

# An Open Door (Part 6)

by Jim Cymbala

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*Jim Cymbala emphasizes the importance of recognizing and seizing the open doors of opportunity that God presents to the faithful church amidst challenges.*

**Duration:** 20:04

**Scripture:** Matthew 7:7, Matthew 16:19, 1 Corinthians 16:9, 2 Corinthians 2:12, Revelation 3:7-8, Revelation 3:16

**Topics:** "Open Door"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal story of a minister who spent 40 years preaching rules and regulations before truly preaching about Jesus. The speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing and seizing open doors of opportunity that God presents to us. He mentions the apostle Paul's experience in Ephesus, where a great door for effective work opened for him, despite facing opposition. The speaker encourages the congregation to embrace the open doors God provides and to hold on to their spiritual blessings.

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## Transcript

We've been doing Love Letters to Jesus on Tuesday night, which is just briefly looking at the letters in the book of Revelation Jesus wrote to seven churches. They're all in the nation of Turkey, what we would call Turkey today. And Jesus, we found out, is saying different things to different churches.

And now we're at the next to the last church, the Church of Philadelphia. Not Pennsylvania, but Philadelphia over there. And Philadelphia was right southeast of the city of Sardis that we talked about last week.

And we're not going to do an exposition of this. We want to just get one main sentence. So Jesus is writing to this church, and this church, the city of Philadelphia, was on a major trade route, a very key city.

But unfortunately, it was not only well located in one way because of where it was for trade, commerce, and all of that, but it was located in a negative place because it was located right on a major fault where there were earthquakes quite often. And when Jesus was about 16 years old in Philadelphia, which he never got to in Turkey, he never left the Holy Land, the land of Palestine. And when Jesus was about 16, there was the greatest earthquake in the history of the world up to that point that anyone had ever heard about.

And Sardis, the city we heard about last week, was totally wiped out, and so was Philadelphia. It was destroyed. And it was rebuilt by Emperor Tiberius, who followed Caesar Augustus, who was the emperor when Jesus was born.

And Tiberius poured a lot of money that this city would be rebuilt. But there were so many tremors in Philadelphia that the people wouldn't even live there, and they would live out in the countryside because they were afraid of what might happen. Now, how the gospel went to Philadelphia, we don't know.

But there was a church there. It doesn't seem to be a huge church, a strong church, but they were very faithful, and they had endured, and they were serving the Lord. And here's the letter of Jesus.

By the way, this is only one of two churches that had no correction from Jesus Christ. Imagine Jesus looking at your church and not giving one correction. There's only two churches of the seven.

Smyrna, the second one that we talked about, the church that was persecuted so violently, and then this church of Philadelphia. There's no word of correction, of false doctrine. You permit this, you permit that, and some have been doing this.

So let's just read it and just take one sentence out of it, really. To the angel of the church in Philadelphia, that's the messenger probably of the church, right? These are the words of him who is holy. In the Greek, it's the holy, much more stronger than the NIV has it, who is the holy, the true, who holds the key of David.

What he opens, no one can shut, and what he shuts, no one can open. And that probably is speaking of kingdom authority, that although Jewish people who were giving them a lot of trouble were saying, we're the chosen people, and we decide who's in the in crowd with God. Jesus is now saying, no, I am the one who holds the key of the kingdom of David's throne, and I open, and I shut, and I shut, and I open.

And what I open, nobody can shut, and what I shut, no one can open. I know your deeds. We saw that in every letter so far.

In other words, I know what's going on. You don't have to explain anything. You don't have to say anything.

I know the whole story. See, I have placed before you an open door. This is a different kind of door that no one can shut.

I know that you have little strength. That shows churches have different levels of strength. This one had little strength.

Yet, you have kept my word and have not denied my name. God saw their faithfulness. I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, these are Jews who probably were persecuting them, but in calling them Jews, Jesus says, yeah, they're a synagogue, but they're a synagogue of Satan who claim to be Jews, but they're not really Jews, because a true Jew is a spiritual Jew who has put faith in Jesus Christ, who claim to be Jews, though they are not, but are liars.

I will make them come and fall down at your feet. In other words, I'm going to vindicate you. I see what everyone's putting you through.

I see how they persecute you. I see what you're going through from them, but in the end, I will vindicate you, and they will bow at your feet in some way that we're not sure of, and they will acknowledge that I

have loved you. The emphasis is there on you.

You are my chosen people, not this synagogue of Satan. Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, notice that's a command from the Lord. Not everything is a walk in the park when we serve Christ.

One of the things we have to do is endure patiently. Endure what? Bad stuff, pain, persecution, aggravation, attacks of the enemy. We 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, whether that's speaking of something in the very last day or something in their time the commentators disagree on, but it says to everyone who lives on the earth. So it must be some cosmic judgment coming from God that's going to test everyone on the earth. I am coming soon.

That's a very famous sentence from the New Testament. I am coming soon. Say it.

