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Sermon Notes

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## **Philadelphia: The Church of the Open Door**

### **Revelation 3:7-13**

Since the beginning of human history, people have marked the passage of time in various ways. God himself set the sun, moon, and stars in the heavens and their celestial motions were the first timepieces:

***Genesis 1:14 And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years***

This rhythm of the passage of time was established right from the start:

***"There was evening and there was morning... the first day; there was evening and there was morning, the second day..."***

At some point, technology took over and developed more and more elaborate ways of marking the passage of time: water clocks, candles with gradations, sundials, pendulum clocks with escapements, Swiss watches with exquisite movements, quartz digital timepieces, and even atomic clocks...

But what is TIME?? What is it really? Physicists call it the fourth dimension. Science fiction writers fantasize about time travel. Philosophers meditate on the significance of time in human culture. People in nursing homes ponder how quickly time passed.

In the Hobbit, the creature Gollum and Bilbo Baggins engaged in a duel of riddles, and Gollum tried to stump Bilbo with this one:

*This thing all things devours:*

*Birds, beasts, trees, flowers;  
Gnaws iron, bites steel;  
Grinds hard stones to meal;  
Slays king, ruins town,  
And beats high mountain down.*

The answer to the riddle, of course, is TIME...

Time devours all things... time kills birds, beasts, trees, and flowers... they pass away like they never lived at all

Time gnaws iron until all that's left is a pile of rusty powder

Time grinds the hardest stones down along the oceanside, the relentless pounding of waves over the centuries eroding the rocks until they are erased entirely

Time slays kings and commoners alike... their glory fades like the flowers of the field, here today and gone from all memory within the blink of an eye

Time ruins towns and cities alike... they rise up, up, up from the dust by human ingenuity, and they eventually sink back down, down, down into the dust until they are gone, covered by layers of silt to be found centuries later by archaeologists

Time even wears the ancient mountains down... wind and rain effacing the hardest rock until it is gone.

Obviously Gollum had a very dreary view of the effects of TIME, however

Though everything under the sun eventually is destroyed by time, yet in Christ, time itself has been redeemed

The biblical way to understand TIME is OPPORTUNITY... time is a specific set of providential circumstances that will never happen exactly that way again

Today, this day, is unique... and with this day come a unique set of OPPORTUNITIES worldwide for the church of Jesus Christ to do eternally significant things

There is something in the universe that is NOT wearing down by time, it is not aging, it is not past its prime... it hasn't even reached its prime yet... every day makes it more and more glorious, more and more lofty and grand, more and more intricate and detailed, more and more beautiful and massive...

It is the CHURCH of Jesus Christ:

***Matthew 16:18 On this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades {18 Or hell} will not overcome it.***

Death cannot stop it... this glorious worldwide building project of the church

Every day, by the sacrificial loving works of the children of God, it rises:

***Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.***

***Ephesians 2:21-22 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.***

***Revelation 21:9-11 "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." <sup>10</sup> And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. <sup>11</sup> It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.***

Every day is SPECIAL, unique, specially prepared in eternity past by the sovereign wisdom and plan and power of God to shape one aspect of this radiant city of God, this magnificent church, until at last it is finished

TIME then is OPPORTUNITY... a chance to do something eternally significant by faith, by the Spirit, in the name of Christ

Today is OPPORTUNITY... In Revelation 3:8, Jesus speaks to the church at Philadelphia these amazing words:

***Revelation 3:8 Behold, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut.***

I will seek to prove that we should read this as a word to us today to walk through an open door of opportunity to serve the living God, to build the church through EVANGELISM and MISSIONS and SERVICE and DISCIPLESHIP and PRAYER and the MINISTRY OF THE WORD OF GOD

We have a limited number of days, and everyone of them is unique, with its own OPEN DOOR of opportunity

## I. Christ the Sovereign King Addresses His Church (vs. 7)

### A. What Makes these Seven Letters So Precious

1. Each of these seven letters begins with “These are the words of...” and then some amazing description of Jesus Christ, the Lord and King of the Church, walking among the churches
2. Usually they also begin with the words “I know you... your deeds, your circumstances, your challenges, your success, your failures...”
3. That’s what makes these letters so precious... the glory of the one who writes them, and the detailed specific addresses they all represent
4. AND each church should read all seven letters as though they were ALL addressed to us personally

***“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”***

### B. BUT in this Case: Christ’s Self-Description is Unique

1. It doesn’t come from the vision of chapter 1, but comes from the pages of the Old Testament

***Revelation 3:7 “These are the words of him who is holy, who is true, who holds the key of David, who opens and no one can shut, and who shuts and no one can open.”***

