

The Open Door

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[0:00] We're going to look at a verse here which speaks to me about finding and doing God's will. Knowing God's leading through the open door. 1 Corinthians 16 verse 9 it says, And he's writing here from Ephesus.

So he's ministering in this city called Ephesus. And at this time he's making inroads into all of Asia here around Ephesus. And he's taking the gospel into areas all around about.

But Ephesus in particular which is devoted to idol worship. And all hell was breaking loose you could put it. As this great door is open it was a wide open door. A great door it says.

And when we think of the gospel witness that's a great door isn't it? It's great because it's eternal. What we're talking about is something that's great and wonderful. The great gospel good news.

And in Acts 19 we read from verse 24 it talks about how Paul was there. And there was a silversmith that was making these silver shrines. You know this idol worship unto Diana.

[1:10] Then in Acts 19 there was a bit of a riot. A bit of an upheaval. Where it says that the temple of the great goddess Diana is being despised here.

By these ones who've come in and are causing all this trouble. And the crowd got stirred up. And they were crying out great is Diana of the Ephesians. And it says this is Acts 19 29.

The whole city was filled with confusion. Acts 19 verse 29. And verse 34 it says they cried out for two hours. They cried out great is Diana of the Ephesians.

And so we see there's much stirring up about Paul's witness in this city of Ephesus. And yet we read in this verse that we started with. 1 Corinthians 16 verse 9.

That God has given a great door and effectual. And it's opened unto me says Paul. And there are many adversaries. So just some thoughts that strike me about Paul's reference here to the great door and effectual.

[2:13] And the many adversaries. Firstly Paul's talking about the opening of a door. We can see Paul speaking about a door open.

And we can reflect that that speaks to us of God's providence. A door is open and we could say likewise there's a great door open right here. Right now for us. A great door.

God has given us an opening into this city of Elizabeth and surrounds Adelaide. It's an open harvest field all around us. And there's much ripened grain. It's a great and effectual open door.

And as Paul talks about this opening of the door. We could think of the opportunity that lies around us. Of many souls. And how this need for labourers to enter into this harvest.

To reap. To reap. And to bring in the sheaves. When you think of the city that we live. Many lost souls. Are lost in heathen darkness. And in the concrete and suburban jungle that they call home.

[3:16] It's a city that's lost. It's a city that's lost. Let's face it. The city, the suburbs of Adelaide. It's a city of worshippers of false gods. Of false idols.

And there are no gods at all really. Yet there is an opening here. The door is still open. Think of it friends today. As the open door. And of course we know as the Bible speaks about the Lord Jesus. He says, I am the door. That door is still open. That salvation door. The door of salvation. Who is Christ himself. And he offers it still. He offers us still that door of salvation.

It's still open. But the time is coming when the door will close. So. It's needful for us that are believers to. To not make the mistake of missing the open doors.

And to be mindful. How is God leading me? What are the open doors around me? And while we see the open doors to go through them. The door was open on the ark. But it was for a limited time only.

[4:16] As we know in Genesis 7. It tells how Noah built the ark. In Genesis 7. Verse 15. It tells how they went in two by two.

Of all flesh. And verse 16. They went in male and female. Of all flesh. As God had commanded him. And the Lord shut him in. That's Genesis 7. Verse 16.

That's a reference to God shutting a door. God shut the door of the ark. So it's a picture to us. That salvation opportunity. Was time limited. There was only that opening for a time.

Where the door was open. Then God closed the door. And of course the ark of Noah. It pictures for us. The very person of our Lord Jesus. And friends. There's a time coming.

When God will shut the door of salvation. In his timing. And he will shut in the saved. And he'll shut out the lost. In judgment. Paul says the door is open. He says behold now is the accepted time.

[5:15] Behold now is the day of salvation. And the Lord opens the door of faith. Some other references to the door. And that picture of a door. Of a doorway. We see in Acts 14.

