***The Open Door and Super Grace  
  
RV42-01***

Please turn to Revelation 3:7-13 which deal with the letter to the church in the city of Philadelphia. The church in that city was the kind of local assembly that was particularly pleasing to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord speaks to them as one who is holy. He addresses them as the holy one, which means that He is the one who has absolute righteousness and perfect justice. He speaks to them as the one who is completely genuine relative to the divine viewpoint principles of Bible doctrine. He speaks of them as the one who possesses the sovereign authority over the events that are associated with the royal line of David. He has sovereign authority over the events of life because He is of the royal line of David.

So, He has that key of authority. The Lord Jesus Christ has omnipotence, therefore, to open and close doors of service; of prosperity; and, of promotion. Believers who are occupied with human sources will look to people for these things, and they will be disappointed. Ananias and Sapphira are an example of that from Scripture. They looked for promotion, and they looked for prosperity, but they had their eyes set on people, and they experienced a terrific disappointment, and paid a very great price, as you remember. Believers, however, who are occupied with the Lord Jesus Christ will look to Him for these things, and they will be glad. They will prosper, and they will be satisfied.

So, believers must never forget that the main issue in life for all of us is the relationship that we have to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not our relationship to an organization that counts. It is not our relationship even to a creedal or a doctrinal statement that counts. It is ultimately our loyalty and our association with a person – the person of the Son of God. That's what makes the difference in salvation. Salvation is a matter of being related to Jesus Christ. That's what makes the difference in the Christian life. It is a relationship to the person of Jesus Christ.

So, all of these areas of doctrine that we study, and all the areas of truth, are all focusing our direction and our attention toward Him. They are leading us to a person. They are not just leading us to a position or to an organization. It is very important to make that distinction. It is the Lord who has the capacity to solve our problems, and He stands ready to do so. It is this Lord that we focus on who can open doors to us through the learning of doctrine, because that's what develops the capacity within us to be able to go through the doors that He opens: doors of service; doors of prosperity; and, doors of promotion. The Lord is far more eager to open these doors for us than we generally are to go through them. Real blessings are of an eternal nature, and they are stored as treasures in heaven. The doctrine which we store in our human spirits results in a genuine love for the person of Jesus Christ, and a capacity to serve and to perform our duty in the angelic conflict.

So, verse 7 has presented the person of Jesus Christ. It has declared what he is capable of in terms of opening and shutting doors, which no one can counter. And verse 8 then proceeds to deal with the Lord's commendation – His dealing with this church in Philadelphia. This is one of two churches of these seven for which the Lord has no criticism. For this church, He has only commendation.

So, He begins by telling them that He knows their works: "I know your works." In the Greek Bible, the word "know" looks like this: "oida." This is the word for knowledge which is gained as a result of observation; something that you think through; or, something that you just have an intuition for. It is not knowledge that is the result of some personal experience. You do indeed learn by doing, but you also learn by thinking things through. Here, it is the word for gaining knowledge by thinking things through. It is not the other word that the Greek New Testament uses that describes knowledge as a result of your personal experience. This word here, of course, is referring to the divine omniscience of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is that full and complete knowledge that He has about the Philadelphia church, and the people of that church, that is in view here. This is the absolute knowledge which God alone possesses. Consequently, there's no mistake about what He knows. There is no error here.

This word is in the perfect tense, but it has a present meaning. It's a peculiar word in the Greek. So, because it has present meaning, that indicates that this is something that the Lord Jesus knows about these people constantly. This, of course, is true of us. It's very easy for you and me to forget that the Lord's got the full story on us all the time. There is no area in which we're conning Him in any way whatsoever. We do that with other people. We do it to ourselves, but God has the full and the clear picture about us. It is very, very valuable, once in a while, to remember this kind of a statement: "I know your works. I've got the whole picture about you. I know everything that is true concerning you, and I know it all the time." It is perfect tense with a present implication, and present means a continual action: "I know it always." It is active. It is Jesus Christ who personally possesses this kind of full omniscient understanding. It's in the indicative mood – a statement of a fact.

