

Open Doors

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[0:00] Every morning when I wake up there's a little ritual that we have. I open the door to the laundry and there's a little dog there poised.

! Eyes sharp, his body coiled like a spring about to be unleashed. Like an Olympic athlete at the status blocks.

And he holds his nerve there at the door until I swing the door wide open. And then he races in and bounds and springs onto the bed to give Julie a good morning kiss.

And he loves going through that open door and to bound into welcoming Julie and waking her up.

But I wanted to talk about open doors. God puts before us open doors.

And Paul writes of such a situation here in 1 Corinthians 16 verse 9. It says, For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.

[1:15] It's a door we're talking of tonight. A door. What's a door? It's an entrance. It's an entrance into something.

It's a moveable barrier that closes and opens the entrance to whether it be a room, a building, a vehicle, a door. And God says to us about a door here in this text. The Lord opens a door. A door of opportunity to his people to do his work.

Do we recognise God's opportunities? Sometimes I think we miss them. We miss them. A gateway. A doorway. A door is opened up. Friends, God knows how to open doors. The scriptures that speak of various doors.

In Hosea 2 verse 15 it speaks of a door of hope. In Acts 14 verse 27 it tells of a door of faith.

In Colossians 4 verse 3 God opens a door of utterance or witness. So the analogy of a door, it represents openings, opportunities of doorways, of ministry, of witness.

[2:37] And it is God who opens the doors. God is the one who opens the doors. In Revelation 3 verse 8 he says, I have set before thee an open door and no man can shut it.

Doors open and doors close through our lives. Let's take a note of this text. Firstly, it is a great door. A great door. Paul says the door that he is speaking of here, this door of ministry that is opening to him, is a door that is a great door.

It is the kind of opening that speaks of a great opportunity. Way back when I was a little tacker, I can remember being summoned into the principal's office.

I was just a year to 12 student, very young, and I was sitting there summoned into the principal's office. As she sat me down, she was sitting there across the desk from me, just down the road here in Elizabeth.

And it was daunting. It was kind of nervous for me to sit there in the principal's office. And this lady principal sat me down and she was really helpful that day.

[3:50] She talked about how life is like a corridor with lots of doorways. A corridor with different doors in it. And you can take a walk down that corridor, if you like that corridor of life, and some doors are shut and some are open.

And depending on, of course she was talking about subject choice and decisions that we make about careers and our future, life. When we choose a door, and we go into that door, sometimes other doors shut behind us.

Other doors then open up down the new corridor. Depending on the subject choice and the decisions we make can determine the career that we have in our life. So these are important decisions.

There are some doors that are great, they are very important that we make wise choices. We make those big decisions carefully about where we will go, about what paths we will tread.

Do we stop to think about the decisions of life, about whether we are headed in God's direction. Are these doors, doors that God is opening for us? To be in his service, to do his will, to do a great work.

[4:57] A great door is opened. Do we look at life and see life through the lens of ministry, if you like. The lens of how would God like us to view the choices that we make in our lives.

Whether they be God honouring ones that will bring God the glory. Do we lift up our eyes and see things as Jesus would have us to see them. Our Lord and Saviour, as he says lift up your eyes and see.

Behold, the harvest is ready. Do we lift up our eyes and see through his eyes. Do we have that spiritual eyesight. How will we serve God in our life?

The door is great in its significance. There is a high calling. Each one of you has a gift, a calling as God's saved people. Each one of you has something that you are gifted and able to do.

And there is a responsibility along with that. A work with a purpose. He has given us something that is great. It is an eternal work. Paul was here in Ephesus. Ephesus.

[6:00] Now it didn't look that great. Humanly speaking in Ephesus. If you know about Ephesus. Ephesus was an evil town.

It was an evil place. It was decadent. It was worldly. It was renowned as a sanctuary for criminals. It was an idolatrous city. An idolatrous city. It was renowned for having the temple of Diana there.

Or Artemis. It was a very evil, gross, sick, pagan, idolatrous place. A place of idol worship.

