

This afternoon we are going to be sharing about the message to the church of Sardis and Philadelphia from the book of Revelation. Our text is Revelation Chapter 3:1-13.

- There is an overwhelming theme regarding these churches...
- God is and “more so” **wants** to be part of the church... here and now!
- That sounds a bit generic and obvious. But take a look at the contrast regarding these two churches. The one church... Philadelphia is on target and the other church... Sardis is not. To the outsider who has read or heard those messages, one is the more ideal church... people are there! The other... a no go!
- Yet notice that God takes time to address both churches and shows equal care for both!
- I want to first look at what God is saying to the church of Philadelphia and then to the church of Sardis.

## Revelation Chapter 3:1-6...

1 "Write this letter to the angel of the church in Sardis. This is the message from the one who has the sevenfold Spirit of God and the seven stars: "I know all the things you do, and that you have a reputation for being alive—but you are dead.

2 Wake up! Strengthen what little remains, for even what is left is almost dead. I find that your actions do not meet the requirements of my God.

3 Go back to what you heard and believed at first; hold to it firmly. Repent and turn to me again. If you don't wake up, I will come to you suddenly, as unexpected as a thief.

4 "Yet there are some in the church in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes with evil. They will walk with me in white, for they are worthy.

5 All who are victorious will be clothed in white. I will never erase their names from the Book of Life, but I will announce before my Father and his angels that they are mine.

6 "Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.

## Revelation Chapter 3:7-13...

7 "Write this letter to the angel of the church in Philadelphia.  
This is the message from the one who is holy and true,  
the one who has the key of David.  
What he opens, no one can close;  
and what he closes, no one can open:

8 "I know all the things you do, and I have opened a door for you that no one  
can close. You have little strength, yet you obeyed my word and did not deny  
me.

## Revelation Chapter 3:7-13 (continued)...

9 Look, I will force those who belong to Satan's synagogue—those liars who say they are Jews but are not—to come and bow down at your feet. They will acknowledge that you are the ones I love.

10 "Because you have obeyed my command to persevere, I will protect you from the great time of testing that will come upon the whole world to test those who belong to this world.

11 I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your crown.

12 All who are victorious will become pillars in the Temple of my God, and they will never have to leave it. And I will write on them the name of my God, and they will be citizens in the city of my God—the new Jerusalem that comes down from heaven from my God. And I will also write on them my new name.

13 "Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.

As a backdrop, God immediately reveals three things about Himself in the message to the church of Philadelphia...

1. God addresses who He is...
  - the one who is Holy and True.
  - who has the keys.
  - the one who opens and no one closes.
2. God is part of the here and now... note in verse 8, He is aware of what we do... in the Kingdom.
3. God opens doors... for us.

This afternoon I want to spend some time and unpack this "open door" God is speaking about. Let's look at verse 8.

Now, recall it is God who say's to this church...

"I set before you an open door."

What is an "open door"?

An "open door" is a metaphor for opportunity.

Let's takes a look at it in the Bible.

In 1 Corinthians 16:9, Paul telling the Corinthians, "In the meantime, I will be staying here at Ephesus until the Festival of Pentecost. There is a wide-open door for a great work here, although many oppose me."

The same metaphor is used in 2 Corinthians 2:12 "When I came to the city of Troas to preach the Good News of Christ, the Lord opened a door of opportunity for me."

Lastly, in Colossians 4:3, Paul writes, "...praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ,..."

This open door stands for the opportunity not only to be used by God, but more importantly to fulfill God's purposes in the earth. From Jesus' perspective and ours... to advance the "Kingdom of God".

Let's take a historical look at this "open door" regarding this church. Philadelphia was considered an insignificant town. The church itself was not popular or considerably well known by any means. The town itself was started to be kind of a missionary outpost for the Greek culture and language. Yet we read here... God has other plans to step into history to reach the whole area for Christ through this church.

But the greater question he asks when the door opens is... will you and I walk through it? Will you let me minister through you (corporately and personally)... to reach others in remarkable ways?"

