***Occupation with Christ

RV41-02***

We continue in Revelation 3:7-13. Here, the Lord Jesus Christ is communicating to His local church in the city of Philadelphia. He approaches them on the basis of three personal qualities. He has, first of all, presented himself as the Holy One, which means that He functions on the basis of absolute righteousness and perfect justice. Secondly, He has presented Himself as the one who is genuine; that is, He acts on the basis of divine viewpoint truth of Scripture. He is not a hypocrite. He is compatible to it. He does not say that He believes one thing, and then acts in another way. Thirdly, He has presented Himself to this church as the one who possesses the key of David, which means that He has sovereign authority as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

It is a very natural thing for believers to seek prosperity and promotion in their lives. They want things to go well in every respect of their lives, and they want to find themselves getting ahead. However, the problem arises in that many Christians have the worldly viewpoint (the human viewpoint) of seeking to have these desires of prosperity and promotion fulfilled by looking to human sources. Human celebrities themselves are very far from God's viewpoint, as we have seen. This is true of secular celebrities, and it is true of religious celebrities. They are often the most untrustworthy, even though everybody looks up to them; their names are household words; and, they carry great prestige.

Therefore, only the believer who feeds his soul daily on Bible doctrine can have the spiritual discernment to escape the delusions of Satan's humanism. That is the problem – the fact that our society and our celebrities operate from the frame of reference of humanism. Humanism has at its core the concept that man is self-sufficient. It says that man doesn't need anybody besides himself to prosper and to be promoted. This is inherent in our society. The problem is that Christians pick that right up, and they act in the same way. They think that if they want to prosper in some way, that there is some human being that they must deal with which will be the source of their securing that prosperity. If they want a promotion of some kind in life, they think that there's a human being, and that through their efforts, relative to that human being, they're going to get their promotion. That is a very false notion, and you need to readjust your thinking if that is your outlook. It may be without your realizing it. If you think a little bit, it may strike you that, indeed, that you are in the habit of looking to people to secure these things.

**Is the Bible the Inspired Word of God?**

Liberalism, in all areas of life, is in conflict with the Word of God, though often the very people who are opposed to the Word of God are the ones who are using it to establish their human viewpoint; to establish their liberal views; and therefore, to establish their evils. Last year, a survey was made among clergymen as to what their attitude was toward the Word of God. The question that they were confronted with was specifically: "Do you believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God?" That question is much weaker than asking a clergyman whether he believes that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God – that the Bible is without mistake. They just asked them the lesser question of, "Do you believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God – that God actually was behind the writing of this book, and inspired it." Of course, there were varieties of viewpoints that were expressed. I thought you might be interested. This was 1979 that this survey was taken.

Among Methodist ministers, 82% of them said, "No, I do not believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God." You may be sure they didn't view it as being inerrant. Among the Episcopalians, 89% said, "No, I do not believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God." That means that, in Episcopalian churches as of this survey (and it probably is worse now because they have gotten a few more seminary classes out), only 11% of the men in the pulpits would face their congregations with the attitude that when they pick up the Bible, it is a book that God produced; that God was behind; and, that God used human authors and preserved them, in the process of their writing, from error, and was able, through these authors to convey His divine viewpoint thinking. When it came to the United Presbyterian church, 81% of their ministers said, "No, we do not believe that the Bible is inspired by God." When it came to the Baptists, 57% of them said, "No, we don't believe the Bible is inspired." Of the Lutherans, 57% said, "No" – that the Bible is not an inspired book.

I take these statistics from a little book called Does Inerrancy Matter? written by James Montgomery Boice. It is rather interesting to notice that the Baptists and the Lutherans have the lowest negative attitude on the part of its ministers toward the Word of God. It is also interesting to note that these are the two large mainline denominations which still have not completely fallen for liberalism. The fight is still going on, particularly among the Southern Baptist Group and the Missouri Senate Lutherans (those two groups). Of course, Harold Lindsell has done an excellent job of delineating this in a very accurate way in his two books that he's written relative to this question of the Bible and inerrancy.

