

Go Through Open Doors

Revelation 3:7-13

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When Hudson Taylor first sensed a call to China in the 1800s, almost everyone told him the same thing: “*China is closed.*” Taylor persisted, believing that if God was calling him to go, He would open the door. With very little money or support, he obeyed and sailed to China. Over time, doors began opening all over China and many started coming to Christ.

By the time of Hudson Taylor’s death in 1905, the China Inland Mission had grown into a massive ministry with 825 missionaries, over 300 mission stations, and more than 25,000 baptized converts. Some reports indicate that during his lifetime, over 125,000 Chinese came to know Christ. Today, largely because of the foundation laid by Taylor, there is an estimated 100 million or more Christians in China.

The door that once seemed closed began to swing wide open. All because one man decided to walk through one open door. That is exactly what Jesus promises in Revelation 3:8: “***Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut.***”

The lesson is clear: *Jesus opens doors for those who obey Him.*

Let’s begin in the first part of verse 7: “***And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write...***” As we’ve established previously, the “*angel*” is either an actual angel assigned to the church, or it’s a reference to the pastor of the church. The church in Philadelphia, along with the church in Smyrna, are the only churches which did not receive any correction from Christ. This is a huge contrast with the church at Sardis which was pronounced dead by Jesus.

Philadelphia was a small city, located 30 miles from Sardis. It was nestled in a fertile valley famous for its agricultural products, especially its vineyards. Their patron deity was Dionysius (or Bacchus), the god of wine. The city was affluent but was afflicted with huge earthquakes. Because of its strategic location along several important trade routes, it became known as the “Gateway to the East.” Philadelphia viewed its mission as bringing Greek language and culture to the lands around it.

1. The Person who holds the key. As we've see in our study, Jesus introduces Himself to each church with a description reflecting His character. We see this in the second half of verse 7: ***"The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens."***

- **The holy one.** The Old Testament repeatedly describes God as the Holy One as we read in Isaiah 40:25: ***"To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One."*** When Jesus called Himself the Holy One, He was making a direct claim to be God. We see this in multiple passages in the New Testament as well. Even the demons knew who Jesus was according to Mark 1:24: ***"I know who you are—the Holy One of God."*** Another example is Peter's confession of faith in John 6:69: ***"And we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."***
- **The true one.** This word for ***"true"*** means, ***"genuine, authentic, and real."*** It also means "faithful" and "trustworthy." Truth is combined with holiness to describe God five times in Revelation, including 6:10: ***"They cried out with a loud voice, 'O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?'"***
- **Has the key of David.** A ***"key"*** in Scripture represents authority. Whoever has a key has complete control. The ***"key of David"*** links Jesus to the fulfillment of prophecy. This title also appears in Isaiah 22:22, where it refers to Eliakim, who served as the chief of staff to Israel's king, and also served as a type of Christ: ***"And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David..."*** In ancient royal courts, large golden keys were worn on the shoulder of the gatekeeper. One of his jobs was to control access to the king by opening and closing doors. Jesus fully fulfilled this prophecy along with Isaiah 9:6: ***"...And the government shall be upon His shoulder..."***
- **Who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.** This phrase comes from the second half of Isaiah 22:22: ***"He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open."*** This description stresses the absolute power of Christ as He alone has the power to admit and exclude. I think of Matthew 25:10 where Jesus calls Himself the bridegroom who one day will say it's too late to enter: ***"and the door was shut."*** One commentator captured it will: ***"No one can shut the door to the kingdom or to blessing if He holds it open. No one can force it open if He holds it shut."***

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2. Praise for their perseverance. In verse 8, Jesus commends them: ***“I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.”*** It’s comforting and convicting to know that Jesus knows everything about His churches, isn’t it? The phrase ***“Behold, I have set before you”*** means, ***“to put in front of your face.”*** There are open doors everywhere but many times we don’t see them because we’re not looking.

