

Revelation 3:7-13
 God on the Throne
 RV1607

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 Revelation

The Struggling Church

INTRODUCTION: The joy of preaching on the Seven Churches of Revelation is found in three things ...

1. First: There is a bevy of good books commenting on these Seven Churches (e.g. *Wm Barclay* and *John Stott*)
2. Second: The messages outline themselves with their seven-fold pattern.
3. Third: The applications are so pertinent that these seven letters speak to us in a powerful and practical way.
4. Really, they are a preacher's dream: *good study material, easy to outline, practical in application.*
5. These seven letters to these Seven Churches can be summarized with one word for each Church (**John Stott**)
 - a. *Ephesus*: **Love**
 - b. *Smyrna*: **Suffering**
 - c. *Pergamum*: **Truth**
 - d. *Thyatira*: **Holiness**
 - e. *Sardis*: **Reality**
 - f. *Philadelphia*: **Opportunity**
 - g. *Laodicea*: **Wholeheartedness**
6. One commentator pointed out that in the Christian life in the church we are always being developed for godliness by three processes:
 - a. *Affirmation*: We like to be told where we are doing well. This gives us both confidence and assurance.
 - b. *Correction*: We need to be told what parts of our lives aren't doing well. This allows us to avoid distress and danger.
 - c. *Motivation*: We want to be moved by God's promises and the Spirit's power to undertake the steps of growth set before us. This gives us focus and zeal.
7. **Eugene Peterson** (*Reversed Thunder*; p. 53) points out that these three processes are in all of the 7 letters to the 7 churches and the whole of their messages serves as God's training program for His Church –
 - a. *The training takes place in seven areas: we are trained to love (Ephesus), to suffer (Smyrna), to tell the truth (Pergamum), to be holy (Thyatira), to be authentic (Sardis), to be in mission (Philadelphia), and to worship, using things to praise God, receiving gifts to serve God (Laodicea). The church is the community of people who explicitly and consciously submit themselves to the direction and training of our Lord the Spirit, so that excellence is pursued in these seven areas.*

- b. “*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches*” – again, and again, and again ... 7 times.
- 8. It is **never** easy to be a Christian in this world. We can lose our first love for Christ or our zeal for God because of worldly pursuits and pleasures.
 - a. We can suffer persecution, opposition and hatred from our neighbors around us, or the government.
 - b. We can compromise on God’s word or quench and grieve His Spirit until we are spiritually dead.
 - c. Or, we can always just turn away from Christ because success, money and sex are three gods too strong to resist. We can fall away from the faith.
- 9. One of the great delusions we allow ourselves to embrace is this: Churches that are small and struggling must be doing something wrong and therefore lack God’s favor.
 - a. This is a corollary misconception to the *myth of success*.
 - b. It is taught by **Joel Osteen, T.D. Jakes**, and some Charlotte mega-church pastors.
 - c. America Thinks: *If it’s big, if it’s powerful, if it’s popular and wealthy it must have God’s blessing upon it.*
 - d. **Illustration:** About 8 years ago I obliquely criticized a local mega-church for its unbiblical actions. A mother, who took her children there, wrote to me: “ _____ church is the fastest growing church in America, so God must like what they’re doing.”
 - e. Careful now: We could apply that same rationale to Islam, the Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, or the rise of the “Nones!”
- 10. God loves small churches. So do most Americans!
 - a. **George Gallup** tells us that ...
 - i. the average size church in America is 89 adults
 - ii. 60% of American churches have less than 100 adults
 - iii. Most American churches never break the 200 barrier
 - iv. Only 2% of American churches have over 1,000 adults attending.
 - b. **George Barna** says this is not due to
 - i. Lack of desire – most churches want to grow
 - ii. Lack of prayer – most church leaders are faithful in prayer
 - iii. Lack of love – smaller churches often love better than their larger counter parts
 - iv. Lack of Facilities – growth can start in unlikely places
 - c. No, **Barna** says it’s due to a lack of a plan to grow: *most churches organize, behave, lead and manage like a small organization. They operate like “mom and pop” businesses.*
 - d. But ... perhaps ... the reason is that