I am coming soon. Say it again. I am coming soon.

So it must be that God's intended over all these years for all of us to live with the expectancy that Christ could come at any time. Otherwise, He wouldn't have said all that time ago, I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have so that no one will take your crown.

Hold on to what you have spiritually. Don't let anybody rip you off of the blessings you have, the growth you have, the knowledge you have, the maturity you've gained. Don't let anybody rob that and make you go backwards.

By the way, crown there, no one will take your crown. That is not the kind of crown a king wears or queen wears. When crown is used in the New Testament, it's the wreath that they would put on the person in the Olympics who won the contest and endured and fought to the end, and then they wore a crown.

But it wasn't like a king's crown. It was just a little wreath saying that they had won and been victorious. Make sure no one robs that.

Him who comes, 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.

The city of God is not New York, or not Jerusalem in Israel, or not Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, or not anywhere. The city of God is the New Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God. And I will, Jesus said, and I will also write on Him my new name.

And then He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the church. So here was a church that doesn't seem that strong, but it was faithful. You know, the whole church growth movement and looking at numbers is totally deceptive, because you can have a church of 10,000 people coming in and out in a week, and God could be sick with the whole thing.

And you can have a church of 400, and God says, those are my people. Look how they love me. The last church we're going to hear about, Laodicea, might have been the largest one, but next week we're going to learn about the Lukewarm church.

It was neither hot nor but Lukewarm, and what was Jesus going to do? Spit it out of His mouth. Might have been running 8,000. Who knows? But numbers don't mean anything.

The only one who can judge where a church is at or where a ministry at is Jesus Christ. And at the end of time, my wife and I, the pastors, all of us will stand before Christ, and that's the only verdict that matters. People can think you're great, and you're not.

People can think you're a devil, and God is pleased with you. It doesn't matter what anyone says. Come on.

Can we put our hands together? Jesus will have the last word. Now, what I want to say here, what I want to say now, God help me to say this this right way. What I want to say is this.

The thing about this church was, although the city was rocking and rolling with earthquakes and tremors and had been rebuilt, and then later, I think in 97 AD, yeah, about 80 years after that terrible earthquake, it got knocked out again. Another earthquake came. But in all these hardships and the church not being so big, maybe it was little in numbers, maybe it was little in whatever reason, but they were faithful.

Jesus says this, I have opened a door before you that nobody can shut, but a door before you. There's a door of opportunity that I have given you to spread the gospel and do what I told you. I've placed that door.

Nobody can shut that door. I have opened it, and I am the Lord. When I open the door, nobody can shut it, and when I shut the door, nobody can open it.

But I have placed before you, you know, there's a famous church out in California that was called the Church of the Open Door. It was started 80, 90 years ago, if I remember correctly, and they named it after that sentence. I have placed an open door before you.

Don't be sleeping now. Don't get distracted. Don't get caught up with yourself and think inward, because I've placed a door before you.

There are times in life and there are places in life when God puts an open door of opportunity before you to do something important for the kingdom. Now, every day, we're to live for Christ. Every day, we're to be ready to speak for him.

Every moment of every day, there's something we can say, someone we can love, but the Bible teaches us that there are certain times in life that for a church or for a minister or for a Christian, a congregation, a family, a missionary, God says, right now, I have opened a door for you. He doesn't say this to any other church. Only Philadelphia is told, I have opened a door for you, a door of opportunity, for sure.

And nobody can shut it, but now you got to make the most of that opportunity. You got to strike while the iron's hot. You know, one of the saddest things in life, and I've been told this by ministers as I've been in the ministry a number of years, I've talked to guys who have retired.

Some guys have broken down and wept and told me, I had my moment and I missed it. God opened the door. There was an opportunity and I missed it.

I was distracted, didn't have the faith, was self-indulgent. I remember a man in Brooklyn here on 64th and 7th Avenue telling me when I was in college, he almost like prophesied that one day I would be in the ministry, and that was the last, absolute last thought on my mind. I was in college playing ball, going to

school sometimes, but mostly playing ball, and tears ran down his eyes, and he said, can I tell you something, Jim? I said, yes, sir.

He said, I've been in the ministry 60 years. For the first 40, I preached the law. I didn't preach Jesus.

I just preached rules and regulations. It took 40 years for me to be able to preach Jesus, even though I was a Christian, and the tears rolled down his eyes, because once you miss an opportunity, it's gone. You can't go back 60 years.

You can't go back 40 years. Now, what usually comes with open doors is there's problems. Look what Paul says at the end of his letter to church in Corinth, but I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost.

That's a Jewish holiday, because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me. Did God open a door for him? Yep, and what did the door come with? Many who oppose me. A lot of people, when the devil attacks us and opposes us, and there's obstacles, and there's challenges, and a shortage of money, or you say, I can't do this, many of us think, oh, you know, why? You know, I thought this might work out.

I thought God would open a door for me, but look at all these problems. Don't you get it? The bigger the door, the more the problems. The bigger the door that God opens, Paul says, there is a great door for effective service.

