



river west church

The Open Door
Revelation 3:7-13
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The sixth of the seven letters to the churches in the Book of Revelation, the letter to the church of Philadelphia, is all positive. What a relief! We have seen a lot of intensity in Revelation 2 – 3. This is because Jesus really cares about His church! He has an incredible purpose and a plan for His church and He wants the church to live up to its calling. He wants us to be His light shining in this world. So He affirms what is good, but He calls us out on what we are getting wrong. His words of correction are words of love and they are life giving. Still, it's nice to see a church where Jesus has nothing negative to say!

To the church that is getting it right, Jesus has a special word of encouragement. This word is spoken not just to the church at Philadelphia. Jesus wants each of His churches to hear this word. This message is designed to pull us forward in our relationship with Christ. We need to overhear these words of Christ and let them create a hunger in our hearts to walk more closely with Him.

At the center of the message to Philadelphia is the promise of an “open door.” This is the central focus of the message. There are two ways we can understand this promise – two possible meanings. It may be that John wants us to look at it from both angles, because both represent powerful truths of the Gospel.

Security

The church at Philadelphia was a small group with limited resources and tremendous opposition. Jesus knew they had “but little strength” (3:8). Jesus knew that there was a Jewish community in town that hated them and were doing everything they could to oppress them (3:9). The Christians at Philadelphia had good reason to feel insecure about their lives as followers of Christ and about their church and its future.

Jesus speaks into this situation words of confidence and security. Jesus is holy and true. Jesus has the key of David. Jesus opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens (3:7). Jesus says to them, “Behold, I put before you an open door which no one is able to shut” (3:8).

The open door is a picture of safety. The door is the door of salvation. The door is the door of acceptance with God. To enter through that door is to be in His presence, to belong to His family, to be absolutely secure in your relationship with God through Christ. As we study the passage, we will highlight the words and the images that speak of our absolute security in Jesus Christ.

Opportunity

There is a second way for us to understand the central theme – the door. The door can also be the door of opportunity. This echoes what Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 16:9, “A wide door of effective ministry has been opened for me.” This is a powerful word for the believers at Philadelphia and for us as well. They had only a little strength. They had much opposition. But the Lord wants them to know that in spite of these things they also have an open door of opportunity to impact this world for Christ! Jesus has opened a door that no one can shut. Because this is so, they are encouraged to press on in faith to see what Christ will do through their lives. As we study the passage, we will look at the door as a door of opportunity. We want to hear Christ's word of promise for our church as well. What are the opportunities that Christ is putting right in front of us? How will we respond? Will we walk through the door, or will we hold back?

One of the most powerful things we can do is see the connection between both ideas: security and opportunity. The truth is, the more convinced we are of our security IN Christ, the more likely we are to take the "risk" of pushing through the doors of opportunity that are before us FOR Christ, even when we feel weak or the challenge seems great. It is His power, promise, and faithfulness, not ours, which make the difference. This is the good word of Christ to His church through the letter to Philadelphia. May we have ears to hear!