- i. Americans *prefer* smaller churches
 - ii. America is becoming *less churched* over all
 - iii. America is becoming *more pagan* in its projection.
 - e. **There is nothing inherently wrong with a smaller church.**
11. **Church leaders.com** offers a different, and perhaps more realistic picture: *7 Startling Facts: An Upclose Look at Church Attendance in America*. (Rebecca Barnes and Lindy Lowery)
- a. Less than 20% of Americans regularly attend church (less than ½ of what pollsters report)
 - b. American church attendance is steadily declining.
 - c. Only 1 state is outpacing its population growth: Hawaii at 13.8%
 - d. Midsized churches are shrinking: smallest and largest churches are growing
 - e. Established churches, 40-150 years old are on the average declining
 - f. Increases in church attendance is ¼ of what is needed to keep up with population growth
 - g. In 2050, the percentage of the U.S. population attending church will be 50% of what it was in 1990.
12. **BTW:** *The Hartford Institute* estimates that there are approximately 350,000 religious congregations in America (based on *Religious Congregation Membership Study 2010*) 314,000 Protestant, 24,000 R.C. or Orthodox, and 12,000 non-Christian groups.
13. Who's right? What the real situation? What's truly happening and why? **I don't know!**
14. But **one thing** appears to be true: Because of a generational shift in the interest in church, increased immigration of non-Christian religions, and the overall secularizing trends in Western Society, most American churches will be ...
- a. Smaller in 40 years than they are now.
 - b. Christians will be a minority in the U.S.A.
 - c. Churches will be smaller that the task set before them by the Great Commission.
 - d. i.e. *Churches in America will be like the Church in Philadelphia, Asia Minor, in 100 A.D.*
15. The small struggling church trying to be faithful to the Great Commission...

“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘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.

“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. 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. 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. I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. 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. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ (Rev 3:7-14)

I. THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH OF PHILADELPHIA (Rev. 3:7-13)

1. **Note:** the church in Philadelphia is one of two churches (*Sardis*) whom Jesus does *not* rebuke or give a warning. He has only good and gracious things to say to this little church.

2. The Identity of Christ: *The Holy One with the Key of David (3:7)*

a. *And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘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. (Rev. 3:7)*

b. Jesus is quoting Isaiah 22:22

i. *And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David. He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. (Isaiah 22:22)*

ii. *About Eliakim the Son of Hilkiah, the steward of King Hezekiah’s House*

c. *“The Key of David”* = a symbol of authority and power of the the kingdom. The promise God gave to David that he would not lack a son to sit on his throne (a messianic picture here)

d. Jesus Christ has been placed by God as Head over the House of God = *The Kingdom of God*. The Son of David

Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God’s house. For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) Now Moses was faithful in all God’s house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God’s house as a son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope. (Hebrews 3:1-6)

e. The “open door” – the door to the Kingdom of God; the door of salvation

i. Only Jesus can open that door

ii. No man can shut that door

iii. *So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. (John 10:7-10)*

iv. *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)*

f. **Gist:** No one can keep the Saints of Philadelphia out of heaven as long as they are faithful to Christ.

3. The Commendation: *Faithfulness in spite of smallness* (3:8)

- a. *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.* (Rev 3:8)
- b. Again for the 6th time “*I know*”; and for the 4th time “*I know your works.*”
- c. “*But I have set before you an open door...*”
 - i. Is this door different than the one referenced in v. 7?
 - ii. Probably yes, but nonetheless related
- d. The door is the *opportunity to witness for Christ.*
 - i. *But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.* (1 Cor 16:8-9)
 - ii. *When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, even though a door was opened for me in the Lord* (2 Cor 2:12)
 - iii. *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.* (Acts 14:27)
- e. A door of opportunity to use the Gospel to open the door of the Kingdom of God to other people
—
I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matt 16:19)
- f. But: “*I know that you have little power, and yet, you have kept my word and not denied my name.*” (**commendation**)
- g. **Pliny the Elder** was the Roman governor of *Pontus and Bithynia*, just north of Philadelphia, from 111-113 AD, leader Emperor **Trajan** (About 10-15 years after John wrote Revelation)
- h. He wrote a letter to Emperor Trajan seeking advice and telling the Emperor how he handled the “Christian Problem” in his region:
 - i. *It is my practice, my lord, to refer to you all matters concerning which I am in doubt. For who can better give guidance to my hesitation or inform my ignorance? I have never participated in trials of Christians. I therefore do not know what offenses it is the practice to punish or investigate, and to what extent. And I have been not a little hesitant as to whether there should be any distinction on account of age or no difference between the very young and the more mature; whether pardon is to be granted for repentance, or, if a man has once been a Christian, it does him no good to have ceased to be one; whether the name itself, even without offenses, or only the offenses associated with the name are to be punished.*
 - ii. He then told the Emperor his procedure...
Meanwhile, in the case of those who were denounced to me as Christians, I have observed the following procedure: I interrogated these as to whether they were

Christians; those who confessed I interrogated a second and a third time, threatening them with punishment; those who persisted I ordered executed. For I had no doubt that, whatever the nature of their creed, stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy surely deserve to be punished. There were others possessed of the same folly; but because they were Roman citizens, I signed an order for them to be transferred to Rome. Soon accusations spread, as usually happens, because of the proceedings going on, and several incidents occurred. An anonymous document was published containing the names of many persons.