A man once came to Charles Spurgeon and asked how he could win others to Jesus. After Spurgeon asked him what kind of work he did, the man said, ***“I’m an engine driver on a train.”*** ***“Then,”*** said Spurgeon, ***“Is the man who shovels coal on your train a Christian?”*** ***“I don’t know,”*** said the man. To which Spurgeon said, ***“Go back and find out and start on him.”***

Jesus gives specific and unique opportunities to each of His churches: ***“an open door which no one is able to shut.”*** John was about to receive an amazing invitation to go through a door in Revelation 4:1: ***“After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in Heaven!”***

Open doors in the Bible refer to evangelism or to new ministry or mission opportunities. Consider the following:

- Acts 14:27: ***“And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.”***
- 1 Corinthians 16:9: ***“For a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.”***
- Colossians 4:3: ***“At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word...”***

As we have been seeking the Lord about the viability of the India trip, and whether the Kenya trip will occur because the cost of airline tickets had gone up significantly, I found myself stressing until I read Revelation 3:8: ***“Behold, I have set before you an open door which no one is able to shut.”*** The Lord is the one who opens and shuts doors. Our responsibility is to wait when the door is closed and to go through it when it’s open. Here’s a text I sent to Pastor Kyle while we were waiting to hear if the flight to India was still on: ***“If He doesn’t want you to go, the door will shut and we’ll wait for a new one to open. If He wants you to go,***

the door will be open.” The door opened and they left on Friday morning! Here’s a picture.

The Lord has given us multiple open doors for ministry here at Edgewood. I think especially of Mainspring, our young adult ministry, and Celebrate Recovery, our ministry to those struggling with hurts, habits, and hangups. We are trusting God to provide pastors to lead these ministries.

We’re calling the church to five focused times of prayer for these two pastoral positions. One of the prayers we’re praying is *“for God to open and close doors.”* Here are the dates and times for the final three prayer times.

Sunday, March 15, at 5:00 p.m. in the Student Center

Friday, March 20, at 5:30 p.m. in the Worship Center

Sunday, March 22, at 8:00 a.m. in the Student Center

I think of how our location on 38th street also gives us open doors because so many of our guests comment on how God has used our church signs to get their attention. I’m grateful to Pastor Brown for moving the physical location of Edgewood to this spot. Another way to view our location is to consider all the open doors we have individually when we scatter to live on mission in the Quad Cities as we go with the gospel to our families, neighbors, and the nations, as we give priority to our classmates, co-workers, and other relationships.

Jesus mentions three qualities of the Philadelphian believers:

- **Humble** – *“I know that you have but little power...”* This church felt outnumbered and the individual members probably wondered how they could make an impact in their culture. I like what Charles Spurgeon said about this: *“The Lord does not blame us for having little strength, but for having little love, little faith, little zeal, and little consecration.”* Are you aware that 70% of all congregations in the U.S. have 100 or fewer people in regular attendance? 50% of all churches have fewer than 65 attendees. Remember, size doesn’t dictate impact. In the biblical narrative, God consistently chooses the “small” (Gideon’s 300, the boy’s five loaves) to ensure the glory goes to God rather than to the size of the crowd.
- **Obedient** – *“...and yet you have kept my word...”* The word *“kept”* means *“to guard, to watch.”* The believers at Philadelphia were men and women of the word.

- **Faithful** – “...and have not denied my name.” Because they were faithful to His name in a world that rejected it, Jesus gave them props.

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3. The privilege of vindication. These Christians had been excommunicated from the local synagogue and were being slandered and persecuted by some Jews who had no spiritual connection to God, as verse 9 indicates: ***“Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you.”***

This statement is not antisemitic. Rather, it is a sober assessment of those in Philadelphia who rejected Jesus as the Messiah and actively opposed Christians. Though they claimed to represent God’s people, their rejection of Christ placed them in opposition to God’s purposes.

Jesus promises that one day He will turn the tables. Those who had mocked and maligned these believers would ultimately bow before them in an act of public vindication. Their persecutors will come to recognize that the very people they despised were deeply loved by Christ. Interestingly, in Isaiah 60:14, it’s the Gentiles who will bow at the feet of the Jewish people: ***“And all who despised you shall bow down at your feet.”*** In Revelation, these Jews will bow before the followers of Jesus.

4. The promise of protection. Check out verse 10: ***“Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.”*** The word “endurance” refers to “remaining under.” Revelation 14:12 says, ***“Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.”***

I find great encouragement that believers will be kept ***“from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world.”*** The phrase ***“keep you from”*** literally means “to keep out of” or “away from.” Because of that wording, I understand this as a reference to the rapture of the church, when believers will be removed before the global ***“hour of trial,”*** often identified with the Great Tribulation. According to this view, Christ promises that His church will be taken out of the coming worldwide judgment, rather than going through it. The trial described here is not

local or regional because it will affect ***“the whole world.”*** The phrase ***“those who dwell on the earth”*** appears nine times in Revelation and speaks of unbelievers who oppose God (Revelation 6:10; 13:8).