So, you can see that the trend here on the part of the Baptist group and the Lutheran group is also in the direction of going down the hill toward liberalism. That's a very terrible thing. That's why we say you should secure an innate revulsion toward the word "liberalism." It should be a word that becomes offensive, and that literally almost causes you to gag as you realize the blasphemy that is involved in that word; the insult to the Lord Jesus Christ; and, the humiliation that the word "liberal" connotes. Just because a religious group is involved, it doesn't mean a thing.

I have been listening to some of the arguments that various groups are presenting about some of these liberals who've been cast out of office. One of them was really amusing. It was one of these denominations with a high percentage of ministers who deny that the Bible is the Word of God. This man actually looked out through the television screen and he (with a straight face) said, "This man, of course, is a man that is in sympathy with the Moral Majority. He is, of course, a man who is a church man." Then he named the denomination that he came from, and he teaches Sunday school there. And anybody who did not know these statistics would look at that and say, "Well, that's a very wonderful person. How could he be wrong on biblical principles?" But I happen to know that the denomination that he mentioned was one of the most rabidly liberal. I knew very well that this man could not possibly have any divine viewpoint. So, the man was arguing that this man who stood for abortion understood the Bible. He had this Bible background, and certainly he could not be confused on this issue.

And I yelled back at the screen, "Baloney." He is completely confused on the issue. I know exactly why he's confused. It is because he is listening to someone who does not have an anchor point of an infinite personal God in the universe who has communicated from His side to our side in an intelligible and inerrant way. He has done exactly that. Once you cut yourself off from an infinite personal God who can speak to you without error, you are adrift in the universe. That is at the heart of liberalism's problem.

Therefore, the only celebrity that you can trust in this universe is the Lord Jesus Christ – not any human being. As we thought about the principle of Christ being a celebrity, we indicated that that is a matter of being occupied with Him in your thinking. The bases of all prosperity and promotion in the Christian life is occupation with Christ. Occupation with Christ will result in daily living compatible to the Word of God. Occupation with Christ is the result of learning doctrine. Positive volition response to the doctrine that you have in your mind produces a love for Jesus Christ that, in time, causes you to become a friend of God. That is the spiritual prime of life. Please remember that that is how the system works.

**The Brain**

You are born with a brain. This brain has two functions. One side of the brain is the perceptive side. The other side is the directive side. When you sit and listen to the Word of God, it comes in through the perceptive side. That enters your mentality, and then something happens. If you go positive toward that, that information (which is simply knowledge, or what the Bible calls "gnosis") becomes a different kind of knowledge (that the Bible calls "epignosis"). "Epignosis" is full knowledge. That knowledge is sent down into the compartment of the human soul that we call your emotions, and then into the compartment that we call the will. So, the Word of God comes down, and it governs your emotions, and it governs your will. Because it has been received by you in a positive way, it goes in this fashion: ... the perceptive mind; and, the directive mind – the emotions; the will; and, ... the intellect.

Then there is that very wonderful category of the human spirit. When you believe what God has taught you (when you believe what you're hearing now), the Word of God tells us that the Spirit of God (while you are in the status of being filled with the Holy Spirit) takes that information that you have learned, and stores it down in the human spirit in these various compartments – in summaries (categories of truth). This word is stored, and your human spirit gets filled with "epignosis" (full knowledge). What you have up in the perceptive mind is no good to you. It does not produce divine viewpoint actions. But what is down in the human spirit is now taken by God the Holy Spirit, and it is fed up to guide your emotions, and it is fed up to guide your will. The result is that your emotions and your will respond in such a way to your intellect (with the knowledge of the Word dominating) that you make divine viewpoint decisions. This is how the mind reacts to the Word of God.

What you take in, and what you are positive toward, is stored in the human spirit. That is why the Word of God says that it is God's Spirit who witnesses to our spirit that we are the children of God. God the Holy Spirit works through our human spirit. It is the depository of all of our divine viewpoint.

You are born into the Christian life with zero in that storage compartment. You are born into the Christian life with nothing in the human spirit – absolutely zero. If there is anything in there, it's just the bare smattering of the knowledge of the gospel, and that's it. That's why from then on, it takes a period of several years for you to go through this process of learning doctrine; being positive toward it; having "epignosis stored; having "epignosis" influencing the emotions; having "epignosis" influencing the will; and, thus it is directing the mentality so that you make divine viewpoint decisions. That's how a human being works. If you understand this, you will suddenly realize why it is so important to feed upon the Word of God daily, because this has to constantly be filled, and it has to constantly be replenished.