- iii. What did he find when he interrogated, tortured and persecuted these “offenders”? Just this:

They asserted, however, that the sum and substance of their fault or error had been that they were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god, and to bind themselves by oath, not to some crime, but not to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, not falsify their trust, nor to refuse to return a trust when called upon to do so. When this was over, it was the custom to depart and to assemble again to partake of food -- but ordinary and innocent food. Even this, they affirmed, they ceased to do after my edict by which, in accordance with your instructions, I have forbidden political associations. Accordingly, I judged all the more necessary to find out what the truth was by torturing two female slaves who were called deaconesses. But I discovered nothing else but depraved, excessive superstition.

- iv. He then makes this final and fascinating observation:

I therefore postponed the investigation and hastened to consult you. For the matter seem to me to want consulting you, especially because of the number involved. For many persons of every age, every rank, and also both sexes are and will be endangered. For the contagion of the superstition has spread not only to the cities but also to the villages and farms. But it seems possible to check and cure it. It is certainly quite clear that the temples, which have been almost deserted, have begun to be frequented, that the established religious rites, long neglected, are being resumed, and that from everywhere sacrificial animals are coming, for which until now very few purchasers could be found. Hence it is easy to imagine what a multitude of people can be reformed if an opportunity for repentance is afforded.

- i. **This** was what these Christians in Philadelphia were up against: *accusations, arrests, interrogation, torture, death, and many fellow Christians renouncing Christ and returning to paganism to save their skins!*
 - j. **Now we know WHY the church of Philadelphia was “little” in power, small and struggling.**
 - k. But, they were **faithful** to the Name of Christ.
4. The Admonition (Rebuke): *None. These were faithful witnesses.*
 5. The Warning: *None. Jesus threatens them with nothing.* Instead of a warning there are two promises...
 6. The Promises: Two great promises: one for now and one for later (3:9-10)

- a. *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. 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. (Rev 3:9-10)*
- b. First: Jesus promises them that some of the “*Synagogue of Satan*” (a militant Judaism that was turning Christian names in to the governor) would come to faith in Christ, and would come to seek forgiveness for the way they wronged their Christian brothers.
- c. **Dennis E. Johnson:** *Triumph of the Lamb*; p. 88
 - i. *Here, however, Jesus describes the closer, grace filled foretaste of that day, in which the humiliation of his enemies becomes their salvation. In Isaiah’s prophetic imagery the Gentiles were to be saved as they came to bow at Israel feet and to confess, “Surely, God is with you, and there is none else”. Now the tables are turned: It is the multiethnic church to whom Jews will bow, confessing that here alone can the love of Israel’s holy One be found.*
 - ii. Their love for Christ and one another would over come the hate of pagans and Jews, and lead them to salvation.
 - iii. The Reverse of Isaiah 45:14 –

Thus says the Lord:
“The wealth of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush, and the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over to you and be yours; they shall follow you; they shall come over in chains and bow down to you. They will plead with you, saying: ‘Surely God is in you, and there is no other, no god besides him.’” (Isa. 45:14)
- d. Second: Jesus will protect Philadelphia from the “hour of trial” coming upon all mankind.
 - i. Jesus’ Prayer for His Church...

I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. (John 17:9-15)
 - ii. Preservation through the Persecution and the Great Tribulation coming in the last days.
 - iii. **Not** an escape, **but** a preservation.

7. The Exhortation: *Keep Being Faithful. Hold fast! (3:11)*

- a. *I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. (Rev. 3:11)*
- b. “*Hold fast to what you have*” = Your faith in Christ

8. The Promise of Reward: *Most interesting of the 7 Churches (3:12)*

- a. *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. (Rev 3:12)*
- b. *Three things: a pillar in God's temple; the name of God written on the believer; the name of the City of God.*
- c. **Notice this:** In 17 A.D., under Tiberius Caesar (when Jesus was about 22 years old) Philadelphia was destroyed (levelled) by a great earth quake and experienced destructive after shocks for decades.
 - i. The Emperor came to the aid of the city by exempting them from taxes, tribute and other subsidies.
 - ii. In gratitude Philadelphia erected a huge monument to Tiberius, and gave their city a *new name: Neocaesarea* (New City of Caesar)
 - iii. It remained a small city, dependent on Roman relief, for many decades.
- d. To this little church, ravaged by difficulty, but faithful to Jesus' Name and their gospel mission, Jesus promises them 3 things.
 - i. *To make them pillars in God's Temple in heaven* (better than the worshippers at Tiberius' new temple in Philadelphia.)
 - ii. *To write on them the Name of God*, identifying them as belonging to God and under His protection not curse.
 - iii. *To write on them the name of God's New City*, not Neocaesarea but The City of God. (New Jerusalem)
- e. **A promise of safety, honor and eternal security.**
- f. **John Stott:** *What The Spirit Says to the Church: p. 108*