Verse 27. And when they would come together. And had gathered the church together. They rehearsed all that God had done with them. And how he had opened the door of faith. Unto the Gentiles. Another door.

Is the door of faith. So as we believe. As we trust Christ. He opens that door. If you like. The door of faith. He opens that door. To him. The Lord opens the door.

Of the word of God. In 2 Corinthians 2 verse 12. He says he came to Troas. To preach the gospel. He says the door was opened. Unto me. Of the Lord. So the word of God. His giving the message of salvation.

Was the door that was opened. And in Colossians 4 verse 3. Paul says pray for us. That God would open unto us. A door for the word. And that's a prayer. We should pray still. Isn't it?

[6:13] That God would open unto us. A door for the word. I know when we're going witnessing. On a Saturday. For example. As we. Physically knocking on. On physical doors. That we're actually.

Praying that God would open those doors. As it were. The doors of those. That will trust Christ.

And. Pray for the Lord to open. The door for the word. That people will have a. Receptive ear.

To hear the word of God. So we see. Just to recap there. The door of salvation. As God says. Now is the day of salvation. The door of faith. In Acts 14.

27. The door of the word of God. The proclaiming of it. And. Another one. Is in Revelation 3. Which we've just started to. Touch on in our. Wednesday night studies. Revelation 3 verse 7.

Talks about the. Church of Philadelphia. Philadelphia. And it says that. The Lord. He opens. And no man shutteth. And he shutteth. And no man openeth. And then it says. In Revelation 3 verse 8.

[7:10] This is talking to the church of Philadelphia. Revelation 3 verse 8. It says. Though thou works. Behold I have set before thee. An open door. And no man can shut it. For thou hast a little strength.

And hast kept my word. And hast not denied my name. So another picture there. That the church of Philadelphia. Which means the church of brotherly love. God opens the door for that church. Of Philadelphia.

It's a picture I guess of God's blessing. Of his opening opportunity. Of God blessing. And when we think of our own lives, sometimes there's open doors where God seems to open a way to walk, a way to go through, to do something for God.

And then sometimes God closes a door. And in this case, in the Church of Philadelphia, it says that God is the one who opens the door and no man can shut. So you could see from that that God is sovereign here.

And he has control. He's got control over the doors of our life, whether they'll be opening or shutting, whatever it is, the walk that he wants us to walk, the doors that he wants us to go through, that he'll open them for us.

[8:17] There's a time where God shuts a door. Paul says in Acts 16 verse 6 that they were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia. So there's a time when God actually, as much as they wanted to go to a certain place, God shut the door to that place.

God withstood them going to that place. So sometimes God shuts doors. So that can be in our own lives where we think, well, we think God's wanting us to do something, but circumstances and providence lead us otherwise.

And we see that, no, God's shut that doorway off. God's shut that door, but he's opened this door. And when God opens the door, it could be opening the door for our witness, for our mission, for our outreach, for God's will to take a certain direction.

And so it's about us, I guess, really trusting the one who opens and no man shuts and shuts and no man opens. In other words, trust the Lord with your life, whatever doorways lie ahead for you, discerning which are open and which are closed, knowing it's the Lord who is the one who opens the doors for your future.

And he's the one who closes those doors. There's open doors for witnessing too. As we see that our Lord unlocks the hearts of people. As it reads of Lydia, it says, the Lord opened her heart.

[9:35] You can think of that as a picture of, you know, some people's hearts are closed, they're shut, they're bolted, they're padlocked. And some people's doors of their hearts are open.

It says, for Lydia, the Lord opened her heart. So that's what we want to pray for, isn't it? When we're witnessing to people, that the Lord would lead us to people with hearts that are open.

People like Lydia, that the Lord opens her heart so she will receive the witness of the word of God and God will lead us to such people. So when we go and join in regular witnessing, whether it might be open air preaching or through door knocking or other personal witness, personal testimony, ask the Lord to lead you to those that have the open door.