2. He who is HOLY

- a. God alone is holy... infinitely set apart from all creation

***Isaiah 6:3 “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty... the whole earth is full of his glory.”***

So also the living creatures before the throne cry the same thing:

***Revelation 4:8 Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."***

- b. Jesus here identifies himself as holy... in this context, it is really a claim to DEITY
- c. Jesus possesses undiminished holiness... not only perfect separation from all evil, but perfect separation from all creatures as King and Lord over all

3. He who is TRUE

- a. Jesus also is the one who IS TRUE
- b. If something is true, it means it is really the way it is... it is genuine, it is authentic, it is REAL, in heaven and on earth
- c. Satan has crafted his evil empire out of lies... he lied to himself about his own power and glory when he tried to ascend and take the throne of God, he lied to the angels that followed him in his rebellion when he tried to take over heaven, he lied to Adam and Eve about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and he has lied to every sinner that has ever lived... by LIES he has built a worldwide empire of sin

***John 8:44 [The devil] was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.***

- d. BUT everything Jesus has ever said is perfectly TRUE

- e. He appears to be powerful because he IS powerful
- f. He appears to be glorious because he IS glorious
- g. He appears to be alive because he IS alive
- h. His words are TRUE because he himself IS the truth!!

C. He HAS the Key of David

- 1. The “Key” represents authority... the right to open and shut... the right to unlock and swing a barred door wide open; also the right to slam a door shut and bolt it and lock it
- 2. Jesus holds the keys of death and the grave

***Revelation 1:18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.***

- 3. Specifically here, the “key of David” = the right to sit on David’s throne
  - a. David was the focus of the promises God made to place a human king over all humanity... the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Savior of the World was to be the Son of David

***Matthew 1:1 A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham***

- b. Here he HAS the Key of David...the heir to David’s throne... but in Christ, it is an eternal throne of infinite glory
- 4. The right to open and close doors

***Revelation 3:7 What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.***

- a. Jesus has INFINITE POWER and INFINITE AUTHORITY... he controls the doors of heaven and earth
- b. If Jesus wants a door open, and Satan and all wicked demons and evil people joined him in his efforts, they could not close that open door

- c. Conversely, if Jesus shuts a door, it is shut with immeasurable power... and no one has the power to wedge it open
- d. In this way, Jesus controls the flow of human history... and entrance into heaven itself
- e. Jesus has the right to determine who will enter his Kingdom and who will not

***Matthew 5:20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.***

***Matthew 18:3 "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.***

If Jesus shuts the door of heaven, no one can open it... like Noah's Ark, when the door was shut, everyone on the outside perished

So also with the parable of the Five Wise and Five Foolish Virgins, when the five foolish ones came late to the banquet, they found the door was shut... and though they pounded to gain access, they were not permitted in

- f. He has the right to determine who has ACCESS to the throne of Almighty God, to right to draw near to God and address him

***Ephesians 2:18 For through [Christ] we have access to the Father by one Spirit.***

So Jesus describes himself as HOLY, TRUE, and having the Key of David... having authority to shut and no one can open, and to open and no one can shut... he is the one SPEAKING to his church today!

## II. The Church at Philadelphia: Small but Faithful (vs. 8-10)

### A. Christ's Unmixed Commendation

***Revelation 3:8-10 I know your deeds. Behold, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. <sup>9</sup> I will***

***make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars-- I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. <sup>10</sup> Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.***

1. "I know your deeds"
  - a. Jesus always begins with this... by our works, by our fruit he knows us
  - b. Jesus says nothing directly about their deeds... but instead speaks of the challenges they are facing from unbelieving Jews, which we'll address in a moment
2. "I know that you have little strength..."
  - a. this is an accurate evaluation of this church... not in any way a criticism
  - b. They are not boastful about what a great church they are; they are not a dominant part of the city; they don't have a massive footprint in the life of that pagan place, but they are a FAITHFUL OUTPOST, colony of heaven, a refuge for those seeking true salvation
  - c. The church seems to have been small in number, and probably made up of lower classes of society... "not many wise, not many influential, not many powerful..."
  - d. It is in having such SMALL STRENGTH that the church found its truest power

***2 Corinthians 12:10 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.***

- e. A church that knows that APART FROM CHRIST it can do nothing, is actually the most powerful church in the world
3. "You have kept my word and have not denied my name"