Of course, if you are in the status of carnality, then you break the line, and you learn all kinds of truth and it goes nowhere. Church members go to church for years and years and years. Oh, they learn a lot about the Bible. They keep taking it in, but they have a short-circuit in the system. No one has ever taught them 1 John 1:9. They don't know how to confess their sins. They don't know how to get out of the area of carnality and get back into this area of temporal fellowship. They are within the area of eternal fellowship, but they don't know how to get back into temporal fellowship. So, they're out here in carnality, and they're learning. They're learning all kinds of things, but it is going exactly zero as far as the influencing of their thinking because it has been short-circuited. This is a very important concept. Once you get hold of this, your heart will come alive with a love for the Word of God. It will be the most exciting thing that you do in your week. You will realize that right here is where it's at – when that perceptive mentality of yours gets an opportunity to know something about what God thinks. Then you're off and running according to what you do with it.

Well, positive volition response to that doctrine in the mind produces an emotion of love for Jesus Christ. The Lord made it very clear. What did He say? "If you love Me, keep My commandments." How can you keep His commandments if you don't know them? This is where you learn His commandments, and you cannot love Him until you have an understanding of His viewpoint. And the more divine viewpoint that you store in that human spirit, the deeper your love is for Jesus Christ.

So this is the way that you're occupied with Christ. It is not by being a mystic of some kind. It is not somebody that says, "I'm going to live from now on on vegetables and birdseed in order that I can really relate myself to God. I want to think about the Lord, and I want to suffer for Jesus." We've always got these creeps running around who want to suffer for Jesus, and they are downright boring and an irritant to the most spiritual among us.

What God wants you to do is to take in the Word of God and let a deep love for the Lord develop within your emotions as a result of God the Holy Spirit directing your emotions. The order for God is that the intellect is the supreme controlling element, and the emotions and the will are lesser elements. The intellect in charge. But the poor charismatics have put the emotions in charge; they have put the will in a stronger position; and, they've made a great minority out of the intellect. They reverse the whole thing. There is no knowledge in the emotions. Therefore, they go into an orgy situation. They think that the order in marriage is that the husband and the wife as the associates. However, he is the head. He is the dominant one. This is the relationship that is comparable to the right man and right woman within the marriage relationship. You cannot beat this combination. This is how God says, "I made you. This is how you will work. This is how you function. If you do it any other way, you will destroy yourself."

If you don't have anything of God's knowledge in the intellect, this is exactly what you're going to go. How many people have you heard that discuss spiritual things and say, "Well, I just feel like ... ," and then they're off and running on what they feel. What difference does that make – what you feel? What God thinks is what is important, and that's what governs our thinking. This is simple stuff. This is elementary in the Scriptures. But how many Christians have it? And we have to keep reminding you, because if you lose this, then you've lost it all.

**The Grace System of Perception**

By the way, this system is called the grace system of perception. The grace system of perception means that it works for anybody. It's a grace system, and it works apart from human IQ. Human IQ is absolutely zero in this setup. It doesn't matter how many smarts you have. It only matters what kind of devotion you have. As you fill this human spirit with the Word of God and God's viewpoint, you develop a spiritual IQ. So, it's a grace system. Everybody is equal, and nobody is excluded.

**Occupation with Christ**

Well, there are some very wonderful results when we are occupied with Jesus Christ. We want to look at some of those now. First of all, this occupation with Christ, as a result of this grace system of perception functioning within the soul, directs the believer's desires toward eternal values. That is one of the prime questions that every Christian has to face – his set of values. What is it that he's out to do in life? Colossians 3:1-2: "If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Of course, the Lord Jesus Himself said, "Seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these material things shall be added unto you."