So to a small congregation of ordinary Christians, notice what he says about them in verse 8 and 10, ... though you have little strength, you have been faithful... you have kept my word and persevere.

This is the exact reason God has set an open door before them.

But what do we notice here? A biblical pattern?

Let's take a look...

You see first we have faithfulness. Our faithfulness leads to number two... doors opening. The opening of doors through which we walk leads to number three... the fulfilling of God's will.

There is a process here... a biblical pattern, which we are going to look at later from two stories in the bible..., but not a guarantee in terms of a formula, method or technique.

Faithfulness



Opportunities

(door[s])



Fulfilling

(God's will)



The big picture... our faithfulness makes room for opportunity... in Proverbs 18:16, it reads, "A man's gift makes room for him and brings him before great men" (NASB).

This is what the Lord was conveying to the church at Philadelphia and it applies to all of us as the church who are faithful to the things of God.

Let's look at it in a practical way from two examples in the bible. First, Acts 3:1-6.

Peter and John were going up to the temple to pray during the three o' clock prayer service.

A lame man was carried to the gate of the temple each day to beg from the people as they were entering the temple.

Remember, prayer and the ministry of the word was a high priority to the disciples (Acts 6:4).

I believe... Peter and John passed by this man everyday as they went to pray.

But on one day a door opens. But notice beforehand they are faithful... praying, seeking the heart of God... "God I want you to minister and heal the sick... we pray for the moving of your Spirit".

In summary, their faithfulness leads to a door. They take the step and walk through the door... listen to Peter, "what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!

With a leap he stood upright and began to walk..." Look at what we see... the faithfulness, the open door, and finally, as a result they fulfill the will of God!

A few verses down we read in Acts 3:12, "Peter saw his opportunity and addressed the crowd". Notice this was another door (due to the healing of the lame man)... and many became believers with the total being about 5000 excluding women and children.

When people trust God and walk through an open door, the power of God is set in motion and things beyond our ability begin to happen.

This is the in-breaking of the Kingdom of God. God is stepping into this side of heaven in a very manifest way and taking over (Heb 6:5).

Certainly God does not force such doors upon us. However, when we walk through that door, again... the power of God is unleashed and begins to manifest.

The entire bible is full of such stories of faithfulness and before we mention our second example,... let's have...

a balanced biblical understanding of faithfulness.

Too often we make an association or correlation and somehow connect faithfulness to perfection or some type of super servant of God. No, Super Servant will not save the day because of his or her perfection... otherwise we would not need Christ!

For a moment, let's look at Abraham regarding a biblical understanding of faithfulness.

Recall that in the very beginning God told Abraham to leave his country, family and relatives to go to another land. Yet he took his relative Lot with him! Maybe Abraham would not have encountered some of the difficulties he faced... had he not asked Lot to join him... including a difficult situation with Lot himself... later on.

Also, keep in mind... Abraham did not convey the complete truth in two different situations (not that we should do the same of course)... telling Pharaoh and King Abimelech that his wife Sarah was his sister (12:13; 20:2). He struggled with the fear of losing his life!

In summary, faithfulness is not some super perfect Christian. Faithfulness is the life long journey of continuing in the purposes of God... no matter what mistakes we may or may not make and though at times things do not go so well!

That is why this is... "all a God thing"... putting our trust or better yet casting our trust on God's faithfulness.

Remember, even Paul mentioned "... the life which I now live... I live by faith in the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20). Paul's faith is found in God's faithfulness.

Certainly, we do our part. ... just simply by cooperating with God.

... a joint venture if you will!



Our second example, is found in Genesis 24.

Abraham is old at this time and it's time for his son Isaac to be (hitched) married. The situation is very real! The whole future of Israel rests on this decision.

The question is how is Abraham going to find a wife for his son? Think about it! There were no computer dating services, no single get together's as we know it. There were no newspapers in which to write personal ads... "Attractive nomad with excellent prospect searching for female who likes to travel."

As you may know, the custom in those days was for a parent to arrange the marriage for their children. And Abraham basically follows the same format, but sends his most trusted servant Eliezer due to his age.