- a. this speaks to the opposition they were facing, though not as severe as Smyrna or perhaps the other places, like Ephesus
  - b. still they faced pressures to compromise, to disobey Christ and live sinful or cowardly lives... and they REFUSED to cave in
4. “You have kept my command to endure patiently...”
- a. Christ commands his people to run the race TO THE END with great endurance

***Matthew 10:22 All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.***

- b. We are not permitted to QUIT, to DROP OUT, to FALTER by denying his name
- c. This Christian life is a marathon race through enemy territory, constantly assaulted by bitter enemies of our souls... both DEMONIC and HUMAN

***Hebrews 12:2 let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.***

- d. This faithful little church refused to drop out, refused to quit... they kept his WORD, his COMMAND of endurance

### III. Christ’s Provision: The Open Door and Protection

#### A. The Open Door

***Revelation 3:8 Behold, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut.***

- 1. We already discussed Jesus’ sovereign power over the doors of heaven and earth
- 2. He holds the key of David... what he opens, no one can shut
- 3. And he is saying BEHOLD, I HAVE PLACED BEFORE YOU AN OPEN DOOR that no human being or demon has the power to shut

4. It is in precisely this way that the Kingdom of Jesus Christ has been advancing for centuries
5. What is this OPEN DOOR?
  - a. Could be the door of salvation... the ability to enter heaven, eternal life

***Matthew 7:13-14 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. <sup>14</sup> But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.***

- b. More likely, however, it is a DOOR OF OPPORTUNITY to serve Christ, specifically by evangelism and missions

***1 Corinthians 16:8-9 I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, <sup>9</sup> because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.***

Amazing statement! Paul is excited and motivated to stay on in Ephesus because God has opened a GREAT DOOR for effective work there... and also there are many enemies of the gospel; so an open door does not mean there is no opposition; rather that people's hearts are OPEN to the word of the gospel... like Lydia in Philippi:

***Acts 16:14 One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.***

Paul's request for prayer:

***Colossians 4:3-4 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. <sup>4</sup> Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.***

The "open door" represents God's sovereignty over circumstances and providential indicators that the word of God will flourish in an area

For example, in 1949 Douglas MacArthur was ruling over the rebuilding of war-devastated Japan, he urgently called for 1000 missionaries to come and preach Christ there. He said “Japan is a spiritual vacuum, and if we don’t fill it with Christ, it will be filled with communism.”

Literally thousands of missionaries from many different denominations responded to that call, that OPEN DOOR of opportunity and led thousands of Japanese to Christ. As a matter of fact, the Japanese pastor that I worked under, an 82-year old man we called Kubo-sensei had fought against the Americans in the Pacific. He had contracted malaria and had returned to Japan to convalesce. He was there when the war ended. Some American missionaries led him to a genuine faith in Christ in Takamatsu in 1950.

Throughout the history of missions, Christians have walked through open doors of opportunity to advance the church of Christ. As Paul said in 1 Cor. 16, there was a GREAT DOOR of openness to the gospel in Ephesus, and also great opposition. This may confuse us, but the two are not mutually exclusive. Actually it makes sense... once large numbers of people come to Christ, the government frequently cracks down in reprisals.

After the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, the Eastern Block countries were open to missionaries and Christian workers as they hadn’t been in decades. The gospel spread rapidly in Russia and other formerly communist nations.

Other doors of opportunity can come with natural disasters like earthquakes and floods and tsunamis... countries formerly closed turn to Christians for aid that they would never have permitted because they are so desperate

So also backlash from Muslim extremism can lead to open doors... a book called *Leaving Islam* has asserted that fundamentalist groups like Al-Quaeda (and we would say ISIS) have caused many nominal Muslims to say “If that’s what Islam is, I want

nothing to do with it!" This has led to amazing openness in Iran and North Africa and many other Muslim strongholds.

PRAY FOR OPEN DOORS of opportunity for the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth!!

## B. The Opposition

***Revelation 3:9 I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars-- I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.***

1. This is the second time that Jesus mentions the "synagogue of Satan" ... also said it of the church at Smyrna
2. According to Jesus, Christ-rejecting Jews really are no Jews at all... this is the consistent teaching of the New Testament... just because you are physically descended from Abraham doesn't make you a child of Abraham

***John 8:39 "Abraham is our father," they answered. "If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do the things Abraham did.***

***John 8:42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me.***

***John 8:44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire.***

Similarly, these so-called Jews were not really Jews, but liars like their father, the devil.