"I know your (referring to the Philadelphia congregation as a whole) works." The word "works" is the Greek word "ergon." The word "ergon" means "deeds." This refers to the personal activities of the members of the Philadelphia congregation, and also to their church program as a whole – the church as an organization. The Philadelphia believers are viewed from a divine viewpoint perspective. God says, "I know your works. I *really* know your works." A lot of people think they know what they're doing. They think they understand their works, but their works are distorted in some way. We often look at other people, and we think we understand what they're doing, and we put an evaluation on it that is often very far from what is really taking place. The Lord says, "I know the nature (the real nature) of your activities." This is because what the Lord knows includes the internal part of our works. It includes our mental attitudes from which our external works flow. The Lord Jesus Christ is well aware of our secret thoughts. He is well aware of our personal attitudes. He knows fully our motivations for what we're doing in terms of Christian service.

It is very possible to be very active in Christian service out of wrong motivations. I won't go through listing those now. You can do those for yourselves, but there are many wrong reasons for serving the Lord. There are many wrong reasons for trying to get people to serve the Lord. One of the worst of them is pressures that are contrary to grace. That is why, as a church organization, we do not try to pressure people into doing things – even the things that they should do. If God the Holy Spirit does not lead you to do something, then you're not going to be doing it in a way that's going to be rewarded by the Lord.

The same thing goes for those internal mental attitude sins. Oh, they crop up all the time. The external actions indicate a mental condition. Yet, while the external sin may be a danger point in which we may indicate to a person that there is a warning to him that he should observe what he's doing, the change has to come internally. The change has to be of the motivation of the heart. The Lord looks at our works in terms of these heart motivations. He knows that what may look good to people on the outside is pretty rotten on the inside.

This statement does not detail any specific works. It simply does indicate divine approval. The Lord says, "I know your works. I know why you're doing them. I know why you're motivated. I know what you're doing, and I'm pleased with it." There is an implication that there is genuine, divine, good service, and that the Lord is happy with what they're doing.

This kind of service, of course, does not draw the world's commendation or the world's support. If any local church organization is looked upon fondly by Satan's world system, then that local church organization is suspect. If a church organization has extensive commendation by the outside world of Satan, then you may be very suspicious as to the quality of what that church is doing, because Satan's world does not bring commendation upon what people are doing that is genuinely pleasing to God. The need among believers today is faithfulness for the Lord Jesus Christ apart from personal glory and apart from personal appreciation. When you get to be a mature Christian, that's how you serve. You serve apart from personal glory. You're not looking for somebody to pat you on the back. You're not looking for somebody to express appreciation and to thank you, because you're indeed doing it unto the Lord and for the Lord's glory.

It is very tiresome and it is very oppressive, within a church organization, to have to be dealing with other believers who are the little kids spiritually – the little immature ones who can only move forward to do something as long as somebody is praising them; as long as somebody is commending them; and, as long as somebody is expressing a great deal of appreciation. There's nothing wrong with expressing your appreciation. There's nothing wrong with being grateful. There's nothing wrong with commending what somebody does. But whether people do that or not is not the reason why you should be serving the Lord. Our motivation is faithfulness to Jesus Christ apart from the commendation of the world. Generally, what we are doing that delights the heart of the Lord is going to receive very little praise from others. Very often, only the real spiritual maturity type of believers will realize that what you're doing is a monumental, wonderful piece of divine good production.

**Working in the Shade**

The Lord Jesus Christ delights in believers who can function in the shade out of the spotlight. You can test yourself. If you can function in the shade; be faithful; be consistent; and, not be erratic – just keep moving forward and getting your job done without somebody having to constantly motivate you without having to be under the spotlight, then you can test your own spiritual development and your own spiritual maturity level.

To this church, the Lord could say, "I know your works." The implication is: "I know them externally, and I know them from the attitude of your heart (what motivates) and I like what I see."

**Behold**

Then he goes on to describe a divine opportunity. He says, "Behold, I have set before you an open door." The word "behold" is kind of an important word here. It looks like this in the Greek Bible: "idou." It is what we call a demonstrative particle because it's pointing to something. What it is doing is announcing (pointing to) an important announcement which is being made. This is a divine proclamation. This word is actually used in order to get your attention – to cause you to take notice that an important statement is about to be made.

It's kind of interesting that in this letter, you have this in the Greek Bible four times. You notice here in verse 8 that you have it: "Behold." If you drop your eye down to verse 9, that verse begins with, "Behold." So, as soon as you see that word, you say, "Oh, oh, here comes a proclamation – a statement of importance. Notice what follows." Then in the middle of verse nine, you have another "Behold." Right there again, you say, "Wait a minute. Here's another important statement. Take notice of it." Then down in verse 11, you again start with the word, "Behold." So, again, you know that immediately following that word, an important divine proclamation is about to be stated.

