

# Open Doors

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[0:00] When you come to a door, what do you do if it's shut? A hootis, yeah. You might be able to just open the door. Yeah, what else might you do if a door is shut?

I just saw someone knocking, so yeah, knock or ring the bell and someone might open the door. Any other thoughts? What might be handy for a door?

Key. Key. Yeah, absolutely. This door has a key, which means I can probably open it, and the door opens. And when a door opens, you can go in or you can speak to the person that opens the door. They give us opportunities, opportunities to speak, opportunities to go in. And at the end of our reading, we're looking at Acts 14 this morning. At the end of our reading, I'll give you a moment to turn to it, actually.

Acts 14. If you don't have a Bible, there's some just at the back there. Acts 14. Acts 14 and verse 27.

[1:18] We read Paul and Barnabas saying, on arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.

So what we're going to see, and what we've actually already seen in Acts, if you can remember before Christmas, is God opening doors of opportunity for Paul and Barnabas on their travels to speak about the Lord Jesus to people.

And we're going to see how God will open some doors for them to speak and actually close some doors as well in this chapter.

So we're going to look at it in three parts. The first part is verses 1 to 7. And I think Samuel's going to come before we dive into the passage a little bit. So I'm hoping that's Marmite on that bread.

Apologies if it's not. But Marmite divides people. Some people love it. Some people hate it.

Interesting. It would be interesting to see who amongst us loves Marmites.

[2:29] Put your hands up if you're a Marmite lover. There's quite a few. Quite a lot. Cool. If you're a Marmite hater. Oh, wow.

Quite more in the minority here at Calvary Church. Does anybody just like it? Yeah, I think I just like it.

I'm not quite sure I can go as far as loving it, but I definitely don't hate it. Interesting. Something else which might divide us. How do you say scone? Scone.

Do you say it's scone as in cone or scone as in gon? Hands up if you say the first one. Scone. A few people are with me. Great. Brilliant.

Scone. I think that might be a few more, but it has divided us a bit. Sticking with scones. Sticking with scones.

[3:24] Are you a jam first person? Who's a jam first person on the scone? You're sort of the Cornish way. Rachel's got her hand up. Oh, cream first?

I'm definitely... That's the Devon way, I think. I'm all for that. We're closer to Devon than Cornwall, aren't we? Excellent. Excellent.

We're going to see, as Paul and Barnabas are on their travels, that the good news about the Lord Jesus divides people. Some people don't want to hear.

Actually, they hate it. And others, yes, we believe. We love this. Now, Paul and Barnabas are on their travels, as I say. And here's a map of where they've been going.

So they started over here in Antioch, up in Syria way. And then they headed by boat down to Cyprus, and then to Paphos, and then up by boat again to Perga.

[4:28] And we're heading into sort of Turkey area, modern-day Turkey. We've already seen them up in Pisidian Antioch. And now we're coming down to Iconium. That's where the reading was that Samuel read for us.

And we'll get to Lystra and Derby in a moment. So, what's going on here? Well, first of all, we see that they have an open door of opportunity to speak in a synagogue.

Have a look there at verse 1. At Iconium, Paul and Barnabas went, as usual, into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed. So they had opportunity to speak to people that were already religious, already interested in God. And they heard what they had to say.

And a great number of people believed. God worked in that synagogue. We can praise him for that. But verse 2 shows how divided they were.

[5:40] The Jews who refused to believe stirred up the other Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. So this would be like the jam first people saying about the cream first people, don't do what they do.

They do it wrong. We do it right. They're being silly. They're being silly. Or it would be like the people that say scone telling others that people who say scone are just wrong.

Don't listen to them. Don't trust that you don't trust a person who says scone. Or someone that hates Marmite saying about the people that love Marmite.

Don't. If they like Marmite, you don't have anything to do with them. And that's what's going on in Iconium. They're so divided that those who refused to believe in the Lord Jesus were stirring up others and saying, don't listen to Paul and Barnabas.

Don't have anything to do with them. Don't follow the Lord Jesus. You can't trust him. Did he really rise from the dead? And so verse 4 sums up the situation well.

[6:52] Have a look. The people of the city were divided. Some sided with the Jews and others with the apostles. There was division in the town.

Some followed Jesus. Some really did not. And it's helpful for us to know this from the Bible. It speaks about the reality of following Jesus.

That actually Jesus will divide people. Jesus himself said this. Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.