Since the purpose of the Tribulation is to judge unbelievers, I believe followers of Jesus will escape this judgment. Another reason I believe this is that the church is mentioned repeatedly in chapters 1-3 but no longer appears on earth during the Tribulation judgments which begin in chapter 6.

Let me be quick to say that other faithful and godly Christians interpret this promise differently. They believe this verse teaches that God will protect believers *through* the period of tribulation, just as He protected Israel during the plagues in Egypt. In this view, the promise is not removal from the trial but preservation during it.

Whichever interpretation one holds, the central truth remains the same: Jesus promises to protect and preserve His people.

5. The plea to hold fast. We see this in verse 11: ***“I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.”*** The word ***“soon”*** means, ***“suddenly, speedily, quickly.”*** This is a repeated theme in Revelation. Consider these three verses from the last chapter of the Bible.

- 22:7: ***“And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”***
- 22:12: ***“Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done.”***
- 22:20: ***“He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!”***

There are many other passages as well. Here’s just a sampling:

- Zephaniah 1:14: ***“The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast...”***
- 1 Corinthians 15:52: ***“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.”***
- Matthew 24:42-44: ***“Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house***

had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

Revelation 3:11 says, ***“Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.”*** 2 John 8 reinforces this idea: ***“Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.”*** The question for you is simple: *Are you ready...or not?* Let’s hold fast so we don’t forfeit our rewards. While we can’t lose our salvation, we can lose out on crowns.

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6. The prize for the one who conquers. Verse 12 says, ***“The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and 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 from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.”*** The word for ***“conquer”*** is translated as ***“overcomer”*** and has the idea of being victorious. Interestingly, people will be made into pillars. The idea behind a pillar is to be firmly fixed and permanent. This would have resonated with a people who were living in an area prone to earthquakes because pillars were often the only thing still standing when everything else crumbled.

Jesus promises to write three names on victorious believers, marking them indelibly with identity, ownership, and destiny. These inscriptions signify belonging, authority, and intimate relationship. They function much like a seal or brand in ancient times denoting possession and protection. These names aren’t just written on a person; the verse says the overcomer is made into a “pillar in the temple.” In ancient times, it was common to carve the names of honored citizens or donors into the pillars of a temple to commemorate their contribution and presence forever.

Several weeks ago, we gave out white rocks with the reference “Revelation 2:17” written on them to help us remember this truth: ***“And I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.”*** This past weekend, an Edgewood couple found it curious that we were giving out rocks because they had just told their boys not to pick up rocks outside. We try to come alongside and support parents, but I guess we blew that one!

I needed some help understanding this verse, so I want to acknowledge the help I received from other sources.

- **The name of God: Ultimate ownership.** This echoes the high priest's golden plate inscribed with "*Holy to the Lord*" (Exodus 28:36), signifying consecration and direct belonging to God. It declares that the overcomer is set apart as holy, owned by the Father, and bears His authoritative name as a mark of divine favor and protection. In the Roman world, a mark often signified slavery or branding. Here, it is the opposite, serving as a mark of adoption. To have the Father's name written on you is to be declared "Sacred Property." It means you are no longer defined by your past, your failures, or your earthly lineage, but by His holiness.
- **The name of the new Jerusalem: Permanent citizenship.** This points to the eternal, heavenly city described in Revelation 21:2–3, descending from heaven as the bride prepared for the Lamb. It recalls Ezekiel 48:35, where the restored city is named "*The Lord Is There*" (Jehovah Shammah in Hebrew), emphasizing God's abiding presence. Writing this name on the overcomer signifies permanent citizenship in this perfect, unshakable city. God's people will experience no more excommunication or exile, no more instability, but eternal residence where God dwells fully with His people. Writing the city's name on a person means they aren't just visitors; they are permanent residents of a kingdom that cannot be moved.
- **The new name of Jesus: Eternal intimacy.** This is the most mysterious and intimate of the three. It refers to a fresh unveiling of Jesus Himself, with a name tied to His ultimate glory and victory. Revelation 19:12 says He has "*a name written that no one knows but Himself.*" Commentators often see this as signifying deeper union with Christ, a new aspect of His character or authority revealed fully in eternity. It marks the believer as unmistakably belonging to Christ, claimed by Him in a profound, personal way. Just as names in Scripture often reflect character or destiny, this "*new name*" points to transformed identity and eternal intimacy with the Savior. Bearing Jesus' new name suggests we will finally see Him as He is, and in doing so, we will finally become who we were truly meant to be.