So, this is an interesting word, and one that you want to observe. It actually comes from a Greek verb called "horao." "Horao" means "to see." It's the verb for an overview – a panoramic view. It is in the aorist tense, so it's referring to the point of stopping to pay attention to focus on a particular issue here. It is in the middle voice which means it's for your personal benefit for you to do so. And it's imperative. It's a command. So, "idou" (behold) is centering on a point of action. It is for your personal benefit to do so. And it is a divine command. So, now the word means a little more. It's not just, "Hey, look here. Hey, notice something that I'm going to say." It is God saying, "I want you to wake up and pay attention. I'm going to say something, and I don't want you to miss it." He says, "Behold" four times in this letter. It connotes a very important statement.

So, when you see that word, "idou" (behold), grasp that there is a great significance to that little word. It's not just a little grammatical structure. It's not just a little bit of a way of saying something in order to make the language sound beautiful. It is a calling to attention. It is shouting, "Notice. Wake up. Pay attention for your own benefit to something which is now to be stated."

OK, what's the important statement here? "Behold, I have set." The word "set" looks like this: "didomi." "Didomi" actually means "to place." It really means "to give." It is perfect tense which means it was done by the Lord Jesus Christ in the past, and it continues to be true to the present. The perfect tense always shows you that something happened in the past, then the effects of that thing have just continued right down to now in the present. It just continues on. So, Jesus said, "Something in the past I have established for you, and that is a permanent provision. It continues on. It is in the active voice, which means that Jesus Christ Himself made the provision. It's in the indicative mood, meaning that it as a statement of a fact.

"I have set before you." We've had this word previously for the word "before." You might remember: "enopios" "Enopios" means "face-to-face," or "in the presence of:" "I have set in your presence" something. He's referring here, of course, to some open doors for service; for prosperity; or, for promotion. This is something that can be readily seen by the believers. "I have set before you. I have placed before you (right in your very presence). He emphasizes the "the:" that it's before them specifically.

**An Open Door**

It is what he calls "an open door." These are two Greek words. The first word is open, which is "anoigo." "Anoigo" means to make access to something. Again, this is perfect tense. That means that it starts in the past and it continues. This door has been opened, and it stays open. It is passive. It has been opened for us by Jesus Christ. We do not open our own doors to service, prosperity, and promotion, and neither does anybody else. It is in the participle mood to indicate a statement of a spiritual principle. What He has opened for us in the past (that remains open) is a "thura" (a door). This is the cover on an entrance. Here it refers to opportunities for service. These are opportunities in spite of a lot of opposition and a lot of hindrances. He mentions these opportunities (this open door for service; for prosperity; or, for promotion), and then he says, "No man" (meaning no one), which is the Greek word "oudeis." This has, at the beginning of this word, the strong Greek negative. That is the strongest: "Absolutely no one can."

The word "can" is "dunamai." "Dunamai" means "to be able," or "to have inherent power." That's maybe a better translation: "No one (absolutely no one) has the power." This is present tense. It is always true that no one has the power. This is passive, but it has active meaning here (active voice). No person is able to do this. It's indicative – a statement of fact. No one is ever able to shut the thing. The word shut is "kleio." "Kleio" means to deny access to the doors that God opens to you. It's in the aorist tense (at no point in time). It's active. It's not able to be done by anyone. And it's an infinitive which means it's God's purpose that this door should not be closed. No one is able to close it (that is, the door).

So, here's an interesting statement. The Lord says to these people, first of all, "I know your work." The implication is, "I'm pleased with what you've been doing. You've been functioning on divine good production principles. Now, I want you to listen. Behold." He is going to make a statement of principle. "I have set before you" something. It's not over the hill where you can't see it. It's right before your nose. That's what this means. "Enopios:" right in your presence. It's face-to-face where you can see it, if you want to look for it: "I have set right before you an open door." This is an entrée into service; prosperity; or, promotion. There isn't anybody that's going to be able to close it.