Sometimes the Lord closes a door. And we could think of that through our own lives where we think we should be going a certain way or doing a certain thing and it seems that God's showing us God's closed that door.

If that happens, just humbly accept it. And when he opens the door, let's step into it. So we could all think of circumstances maybe through our lives where he's led us through certain things and he's guided us, he's made provision, he's opened a door.

[10:49] Or sometimes we get that sense, no, God doesn't want us to go down that track, that he's closed that door. And as Paul told it here, he says that a great door and effectual is opened unto me.

The point number one is there's an open door. All right? God opens a door. He opens the way that we should walk. And another thought is that there's a great door and it's effectual. That God will lead us through circumstances.

He'll show us what's effectual for our life. God knows the best for us. The best for our lives. And so it's about finding those opportunities to grow. And here he is. He's going into the lion's den, the city of Ephesus.

He's going right into Ephesus, the city of Ephesus. And he's talking about this incredible opportunity, a great opportunity for effectual work, for effective work. And friends, there's opportunities for mission right here where we live.

There's opportunities all around us for God's blessing, for his providence. It's a great door because what we're talking about is eternity. There's nothing greater than eternal truth.

[11:54] And it's effectual because this can be life-changing. And it's a great door. There's many hearers. People, there's an opportunity for you to reach out in your own life and witness.

And great opportunities. And we see in Acts 16 verse 9, we see a vision that appeared to Paul in the night. And he saw a man of Macedonia.

And this man prayed. He sought him saying, come over and help us. Paul had this clear vision of a man in Macedonia. So God gave him this vision.

And it showed to Paul there was an open door into Macedonia. He's talking about this opportunity to take the gospel message. And as if he saw a man praying and asking for the message to come to that area.

And that's how missionaries are often led. They have that sense where God's leading them to a particular place. And here we're up to this place here in 1 Corinthians 6 verse 11. In the context it talks about unrighteous.

[12:55] It talks about people who are idolaters, adulterers. People that are thieves and covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners.

And he says, Paul writes to the Corinthians here in 1 Corinthians 6 verse 11. Such were some of you. So you might have a dark past of all kinds of sinful things that are in your past.

Paul says to you, to them, you were that, but now you're washed. You're sanctified. You're made holy. You're justified.

And God can affect that transformation of a life. That's really what this great and effectual door with the gospel witness manifests. Is that people can be changed.

Their eternal direction and destiny can be changed. So it's a great and it's an effectual door. Think of the opportunities that exist all around us that sometimes we might miss to do something for the Lord.

[14:00] Now we can make that mistake of missing where God's leading us to do, to work. Not always clear what he wants us to do.

But no matter how far we go, it says the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save. Isaiah 59 verse 1. His hand can reach to those that might seem the most lost, the most far from God.

And so we ought not to be deterred from witnessing, taking the opportunity to reach out. Take those opportunities to witness where you can. You know, you might have some workmates and people in your circle of family and friends that might seem they're so hard, so hard, so tough to the gospel.

God can work through. He says that if there's that open door for you to witness to them, then take that opportunity to witness. And don't hold back. Seize the opportunities that God gives you to witness.

So back to our text, it says, So we see that God provides an open door and God provides opportunities.

[15:11] And thirdly, with all of these openings and opportunities, with the open doors that God gives you in your life, you might get a third feature, which is many adversaries. You might get opposition.

Now, sometimes we can make the feeling, when we can get that feeling, when things get tough, maybe I'm out of the will of God. Maybe as I get some opposition, maybe I'm going the wrong way. There's a great opportunity, but actually it comes hand in hand with great opposition. When you step out for God, it's not unusual that you'll have some opposition.

When you step out for God, it's not necessarily going to be all plain sailing. So don't be deterred. If you do something for God, you go through the open doors, you take the opportunity to step out in faith.

Don't be deterred by opposition. Because it's only natural people are opposed to the gospel. You're going to get those that will hate the gospel, they'll hate the message.