For I have come to turn a man against his father. A daughter against her mother-in-law. A daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A man's enemies will be members of his own household. And some of us know this painfully well. Because some of us are following the Lord Jesus. But we're the only ones in our family who do. And that hurts us.

[7:55] That the Lord that we love. Others in our family that we love. Don't love him. It's hard for us to see that. Even when most of our family are Christians.

My brother and I. We grew up in a church like this together. And he doesn't believe yet. And I do. And it feels like it's brought division to us.

He's going one way. And I'm going another way in life. And that's really hard. But despite the division. Paul and Barnabas keep going.

And telling people about God's love and his grace. Have a look in verse 3. So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there. Speaking boldly for the Lord.

Who confirmed the message of his grace. By enabling them to perform signs and wonders. There were people there that literally hated them. But they continue to speak the message of God's grace.

[8:55] Saying all of us sin. All of us have turned away from the Lord. But Jesus has come. And he has done all that you need. To be saved. He's come to bring peace between you and God.

And that's good news. But not everyone wants to know. It divides the town. Before Christmas.

Roger and I and some others. Went out on London Road. To do this. The book table. To go and give people. Flyers about the church. And about Christian stuff.

And we've got that sign there. Saying good news. But whilst out there. I remember one lady. Came along and she shook her head.

And said. No what you're doing is dangerous. You're trying to convert people. And I said well. No I'm just sharing good news. It's God who converts people. I'm just telling you good news.

[9:55] And she walked away in anger. The gospel divides. It's dangerous. Doesn't it? And that. That will be hard. For us. It is hard to have an open door.

And then someone slams it in our face. And for Paul and Barnabas. This must have been hard. But they stayed there. They stayed there.

And they shared about God's grace. But then verse 5. We read this. There was a plot afoot amongst Jews and Gentiles. Together with their leaders. To all treat them. And to stone them. Suddenly things became very dangerous. And they thought it's wise for us to move on. And so they fled. But we're told they kept on speaking about Jesus.

Where some people don't want to hear. And doors close in our face. It doesn't mean to say that others won't want to hear.

[10:50] It's hard to be rejected. But we can trust that God will work. And that God will open other doors. And other people will want to hear.

About this good news of God's grace. We're going to leave Iconium now. We'll move to Lystra and Derby in a minute. But first of all we're going to sing again.

And to Acts 14. And this time Megan I think it is. We'll read for us from verses 8 to 20. Thanks Megan. Thanks so much Megan for reading.

Let me tell you a story. In Lystra. Where Paul and Barnabas find themselves. There was a legend. That these two Greek gods.

Zeus on the top. And Hermes on the bottom. came to visit the town. Now they went from place to place. House to house.

[11:50] Knocking. And finding out if they could stay somewhere. And lots of people said no. There's no room for you to stay. Until an old couple.

Answered the door. And said yeah you can come and stay. In our house. And so they rewarded. The old couple for their hospitality. And they destroyed the homes.

Of everyone who had said no to them. So that's a legendary tale. That goes around in Lystra. Where we find that Paul and Barnabas.

Arrive to. Now. I think to help us understand this story. We're going to do something slightly different. I'd love three people. Age doesn't matter.

Three people to help us see this story in action. So let's go. Isaac over here. Isaac can you. Yeah this works for you.

[12:49] Because can you be the lame man over here. Okay. So you need to sit down. You can't walk. I know your arm's also hurting. Let's go. Isaac.

Other Isaac. Did you have your hand up Gracie? Okay. Isaac and Gracie. You can stand over here. Let's go. Isaac. You're Paul. Gracie.

You're Barnabas. Okay. So. Let's see what happens. We haven't rehearsed this. So. Let's see. See how we go. So. In Lystra.

There sat a man. Who was lame here. He had been that way from birth. And he'd never walked. Gosh. But he listened.

To Paul. Who was speaking. And as Paul was speaking. Paul saw the man. And he looked at him.

[13:46] You can come closer. Paul and Barnabas. If you want to. And Paul looked at him. And saw that he had faith. To be healed. And so Paul called out.

In a loud voice. Stand up on your feet. Stand up on your feet. At that the man jumped up. And began to walk. Wow. When the crowd.

You're all the crowd. By the way. When the crowd. Saw what Paul had done. They shouted. In the Lycaonian language. And you can join in. With this. In verse 11. The gods.

Have come down. To us. In human form. Barnabas. Which one of you. Is Barnabas? Gracie. So they called. Barnabas. Zeus. And. They called.