So, here you have the divine open door policy. This is a divine provision. This statement implies that the Philadelphia church had responded to this open door. They had seized the opportunity. They had exercised a positive volition attitude in the face of Satan and the inspired human viewpoint opposition that undoubtedly they received. This was a missionary congregation. It proclaimed divine viewpoint truth from the gospel to the unsaved, and to rewards for the believer someday in heaven.

**Storing Treasures in Heaven**

Also, the open door of Christian service meant, of course, an open door for storing treasures in heaven. That's one reason the Lord was stressing this. He was making it clear to them that there is an open door for service. This open door for service means a great deal to you in terms of eternity, because when you go through this open door of service, you are also putting yourself in the position of storing treasures in heaven. These treasures are made possible by the promises and the provisions of the Lord Jesus Christ to His saints.

I want to read to you the way the Lord expressed this same idea in Luke 12:16. This is what is involved in going through the open door, and the consequences to you in terms of eternity. This passage is about a man who did not go through the door, and the consequences to him in eternity: "And He (that is, Jesus) spoke a parable onto them saying, 'The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully, and he thought within himself saying, 'What shall I do because I have no place to bestow my crops.' He said, 'This I will do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater, and there I will bestow all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years. Take you ease: eat; drink; and, be merry.' But God said unto him, 'You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you. Then whose shall those things be which you have provided?''"

What happens in death is that the soul leaves the body, and when the soul leaves the body, the brain waves stop. That's how you know that a person is dead. As long as their brain waves are present, the person is not dead. The soul hasn't left. Once the soul has left, the brain stops functioning. That's what he means: "I'm going to take your soul. You're going to die.

Verse 21: "'So is he that lay up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.' He said unto his disciples, 'Therefore, I say unto you, be not anxious for your life: what you shall eat; neither, for the body, what you shall put on. The life is more than food, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which neither have storehouses nor barns, and God feeds them. How much more are you better than the fowls? And which of you, by being anxious, can add to his stature one cubit? If you then are not able to do that thing which is least, why are you anxious for the rest?

"'Consider the lilies – how they grow. They don't toil. They don't spin. Yet, I say to you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothed the grass, which is today in the field and tomorrow is cast into the oven, how much more will He clothe you? Oh, you of little faith. And seek not what you shall eat or what you shall drink. Neither be of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after. And your Father knows that you have need of these things. But rather seek the Kingdom of God, and all of these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have, and give alms. Provide yourselves bags which don't grow old – a treasure in the heavens that doesn't fail, where no thief approaches, neither moth corrupts. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

What a splendid statement of this principle of an open door opportunity, which if taken, will mean treasures in heaven. Many believers do not take the open door opportunity because they are preoccupied, as was this rich man, with what to do with what they have now, and with how they may secure what they feel they must have now – with taking care of their temporal security to such an extent that they just do not have any time to think about going through the opportunity of service which God has opened to them.

It's great to realize that the Lord opens those doors to us for storing these treasures in heaven, and that no angelic or human creature can close the open door of eternal riches to any believer. Only our personal negative volition can keep a believer from walking through the door of opportunity. So, why in the world would anybody want to be poor in heaven? The open door to temporal and eternal prosperity and promotion is the result of the provision of super-grace status. This is why we are able to walk through this door. This door is a provision of an entrée into super grace status with all the consequences of being in that position.

**Super Grace**

Please turn to James 4:6 which tells us about the potential status of every believer who walks through the open door of opportunity which God has provided in terms of service: "But He gives more grace. Wherefore, He says, 'God resists the proud, but gives grace unto the humble.'" This expression "more grace" indicates that God the Holy Spirit gives more grace to certain believers than He does to others. It looks like this in the Greek Bible: "meizon." This word "meizon" means "greater" or "super abounding." So, for some reason, certain Christians are in the position of receiving super-abounding grace from God. In James 4:5, we read, "Do you think that the Scriptures say in vain, 'The spirit that dwells in us lusts to envy?'"

**Humility**

What this Scripture is saying is that God the Holy Spirit desires to control the human spirit of the believer. God the Holy Spirit wants to be in charge of your life. He wants you to be wholly subject to Him. He wants you to be wholly subject to Him in every way. The humble believer is subject to God the Holy Spirit. Do you know why the humble believer is that way? The humble believer has a quality. That's why he is humble. He has a spiritual maturity structure in his soul. He has a fully developed structure. So, he has the quality of being humble. The other believer, as most believers are, is proud. They do not have a spiritual maturity structure in the soul, and that's why they are proud. Therefore, they lack prosperity and promotion. The humble believer has developed a spiritual maturity structure in his soul. He has capacity. To him, God gives prosperity and promotion. The proud believer does not have spiritual maturity. Therefore, he does not have capacity for divine blessing. So, God doesn't give him any. Whatever promotion he has, and whatever prosperity he has, doesn't come from the Lord. He guts it out on the human plane on his own. This is usually as a result of his dealing with other people.