If you are a parent who is occupied with Christ, then you have a perspective on values. Your goals are toward eternal values. Therefore, along will come your son or your daughter, and they'll have an opportunity to have a job to earn a little money. But then you discover, "Hey, if you take that job, you can't go to band practice on Saturday morning." Therefore, it'll interrupt your serving the Lord. You have to make a decision. This kid is all ears. He's watching and he's waiting to see what you're going to say. He's going to see what kind of a decision you're going to make. You may say, "Sure, go ahead. Skip band practice and go out here and do this." Do not think that he doesn't get the signal. You don't mean for him to learn something bad, but you've already taught him. When it comes to something for the world, and it comes to something for the Lord, you're telling him that it's alright to pick the things for the world; it's alright to go ahead and secure and to indulge your ambition; and, it's all right for you to get a little money, and you can do the Lord's things later.

Think about that. If you are a parent who is occupied with Christ, man, it will be an easy decision. The minute you discover the conflict, you say, "That's all. Forget it. We do not compromise Christian service for some ambition; some monetary advantage; or, some temporal cause. Remember, that that's what we're talking about. You can put in whatever your particular case is, but we are talking about temporal things. These are the things that are going to be short-lived. These are the things that are not going to make any difference in terms of eternity. Many a parent has taught his son and his daughter a terrible, terrible principle: compromise the things of eternity for the temporal things of the moment. Don't kid yourself that they don't get the message.

What occupation with Christ does for you in terms of orienting your desires toward eternal values is that it actually is giving you capacity to enjoy the things that God is going to give to you. You want prosperity, and you want promotion. There is a problem with those things with all of us in terms of enjoying them. There are many people in the world who have prosperity and they have promotion, but they don't enjoy them. It's not any fun. You may wonder, "What's their problem?" Well, it's pointless to seek prosperity and promotion before securing the capacity to enjoy them. How do you secure the capacity? The only way you secure the capacity is through the grace system of perception. That is why this is square one – developing through the exercise of the pastor-teacher in the local foundation, which is what the local church is all about. This gives Christians a chance to be able to take into their soul God's viewpoint, so that they will be able to have the capacity, so that when God increases your funds, you'll enjoy them. You won't be stupid enough to take that increased money and use it in such a way that it does you injury, and that it works against you.

A few years ago, we had a family in this church. They got interested in buying a trailer. These recreational vehicles can be the kiss of death. That's a dangerous thing to have around. If you have a recreational vehicle, you have to use it, don't you? Of course, you're tied up all week, and you're looking for a time: "When can I use that trailer I have out there?" So, you decide that the way to do that is to kind of slip in on Saturday. Then you find that you just love it so much on Saturday: "Well, let's say Saturday night too." Then you rush in early so that you can get there for Sunday school. Then after a while, you say, "Well, it's just so wonderful out there." You know, you get in the trailer, and everybody's having a wonderful time, and it's so quiet. You're sleeping, and it's raining outside, and you're all dry inside the trailer. So you say, "Well, let's just skip Sunday school this morning." And then it expands. It has a way of growing.

The result is (and was in this case) that pretty soon there was a rationalization on the part of this family that they needed to be able to be out there because it was a little country place and it was so good for their son. The mother was very concerned about her son. He was getting interested in girls. So, they finally decided that the way to help protect him was to stay in the trailer on the weekends out at the farm, and that would help him to learn how to deal with girls. This is the old isolation technique. And of course, I imagine that by the time Monday morning school came around, that guy was really raring to go again. They had kept him penned up there in that stupid little box over the weekend.

I kind of warned them. I said, "That's a dangerous game to play. God has prospered you. God has given you the money, and you're free to invest it in a recreational vehicle, and now you're using it against the Lord. Your kids can't play in the band." The kid says, "I can't come to band practice." And sure enough: pretty soon the boy came and handed me the instrument, and said, "I can't play it anymore because we have to go out to the farm with our trailer on the weekend."

Well, the other day I just heard that this poor little boy (barely out of his teens) has just married somebody three times his age. I imagine that that's interesting, but it is doom down the line. And the going to the farm and the excluding from the sound of the Word of God is proving to be a very costly, stupid move.

And that's what we're up against. Excluding yourself from Christian service, and excluding yourself from the sound of the Word of God, in time, will bear a bitter fruit, even if something extreme like that doesn't happen. I'll guarantee you that when you stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, a lot of kids are going to look back and say, "Why did my parents ever make that kind of a decision on my part, because I picked up the clue, and later on someplace down the line, I was programmed to swap temporal things for eternal things?"