Ephesus. And yet Paul says of this place a great door. A great door. So when we might be as it might seem in this place.

We are in a heathen community that rejects Christ. And is largely godless. As much as they call Adelaide the city of churches. It is very far from being the place that God would have it to be.

[7:00] Yet Paul counts it. This was a great opportunity. A great door. There is a great door and it is right here. Because God is in it.

That is what matters. When God is in something it is a great door. Secondly we see not only is it a great door. It is great and effectual.

It is effectual. Paul says this door is effectual. Real Bible Christianity has a wonderful eternal effect. There is something effectual about Christianity. Bible Christianity. There is something effected in the here and now and in the hereafter in being a Christian.

It is effectual. It means it engages. It calls for work. It produces an effect. The word for effectual here is a word where we get our English word energy from.

[7:55] Energy. And the word great in this text is where we get our English prefix mega from. So you could say transliterating this text that God is talking here about something that is big.

It is mega energy. Sounds a bit like one of those high energy drinks you can buy doesn't it? This door is mega energy. It is great and it is effectual. There is an effectual operation to the opportunities that God brings across our way.

When God is in something, something will happen. There is an effect. It is effectual. It is big and it is great and it is effectual. The sense here also is it is full of labour.

There is an aspect. There is something working here. There is something that is operating. This is Christianity that works. It is Christianity that is effective. That is fruitful. And friends we can consider through our lives.

That corridor of life if you like. The doors that open and close. Different opportunities open up and close behind us. Some are bigger than we can think we can do.

[9:03] And yet God, if God is in it, he will make us able. With God all things are possible. So let's keep our eyes peeled as we walk through the corridor of life for those doors that God is bringing across our pathway.

Keep our eyes peeled and look out. What is God guiding me and leading me to do? Where is he sending me? What is he opening up for me? Where is the opportunity that I can find to be an effectual Christian?

When God opens the door for you to serve him, it will be effectual. Paul writes much of effectual. He says of the effectual working of his power in the believer in Ephesians 3 verse 7.

God's power is effectual working in us, with us, through us. God's church is described as a body of Christ here on earth. As being a whole body, fitly joined, compacted by every joint, supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part.

It makes increase of the body unto the edifying or building up of itself in love. It says there in Ephesians 4 verse 16, the body of Christ is meant to be something that's effectual.

[10:21] Where every part, every joint is working in tandem, in coordination, in that inter-cooperation, that interdependence of every part.

Christ is a human body. Every part has that interdependence. So too, in the body of Christ, there's an effectual working in the measure of every part.

And then in Philemon 1 verse 6, Paul says in his prayer for Philemon, he prays that the communication of thy faith may be effectual.

He prays that Philemon's faith, as it was communicated, as he was witnessing, that it would be effectual. And then James speaks of effectual. In James 5 verse 16, he talks of prayer that is effectual.

He says, confess your faults one to another, pray for one another, that you be healed. The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

[11:22] Effectual, fervent prayer. So God wants you and I, as his people, to be effectual, to be effective, to be fruitful, to be functioning parts of the body of Christ.

Every one of us, our faith being communicated effectually, our prayer being fervent, effectual. God is opening a door, a great door and effectual.

He's opening a door for you. Sometimes we miss it. I believe we miss it. Those opportunities where God is opening a door for us to be effectual for him. Where his will is for us, for every one of us, it's effectual.

So this door is great and it is effectual. And thirdly, we know that this door, it's a great door and effectual, is opened to me.

This door is an open door. It is wide open, wide open, opened for us by God's hand. You know, God's got a way of busting doors wide open.

[12:25] He busts doors wide open. Even big doors, mega doors, great doors. You know, we talked briefly this morning of Samson ripped off the gates of the city, carrying them 20 odd miles.

That was a great door. God's got a way of busting doors wide open. Even doors that man tries to shut. He opens them wide up. That's what he did at Philippi in Acts 16 verse 26.