**Greater Grace**

However, the spiritual maturity structure type believer receives greater grace. To this believer comes "meizon charis" (greater grace) – extended and expanded. That is super-abounding grace. That is what it means, and that is because he has the capacity to handle it. Most believers grovel around through life in just the ordinary levels of grace provision. That's where most Christians are. God has a level of grace (a common level of grace) that He gives all believers. Most believers grovel around in that level. That's as far as they go. But that is not God's ideal. His ideal is to go above that. There is a variety of reasons why they grovel around on ordinary grace levels. But basic to all the reasons, is that they lack the doctrine in their souls that they need to guide them. So, they lack the capacity for God to bless. The person who has developed a spiritual maturity structure in his soul has a container. The person who has not developed a spiritual maturity structure in his soul does not have such a container. The humble person has a container in his soul, so God can pour grace in. The proud person has no container. There's no place to pour the grace. Therefore, he does not get super-abounding grace.

One of the things that the Lord Jesus Christ means when he says, "I have opened the door to you," is that, "I never opened the door to every believer to have super-grace status." He has opened doors for you; you don't open it for yourself; and, no one can shut this door on you. You can ignore the fact that the door is open, but nobody can shut the door upon super-grace blessings to any believer here. This super grace blessing is the product of doctrine stored as "epignosis" knowledge in the human spirit – that which you are positive toward receiving. Super-grace status is a container. This container is actually super grace – this container (this pot) that you build in your soul for receiving the abounding grace blessings. Once the super grace container is in place, God can pour blessings into us.

**My Cup Runneth Over**

Actually, you remember that Psalm 23:5 says, "My cup runneth over." This super grace container is actually a cup which gets filled all the way to the full, and then God just keeps pouring in the grace, and it keeps overflowing. That's the picture of super-abounding grace. You have a cup. What is the cup? It is the spiritual maturity structure built in your soul. With that, you have the capacity to be able to take the super-abounding pouring out of divine grace.

**The Angelic Warfare**

This open door enables you, as a believer, to enter this status so that you are successful in the angelic warfare, and you do not become a spiritual casualty. It enables you to walk through the doors of service such that you are storing treasures in heaven. Super-grace status is the goal which the Lord Jesus has for every believer in the church, and few people make it. That is for a variety of reasons. The basic reason is no access to doctrine.

So, there are not going to be a lot of rich people in heaven. That is a very false notion. The average Christian does not even have access to be able to build this container in his soul. And until the container is there in the soul, God's greatest blessings can never be given to a person. He goes into heaven with just the regular, ordinary blessings of grace, and that's all. Yet, that precious verse in James 4:6 says, "But He gives super-abounding grace." To whom? "To the humble:" "God resists the proud, but He gives grace unto the humble." That is a tremendous statement, and one that you should not ignore.

Exactly what are we talking about when we talk about this kind of a cup of super grace container? Move over to 2 Corinthians 12:9. Here's the whole story. The apostle Paul has just been reviewing the fact that he once was taken into heaven at the time when he was stoned to death in Lystra on his first missionary tour, and then was raised back to life again. He was given a physical ailment to remind him that he must never reveal exactly what heaven was like. He must never tell what he actually saw and what he actually heard. That knowledge was to be kept top secret. This physical ailment was not an easy thing for him to bear. He tells us that on three different occasions, he went to the Lord and said, "Lord, can you take it away?" For all we know, he may even have said, "Lord, I really promise that I'll keep my mouth shut. I cross my heart and hope to die, Lord. I won't do it. I won't say anything." But the Lord said. "No, I'm going to keep this reminder (this physical ailment). Every time this pain comes, and every time distress comes, you'll know it's there. You're reminded why it's there, and it keeps you on guard not to tell what you must never tell – what heaven is really like. You've seen it, but we're going to keep it between us."

