

Opportunities and Adversaries

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Paul wrote the book we call First Corinthians about AD 56 or 57 while he was in Ephesus. Toward the end of that letter, he told the Corinthians he planned to “*tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries*” (16:8, 9).

What door (i.e. opportunity) was opened to Paul in Ephesus that would relate to the Jewish feast of Pentecost? Ephesus was the center of worship of the goddess Diana. About the same time of year that Pentecost was observed in Jerusalem, Diana-worshippers from all over the world gathered in Ephesus for a festival. What an opportunity for Paul to evangelize! He could reach people from numerous cities and countries in a short time; when they returned home, they would leave their idolatry behind, carrying their new-found faith in Christ home with them.

Along with opportunity, however, came opposition. Paul encountered “many adversaries” indeed! His success in converting Diana-worshippers resulted in a severe decline in revenue for Demetrius and his fellow silversmiths, who sold shrines of Diana to festival-goers. (Hint: If you want to get someone’s attention, hit him in the pocketbook!) They stirred the entire city into a riot which threatened the safety of two of Paul’s traveling companions, Gaius and Aristarchus (Acts 19:29). The mob shouted for two hours, “*Great is Diana of the Ephesians!*” (v. 24).

God is opening doors of opportunity for His church in Justin, Texas in 2016. Today we begin a series of sermons on “What the Cross Demonstrates.” You have the opportunity to invite friends, relatives, neighbors, and

anyone else to hear some basic, fundamental principles of the gospel. Will you take the opportunity?

This summer we will have fourteen sound, capable preachers from this area for our Wednesday night Summer Series. Our theme will be “Why,” looking at fourteen “Why” questions from the Scriptures.

Of course we will have our booth at Justin Fun Day on June 4. This is another outreach to our community. Will you help?

And, we have planned a “How We Got The Bible” seminar for September 23-25 with Dan Owen (Paducah, KY). This will be yet another opportunity to reach our neighbors with information which should interest them!

Though a few people may oppose our efforts, I doubt that we will face a riot! Our adversaries are generally more subtle, but they are every bit as real and effective. Satan uses apathy, reversed priorities, fear, false doctrine, and other tactics to sidetrack us. But through Christ, we can overcome. Let us boldly walk through the doors of opportunity God opens for us!

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God's Desire and Grace

God is looking for a reason to save us, not for an excuse to condemn us.

-- Randy Medlin

Heaven goes by favor; if it were awarded by merit, you would stay out and your dog would go in.

-- Mark Twain

To Heal and to Care

“Tend My sheep” (John 21:16).

After W.W.II, my Navy friends, veterans who depended on the national veterans' facilities, complained about how difficult and uncaring it was for them. There was the distance that had to be driven, the long hours waiting for service, and the abrupt attention given by those appointed to render aid.

Nearly seventy years later, accounts coming from such facilities remind us that our country's defenders, injured and incapacitated, now die after long waits for attention. Even illnesses determined by private doctors at a veteran's own expense are not seen in proper time. It is our country's promise not kept, and ignored.

One veteran's wife told of writing her Senator asking that he intercede for her quadriplegic husband, desperately needing help, no longer able to make the trip on his own nor the wait therein. The Senator responded, “Madam, these days I am so busy and involved in many matters of importance to the nation, I no longer have time to direct my attention to the concerns of individuals.”

Fortunately, we learn in the New Testament, that we can have access to God, the Father, through Jesus, the Son, for it was He who associated with friends, and often foes, meeting needs on an individual basis, not through those supposedly responsible for the less fortunate.

Jesus reached out to touch and to heal, and was available for those seeking assistance or to touch Him. His was a manner of comfort, providing reassurance, and guiding the lost. And yes, there were periods when He took time to bring the dead back to life (Mark 5:4). Our God is a God of total access, never too hurried or busy to direct His attention to the living . . . and the dying. His efforts are always one on one, and it is to that responsibility leaders need to adjust themselves.

--Gordon V. Herrmann (deceased); Santa Maria, CA