If we renounce in this life the way of ease, we shall in the next life, in God's temple which is heaven, be made pillars, stable, immovable, secure, which would not fall even if Samson were to lean on them. Philadelphian Christians might live in fear of earthquake shocks, but nothing will shake them when they stand as pillars in heaven.

9. The Final Statement: *"He who has an ear..." (3:13)*

10. **William Barclay:** *Letters to the Seven Churches; p. 107*

In the ancient world when a man became king, or when he became a claimant to a kingdom, the first thing he did was to issue coins with his name stamped on them. Coinage was the sign of kingship; and the name was the sign of ownership. The Christian is like the coin of God. He ought to have his owner's name stamped upon him. The life of the Christian should be such that all men may see that he is the property of God.

11. Jesus does not forget to own those who live faithfully for Him!

II. THE MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH OF PHILADELPHIA

1. We need to know one more important thing about the City of Philadelphia: *It was started in 140 BC, by the Greeks, to serve as a frontier town to Hellenize the Asia Minor Region.*
2. Philadelphia was begun around 140 BC by **Eumenes II**, the King of Pergamum, and named after his younger brother **Attalus Philadelphus**.
 - a. 30 miles SE of Sardis, on main roads for both commerce and the military, into Phrygia.

- b. It was begun to spread the Greek language, religion and culture into Lydia and Phrygia
- c. It was called “*Gateway to the East*” or “*Door to the East*”
- d. Sir **William Ramsey**: “*Philadelphia was a missionary city from the beginning.*” (missionary of Hellenism, not Christianity)
- e. And quite successful, by the first century A.D. Greek was the language spoken in those lands, Greek temples and statues of the gods dotted the country side and filled the cities, and Greco-Roman culture changed everyday life.

3. **Darrell W. Johnson**: *Discipleship on the Edge*; pp.111, 112

“Here is where we really see the brilliance of Jesus. Philadelphia was founded in 140 B.C. for one over-riding purpose: to be a base from which to launch a campaign to Hellenize the world—to be a base from which to spread the Greek language, worldview and way of life to the whole world. So Sir William Ramsey wrote: “Philadelphia was a missionary city from the beginning.” A missionary city for everything Greek!”

“From now on the city would be a base for the launching of a new campaign, the campaign to gospelize the world. It would now be a missionary city for the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Philadelphia was the ideal of the seven cities for such a base. It was located on one of the greatest highways in the world, the highway that led from Europe to the East. It was one of the most strategic cities of the ancient world. “Look! An open door for opportunity.” Is Jesus not making the same claim for your city, and my city? Does he not want to make it a platform from which to gospelize the world?”

- 4. Yes! *Charlotte, NC* is a “gateway city” to much of both our country and the world.
 - a. It is a *Banking Center* for America and the World.
 - b. It is a *Sports Center* with the *NFL Panthers* and *NBA Hornets*
 - c. It is in one of America’s most beautiful states, with a growing population in both all its cities and its rural areas; especially businesses and retirees.
 - d. It is an *Educational Center* near some of the USA’s finest colleges and universities.
 - e. Charlotte is increasingly a *cultural center* with one of the most liberal city councils and one of the most pro-active gay/LGBT communities (cities) in Western Society.
 - f. Finally, Charlotte has a *huge* international community with over 16,000 Muslims in the greater Charlotte area.
 - g. Note well: 60% growth rate in less than 5 years!
- 5. The *Creative Loafing* Newspaper of Charlotte (an avant-garde, anti-Christian local newspaper) ran an article in the Sept 27, 2011 on-line edition
 - a. i.e., about 5 years ago.
 - b. *Muslims in Charlotte: Islam is here and it would like to be your neighbor*, by **Cheris Hodges**.
 - c. **“...religion is to Charlotte what country music is to Nashville. The home of the evangelist Billy Graham. The region that saw the very public downfall of televangelist Jim and Tammy Bakker. Churches dot neighborhoods from Uptown to Ballantyne. But behind this shiny Bible-belt buckle is a community of Muslims –men and women who believe in one God, community service and peace – that has been growing steadily since the Islamic Society of Greater Charlotte was founded in 1978...**

Today, some 10,000 Muslims work, play and worship in Charlotte, and attend prayer services and community events at five area mosques. A few years ago, a group of Islam-practicing bank executives pushed Bank of America and Wachovia to set aside areas in

their downtown offices to accommodate Muslims’ required five-times-a-day prayer ritual. Some non-Muslims cry foul at the time, but the controversy simmered and those executives are now praying.