**We Live in a Unique Time in History**

You and I live in the greatest time in all human history. Never before in the history of the human race, except in the age of grace (the dispensation of the church), has it been possible for people to develop such an occupation with Jesus Christ for the simple fact that, in this age alone, we've got it all together. We have a completed canon of Scripture. We've got it all. We've got the whole story from one end to the other. The Old and New Testament are complete. We have the local church organization. We have that structure divinely provided as an access to what is inside that Scripture. We have the unique pastor-teacher gift provided for the exposition; the explanation; and, the ability to convey what's inside that complete canon of Scripture. We have (wonder of wonders) the personal indwelling of God the Holy Spirit as our personal guide and teacher into an understanding of the things we're taught. He is the one who gives us the capacity for positive volition to go from the perceptive mind to the human spirit, and then to feed back up into all the areas of the soul so that we prosper indeed. That's how you prosper in life. That's how you put yourself in a position for promotion. But until you have capacity, you're not going to enjoy your prospering, and you're not going to enjoy your promotion. Worse than that, you're going to go about seeking your prosperity in the wrong way. You're going to go about seeking your promotion in the wrong way. What you're going to do is keep your eyes on people. That's where you're going to look for it.

Another point is that occupation with Christ produces the quality of holiness and of genuineness which the Lord spoke of to this Thessalonian church. It is the Word of God residing in the human spirit that produces this change. In James 1:18-22, James says, "Of his own will He begot us with the Word of Truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath. For the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. Wherefore put away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." What is it that occupation with Christ through the intake of the Word of God produces? It produces holiness. It produces a genuineness toward the word of truth so that we are not hypocrites in terms of the Word of God. We do not sound off our devotion to the Lord, and to His causes, and then undermine them by our conduct and our choices. Occupation with Christ begins with the intake of the Word of God, and that occupation with the Lord produces the holiness and the genuineness that He expects and that He seeks in His children.

**Happiness and Stability**

Occupation with Christ also produces the happiness and the stability that we seek. One of the qualities that every human being needs is to be able to be stable – not the yo-yo type. That is contrary to God's plan. In Psalm 16:8-9, the psalmist puts it this way: "I have set the Lord always before me (occupied with Christ). Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved (stability). Therefore, my heart is glad (happiness), and my glory rejoices (promotion). My flesh also shall rest in hope." You will have future happiness, even in the face of death. Occupation with Christ is where you get happiness. That's where you get the stability in life so that you're prepared to meet it. One of these days you may discover that you need a handful of stability. You may suddenly find yourself in a world of turmoil, and you're going to have to dig deep within yourself and reach back for stability that you are not going to produce unless you have established it ahead of time through your occupation with Christ.

Another factor to observe is that occupation with Christ promotes total dependence on Him for personal prosperity and promotion. Psalm 37:4-5: "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your ways unto the Lord. Trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass."

**Gratitude**

Then there is one point more. Occupation with Christ enables the believer to live with a spirit of gratitude to the Lord without grumbling about his circumstances. In Colossians 3:16-17, Paul says, "Let the Word of Christ (doctrine) dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching; and, admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." One only has to read the opening chapter of Romans to discover that man, who began with a knowledge of God, because he was an ingrate relative to that knowledge, went downhill by a process of devolution until he began worshiping animals; four-footed creatures; and, insects that crawled around. Why did he do that? Because he was an ingrate. If you want to undercut the blessings for prosperity and the promotion that you seek, just be an ingrate toward what God has provided for you in the Word of God. Just be a grumbler. Just be a complainer. If something happens in life; something disturbs you; or, something upsets your plans, do you take it in stride? Maybe the Lord is telling you something through that disruption. Just start grumbling, and demonstrate that you don't have the stability; that you don't have a spirit of gratitude; and, that you don't have a spirit of subjection to the Lord. Occupation with Christ gives you all of that.