It says as they were rejoicing and praising God in the midnight hour. They'd just been lashed and beaten. And suddenly there was a great earthquake.

The church was praying. Suddenly there was a great earthquake. So that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened. And everyone's bands were loosed.

The chains were loosed from their hands and feet. The doors were opened in Philippi. God opens doors for us. It makes me think of the picture of a castle.

[13:28] Who's ever seen those old fashioned movies where the castle is stormed by the invading forces. And they get that big battering ram. And bash it.

And bash it against the door of the castle. Against those massive gates. And the gates fall. And as the soldiers storm the gates. They lay siege to the stronghold.

And the gates come a tumbling down. God swings a door open for us. Just as if he battered it down. It seems at times.

God's got a way of making doors open. Sometimes we just have to wait for him to open the door. You know there's many Bible characters that had to wait for some things.

Whether it was the blessing of children. Whether it was opportunities to serve. They had some time in the preparation time. You know how long was Paul in Arabia? Three years before God fully engaged him in the work that he called him to do.

[14:29] And so we see. Sometimes we've got to wait for the doors to open. Will we pray for God to open some doors for us? You know younger

Christians, older Christians.

All of us. We can all prayerfully seek God's face for doors that will open. I think back to that little talk in the principal's office that I had. And the talk about some doors open and some doors closed. And she was saying to me here. When you go into one door. There's other doors that it leads to. Depending on the choices we make. There's some doors that will stay closed. And some choices that will lead to some doors.

And sometimes we may have doors that we never get the chance to go into. Because of choices we made. Life's like that. Life's like that. We're older ones.

We realize. I don't think I can become a brain surgeon now. I'm a bit past going back to university for that. Mind you I am going to university to do something else. Part time. But life's like that isn't it? [15:30] That sometimes the doors close. Opportunities are gone. And it's gone. Some of you young ones. You've still got time to be a brain surgeon. If God chooses you to be that.

Who knows? Anything's possible with God. But you know. I look back at that time. With the principal. And I finished my matric. And I was given office. I had a university entrance. And I had some doors open up to me. There were some choices to make. There were several doors open to me. Doors that may have led to some great careers. And I had a door open to attend a Bible school.

Miles away. On the other side of the continent. I chose that door. I chose that door. Because I wanted to be in the ministry. I wanted to be serving God. I wanted to learn how to serve God better. And to be of service to his people. I had only just turned 18. When I stepped through the door of that Bible school. Wet behind the ears. And that door meant.

[16:27] Leaving my sweetheart behind. What a sacrifice it was. Leaving my sweetheart behind for 7 months. While I was on the other side of the country. Would she wait for me?

Was this sacrifice too much? Friends. Life is like that. God closes doors. And he opens doors. He opens some new doors.

And he's still doing that as we live on. What is it that we care about? What are the doors that God's will. Is for us to open and to enter? What will you pray for?

Will you pray for God's will for your life? Will you pray as Paul prayed? Paul is there under house arrest in Colossians 4. He doesn't ask for prayer for his release. Here he is bound and captive in Colossians 4. He didn't pray for release from prison. He didn't pray for better food. Or anything selfish like that.

He simply wants an open door for the gospel message. He says in Colossians 4 verses 2 to 3.

[17:26] Continue in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving. 2-3, continue in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving, with all praying also for us that God would open unto us a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ for which I am also in bonds.

He says pray for me, pray for us for a door of utterance, a door of witness in this place, in this prison confinement, praying that I will have a door to utter the gospel.

When one door closes, another opens. Now we can often look so long and regretfully at the closed door. Sometimes God shuts the door. As he did through Acts, the Holy Spirit said, don't go to that place, go to the other place.

God showed the people where he was leading them. Sometimes we need to pray through, pray through. When the door seems closed, when it seems like God's closed the door, we can still pray. We can still pray through. And sometimes God can open a door that is closed. We know prayer is the hand that moves God.