What a door. What is he saying there? He's saying, in every city I go, it's not the same. In some places, it's not by formula.

In some places, the Holy Spirit opens doors, and I just know the Lord is saying, stay here for three years. He stayed three years in Ephesus, 18 months in Corinth. In other places, he only stayed a few weeks.

Why? Doors. Sensing what God is doing. Timing.

Seasons of life. He says, I got a great door open by God, but ooh, there's a lot who oppose me. In fact, brothers and sisters, what I want to leave with you is this.

If the devil is attacking you, trying to discourage you and distract you away from what you know God wants you to do, then that must mean there's a big door of blessing that's coming. There must be some huge door. I've learned in my life that when the enemy attacks the most, and I feel the weakest and most vulnerable, I have learned now to be able to say, Satan, God must really have something in store for you.

Come on, can we put our hands together? God must have something in store for you to attack like this. Now, you forgive the self-reference here. I want to say this very carefully, but I want to say it as a word of encouragement.

For many people here in this building, you got to understand the door that God has opened for you individually and for us as a church. Right now, there is a wide door open for our church. What do I mean by that? And I say all this for the glory of God.

God knows how imperfect we are and that we need lots of grace. How many know we are a very imperfect church and need God big time? Just lift your hand. Just lift your hand big time.

But I want to say this too. Why would four or five excellent ministers, why would they fly from Louisville to downtown Brooklyn to come to a prayer meeting? That means God has given us a door that we can influence them, encourage them, bless them, send them on their way. Do you think that happens in every church on a Tuesday night in a prayer meeting? Every Sunday, we have hundreds and hundreds who are visiting us, right? Am I right, congregation? Hundreds.

Some of those are missionaries. Some of those are ministers. Some of those are people who are saying, I hear that when you pray, God answers.

Is it true? And they come and they write me emails. You have the best congregation, the sweetest people. I felt God.

I felt at home. I went back. I have a new lease on life, all by just sitting among you.

It's not me. It's not the choir. It's God working among you.

Can we say yes to that open door that God has given us? Now, we better be careful about this, and we better pray, because this open door might not always be there. Okay? Carol's music has gone around the world. Do you think she ever thought that? Do you think she ever planned that? Do you think she and I ever had one conversation where I want to write music or have a choir one day where the songs would be sung around the world? They are.

And we got invitations and people coming in from Brazil, from Norway, from Sweden, from this place, that place, all coming into this church. And we just watch it. It's an open door.

We got to be sensitive. We got to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I'm no writer, but God helped me write some books.

Zondervan published them. They've gone out into 20, 30 languages. I just got a call from someone who said, in Italy, they want you to come.

The pastors want you to come. They don't know if you're Baptist, charismatic, what you are. They just said, no, we welcome him because we don't know what he is, but we trust that he'll come and just lift up Jesus and encourage us.

That's an open door. I better be careful. I better be careful.

That's an open door. God opens a door nobody can shut. You pastors from Baltimore and Washington, you're here tonight.

I want to declare to you, check yourself and see what door God has opened for you because he's opened a wide door for you now. What does he want you to do? You got to really get ahold of God and march through that door because he's opened it for us. Are there adversaries? Are there difficulties? Well, of course there's going to be, but greater is he that's in us.

Come on then, he that's in the world. Can we say amen to that? There's a door, there's adversaries, but God's going to help us. Pastor Park has come here.

We have doors now. Opening around the world. Listen, the world of the early church was polluted.

The church grew not because the environment was good. The environment was horrible, but nothing can stop the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Come on, do I get an amen? I'm not one.

I pray for everything that's pure and decent to happen, but I'm not one biting my teeth and saying, oh no, if that happens. I don't care what happens. Jesus is greater than whatever happens.

I just trust Jesus and the word of God. Can we say amen to that? But it doesn't matter what they do because if God sets an open door before us, nobody can shut it. Oh no, but I hear they're going to, I don't care what they do.

If God sets an open door, nobody can shut it. I want everybody in the building here who you feel a call and God nudged you inside and you said, that's what I want to do. I want that door to open so I can walk through it for ministry.

You come out of your seat, balcony downstairs. I don't care if you're 18 years old, 78 years old. If you feel God is nudging me, come on, when he opens the door, you got to be ready.

Come on, everybody lift your hands up. Lord Jesus, we thank you for your word to us tonight that you're the one who opens doors and nobody can shut it. And Lord, a lot of times we've been looking at the newspapers more than the Bible.

We've been watching CNN and Fox News, Lord, more than we have been listening to the Holy Spirit. And there are doors already open for so many here, Lord. Doors of great effective service, opportunities.

They might not be there a year from now, two years, five years. We ask you Lord Jesus to open doors for those who are reaching out to you and saying, God use me. And we're praying for those who have opened doors that we would have the grace and the power to move through that door, Lord, consecrated, surrendered to you.

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