**Jesus Christ Opens the Doors**

On that background, Revelation 7 says, "Our Lord has the key of David. And with that key (that sovereign authority), he opens something:" "He that opens." The word "open" looks like this in Greek: "anoigo." The word "anoigo" means to make access to something. The Lord Jesus Christ has power to open doors to service; to prosperity; and, to promotion. In the Greek language, this is in the present tense which means that He constantly opens these believers: service; prosperity; and, promotion. It's in the active voice, so this word is telling us that Jesus Christ Himself is the one who opens the door. Please notice that Jesus Christ is the one who opens doors to us. It is a participle. A spiritual principle is being stated. Christians who operate on human viewpoint do not understand this principle of Jesus Christ opening doors. Instead, they only understand the humanist concept that people open doors. The doors that you want to seek to enter in life are never opened to you by people. They are opened by the Lord.

Yet, how often are you flattering up some slob in order to gain his goodwill because he has something that you would like, and that you think he can be a source of providing? That is wrong. If what you seek is in the plan of God for you, nothing will keep you from getting it except your own carnality. If the Lord is out to prosper you, nothing will stand in the way of that prosperity. If the Lord is out to promote you, nothing will stand in the way of that promotion except your own carnality. If you go looking to some human source, then you are going to be disappointed.

How often have we been tempted to compromise our personal integrity in order to gain acceptance? How often have you compromised your personal integrity in order to gain acceptance with someone who could give you something that you sought? How often have you indulged someone's arrogance in order to gain favors from that person? And you have to train yourself all over again. This is the way we are taught in our society: "Play ball with people; play ball with evil; play ball with people who are the worst type in order to gain some goal that you desire." And if you've done that, you have known what it is to be humiliated – to be standing in the presence of these people, and to often be dangled like a donkey who is chasing a carrot out in front of him, and to move you in a certain direction, and to experience the dehumanization, because you have looked to someone in a position of power to gain for you something that you wanted.

Within a church congregation, there are always some people who can do something more than other people. Some people have more money than other people. Some people have more abilities than other people. Some people have more skills than other people. There are always preachers who preach in terms of not offending these folks. They are very careful not to say anything that would be taken personally that would reflect upon them, because they need their support. No, you don't. There's only one person whose support you need, and that's the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. You may get by with making those people acceptable, and making them tolerate you, but they will rise up in eternity and curse you for it in whatever way they can do that because of what it has cost them, because you did not confront them with themselves. You did not put them downwind of themselves so that they could understand what they really were from God's point of view. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who opens, and that active voice is something you don't want to ever forget. It is not human beings.

No one can do anything for you in life. Only Jesus Christ can do something for you. Why? Because we've already learned that He has the key of sovereign authority. Ephesians 1:22 puts it this way: "And has put all things under His feet (that is, under Jesus Christ), and has given Him to be the head over all things to the church." So, what are we saying? We're saying that if the Lord Jesus Christ does not open up to you something you seek, it isn't open, no matter what people may lead you to think. If Christ does not promote you, you haven't been promoted. If the Lord does not prosper you, you're not prospered. You may have more money, and you may have what you seek, but you're kidding yourself. You have not been prospered. Prosperity and promotion is dependent upon the Lord – never upon man. If you depend upon man, you're doomed to disappointment.

We shouldn't seek to get what we want by working on another person. Do you think that anybody ever does that in marriage? Do you think that people in marriage seek to get something they want by working on the other person? How often within a marriage relationship do you have: "I'll do this if you'll do that? If you're not going to do that, OK. There is no sex for you. I'm going to cut you off from this, and I'm going to put the screws on you this way and that way." And if the other person does not have moral restraints, and they find themselves some other playmate, life goes on. Who do you think you're kidding, and where do you think you've gotten anywhere with that kind of getting what you want? Maybe it is something legitimate that you want. But you're seeking it from another person. You're crazy. You'll never get it. That is exactly the humanist viewpoint. That is exactly Satan thinking. What you want must come from the Lord. Whatever kind of prosperity you seek, monetary and other kind, if you don't get it from the Lord, you have not been prosperous.

This is a basic, important principle. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who has the authority to open doors for divine blessings. When He does it, it's on a grace basis with no strings attached. And when He acts, he acts in holiness. Therefore, what He gives us is secured.

It is very clear that the New Testament believers in the Bible actually served as the Lord opened doors of service to them. Notice a few verses.