Paul. Hermes. Because he was. The chief speaker. The priest of Zeus. Whose temple. Was just outside. The city. Brought. You'll have to imagine. This one. Brought bulls.

[14:46] And wreaths. To the city gates. Because he. And the crowd. Wanted to offer sacrifices. To them. The crowd. Is basically. Worshipping. These guys. But when the apostles.

And you don't have to tear your clothes off. When the apostles. Barnabas and Paul. Heard of this. They tore their clothes. And rushed out. Shouting. And you can shout this if you want.

Friends. Why are you doing this? And you can have a seat. Thank you for your help. That was excellent. Thank you. It's all going on in Lystra.

Isn't it? There's the healing of the man. And then. They misunderstand. That Paul and Barnabas. Are gods. They think. And so.

Instead of worshipping. The one true God. That Paul and Barnabas. Is trying to show them. They. Worship them. But Paul and Barnabas.

[15:46] Rightly say. Don't worship us. We're not gods. We're just human beings. Like you. That's what they.

Go on to say. In verse 15. We too. Are only human. Like you. We're bringing you good news. We are like you. We have limitations. We don't understand everything.

We get sick. We don't have great power. But we do have Jesus. And he is God. And he is powerful. Don't worship us.

But gods. That story. By the way. Might have reminded some of us. Who've been here. Since the start of the act series. Of act three. Where Peter.

Healed that lame beggar. Outside the synagogue. In the first part of acts. We definitely see Peter. Sort of leading the way. Leading the mission of the church. But now.

[16:45] We're sort of seeing. Paul. Lead the way. With the mission. Of the church. And as we say. Paul and Barnabas.

They say. Don't worship us. We're not. Zeus. And Hermes. We're only human. But do worship God. Look at what they go on to say about God.

In verse 17. It's great stuff. Yet he has not left himself without testimony. He has shown kindness. By giving you rain from heaven. And crops in their season.

He provides you with plenty of food. And fills your hearts with joy. God is good. To the world. To you. He provides you with good things.

In this world. That's known as this common grace. How he is good. To every human being.

Providing them with all sorts of wonderful things. And. You can turn to him.

[17:42] And find life. You can find salvation. From his son Jesus. And know. Not just his common grace. But his saving grace. But the people of this city.

Are slow to understand. Look at verse 18. Even with these words. They had difficulty. Keeping the crowd. From sacrificing to them.

There is misunderstanding. The open door of opportunity. That Paul and Barnabas had to speak. Leaves the city with misunderstandings.

They aren't thinking about one God. They're thinking about lots of different gods. Powerless gods. And believing that Paul and Barnabas.

Are two of them. And that's true for many people. It may be true for. Some of us here this morning. Whether it's gods of other religions.

[18:39] Or just things at the center of our lives. Which we make number one. Rather than gods. They can be good things. But we. If we prize them above.

God. The God of heaven. And that's not good. It could be our phones. Or our education. Or our fitness. Or our nice cars. Or the best toys. Or the best toys. But God won't have a rival.

God alone is to be worshipped. And these people misunderstand that. And maybe by God's grace. Some will come to see.

That this is God alone. That Paul and Barnabas talk about. And we should worship him alone. Because only the God of the Bible. We're told.

Made the heavens and the earth. Only the God of the Bible. Through his son Jesus. Has made a way. For us to go to heaven. If we trust in him. If you want to find out more about that.

[19:43] By the way. Do come to those 321 courses. We mentioned. Wednesday lunchtime. Or Thursday evening. It would be great to see you. So the open door of Lystra.

Seems to close at this point. Have a look at verse. 19. Then some of the Jews. Came from Antioch and Iconium. And won the crowd over. They stone poor.

And dragged him outside the city. Thinking he was dead. Things got dangerous again. And so it's time for Paul and Barnabas to move on. The door opens.

But the door closes for now. And we're going to look at the rest of the chapter in a moment. But firstly. We're going to sing this song. A great favorite of ours at Calvary.

I think. Behold our God. Seated on his throne. And he. The chapter to us. Thanks Roger. Thanks Roger. Thanks Roger. Thanks Roger.

[20:39] Derby. And now. They get to travel back. Through some of these places. As we.

Saw in the first bit of that reading. And they got to encourage. The disciples there. Which means. There are even. Christians. In Lystra.

Even. Through all that misunderstanding. There were some. Which came. To worship. The Lord God of heaven alone. They went back to Iconium.

Encouraged the believers there. And then. They made their way back. To base. In Antioch. First. Missionary journey. Done. And.