***Romans 2:28-29 A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. <sup>29</sup> No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code.***

3. Jesus says to the church at Philadelphia he will MAKE THEM FALL AT YOUR FEET and acknowledge Jesus has loved them

- a. This is a picture of conquest... of the total humiliation of enemies
- b. This image would be VERY FAMILIAR to all bible-reading Jews... it is the picture their zealots would hold to of their Gentile enemies licking the dust from their feet after the Jews defeated them

***Isaiah 49:23 They will bow down before you with their faces to the ground; they will lick the dust at your feet.***

***Isaiah 60:14 The sons of your oppressors will come bowing before you; all who despise you will bow down at your feet and will call you the City of the LORD, Zion of the Holy One of Israel.***

- c. Amazing to have Jesus himself speak these words to GENTILE CONVERTS of Jewish oppressors!!
- d. This is a picture of total vindication... their enemies will have to admit that Jesus is truly the Son of God, and that these Christians are truly beloved of him

### C. Protection Through the Hour of Testing

***Revelation 3:10 Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.***

1. Jesus also promises to protect this faithful church in (or from) the hour of testing that was yet in the future, that would come upon the whole earth
2. This is a fascinating and challenging promise... but let's keep it simple: Jesus will PROTECT his church, they will not fail in the test, they will endure through it and it will not hurt them at all
3. The words "keep you from" have been carefully analyzed; some scholars think this is a prediction of the secret rapture of the church, in which the Lord will come like a thief in the night and rescue his church from the seven-year tribulation that is going to spread over the entire earth

4. Others see it more as a promise to protect his people IN THE MIDST OF all the trials that will come; that the trial that is coming on the whole earth is not only the seven-year tribulation but all the terrible tests that will come on the church for now twenty centuries; that the terrifying pressure that Satan will put on the church around the world will not kill their faith
5. I like to think this might refer to resurrection from the dead... that the trial that covers the whole earth is death and judgment day

***Hebrews 9:27 man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment***

The refuge Christ promises his faithful church will be to survive death through resurrection:

***Isaiah 26:19-21 But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead. <sup>20</sup> Go, my people, enter your rooms and shut the doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until his wrath has passed by. <sup>21</sup> See, the LORD is coming out of his dwelling to punish the people of the earth for their sins. The earth will disclose the blood shed upon her; she will conceal her slain no longer.***

In any case, Christ gives sweet promises to his faithful church in Philadelphia: an open door of fruitful ministry, vindication from their bitter enemies, and protection from the overwhelming trial that will sweep the whole earth.

IV. Christ's Command: Hold Fast to What You Have (vs. 11)

***Revelation 3:11 I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.***

A. The Promise of the Second Coming: I AM COMING SOON

1. The word "soon" may trouble us
2. But we know this

***2 Peter 3:8 With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.***

3. So also, the Second Coming of Christ will come SOON, and we should cry out COME O LORD!!

***Revelation 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.***

#### B. Christ's Command: HOLD FAST

1. The image is one of a massive STRUGGLE... Satan will send his henchmen to try to rip your treasures from you... DON'T LET THEM!!
2. Hold on to what you have
3. Hold on to your faith... hold on to your confidence... hold on to your doctrine

***2 Thessalonians 2:15 So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter.***

4. Hold onto CHRIST

***Hebrews 4:14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.***

5. Hold on to your CROWN
  - a. The crown may refer to eternal life

***James 1:12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.***

The idea is that this Christian life is a marathon race of terrific endurance through a war zone with flaming arrows flying constantly.

HOLD ON... don't give up!! Run the race with endurance... and you will receive a victor's crown

- b. The CROWN may also refer to rewards for faithful, courageous service to Christ

Paul said to his converts in Thessalonica:

***1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? <sup>20</sup> Indeed, you are our glory and joy.***

V. Christ's Promises: A Crown, A Pillar, A Name

***Revelation 3:12-13 Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. <sup>13</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.***

- A. The CONQUERORS will get rewarded... the ones who stand firm to the end.... The ones that run the race with endurance right to the finish line... HIM WHO OVERCOMES

B. Rewards

1. "I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God... Never again will he leave it!"
  - a. permanent place in the eternal spiritual heavenly temple that is the Heavenly Zion, the New Jerusalem
  - b. we saw this in Isaiah

***Isaiah 56:3-5 Let no foreigner who has bound himself to the LORD say, "The LORD will surely exclude me from his people." And let not any eunuch complain, "I am only a dry tree." <sup>4</sup> For this is what the LORD says: "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose what pleases me and hold fast to my covenant-- <sup>5</sup> to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will not be cut off.***

