word is krateo, and it means “to take hold of, to seize.” It’s the word in Matt.9:25 for Jesus taking the hand of the young girl who was dead and raising her to life. It’s used in Matt.12:11 when Jesus talked about pulling a sheep out of pit.

So the overcomer of v.12 is one who holds on to what they have, who seizes something. What were they to seize? I'm placing all my bets on the open door Jesus has placed before them. As they had been faithful, despite their little strength, continue to be faithful, & seize the opportunity of the open door of ministry.

Luke 19: 13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. To "occupy" = 4231. pragmateuomai, prag-mat-yoo'-om-ahee; from G4229; to busy oneself with, i.e. to trade:--occupy.

Reward For The Overcomer (v.12):

* A crown; What is this crown? See I Thess.2:19-20; Could it be that this crown included the fruit of this open door of ministry? I think that is very likely.

* Permanent place in the temple of God; Philadelphia was constantly threatened by earthquakes, and as a result, many people chose to live outside the city limits. There was an earthquake in A.D. 17 that leveled Sardis, and did great damage to Philadelphia. Often the only parts of the city left standing after a quake would be the huge stone pillars.

* A position of honor; Faithful servants of a city were sometimes honored by having their name placed on a pillar, much like we put names on buildings today. Here, the idea is that we are the pillar, and God places the name of the city, his name, and the new name of Jesus Christ upon us. All this implies ownership & honor.

* A new name for God suggests the idea of learning things about Him that we never have learned in this life. We will know him in a whole new way! I Cor.13: 12 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

No rebuke, commendation for faithfulness, and tremendous promises for this church. And while they were no doubt encouraged by all this, I'm not sure they were jumping for joy to hear about the open door Jesus had placed before them. I mean, come on, they are tired (they have "mikros" strength). It appears to me they weren't looking for an open door, they weren't asking for an open door.

If I understand the last part of verse 11 correctly in the context here, it seems that if they do not accept the open door opportunity, Jesus will get someone else to do the job, and they will lose the crown that could have been theirs. See II John 8; Esther 4:14.

We should pray for open doors

- Col.4: 3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.

While we should pray for open doors, there are times when God opens a door of opportunity without us praying for it. There are times God opens a door and we don't really want the open door he has placed before us (Esther for example).

Moses was not looking for an open door when God came to him in the burning bush. Forty years earlier Moses had failed miserably. Acts 7:25 tells us that Moses knew God wanted to use him to rescue the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt, but he went about it all wrong. He killed an Egyptian who was mistreating an Israelite, and as a result left Egypt and went to the land of Midian. There he married and settled down, working as a shepherd for his father-in-law. Forty years later God shows up and offers

Moses an open door for ministry, the same ministry Moses had failed at 40 years before. You might think Moses jumped at the opportunity, but that's not at all what happened. See Exodus 3:1-12a, 13-14 (summarize vv.15-22); 4:1-9, 10; Acts 7:22 Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and in action; Ex.4:11-12, 13.

Open doors can come at any stage or any age in life.

- God called Samuel when he was a young lad; God re-called Moses at 80 years old; Caleb was still looking for ministry opportunities at age 85! See Joshua 14:10-12.

We have no record of what decision this church made regarding the open door. Did they go through it, or did they pass and lose their crown?

Let's remember now, they had "mikros" strength.

The Positive Side of Having Little Strength

- II Cor.12: 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

The Negative Side of Having Little Strength

- The temptation to not go through the open door
- The temptation to quit, even after going through the open door

What was it that had sapped their strength?

I grew up on Larkfield Circle. Buddy Shumake was one of my neighbors. He coached little league baseball for many years. I played baseball with his two sons in the neighborhood many times. Brooks Shumake ended up pitching for Clemson University, then signed with the Tampa Tarpons (Cincinnati Reds semi-pro team). Unfortunately, Brooks never made it to the majors. Todd played high school ball, then after graduation worked as a welder. One day after work Todd walked into a fast food store in Florence S.C. to get a few things, and before he could pay for his items, fell dead on the floor from an aneurism in his brain. I'll never forget talking to Buddy Shumake not long after Todd's death. He said, "I don't wanta do nothin!"

Ever been at a place in your Christian life where you just want to "hold on" 'til Jesus comes?

Heb. 12:2-3 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Open doors of opportunity from God do not usually come at convenient times.

- Convenient: Suited to personal comfort or easy performance.

With open doors comes opposition

- I Cor.16: 9 because a great door for effective work has opened to me, ***and there are many who oppose me.***

An open door can be walked through, and also walked out of.

- Gal.6: 9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest ***if we do not give up.***
- Acts 13, John Mark

Open doors are not usually BIG doors

- Zech. 4:10; Ezra 3:10-12; Haggai 2:2-5

CONCLUSION

Col.4:5...make the most of every opportunity.

C.T Studd:

“If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him.”

“Some want to live within the sound of church or chapel bell; I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell.”

“Two little lines I heard one day, Traveling along life’s busy way; Bringing conviction to my heart, And from my mind would not depart; Only one life, ’twill soon be past, Only what’s done for Christ will last. Only one life, yes only one, Soon will its fleeting hours be done; Then, in ‘that day’ my Lord to meet, And stand before His Judgement seat; Only one life, ’twill soon be past, Only what’s done for Christ will last. Only one life, the still small voice, Gently pleads for a better choice Bidding me selfish aims to leave, And to God’s holy will to cleave; Only one life, ’twill soon be past, Only what’s done for Christ will last. Only one life, a few brief years, Each with its burdens, hopes, and fears; Each with its clays I must fulfill, living for self or in His will; Only one life, ’twill soon be past, Only what’s done for Christ will last. When this bright world would tempt me sore, When Satan would a victory score; When self would seek to have its way, Then help me Lord with joy to say; Only one life, ’twill soon be past, Only what’s done for Christ will last. Give me Father, a purpose deep, In joy or sorrow Thy word to keep; Faithful and true what e’er the strife, Pleasing Thee in my daily life; Only one life, ’twill soon be past, Only what’s done for Christ will last. Oh let my love with fervor burn, And from the world now let me turn; Living for Thee, and Thee alone, Bringing Thee pleasure on Thy throne; Only one life, ’twill soon be past, Only what’s done for Christ will last. Only one life, yes only one, Now let me say, “Thy will be done”; And when at last I’ll hear the call, I know I’ll say “’twas worth it all”; Only one life, ’twill soon be past, Only what’s done for Christ will last. ” Only one life, ’twill soon be past, Only what’s done for Christ will last. And when I am dying, how happy I’ll be, If the lamp of my life has been burned out for Thee.”

“This is the first day of the rest of your life.”