[16:14] They're not against you, but they're against Christ. And we must press on. It's all the more reason for us to keep going, regardless. It says there are adversaries, not just a few, but many.

Many adversaries. Paul's saying here that there's many that are opposed to me. They're lining up against me, is the sense of it. And Paul gives opposition as actually a reason to stay there at Ephesus.

And so back to where we started in Acts 19. We see what happened when Paul hit Ephesus. It was like there's great opposition there. There was an uproar.

This was going to be a huge trouble to the idol makers of the town of Ephesus. And Paul was public enemy number one.

But Paul gives a reason actually here that the opposition is actually a reason to stay there at Ephesus, not to leave. It can be the case when you're witnessing for Christ and when you're soldiering on, you're serving God and the going gets tough.

[17:17] It's actually God's working there in the opposition. It's not that you're out of the will of God when you have opposition. Maybe in your home place, in your family, in your circumstances of life.

Opposition doesn't mean that you're out of the will of God. It might actually mean that you're right in the centre of his will. And we see that in 2 Corinthians 1 verse 8, Paul says about the trouble that came to us.

He says we are pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life. So Paul had his share of pressure and trouble. And it says again in Acts 19, what happened when Paul was there in Ephesus, there was no small stir about the way.

You know, the Bible Christians were called the way. Of course, it speaks of Jesus our Lord being the way, the truth and the life. So when Paul was there, there was great opposition. There was

excitement, there was disturbance, there was this stirring up.

And Paul says all these opportunities, these openings, these open doors and the many adversaries are actually God's plan for him.

[18:25] When you step out for God and start maybe being more of an unashamed Christian and of course using wisdom in situations where you say it. But you want to be an out and out Christian, not holding back and not being afraid.

And you're going to see some that will oppose that message. Many will resist the gospel. They'll fight God. But that doesn't mean you stop reaching out.

Don't be deterred. If we were to give up when we're going door knocking, for example, it's 99% refusal, pretty much.

If you went by that as a gauge of, well, should I keep doing this? The hostility to the gospel. Then you'd easily throw in the towel and quit. Paul says a number of people are against him.

Many of them. He talks further about troubles inside and outside of the church. In 2 Corinthians 7 verse 5, he says that we are troubled on every side. Without we're fighting, within we're fears.

[19:30] So the church of God, we're all human. It's the same today, isn't it? We're still human. There's fighting, there's fears. We have those human feelings and reactions at times.

We've got many adversaries, but God's opened the door. And that's the point that I'm trying to put through here. When God opens a door, the door of faith, when God shows you the way to go, to serve, to live, to take that challenge, to take that opportunity, then step through the great and effectual open door.

Take that opportunity that God gives to you, even if it means increased opposition, even if it means when you step out for God, you're going to be facing some of the thickest fight.

That increased opportunity can mean increased opposition. Friends, the Bible speaks much of opposition to the gospel. It tells us in the last days, in 2 Timothy 4, how there's going to be a time when people won't endure sound doctrine, and they'll heap to themselves teachers, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth.

Paul says, just preach the word. Keep on going. Keep on preaching. Keep on ministering. Keep on serving. Paul saw the opposition at Ephesus not as a reason to leave, but a reason to remain.

[20:48] And it's the same for you and me, brothers and sisters. When the fight is the thickest, that could be just the place God wants you to be. Opposition is not an evidence that the Holy Spirit is not at work, but the contrary.

In Luke 6, our Lord says, Woe to you when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets. That's Luke 6, 26. Just because things are hard doesn't mean you're out of the will of God.

So I urge you in your own personal walk with the Lord to not be deterred by opposition. Let it galvanise you to endure. Let it strengthen you to overcome the challenges that are ahead of you.

The easy way is not always God's way. Here's what someone said about worldliness. Worldliness would be the easy way, wouldn't it? Just have a carefree Christian life where you don't really, you know, you don't stick your head up above the trenches and you just keep quiet.