[18:40] It can move God's hand. Not saying that we can reign over God, but there's a sense where he intervenes in response to believing prayer. Believing prayer.

He's told us to pray. Why? Because he responds to prayer. He responds to prayer. So we should pray. What does Jesus our Lord say in Matthew 7? Ask, seek, knock.

A-S-K. Ask, seek, knock. Ask and it shall be given you. Seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you.

For everyone that asketh, receiveth. And he that seeketh, findeth. And to him that knocketh it shall be opened. The door shall be opened.

Knock at the door with prayer. Knock at the door with prayer. Brother, sister, God opens the door for those who ask him, for those who seek and knock. So God presented Paul an open door.

[19:37] Let us seek God for our lives ahead. You know, discerning God's will for our life is a fundamental thing to pray about and to seek his face for.

It's been said that the safest place is in the will of God. The safest place for us. It could be in a dangerous mission field.

The safest place for you is in the will of God. Wherever that be. As he opens those great and effectual doors. One last aspect about this great door.

This great door and effectual and opened is, fourthly, there are many adversaries. There are many adversaries.

When you do something for God. When you step over the line and you step, put your head above the trenches, there are many adversaries. Some people think that because you face some opposition, you're outside of God's will.

[20:40] Some people think, oh, it's getting a bit hard. Maybe God's telling you to do something a bit easier. No, wrong. No, don't think like that.

It could be when there's many adversaries, God's in it. God's in it, brother. Sister. Sister. When there's opposition, when there's opposition to the work of God, opposition is not necessarily a bad thing.

When you've got opposition from family members, when you've got ones criticizing or complaining, or trying to put you off serving God, maybe it's all the more that you should determine to do it.

Opposition is not necessarily a bad thing. I read this. Someone has said, there's never any conflict in a dead church. Sometimes there's conflict because there's life.

There's life there. There's never any conflict in a dead church. If everyone's just coasting along, enjoying the sofa chair, kind of armchair Christianity, where no one rocks the boat or says anything to stir up.

[21:46] But we need to be stirred up. We need to be stirred up to life, to action. Paul saw the adversaries. He saw them not as something to put him off, but to make him press harder, even stronger in the battle, as an opportunity to serve God.

Just as much a reason to stay in the fight, to stay at God's open door, where the many adversaries. We're in a battle, after all. Aren't we to expect some opposition?

Notice it says, many adversaries. When a great and effective door is open for you, when there's potential for you to be really used of God, and blessed by God and used to bless others, there will be not a few, but many, many adversaries, many opposition influences, many opposing influences, that are meant to try you and to stop you.

And our human tendency, when such things happen, is just to kind of whimper and act like our little dog with his tail between his legs and just go and hide, you know.

When he's got to have his nails cut, you know, I've just got to say, we've got to get your nails cut, and then he goes and hides, and whimpers, and snivels, and cries. And, you know, some Christians are like that.

[23:07] You've got to get your nails cut, brother. You've got to get your nails cut, sister. And they, ooh, that's got to hurt me. But we need it sometimes. We need, we need the, the vine dressers, pruning shears sometimes, on that vine, on those branches, that are getting a bit straggly, and we need God to sometimes put us in those uncomfortable places.

And so, opposition, when it shows up, it could mean that God's in it. Because sometimes, there's enemies outside the church, inside the church, even within ourselves, those battles raging.

It's easy just to quit, just to give up. Opposition can be sometimes, like it was in the days of Nehemiah. Sam Ballard, was the character there, in the book of Nehemiah.

He says to Nehemiah, come down off the wall, let's have a little talk about things. People were trying to get Nehemiah, to stop the great work, that he was doing. The work of building the wall. God's will for his life, was to be about this ministry, this service, of building up the wall. People were trying to get Nehemiah, to come down off the wall, and have a little talk, have some dialogue.

[24:16] Nehemiah 6 verse 3, Nehemiah, he says, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease, while I leave it, and come down to you?