- c. Also the NAME of the New Jerusalem engraved on them... also the NAME of Jesus Christ himself

***Revelation 22:3-4 No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. <sup>4</sup> They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.***

## VI. Applications

### A. Understand the Significance of TIME

1. It is not a matter of the mindless tick tock tick tock of some wristwatch, or the vibrations of a cesium atom in an atomic clock or the changing of dates on a calendar as the old year passes and a new year comes
2. Time on earth is all about OPPORTUNITY... a unique set of circumstances orchestrated by God for his glory and the blessing of his chosen people
3. In each of these letters, we do well to personalize the message... to take it to heart
  - a. We know we are not the church at Ephesus... but it is best for us to be concerned about “forsaking our first love”
  - b. We know we are not the church at Smyrna... but it would be wise for us to prepare for persecution, and to pray for brothers and sisters in other parts of the world who are being persecuted
  - c. We know we are not the church at Pergamum, but isn't it best to be deeply concerned about modern-day libertine teaching that is so lax about holiness? Modern-day Nicolaitans or Balaams?
  - d. We know we are not the church at Thyatira, but how vigilant must we be against modern-day Jezebels, the spirit of sexual immorality that flows through the wifi connections of our laptops and smartphones and iPads
  - e. We know we are not the church at Sardis, but shouldn't we be deeply concerned about having a reputation of being alive but actually being dead? Isn't one of the surest ways for a local church to die that they don't think it could ever happen to them?

- f. And we know we are not the church at Philadelphia, but should we be PLEADING FOR GOD to set an open door of opportunity before us, a door that no one can shut? And shouldn't we be pleading with God for the wisdom to see that door and the boldness and courage to walk through it?
- 4. Time is about opportunity... what opportunity does today bring?
  - a. If you are a non-Christian, today is about the opportunity to find salvation, the forgiveness of sins in Christ

***2 Corinthians 6:2 he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.***

***Isaiah 55:6-7 Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. <sup>7</sup> Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.***

**B. For You Christians... SEEK THE OPEN DOOR!!**

- 1. Recognize this is something only Jesus can do... he has the KEY of DAVID... he has the authority to open doors and no one can shut them, and to shut doors and no one can open them
- 2. Pray therefore for Christ to set before THIS CHURCH open doors of ministry

***Colossians 4:3-4 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. <sup>4</sup> Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.***

- a. Ask for God to open a door for ministry at Duke University
- b. We used to have dozens of students that would come here to learn the gospel every school year... now most doors at Duke are locked, with swipe cards that only the students have
- c. Ask God to open a door for ministry to the new apartments that are rising in our community... many relatively wealthy, educated people with NON-CHRISTIAN worldviews are

moving within two miles of our church... those doors also have swipe cards, locks that we don't hold the key to...

- d. Ask God to open a door of ministry to refugees and undocumented aliens in our community
  - e. Ask God to open a door of ministry in the high-tech sector of the RTP... businesses... that Christian employees would start being exceptionally bold about their faith and start lunch-time bible studies
  - f. Ask God to open a door of ministry to the underserved and poorer parts of our city... for FBC to have a ministry among African-Americans and Hispanic people who are presently unchurched
3. Unreached People Groups
- a. Ask God to open a door of ministry to the unreached people groups of the world
  - b. Pray for the 10-40 window... North Africa and the Middle East... Morocco!!!
  - c. Pray for Iran, for God to open a door of opportunity to spread the gospel among Iranians who are rejecting the Islamic revolution that took over their land with the Ayatollah Khomeini
  - d. Pray for the hardest countries in the world, like Somalia (run by militant Muslims bent on using starvation as a weapon)... and North Korea, with despotic communist leaders crushing the freedoms of its people
4. Pray for YOU PERSONALLY to have open doors to share the gospel with neighbors and coworkers and even strangers

#### C. Understand the Need for Perseverance

- 1. This is a marathon race and only those who run the race to the end will receive the victor's crown
- 2. Keep Christ's command of perseverance

D. Realize that Many of the Most Effective Churches in the World have  
LITTLE STRENGTH

1. They are not megachurches... in restricted countries, large churches would be SHUT DOWN IMMEDIATELY by the state police
2. Do not be enamored by huge churches or wonder why our church isn't larger or mightier
3. Seek to be bold, holy, persevering, witnessing for Christ, putting sin to death by the Spirit
4. The size and profile of the church isn't nearly as important as the faithfulness, and what Christ sovereignly decides to do with that church!!