

Letters from God
Behold the Open Door
Revelation 3:7-13

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Introduction to Text: We are in the sixth week of a series we are calling, “Letters from God.” Revelation 2-3 contains 7 letters written to 7 historical churches of the first century world. More than just ancient letters, these letters are absolutely filled with practical themes for us to consider today. All but two of the letters follows a similar pattern (recipient, identification of author, commendation, condemnation, charge to correct, challenge to persevere, challenge to hear the message). The letter before us today breaks the pattern at one point—it has no word of condemnation.

Text: ⁷ "To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

"The Holy One, the True One, the One who has the key of David, who opens and no one will close, and closes and no one opens says: ⁸ I know your works. Because you have limited strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name, look, I have placed before you an open door that no one is able to close. ⁹ Take note! I will make those from the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews and are not, but are lying—note this—I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and they will know that I have loved you. ¹⁰ Because you have kept My command to endure, I will also keep you from the hour of testing that is going to come over the whole world to test those who live on the earth. ¹¹ I am coming quickly. Hold on to what you have, so that no one takes your crown. ¹² The victor: I will make him a pillar in the sanctuary of My God, and he will never go out again. 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 My new name.

¹³ "Anyone who has an ear should listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.

Introduction: Have you ever just needed to be encouraged? Sometimes we need to be rebuked and corrected. Other times we just simply need to be affirmed and encouraged. Blessed is the person who knows when we need that time of affirmation. I had a Seminary Professor who did that for me. God is like that. To the church at Philadelphia, He exhorts. To this church, on this occasion at least, He has no words of condemnation. Hear, or as the text reads, “Behold” these words of encouragement.

Behold the Opportunity of the Door Before Us

What is this door? We are not going to get very far into this text until we are able to understand the identification of the door. The possibilities:

1. Our Salvation

- Revelation 3:20 Listen! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and have dinner with him, and he with Me.

2. Our Evangelism

- Acts 14:27 ²⁷ After they arrived and gathered the church together, they reported everything God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.
- 1 Corinthians 16:9 ⁹ because a wide door for effective ministry has opened for me —yet many oppose me.
- 2 Corinthians 2:12 ¹² When I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ, a door was opened to me by the Lord.
- Colossians 4:3 At the same time, pray also for us that God may open a door to us for the message, to speak the mystery of the Messiah —for which I am in prison —

So, which is it? I have to be open and vulnerable with you this morning. I am not 100% sure. The commentaries lean toward the first. They argue that in context, this speaks of salvation in terms of entry into the Messianic Kingdom. The argument has great merit. To be sure, our salvation is consistent with the words of verse 7. They also argue that in Revelation, the imagery of an open door does not speak towards evangelism.

However, I believe that from context, we could also make an argument toward the second option— evangelism. Remember, these are letters to churches, not individuals.

The 3 clauses of verse 8 tilt the evidence in favor of evangelism.

Again, we cannot get very far in this text if we do not make a choice. So, let's consider it as the door open for churches.

Reasons God Opens Doors to Some Churches:

God opens doors to churches that . . .

1. Depend on Him. Blessed are the churches that recognize that our power is in Him.
2. Declare His Word. We've talked for two weeks about keeping our theological standards. God will honor that.
3. Do not Deny His Name. Here is the heart of the Gospel.

If God puts before us an open door, we will be equipped. The winner of the 2000 Little League World Series was from a very poor section of Venezuela. When the team arrived for the series, they only had one bat and four of the players did not even have the proper baseball playing shoes. On the trip, their plane had to go back due to mechanical failure. As word spread, donations came in outfitting this team with better gear. After losing their first game to Japan 10-0, they went undefeated the rest of the way to win the whole Little League World Series. What if they would have said, "We have no money," or "We don't have the right equipment," or "We are not as good as the other teams—we lost 10-0"? But they walked through the open door that had been given to them.

What if a church says, "We cannot reach that kind of person," or "We don't have enough money," or "It will cost too much money,"? Why not believe that God opens the door and the door he opens, no one closes?

Behold the Promises Given To Us:

1. In His Sovereignty, He will provide. He loves us, why would He not provide for us?
2. In His Sovereignty, He will protect. How do we square this with Christians who are persecuted? He will keep us from does not mean He will prevent, but He will keep us in the midst of that persecution.

Behold the Place Awaiting Us:

All of the letters end with a special analogy about what awaits those in Christ.

1. Heaven brings us comfort.
2. Heaven brings us challenge.

Even the encouragement is a word of challenge!