I am doing a great work. Friends, brother, sister, if you're doing something for God, it's a great work, no matter how insignificant it might seem, to the world around about. What you do for God, is something that's great, and it's valuable, and it's worthwhile.

You might get the Sanballat to come, and say, hey, let's go and do this, and do that. Try to deviate you, detour you, distract you from, doing something for God. Sanballat was there, with a whole band of others, trying to deter, and discourage, and undermine Nehemiah.

Many adversaries, don't be deterred. Friends, don't be deterred. Though you face many hindrances, what will it take, to make you quit? Being made is stronger stuff than that.

Trust in God. Obstacles will face us, every day. I read this little quote, about spiritual warfare. Think about this, maybe you're, you're at the front line, you're at the trenches here, and this might speak to you.

[25:34] Of spiritual warfare for you, right now. Here's what he says, most folk, who fill the average church queue, do not know, what real spiritual warfare is. Their concept, of spiritual warfare, is the refrigerator defrosting, and losing all the food.

Or maybe the washing machine, quits working right, in the middle of the load. Or maybe a flat tyre, on the car. Spiritual warfare. Oh, it's tough stuff.

Most of them would say to, something like this, boy, the devil has been really hot, on my trail today. Friends, that's nothing. You know, brother Ian gets some newsletters, from countries, where, right now, our brothers and sisters, are in chains, bound, tortured, persecuted, to the death.

We've got nothing, to complain about. Sometimes the greatest, adversaries for us, are within. Whether it's pride, bitterness, carnality.

We're battling, against spiritual wickedness, in high places, there's spiritual wickedness, all around about. But friends, be encouraged tonight, when God opens a door, no man can shut it.

[26:50] As we read in Revelation 3, verse 8, if God's in it, God's opening a door for you, then go through, go through, as Hebrews 4, verse 16, we're told to come boldly through, to the throne of grace, to obtain mercy, to find grace to help, in time of need.

Hebrews 10, having boldness to enter, into the holiest, there's a door, that's always open for you, it's the door of prayer. It's the doorway, into the holiest, is always open for you.

You don't have to, go geographically, to some holy city, or holy site, you can come, in the privacy of your own home, into the very holiest, of holies, on planet earth, into the very throne of grace, that door is open for you, brother, that door is open for you, sister, the place of prayer, draw near to God, draw near with a true heart, Hebrews 10, enter in, to that open door of prayer, draw ever closer to God.

Friends, look for open doors, not easy doors, look for open doors, not easy doors, don't doubt, that God has opened the door for you, even though it may seem, difficult, he's not promised, an easy road, but he's promised, an open door, and no man can shut it.

So, to round up, what are we saying here tonight? I know I've been talking, somewhat in analogies, and picture form about these doors, and closed doors, and open doors, I hope that I'm not becoming too, you know, hypothetical about it.

[28:35] Because these doors are real. They are real. They're not imaginary. We're talking about the corridor of life. We're talking about doors to go in. Choices we make, decisions we make, the will that we have, is it God's will?

The doors that we choose to enter in, are they doors that he has opened? Can we pray and see him open new doors, as we prayerfully seek his will?

Look for open doors, not easy doors. And walk through those doors, walk through the door of prayer, walk through the doors of opportunity, of ministry, of witness, of service.

Seize your God-given opportunities. That's the point of this message tonight. Seize your God-given opportunities. Friends, there's doors open for you, that you're not taking advantage of.

I urge you, I encourage you, as God's people. If God's gifted you, and called you, he's given you abilities, use them, employ them, be employed, in his service.

[29:44] Don't be standing idle, in the marketplace, as those labourers were that day, but be engaged, by the land holder, the Lord Jesus Christ. Be employed, to be engaged, in the harvest work, to be engaged, in his service.

Walk through the door, trust his plan, seeing as you've got given opportunities. Let's be mindful, as we walk through life's corridor, of those openings, that God sets before us.

And let's pray, and keep on praying, for a great door, and effectual, is opened unto me. And there are many adversaries.

Let us pray.