Acts 14:27 (in terms of the New Testament church): "And when they were come and had gathered the church together, they reviewed all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the gentiles." Who had opened the door of faith to the gentiles? God had opened the door of faith to the gentiles. He had given them that opportunity of service.

1 Corinthians 16:9: "For a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries." I like that verse. The apostle Paul said, "Man, I have had a wide open door of service. The Lord has opened a door to me that has been very effective, and He's done it in the face of a lot of adversaries." Nobody is going to keep a door shut, no matter what they try to do, if the Lord is the one that's opening the doors.

2 Corinthians 2:12: "Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and the door was open unto me of the Lord." The door was open again to Paul by the Lord.

I think that's very interesting. These passages, which could be multiplied, indicate something very significant about personal witnessing – personal Christian testimony. Have you ever been put under the screws of some preacher who said, "Don't you dare go to bed until you have witnessed to five people today; until you have given out ten tracts; or, until you have done this or that in terms of Christian service? Don't you dare do it." You've heard it, and a lot of poor Christians succumb to it. It is very difficult for some Christians to speak with somebody, so they feel they've got to talk to somebody. That's what their preacher told them. So, they stand around on the street corner, and they're very awkward and ill at ease. And somebody comes along, and they say, "Are you going to heaven?" The reply is, "No." Then they say, "Well, do you want to receive Jesus Christ as your Savior?" Again, they reply, "No." Then they say, "OK, you're going to hell." Then they go to somebody else and the guy says, "Same to you, fella." So they have this compulsion to witness even though the door is not open.

We have had Christians who are not very outgoing (just kind of quiet, ordinary folks), but who knew the Word of God, and suddenly they found themselves in a situation where the talk moves toward spiritual matters, and the interest is there on the part of this person who needs the gospel. I don't know how many times people have come to me and said, "I can't believe the way I talked. That's not like me, but I just sat there explaining the Scriptures. Thoughts would come to my mind. I'd remember this point. This person would ask something, and I would remember the answer. I turned to it in the Bible, and I couldn't believe the way I was able to talk to this person."

What had happened? What had happened was that you didn't go up and (SWAT-like) kick the door open to come charging in with your machine-gun full of Bible verses to splatter all over the inhabitants there in order to get them saved. You walked in because the Lord had opened to you a door that was effectual. It was ready to work. This is the kind of witnessing that the Bible speaks of. It knows of no other kind. When God opens the door, you will have the opportunity to speak. You don't have to come around and say, "Boy, this is Thursday, and I've got to go visiting and witnessing up and down the neighborhood today." So you get out there, and you grit your teeth, and you knock on the door and say, "I'm a Christian, and I'm here to tell you about the Lord." Then you're off and running, and struggling. It makes us look like fools because we're acting like fools, and we discredit the very Lord we're trying to represent. But when the Lord opens the door for you, you're going to walk right through it. It's going to be easy. You'll know what to say, provided that you have a little bit of knowledge of the Word of God. And, in heaven's name, get the gospel straight.

Don't be like the preacher I heard of one time who had a man in his office who came and said, "I am really desperate. I'd like to know how to go to heaven." This actually happened. This guy reached across and said, "If you'll come out Sunday night to my church, I'll preach the best gospel sermon you ever heard." Why did he do that? Well, because this preacher knew that the only way you get saved is by an invitation, where he says, "We'll sing hymn number 41 here now: 'Mother, put a light in the window. I'm waiting to come home now.'" So the organ starts playing, and they start singing. Now, how is he going to have such an invitation in his office? He can't do that in his office. You've got to have the congregation sing: "Mother put a little light in the window. I'm coming home." He can't do that in his office. Well, what have you done?

How many people have been delayed? You won't keep anybody from heaven that way. God's going to override your stupidity and bring them in with somebody else's testimony. However, there have been Christians whose salvation has been delayed, and therefore their rewards have been delayed, and they have been denied opportunity for those rewards because somebody fouled up the gospel message. You have to know the message. You have to know what the gospel is – about Christ dying for their sins, and you have to tell people what they have to do with it. They have to believe it, and they have to accept it. When you can do that, the Lord is going to open doors to you, and you will know how to speak to people, and you won't get bogged down with how Jonah could have lived inside that whale, and all of these other things that people bring up as resistances to these matters. You'll get in there, and you'll get right at it. ... You're going to have to learn the Word of God sufficiently to be able to use it. Otherwise, you're going to be devastated.