These three names together form a powerful triad: eternal ownership by the Father, permanent citizenship in His eternal city, and intimate belonging to the Son. Believers will experience unbreakable security, honored status, and relational closeness in the new creation.

In summary, this promise is a profound encouragement for any believer facing instability, opposition, or rejection today. Brothers and sisters, hold fast because the Victorious One promises not temporary fixes but eternal firmness where you will become pillars in His presence, eternally marked as His own.

7. The proclamation to hear. Once again, in verse 13 Jesus urges Christians and churches to hear and heed what the Holy Spirit has been saying: ***“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”***

What is the Spirit saying to you right now?

Sometimes God doesn't open the door until we take the step of obedience. Think about the Israelites crossing the Jordan River. In Joshua 3, the priests who were carrying the ark had to step into the river first. It was only after their feet touched the water that the river stop flowing. God opened the way after they first stepped out in obedience.

Often that's how God works. We take the step of obedience...and God opens the door. That's the promise Jesus gave to the church in Philadelphia and that's the promise He gives to us today.

I'm convinced open doors for the gospel are everywhere. Our challenge is to see them and walk through them. This past December, we provided over 300 blankets and pillows for students at Rock Island Academy. This school, and other schools in Rock Island, will be receiving invites to our Easter Eggstravaganza outreach on Saturday, March 28 at Longview Park. We're still looking for some help and some more candy. We'll also be passing out Easter invitations.

Eight years ago, we had a contractor come to our house to install something we had purchased. While he was there, I started a conversation with him and shared the gospel with him. While he was on his knees working, his shoulders started heaving and he began to weep loudly. He proceeded to tell me that his 19-year-old son had just been killed in a car accident. I put my hand on his shoulder, prayed for him, and gave him Anchor for the Soul. I invited him and his wife to Grief Share and then I lost touch. I added them to Facebook and haven't heard from them in seven years.

On Thursday, the wife made a comment on something I posted that day. I reached out to her and asked if she'd like a free Bible and a free copy of Anchor for the

Soul. I dropped them off later that day, along with an Easter invite. I'm praying they trust Jesus soon. An hour later, she posted a picture of the Bible and Anchor for the Soul on Facebook along with these words, *"I will use them to help me on this journey."*

What doors can you walk through today? It will take courage. It may be awkward and uncomfortable, but it's worth it. You never know what's on the other side of the door...even if it takes a while to find out. When He opens a door, we get to walk through it. When He doesn't, we get to wait.

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Before we close, I want you to know about the most important open door of all. In Revelation 3:8 Jesus says, ***"Behold, I have set before you an open door."*** We've talked about open doors of ministry, open doors of mission, and open doors of opportunity. But there is one door that matters more than all the others. It's the door of salvation.

Jesus made this clear in John 10:9 when He said: ***"I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture."*** Jesus did not say He will show us the door, but that He *is* the door to salvation.

Jesus says there are only two doors in Matthew 7:13–14: ***"Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few."***

One door is wide and popular, and many are walking through it, even though it leads to destruction. But there is another door, which is much narrower, and it leads to deliverance.

The reason Jesus can be the door of salvation is because of what He did for us. Every one of us has sinned and fallen short of God's holiness. Our sin separates us from God and the penalty for that sin is death. But Jesus came to rescue us. He lived the perfect life we could never live, and then He went to the cross and died in our place. Three days later He rose from the dead, proving His power over our depravity, the devil, and death itself.

The door of salvation is open, but it must be entered before it closes. You enter that door by repenting of your sin and trusting Jesus Christ alone to save you. And

when you do, the same Jesus who opened the door to Heaven will open the door to you for forgiveness, new life, and eternal hope.

Are you ready to go through the door?