

The Brown Street Beacon

*"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,
holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)*



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Looking for an Open Door

Paul's third missionary journey brought him to Ephesus where he stayed for three years (Acts 20:31). While at Ephesus, members of the household of Chloe, who had some connection with the church at Corinth, came to Paul and told him of the many problems the church at Corinth was having. As a result, Paul wrote the letter we refer to as First Corinthians some time during that three year stay at Ephesus (1 Corinthians 16:8). At the close of his first letter to the church at Corinth, Paul informed the Corinthians that he was going to delay his planned return to Corinth and stay a little longer at Ephesus. There were a few different reasons for this. First, it would afford the church at Corinth time to repent of their sins and straighten up as a church (2 Corinthians 1:15-24). Second, Paul's new plan would allow him to spend more time with the brethren at Corinth whenever he finally got there (1 Corinthians 16:6, 7). Finally, Paul wanted to stay at Ephesus because he had an open door there to do the work that the Lord had commissioned him to do, that is, to spread the gospel of Christ.



1 Cor 16:8-9

8 But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, 9 for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

God opens doors for us all the time. The problem is we do not always recognize those doors when we have them. One reason for this is we are not especially looking for open doors to do the work the Lord would have us to do. We need to do better in this area. We should constantly be looking for open doors, i.e., opportunities, to spread the gospel of Christ to the lost.

An open door to do God's will is not necessarily a situation where there is no opposition to the word of God. It is not always an environment that is free from all hostilities. It is simply a situation where there are souls that need saving. Wherever there are lost souls who are willing to give an ear to the gospel, you have an open door. While Paul had a great door opened to him, he refers to the adversaries that were there at Ephesus as well. Paul tells us of some of the problems he faced while in Asia (2 Corinthians 1:8-11). In 1 Corinthians 15:32, Paul tells of the beasts that he fought with at Ephesus. Whether Paul actually fought with wild beast, or whether he simply refers to beast in a figurative sense is not known, nor is it important. The point is Paul faced serious danger at Ephesus which was directly related to his stand for the truth. Yet, Paul viewed Ephesus as a place where

he had an open door. There are many lessons that we learn from this. Let's take a little time to consider three of them.

In many cases we have opposition along with opportunity

We sometimes miss open doors to win souls because a little opposition scares us away. Opposition can sometimes result in persecution; however, isn't saving souls worth it? Paul said, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). We need to arm ourselves with the mind of Christ and be willing to suffer. Listen to Peter:

"Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin" (1 Peter 4:1).

Sometimes the greatest opportunities of all come in unexpected places, even amidst our adversaries. Don't close the door of opportunity just because there are some that don't like the message of Christ. Wherever there are souls that need saving, preach the word and God will bless you for your courage.

We should not run from our adversaries

There are those who, at least in their present state of mind, cannot be won to Christ. Their hearts have become so hard that they won't even listen to the truth of the gospel. Their only aim is to hinder the gospel and mock those who proclaim it. Paul once requested prayer that he might be delivered from "unreasonable and wicked men" (2 Thessalonians 3:2). There are still such people in the world today. We cannot allow the ungodly of this world to intimidate us into not doing the work of God. Adversaries of God and His word want us to be frozen with fear and therefore do nothing. But the cry of the Spirit to Christians is to contend for the faith (Jude 1:3). Why did Paul stay at Ephesus to do the work of the Lord even though there was opposition? Because he was set for the defense of the gospel (Philippians. 1:17). We must have the same spirit. Yes, we might find ourselves in a fight if we stand up to those who are enemies of the cross. But God tells us to fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12). We cannot run and hide every time someone opposes the gospel. When we do that, we could be closing a door that God has opened for us.

We should not be discouraged when we meet with opposition

If you are active at all in pursuing the will of the Lord, you will meet with opposition. If you walk in the light, the forces of darkness will most certainly try to consume you (John 3:19, 20). Don't be surprised or discouraged by this. Remember, "greater is he who is in you, than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). We are never alone in this spiritual battle. God is by our side at all times (Hebrews 13:5, 6). So, let's look for open doors to do God's will. If we meet with a few adversaries or a little opposition, so be it. Like Paul before us, we must be willing to walk through that open door.

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