And you can just choose to go a worldly way where you're just really, you're doing nothing for God. You'd rather just have the world and its toys. And here's what someone said about such a way of thinking.

[21:59] Worldliness. It says, Worldliness more than anything else paralyzes our missionary efforts. We're so intoxicated with the spirit of the times that we cannot be brought to sympathise with a world that is rushing down to death.

And we grow so selfish and ambitious in the midst of our earthly prosperities that we have no heart to give as we ought to give to the missionary work. It'll be easy just to step back and say, oh, somebody else will do it or, you know, I'll just enjoy life and just, you know, sit back and take it easy. While the enemies of God are advancing all around us. Friends, we should be the ones that are advancing. God's kingdom should be advancing. And we should be taking the challenge of facing up to opposition, even though it's mounting against us.

So being a Christian is going to bring you into conflict. So don't be surprised. You that might be new in the Lord, when you stand up for Christ, don't be surprised by opposition.

The world and its ways will oppose you. The Bible speaks about friendship with the world is enmity with God. You know, it's contrary. To be friendship with the world is actually hateful to God.

[23:10] So I urge you today to consider Paul's message here in that simple verse that we started with. That a great door and effectual is opened unto me and there are many adversaries.

What were Paul's adversaries? He had religious opposition. The temple of Diana was located there in Ephesus and the church was attacked. They called it a sect and they spoke against it in Acts 28 verse 22.

They called Paul mad in Acts 26 verse 24. They said, your much learning has made you mad.

Paul's adversaries in Ephesus included the immorality of the place.

Ephesus was filled with wickedness. In 1 John 5 verse 19, we see, we know that we are of God and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And another thing that was bad about Ephesus was there was false teachers there.

In Acts 20 verse 29, he warns that there shall grievous wolves enter in among you. and they're going to speak perverse things and draw disciples away after them.

[24:17] So, look at all the opposition. All the adversaries Paul had, many adversaries. He had religious opposition from the false worship of the place. He had immorality.

Ephesus was an immoral place. And then he had false teachers even within the church coming up to take away disciples. So, he was on the front line of this vicious battle.

He says there are many adversaries. Friends, it's the same with you and me. We're waged in an eternal war within the hearts of souls of men. There are forces arrayed against us.

And we see Paul writes to the Ephesians in chapter 6, verse 11, that familiar section where it talks about the armour of God. Where he says, put on the whole armour of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles or the tricks of the devil.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

[25:14] Wherefore, take unto you the whole armour of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand. So, think of it, friends, today we must oppose the devil.

We have a fight to fight. We're against the devil and his wicked ways and even though the whole world lieth in wickedness, we can mount the offensive. Christians can expect to be attacked and opposed.

So, brother, sister, today, take heart. You're feeling like you're in a fight. Feeling like you're taking a few punches under the belt. You know, it's a wrestling match. It's gruelling.

It's arduous. Your energy's flagging. There is a great and effectual open door. Don't let the many adversaries put you off serving God.

Don't let the many oppositions and the many difficulties and the trials and troubles of your walk put you off from serving God. But rather press through that. It says this door is great and it's effectual and it's open.

[26:19] The word effectual in the Greek it's energies which obviously we get our word energy from. Now this door is a powerful thing. It's the same word that's used of, you know, the word of God is quick and powerful.

The word powerful is the same word effectual of the door. So this is something powerful. It's God's power. It's God's effectual. It's God affecting. It's God's operating.

God's mighty working is going to happen as you step through that great and effectual open door. So when you think of it as a believer it's not just you but God is with you wherever you go and when you go through the open doors that he opens for you it will be effectual because God's spirit is working with you and in you as you walk through.

God walks through that door with you and the spirit of God is working as you witness, as you serve. God will work that work of miracle of salvation in hearts.

