

The Open Door

[Acts 10:1-35]

Peter had been prepared for this invitation to the house of the gentile centurion Cornelius, by a vision in which he has told to eat food that was unclean for Jews.

READ Acts 10:23-35 THE MESSAGE ...Peter fairly exploded with his good news: “It’s God’s own truth, nothing could be plainer: God plays no favourites! It makes no difference who you are or where you’re from – if you want God and are ready to do as he says, **the door is open.**”

The last words in THE MESSAGE translation of ACTS, speaking about Paul, is:

“His door was always open”

What a great way to end the story of the beginning of the church!

ACTS could so easily *not* have ended on such a positive note: there had been:

- Beatings
- Imprisonments
- Stonings
- Satanic attacks through persecution / corruption / distraction
- An earthquake and a shipwreck had threatened the expansion of the early church!
- There had been open threats, intrigue and the subtle danger of compromise

...any of these could have been the last word in Acts! But no, the gospel had been let loose on the world and all the attempts to confine it, compromise it or muffle it proved ineffective:

Paul’s door was always open!

Through his death and resurrection Jesus had opened the door into heaven [he has opened the way from earth’s space into God’s space]

Jesus said, “I am the door for the sheep”: John 10:9

“I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out and find pasture.”

Just as the shepherd literally was the door – lying down in the door space of the sheepfold, giving access IN to the safety of the sheepfold, and letting the sheep OUT with the security of being shepherded, so that’s a picture of who Jesus is for you today.

SO FAR, 2 open doors:

1. **God's door is open;**
2. **Paul's door is open.**

→ Is your door open?

Revelation 3:20 THE MESSAGE: "Look at me. I stand at the door. (*Your door*). I knock. If you hear me call and open the door, I'll come right in and sit down to supper with you..."

Eugene Peterson writes: *Christ stands at the door of your heart and knocks, hoping that you will open the door and invite him in to share his life with you...and your life with him. Prayer is the shared meal where that happens. If we fail to recognize that and don't open the door, we leave him standing outside, hungering for fellowship with us.*

There's a famous painting in St. Paul's cathedral in London called "The Light of the World" and it's a picture of this verse. Jesus, wearing two crowns [one of thorns and one of glory] stands wearing a seamless robe and holding a lamp in his hand. He stands knocking on the door – but there is no handle on the outside of the door (it can only be opened from the inside), and the door hinges are rusted; there are brambles and other creepers growing up around this unopened door; the fruit from the tree beside the door has gone rotten and has fallen there by the step, and instead of a bird in the sky there's a bat.

Jesus has opened God's door for you, do you open your door to him?

When you do, and you live before an open door to heaven and with the door of your heart open to God, then just as God directed and protected Peter and Paul in Acts...opening doors before them – doors of opportunity, doors of direction, doors of ministry, so he will open doors for you...

Revelation 3:7&8 THE MESSAGE

"Write this to Philadelphia, to the angel of the church. The Holy, the True – David's key in his hand, opening doors no one can lock, locking doors no one can open – speaks:

"I see what you've done. Now see what I've done. I've opened a door before you that no one can slam shut. You don't have much strength, I know that: you used what you had to keep my Word. You didn't deny me when times were rough."

Philadelphia was known as "The doorway to the East" – travelers would pass through Philadelphia as a trade route to the Orient. Jesus had opened a door for this faithful church that no one could shut. They may be a small, uninfluential minority group, but Jesus, the One with

the authority of the God's anointed Messiah of the house and line of David, had opened for these faithful, trusting followers, a door into heaven that no one could shut.

Conclusion:

When you live before an open door to heaven and with the door of your heart open to God, then God will call you to open the door of your house to the world,

- just as Peter found in Joppa,
- and just as Paul was doing when the book of Acts finishes with this open ended sentence that Paul's door was always open;

When you live before an open door to heaven and with the door of your heart open to God, then just as God directed and protected Peter and Paul in Acts...opening doors before them – doors of opportunity, doors of direction, doors of ministry, so he will open doors for you.

When you live before an open door to heaven and with the door of your heart open to God, you can guarantee that God will lead you on adventures that take you out of your comfort zone. That might feel scary and it might be risky, and to walk this journey you will need to remember:

1. the picture of the shepherd as the door for the sheep, leading then IN to safety and OUT in the security of being under the care of the Good Shepherd;
2. and the perspective of an open door into heaven, opened for you by the King of heaven himself [meaning that no one can shut it.]

When you live before an open door to heaven and with the door of your heart open to God, you will live a life of expectation; a life of hope; a life with the joy of heaven and a life caught up into the purposes of God...and that's the right life to live!

May God help us, for his honour and glory. AMEN.