

Faithful Fellowship

I. Slide1 Intro:

- A. Food for Thought before I pray: **A saint's life** in the hands of God are like **a bow and arrow** in the hands of an archer. O. Chambers, *My utmost for his highest*
1. God is **aiming** at something the saint *cannot see*, and He **stretches** and **strains**, and every now and again the saint says, *'I cannot stand any more.'* God does not heed, He goes on **stretching** till His purpose is in sight, **then** He lets it fly. Trust yourself in God's hands.
For what have you need of patience just now?
Maintain your relationship to Jesus Christ by the patience of faith. *Though He slay me, yet will I wait for Him.*
 2. Pray:

II. Slide2 BACKGROUND

- A. Slide3 PHILADELPHIA - *Brotherly love*. Our 6th church.
- B. Jesus had a very special love for this church.
- C. We also are called to *Love the...*
1. **Love the Brethren** - Jn13:35 *By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*
 2. **Love the Lord** - 1Co 16:22 *If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed.*
 3. **Love the World** - This church had a vision to reach a lost world...& **God set before them an open door.**
- D. **Philadelphia** was a place in a **strategic spot** on the main route of the Imperial post from Rome to the East, **thus** it was called **Gateway to the East**.
1. It was also called **Little Athens** cuz of the **many temples** in the city.
 2. The principle deity was **Dionysus**, the god of wine. This town of Philadelphia sat on a **fertile volcanic plain** suited for **growing grapes & producing wine**, both of which the city was well-known for.

a) So Philadelphia was an agricultural success, prospered commercially.

3. This church had tremendous **opportunity**.

E. One **unfavorable** aspect about the city was its **earthquakes**.

1. A geological fault runs right beneath it.

2. In **17ad** it destroyed the city (along w/Sardis & 10 other cities) followed by a series of *intermittent shocks*.

3. Many that fled the city ended up staying out in what was called **the burnt land**.

a) **Afraid to go back in** (buildings unstable) *Like Haiti 2010 in PP after their earthquake*

4. Probably alluded to in 12a.

F. **Slide4 JESUS IS THE SET-APART, GENUINE & SOVEREIGN SAVIOR** (7b)

G. **Holy** - Jesus is Holy in His **character**, in His **words**, in His **actions**, in His **purposes**.

1. He is uniquely **set-apart** from anything else.

H. **True** - Genuine. He is the Original. Not a copy. The Authentic God, not a manufactured one. [*remember there were 100's of gods in their culture, in their day*]

1. 1 Cor. 8:5,6 **For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.**

I. **Sovereign** - **Key of David**. His right to rule. A metaphorical expression indicating complete control over the royal household. (LKGNT)

J. It's all about **Him**. **His presence**. It all starts with **Jesus**.

III. **Slide5 OPPORTUNITIES & OBSTACLES (7b-9a)**

A. **Slide6a DOORS, ARE OUR PRIVILEGE & OUR RESPONSIBILITY**

B. I said Philly was a **Gateway to the East**. **But** not only a gateway for *economic prosperity* **but** also for *spiritual prosperity*.

C. (7c) **Open & Shut** - He (Jesus) has the authority to open & shut doors.

1. Slide6b From Is.22:15-22 *The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; So he shall open, and no one shall shut; And he shall shut, and no one shall open.*
- D. (8a) In the NT open door = *opportunity for ministry*.
1. Slide6c Acts 14:27 *Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.*
 2. 2 Cor.2:12 *Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord.*
- E. They may have had little strength (ie. small or weak). But they were given an open door by the Lord...a door of service. The Lord urged them to take advantage of it.
1. I remember a very little girl trying to keep the door open for me at Starbucks. Very sweet, but the door weighed more than her. And though she tried really hard to keep it open...it was taking her with it.
 2. When God opens a door to you, Nobody can shut it...but you can ignore it. Or, Neglect it. [examples in Scripture? Moses/speak, Jonah/to evangelize his enemies]
 3. *Having the faith to walk through those open doors & keep walking is not about plans, charts, graphs, marketing, or self-confidence. It's about faith in Him. It's about keeping His Word. It's about a little power. The power to take one small step at a time, with our eyes fully focused on Him. Swindoll
- F. With Doors timing is important.
1. Ever try to walk through a door before it was fully open? (cabinet at Cal's)
- G. With Doors opening is important.
1. Ever see what happens to a dog when the doggy door isn't open (sliding board). After a couple hurt noses, they learn to nudge 1st & not just plow through it.
- H. The one thing to remember about Open Doors is to...**WALK THROUGH THEM!**
- I. What doors have been open to you recently? Did you walk through them? What doors have you missed? Did someone else walk through them?
 - J. Are you truly waiting on the Lord, or procrastinating?
- K. Slide7a **OBSTACLES, SHOULD BE OUR EXPECTATION** (8b-9a)