The result was that the Lord said, "I'll tell you this, Paul. I'm going to carry you through. I'm going to give you the kind of super-abounding grace that'll carry you through. This is a weakness that you suffer. This is an infirmity that you suffer. But out of that, I'm going to give you the capacity, and My grace will carry you through."

So, in verse 9, Paul refers to that: "And He (that is, the Lord) said unto me, 'My grace is sufficient for you. For My strength is made perfect in weakness." So, Paul says, "Most gladly, therefore, I will rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." God's grace is sufficient (that is, adequate) for all of his sufferings as well as for all of his service. God's strength comes to maximum effectiveness in the humble believer who knows that he is helpless in his life. Man's weakness is God's opportunity for producing strength. Therefore, Paul says that he rejoices in his weakness, because these various weaknesses have led him to turn to God's strength. God's strength is expressed in terms of a spiritual structure of maturity within the soul. The power of Christ that he refers to here as resting upon him is this maturity structure we've been talking about. It is built in the soul through the intake of the Word of God. As the "Shekinah" kind of glory of old rested upon the Old Testament tabernacle, so the "Shekinah" glory of God is the spiritual maturity structure which rests upon the believer. It's the same picture. The glory of God was visible over that Old Testament tabernacle. So the glory of God covers you and me when a spiritual maturity structure has been developed in our soul.

**The Spiritual Maturity Structure**

What is that structure? Well, Paul says, "I'll give you the various parts of it to help you to notice what to do with it. There are five distinct parts to the spiritual maturity structure in the soul. Notice that in verse 10, Paul says, "Therefore, I take pleasure in my infirmities;" that is, in his weaknesses and in his reproaches, and that's the word in the Greek for "insults." He takes delight in his infirmities: "I take delight in my weaknesses; in my reproaches; in my necessities; in my persecutions; and, in my distresses." Let's take them one-at-a-time.

1. **Grace Orientation**

Paul says, "I take delight in my infirmities." One of the things that makes him strong is his infirmities. The Greek word is "asthenia." He says, "I take delight in my infirmities." This word is used in the New Testament in the sense of inner poverty or incapacity. Impotence is the idea, so that a person is helpless. The fact of human helplessness requires what? It requires the help of divine grace. God's grace never operates apart from our human weakness. Human energies and capacities operate on legalism. But a person may say, "I have a case of infirmities. I am weak. I have an incapacity about me." Then what happens? Then God's grace moves in and gives capacity. We call that grace orientation. You may look up 2 Peter 3:18 and Hebrews 13:9 which will describe grace orientation.

So, the apostle Paul says, "I'm glad for my "asthenia" (my infirmities) because the result of that is a facet of spiritual authority in my soul in the form of grace orientation.

1. **A Relaxed Mental Attitude**

Then he says that he delights in (what he calls) his "reproaches." That's the Greek word "hubris." "Hubris" means "insults." It is a case of suffering. This word connotes "insulting mockery." This is used in the verb form in 1 Thessalonians 2:2 of the insulting treatment which Paul and Silas received in Philippi. The word there is translated as "shamefully treated," meaning that they were treated in an arrogant and spiteful manner. The condition of being treated in a contemptible manner causes you and me to want to respond with hatred and revenge. When somebody hits you in some contemptible way (in some shameful way), you want to strike back with hatred and with revenge. When you find yourself a victim of someone's arrogance; someone's insolence; someone's slander; someone's insults; or, someone's invasion of your privacy, you want to strike back at them with indignation and with anger.

You perform your Christian service as unto the Lord. Someone else, through jealousy; through envy; and, through a sense of competition puts you down for what you're doing. Have you ever been put down for serving the Lord when you're doing it in genuineness? Well, how is all of this going to be met? How are reproaches that bring those qualities out of us to be met? It is only by one thing: a relaxed mental attitude. A relaxed mental attitude is what Paul says, "I'm glad that the Lord gives me as the result of my suffering these insults." Ephesians 4:31-32 describe a relaxed mental attitude, as does Colossians 3:15.

So, Paul says, "I'm glad for that because that gives me a relaxed mental attitude. I have no bitterness. It is that which enables me to be abused without my responding with bitterness."