In their visits. Encouraging the Christians. On their way back home. And. We see. In verse 22. What they. Have to say to them. They were strengthening.

[21:36] Disciples. And encouraging them. To remain true. To the faith. Keep going. Keep going guys. We're cheering you on. We must go. Through many.

Hardships. To enter the kingdom. Of God. They said. Now that doesn't sound. Particularly. Inspiring. You must go. Through many. Hardships. But that's what we've seen.

Has happened to Paul and Barnabas. On their travels. In Iconium. In Lystra. And Derby. They were stoned. People. People spoke really badly. Of them. Things were.

Difficult. On this journey. And that's the reality. Of following Jesus. Following our Jesus. Who has. Himself. Gone through suffering. For us.

But leads us on. To glory. That's what happens. When we take those doors of opportunity. To tell others about Jesus.

[22:33] Some want to hear. But others don't. It divides people. We see. And so it's going to be hard. There will be hardships.

Hard things. That we'll face. Before we get to live forever. With our God. And his people. In the new creation. I shared this.

A little bit. Last Sunday evening. But I'm going to share this story. Again with you. This morning. For different purposes. In Bangladesh. There's a girl. Called.

Romana. She's nine years old. And she loves. Jesus. But people in her class. At school. Don't. Her teachers.

Don't. And they tell. The other children. In her class. Don't sit next to her. Don't. Play with her. Because she's a Christian. And on her walks.

[23:27] To church. On a Sunday. People will make fun of her. And some even. Throw stones at her. But Romana. Says this. Jesus loves me.

I am valuable. To Jesus. It's only because of Jesus. Is love. That I have survived. Until now. Despite all the persecutions. His love. Has guided me.

This far. And I know. I'm on the right path. Through his love. Isn't that beautiful? That nine year old girl. Who knows. That she loves Jesus. And she's precious.

To him. And she knows. The truth. That that verse. We must go. Through many hardships. Before we enter. The kingdom of God. Now thankfully.

Most of us. In this country. Don't have persecution. Like she does. But we will still find. Many hardships. We will still find. That as we. We tell others.

[24:25] We're a Christian. Or tell others. About Jesus. In some way. Some of those doors. Will shut. Some friends. At school. Might not want to know. Some of our family.

Might not be interested. Some of our colleagues. At work. Don't want to know. Don't want to hear us. Talking about Jesus. And may mock us. They may reject us.

As they did. With Paul and Barnabas. But. We can know. Like with. Romana. In Bangladesh.

We can know. The one who. Loves us. And the one. Who won't stop. Loving us. The one. That we know. Will give us. Life forever. In heaven.

With him. And the final. Thought. In all this. Verse 23. Paul and Barnabas. Appointed elders. For them.

[25:22] In each church. And with prayer. And fasting. Committed them. To the Lord. In whom. They put their trust. It's hard. Following Jesus. At times.

Paul and Barnabas. They say. We will go through. Many hardships. Before we enter. The kingdom of heaven. And so. They make sure. That these believers.

Have churches. To be part of. And that's. Good. For it reminds us. That we don't do it alone. That though.

Jesus might divide. Others. He brings. Us. Together. All sorts of people. Together. To worship him. And we need. One another. We need.

One another. As we follow Jesus. When it's hard. We need. One another. To encourage. Each other. And so. We can be thankful. That we can meet. Today.

[26:16] Like this. And meet in freedom. This morning. And so. Let's make every effort. To be with one another. Like this. And encourage one another.

In following Jesus. And if. You're here this morning. And perhaps. You're. You're trying to. Look for a church. To be part of. In Brighton.

Whether it's this church. Or another church. Do you make it a priority. To settle somewhere. In a church. Family. That will love you. And encourage you. As you seek.

To follow the Lord Jesus. And I don't know. What this year holds. For some of us. For some of us. It might mean. We're not going to be in Brighton. At the end of it.

We'll move away. To somewhere else. If we're moving away. It seems really important. To me. As a Christian. That we. Consider. That the home.

[27:10] We'll live in. That the job. We'll do. Or the studying. We'll do. But it also seems. Really important. To make sure. We prioritize. Being near a church. As we move somewhere.

Is there going to be. A church nearby. That we can get to. Easily on a Sunday. Without having to drive. Miles away. Or catch a bus. That's going to take. An hour and a half. Seems important.

To be close to a church. That's going to help us. And encourage us. As we follow. Jesus. And praise God. For his provision. For us today. Here in this place.

Well let's. Finish. By.