- L. Ok Jesus opens doors *but* whats on the other side of the Door? [expect obstacles]
1. Sometimes we can see through doors (eg. our office doors have windows in them) we can see what's on the other side *then* we walk thru.
 2. *But most times* we can't see through them which involves *risk*.
 - a) Sometimes there's even *rude awakenings* on the other side (I remember being with Jeff T in Ukraine in Winter, where it is **so hot inside** & **so cold** when you breach the front door).
 3. **Lack of Strength** - apparently *1st church of Philadelphia* wasn't a **large** church, **but** it was **faithful** one. **Small** but mighty. **Small** & maybe of *little importance*.
 - a) They were true to His word & unafraid to bear His name.
 - b) It isn't the size or the strength of the church that determines its ministry, **but faith in the call & command** of the Lord.
 - c) *His Commands are His Enablements*. warren wiersbe
 - d) *My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness*. 2Cor.12:9
 4. **Opposition of the Jews** - *How were they opposing?* excommunicated from the synagogues
- M. Philadelphia had both **Opportunities** but also **Obstacles**.
1. **Slide7b** Like Paul in 1 Cor. 16:9 **For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.** (NLT) **There is a wide-open door for a great work here, although many oppose me.**
- N. Remember, **Unbelief** sees the **Obstacles**, **Faith** sees the **Opportunities**.

IV. Slide8a **PROMISES (9b)**

1. **Slide8b** He will **Avenge** them of their enemies (9b)
 - a) One day the name only Jews will have to **eat humble pie** & acknowledge the Christians were rt.
 - b) **Worship** - Not in the strict sense **but** in the military sense. **To bow or kneel in defeat.**
 - c) **If we take care of God's work, He'll take care of our battles.**
2. **Slide8c** He will **Accommodate** them (10,11)

a) It's **not** a local Tribulation, **but World-Wide!** (*whole world*). *Those who dwell on earth* (**not** just in Asia Minor).

b) **Persevere** - **God has placed all confidence in Jesus Christ to save us, now He wants us to place our all in confidence in Him.**

(1) So we **persevere** in our **faith**. In our **trust** in Him. In our **believing** He'll pull us through. In our **attachment** to Jesus. In enjoying His **presence**.

3. Slide 8d He will Award them (12)

a) **Pillar** - The symbolism here would be very meaningful to people who lived in constant danger of *earthquakes*. Because **pillars** are known for the *stability*.
[no need to go out of a city that nothing could destroy]

b) **Names** - Ancient cities often honored great leaders by erecting pillars w/ their names on them.

B. **3 Names** (3 tattoos, *write on him*) **Interesting:** *The citizens of Philadelphia expressed warm gratitude on **inscriptions** and **coins** to the emperor **Tiberius** for his assistance in the process of rebuilding their city, and they later took the name Neocaesarea.*

1. **YHWH. New Jerusalem. Jesus' New Name** (?). *God's name, His City's name. His Son's name.*

a) Just as the high priest wore God's name on their heads (turbans). *Holiness to the Lord.*

b) Also referring to *proof of ownership* [eg. when men put on their wives license plate frame, *Johnny's Girl*]

c) Also, maybe in contrast to *the mark of the beast*.

C. **END**

D. We are much like the Philadelphia church *in that* God has set many **open doors** before us.

1. If He **Opens** the door we must **Work**. If He **Shuts** the Doors we must **Wait**.

2. We must **see** the Opportunities **& not** the Obstacles.

a) **Missed Opportunities** are missed **Rewards** (*take your crown*)

3. Having the faith to walk through those open doors & keep walking is not about plans, charts, graphs, marketing, or self-confidence. It's about faith in him. It's

about keeping his word. It's about a little power. The power to take one small step at a time, with her eyes fully focused on him.

E. CM hear what the Spirit says to our church.