That's why the Lord doesn't open doors. Some people try to kick the door open. And the Lord says, "Man, I don't want you to open your mouth. You're going to make Me look bad. You're going to get this person confused, and I just want you to be silent." That's the same thing as with these celebrities that various church organizations like to come up with. Somebody who is an important person gets saved, and then they want to bring him right out and make a big star of him. Instead, the main thing they should tell them is, "Keep your mouth shut until you have something to say".

I remember reading an article of an interview with President Reagan's pastor, Donn Moomaw. I remember years ago when Moomaw was first saved. He was a football player. And, boy, they grabbed him and said, "Here is a very famous, wonderful superstar. In that article, he was just looking back and observing how he was exploited; how that hurt him; and, how that worked against him. He was getting up there to try to be someone who was a spokesman for the Lord who wasn't prepared to be a spokesman. Somebody was opening doors and shoving him through. But those organizations, as he recognized, were doing it for their own benefit. They were seeking to prosper themselves at his expense. There is no excuse for that.

So, the Scriptures are very tremendous here in this little statement that Jesus Christ, who has the key of David, is the one who opens. Then there is a very wonderful statement. He says, "No one." That's the Greek word "oudeis." When you see this part of the negative ("ou"), you know that that's the strong negative in the Greek language: "Absolutely no one shuts." The word "shut" is "kleio." "Kleio" means to remove access to something. Here, it refers to the door opened by the authority of Jesus Christ to service; to prosperity; and, to promotion. It's in the future tense, which means that at any time in the future – when the Lord opens a door, nobody is going to close it. So, this is a clue too. When you are in an opportunity of service, and God opens the door, it's going to stay open till He's ready to close it. Nobody is going to close it. So, at no time in the future is anybody going to close that door. It is active. No individual can take upon himself to counter that. It's in indicative mood – a statement of fact. When He opens it, it is going to stay open, and no man is going to close it.

The other side of the story is that it says that, "When He shuts it, it stays shut." It uses this same word "kleio" again. This time is it removing opportunity to access. And, instead of future, it's present tense. It's always true. That's what present means. It is active. Jesus Christ does it. It is indicative – a statement of fact. When He closes a certain door, either to your desires or to your service, then that door stays closed. And again, you have the same word "oudeis" (no one). No man is able then to "anoigo." This is the same word we had before. He goes down, and He goes right back up with the same words. No one is able again to open it. So, when the Lord closes the door to service; to prosperity; or, to promotion, don't push, and don't kid.

One of the refreshing things about the Berean Tape Ministry that is precious to all of us is that when it began seven or eight years ago, we made a simple decision that we don't charge for tapes. That was a decision that did not set well with some people. We have some people who are no longer members of Berean Memorial church because they were indignant over the idea that we were giving away these tapes without charging for them, even though God did exactly what we said we were going to look for Him to do – to show us that there was an open door that we were going through, and that He wanted us to go through, because He provided us with the money. And that's exactly what he did. And sometimes when the pressure would get to the point where I'd feel a little bit of discouragement with this resistance toward the tape ministry, a $1,000 check would come through the mail, and I wouldn't even know who the person was who sent it. ... The Lord sure was giving us His answers. The more the resistance, the more He brought us the funds. He was opening a door.

That's what this passage means. ... That characterized the Philadelphia church. That characterized the era of Christian missions. When God opened the door, it was open, and they went under adverse conditions, and they made their entrée. When God closes a door, whether it is to you as a personal witness or whether it is to an organization, then don't try to kick it down. Just back off, and just wait until the Lord is ready to let you through.

This is a great passage of Scripture, and it is one that, if we get the concept of waiting upon the one who has the sovereign authority to open service; to open prosperity; or, to open promotion to us, you're on your way. If you don't know that, you're going to be defeated every time. If you look to men, you'll be disappointed. If you look to the Son of David, who has the ultimate authority, which will have its maximum use in the Millennial Kingdom, then you're going to be a winner every time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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