- d. Indeed: The 10,000 reference in 2011 is now 16,000 in 2016!
 - e. The article interviewed three Muslims:
 - i. *Arissa El-Amin*, a mother
 - ii. *Faiz Shakir*, author and journalist (man)
 - iii. *Jibril Hough*, a Methodist who converted to Islam (man)
 - iv. Together, the three of them serve as *a consultant with Crossroads Charlotte, co-author of the American Progress Study, and a member of Charlotte’s Community Relations Board ...*
 - v. Business, Think Tank, local Government
 - f. **These three Muslims are using the “open door” of Charlotte to promote acceptance of, belief in, and membership in the Islamic Faith and community**
 - g. In Islam’s 5 mosques, 7 houses of prayer, 1 Islamic school, it’s Islamic cemetery and the *Islamic Center of Charlotte*.
 - h. *“Charlotte’s Islamic community is as multifarious as the city’s general population, with believers representing more than 20 countries and multiple ethnicities including whites, blacks, Arabs and Latinos. Muslims serve on the police force, work at local banks, teach in areas schools. They cheer at their children’s soccer games just as Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist and secular parents do.”*
6. What is the **message** of the Letter to the Church in Philadelphia?
- a. *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.* (Rev 3:8)
 - b. An “open door”; a missional *opportunity*
 - c. You don’t have to go overseas to be a “missionary” anymore; the Nations are coming to Charlotte.
 - d. **We must open our doors to non-Christian visitors and walk through open doors in our lives to invite others to explore Christianity, visit Christ Covenant Church, learn about Jesus Christ.**
 - e. Islamists are doing so. Are you?
7. Some will say, “I’m only one person! What difference can I make?”
- a. you mean, like, *Arissa El-Amin, Faiz Shakir or Jibril Hough?*
 - b. at soccer games, community centers, places of prayer, on-line, Bank of America or Wells Fargo, in local politics, private businesses or school?
8. **Robert Bellah**, who was a sociologist at the University of Chicago until his death in 2015, wrote this (*Darrell W. Johnson; Discipleship on the Edge, p. 112*)

“We should not under estimate the significance of the small group of people who have a vision of a just and gentle world. In Japan a very small minority of Protestant Christians introduced ethics into politics and had an impact beyond all proportion to their numbers. They were central in the beginning of the women’s movement, labor unions and virtually every reform movement. The quality

of a culture may be changed when two percent of its people have a new vision.”

9. He’s right: only 17% of American Colonists were Church members,
 - a. **William Wilberforce** and the tiny **Clapham Sect** brought an end to slavery in England.
 - b. The **Abolitionist Movement**, that ended slavery in the US was always a tiny group of Northern Christians.
 - c. The **Women’s Temperance Movement** brought in prohibition before women had the vote!
 - d. **Dr. Martin Luther King** and the *Southern Christian Leadership Conference* was a small, oppressed and disadvantaged group which won for all of us basic civil rights.
 - e. There are *hundreds* of individuals, small group and minority movements that change our lives for the better.
10. You **are** going to live for some cause – *the Carolina Panthers or UNC Tar Heels, MADD, LGBT, Republican Party, your own small business or the corporation, the US Army or the PTA!*
 - a. I suggest you decide today to give you life to the one and only thing that is larger than Life, greater than self and lasting forever – the Kingdom of God.
 - b. *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:8)*
 - c. An *open door* to eternal life!
 - d. *And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘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. (Rev 3:7)*
11. Hear me: *This door may be closed, sooner than you think...*
 - a. If *Ms. El-Amin, Mr. Shakir or Mr. Hough* prevail in efforts to instill *Sharia Law* in Charlotte,
 - b. If the *LGBT* persuade Charlotte City Council to silence our numerous churches,
 - c. If we wake up in 10, 15, or 20 years and find ourselves a persecuted minority, struggling to survive.
12. **Jesus Christ** has opened the door; we are little and without much power, but He is the omnipotent **King of Kings and Lord of Lords**. The Power of His **Gospel** and **Grace** are invincible.
13. We need only to walk through that door, in faith, and speak about our Lord, our church and our faith to *the people in our own world.*
14. *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches: **The Door is Open!***