1. **Mastery of the Details of Life**

Then he says, "I also rejoice in (what he calls) necessities." The word "necessities" looks like this: "anagke." "Anagke" means just that: necessities. It is suffering of some kind. The word connotes a situation of need which creates a pressure on the person. It is something you need so that you're under pressure. You need food – that puts pressure. You need a house – that puts pressure. You need clothes – that puts pressure. You need some recreation – that puts pressure. However, this means knowing how to live with the pressures of prosperity as well as the pressures of property. Even when you're prosperous, you've got pressures upon you. It brings out great plateaus of strength in the believer, or it brings new lows of cheapness. These are the necessities of life. What are we talking about? A mastery of the details of life. Oh, sure, the details are important. You need the food; you need the clothes; and, you need the shelter. You need all that stuff, but how you deal with it, and how you act toward it, and how you cope with it – that's the issue. Concerning the mastering of the details of life, you may look up these verses: Luke 12:15; and, 1 Timothy 6:6. Paul says, "I'm glad for the necessities (for the 'anagke') because that develops a mastery of the details of life in me."

1. **The Capacity to Love**

Then he says, "The next thing I rejoice in (in my weakness) is persecutions. The word "persecutions" is the Greek word "diogmos." This word means "suffering." The word basically means "persecution for religious reasons." This requires divine mental and emotional love for one's enemies; for detractors; for rejecters; or, for legalists. It means to be mistreated for your well-doing while you're in full obedience to the Lord's guidance. This is the cruelty of Christians; the cruelty of non-doctrinal believers; the cruelty of the catty type; or, the cruelty of the negative type. What are we talking about here? We're talking about the capacity to love; that is, to have a quality in your soul that is able not to retaliate, but to respond in love. John 13:34 tells you about that, as does Colossians 3:14. This is a suffering that Paul was able to meet with the capacity to love. How does he get it? Because he's under the pressures of persecution. He's under the pressures of mistreatment. So, Paul says, "That's fine. Sure, you've mistreated me, and sure, you've abused me. But out of that has come something very tremendous for me."

1. **Inner Happiness**

And then the last one he calls distresses. He says, "I thank God for those." This is the big Greek word "stenochoria." Here is a word which means "inner and outer tribulation" which strikes a person and robs him of his peace and robs him of his happiness. This is the thing that hits you and takes your happiness away from you. It connotes being squeezed into something so that you suffer loss. You feel the pressures of people and circumstances. You feel the anguish. Here, Paul is under pressure for the Lord's sake. Paul says, "That's alright, because that creates inner happiness in my soul, and I rejoice in that quality. I have a happiness that is apart from people, circumstances, and things." John 15:11 and Philippians 4:4 tell us about those.

So, here is the spiritual maturity structure: grace orientation; a relaxed mental attitude; the mastery of the details of life; a capacity for love; and, happiness. Can you imagine what would have happened to the hostages who had this built into their soul? Imagine the hostages who did not have this built into their soul, when they were lined up against the wall, as some of them were, and had a gun to their head, and they heard the clicking of the bolts and the chambering of the guns as they were driving a round home. One of them said, "My reaction was sheer terror." Many of them said that: sheer terror. One man said, "I thought this was it, so I tried to make my peace as best I knew how." You know pretty well where he would have gone had they rammed that home through his brain at that point. There is no stability in a situation like that with a person who does not have a spiritual maturity structure like this built into his soul. God has given each of us an open door to build just exactly that kind of a thing through the intake of doctrine. And Jesus Christ says, "Nobody is going to shut it on you. Nobody is going to keep it from you. You're going to keep yourself from it, and that's all. You're going to make yourself a wretched creature. You're going to make yourself a loser. And you cannot store treasures in heaven to any substantial degree without this being in your soul. This is what it takes to build treasures in heaven.

So, when the Lord tells us that He has given us an open door, He has given us an open door to service, indeed. But that service comes through the fact that we take advantage of the open door of the availability of the Word of God to build this structure of maturity in our soul so that we are able to meet the crises and the issues of life. When a nation comes to be torn apart at the seams in times of great national stress, it is the believer who has this kind of a spiritual maturity structure in his soul that is the person who is going to make it.

In the Ephesians 6 passage, the parts of the armor of the believer, this is called the breastplate of righteousness. It is the breastplate of righteousness that deflects all of the attacks and all of the arrows of Satan against you. Isn't that fantastic? What a fantastic provision! What an open door! What a tragedy to be ignorant of the fact that that's on the other side of that door if you just walk through it. And most people never hear about it. Consider yourself chosen of God to have been informed.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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