This guy Eliezer was in charge of all that Abraham had. You gotta understand, Abraham was a wealthy man. So, Eliezer was his like own personal manager.

And I guess Abraham thought... hey he manages my bank accounts, my properties, my servants, my cattle transactions... "why not let him transact a bride?" Or maybe he figured... well if Isaac doesn't like her, I tell him Eliezer picked her out.

Anyway... he says, Hey bro come here, "Put your hand under my thigh". I know... today we would be like, say what". But by putting a hand under the thigh, it was just another way to close a deal in those days. Obviously, today we just sign a contract or shake hands!

Abraham says, " Swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and earth, that you will not allow my son to marry one of these local Canaanite women. Go instead to my homeland, to my relatives, and find a wife there for my son Isaac." (Gen 24:3,4).

"Then he (Eliezer) loaded ten of Abraham's camels with all kinds of expensive gifts from his master." He winds up going to the city of Nahor where Abraham's brother lived. When he gets there, he kneels down by a well and he prays, "God give me success.

When the young women come to the well, I'm going to ask one of them, 'Would you give me something to drink?' Let one say, 'I will get a drink for you and water your camels as well.' And let that be a sign, God."

Before he had finished praying, he saw a young woman named Rebekah coming out with her water jug on her shoulder. Then he asks her for some water.

So, she gets him water to drink and then she says, "I will draw for your camels too until they have finished drinking. Here is the killer of this story: One thirsty camel could drink 30 gallons of water. There were ten camels! Think about it, this one person drawing water from the well. This is a serious woman!

After she finishes, the servant Eliezer goes with her to meet her family and basically, tells them, "I know this is strange, but this is a call of God (a door) to be a part of an amazing adventure."

Rebekah's family shares their heart with her, but in the end they ask her, "Are you willing to go?"

Think about this! The door is there, but she has no idea what this guy looks like or what kind of person he is. Her destiny hangs in the balance! Yet she says, "bye to her family, friends, and relatives to go who knows where".

But look at the results... fulfilling God's will. Rebekah will be regarded as the mother of a nation, the ancestor of the Messiah. And her name will be remembered and celebrated throughout all history... once she walks through the open door.

The other church we're going to look at quickly is the church of Sardis.

This church has a reputation for being alive, but is dead. However, the Lord simply tells them to awake!

As a side note, when Jesus mentions "Be watchful", he is not telling to take a look on the outside and look for clues about when He will return in world events. He is admonishing the church to watch what is going on inside... within their heart.

But the problem with the church of Sardis regarding their faith was they were not concerned (overall) about standing still... not moving toward the center.

To me, this church was simply off center.

Let's take a look.



The goal of the church... likewise, the Christian.

The important thing here is not a matter of whether you are here or there... in the concentric circles.

The important thing is... we are journeying toward the center... Christ!

To Paul, that is goal in Philippians 3:14 as he moves toward the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Jesus says, "for where your **treasure** is, there your heart will be also (Matthew 6:21)." Our quest on this journey is to move forward toward the treasure (the center)... Christ.

And to me, that is what determines whether we are alive "spiritually".

It says in verse 12: "All who are victorious will become pillars in the Temple of my God." While he is talking about our place in heaven, we can be pillars in another way... both in the here and now.

We become part of the foundation of building peoples lives both before and/or after their redemption.

As we continue in faithfulness, doors will open. I really believe that. I have also seen that! Yours may be healing. Or it may be praying for a person and they are healed. It may be an opportunity for a new or different position at work. It may be another friendship or partnership. Perhaps it is a ministry opportunity. Regardless, it is something in the kingdom.

Let's remember the image of the "key" in verse 7; Jesus is... "... the one who has the key of David. What he opens, no one can close; and what he closes, no one can open:"

The key is a picture of authority and Jesus holds the key. Clearly the bible reveals... Christ who asks you and I to walk through the open door is the Christ who holds the key."

Here's the thought and the meaning behind his teaching: No human being and no set of circumstances in this world can keep us from accomplishing what Christ asks us to do.

The reality is when we walk through the open door that God sets before us, we are not working in your own power anymore.