So don't be discouraged when you face opposition for the gospel because God is at work. It's effectual. God is working. God will make the work effectual. Really the ultimate work is to awaken the conscience to see someone see their need of Christ and to overcome the adversaries who are trying to deter you from witnessing and deter them from receiving.

[27:44] There are many adversaries friends. There's many adversaries today. But Satan's kingdom will shake as you reach out. Opposition does not break our spirits.

It makes us stronger. It encourages our zeal. It encourages us, inspires us with fresh courage.

We've got an opening, an open door, an opening to share the gospel.

And those openings are all around us. Friends, there's open doors all around us. We've just got to open our eyes and see those open doors. Doors are open all around you. Are you walking through them?

That's the point. That's the question. Don't be afraid to cross the threshold of the open doors, as it were. When you see God's opening a door for you to speak to a particular individual, God's opening a door for you to enter a particular place and to minister Christ through that open door, walk through the open door.

Amen? Look out for the opportunity. Seize them with both hands. Someone's described the three doors in Revelation. It's an interesting thought. Revelation 3 verse 8, it reads that he has set before thee an open door.

[28:56] That's the door that opens out for service. Then we see in Revelation 3 verse 20, of course that familiar one where the Lord is speaking, Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

If anyone hear my voice and open the door, I will come into him and will sup with him and hear with me. You could say this is the door that opens in for communion and God wants us to enter in and to sup with him, to partake.

It's got a sense of eating, eating with him, dining with him. So there's a sense of communion with God. And then we see another door in chapter 4 verse 1. After this I looked, says John, and behold a door was opened in heaven.

So this door opens up for the Lord's return. It's an interesting thought, isn't it? A door open for the church of Philadelphia that opens out for service. The church here that says he's knocking at their door, he wants to come in and sup with them, it opens in for communion and then the open door that is in heaven, it opens up for the Lord's return.

Friends, there's many open doors that God can speak to us about and show us what to do for his service. Is there a door unlocked that we are struggling to unlock?

[30:12] Though all we have to do is push it open. Sometimes the doors open, maybe it's ajar but we just got to push that door a little. Let's not look back on doors that are open in our lives as we might reflect as we get older in life and we look back and we think there was a door open and I missed it.

Can you identify with that? Maybe there was someone I should have talked to and I didn't take that opportunity. I know there was a man talking to me lately that he had that situation where God put on his heart to speak to someone but he missed it.

They passed away and he regretted that he didn't take that open door. I trust for each one of us we won't look back on our life and think wow that was a door that was open to me and I never answered it.

Those opportunities that we've neglected. Time is a finite resource isn't it? We don't know how much time we've got to take those opportunities. opportunities. So let's not look back on doors opened that we didn't enter into or opportunities that we missed that we neglected and thirdly let's not let opposition deter us from doing God's will.

Friends there's going to be many adversaries. When you step out for Christ there's going to be many opposing. You might be really attacked for your Christian faith and that is true in many countries around the world today that to step out for Christ it could mean that you are absolutely attacked and you've got many adversaries but you're actually in the centre of God's will.

[31:46] So don't be discouraged tonight. Let's pray. Lord we thank you that your word shows us about an open door that's great it's effectual yet there's many adversaries.

Lord let us learn from Paul as he went into that heathen place of Ephesus and he didn't run away but he remained there even in that time where there was great opposition to the gospel and you used him Lord for your glory to see a church planted there.

Help us too Lord to see in our time and place here that those opportunities of open doors where we can take those steps of faith through those openings to enter through the door of faith, the door of utterance and to take the gospel message into hearts that are opened like Lydia's was.

Lord help us to see and to seize those opportunities to take the gospel and not to be deterred. Help us to press through the opposition where we have of course we know we have the ultimate adversary but we have many adversaries also and Lord we pray encourage every believer here tonight to press on and to press through those open doors and Lord give us grace to see them and to seize those opportunities you called us to to reach others for Christ.

We pray in Jesus name. Amen.