

The King's Highway

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I Corinthians 16:9—"For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries."

There are sermons in doors. The suggestiveness of doors has added richness and imagination to our understanding of divine truth.

Look at some of the "doors" of Scripture, listen to them, let them speak to you: The Door of Divine Protection (Gen. 19:10); The Door of Speech (Ps. 141:3); The Door of Indolence or Sloth (Pr. 26:14); The Door of Hope (Hos. 2:15); The Door of Doom (Matt. 25:10); The Door of Salvation (John 10:9) and the Door of Divine Invitation (Rev. 3:20).

Open doors are suggestive of opportunity, challenge, and adventure. Shut doors, on the other hand, are suggestive of lost opportunities and completed tasks. Nineteen hundred and fifty-five is now a shut door. We can not go back. We can not change anything. If we have failed in any regard, we can find now only forgiveness and—thank God—new opportunity. God will give us a new sheet of paper. Nineteen hundred and fifty-six stands before us as an open door. It is ahead of us, almost in its entirety. By God's grace, we do not need to spoil any of it with sin or failure.

I might suggest that nineteen hundred and fifty-six is an open door that leads to other open doors. The one which attracts my attention at the moment is the Door of Service. If space permitted, I should like to consider the Door of Revelation also. (Rev. 4:1).

In the Corinthian text quoted above, Paul said that a door of service was opened to him. That door is also opened to you, reader, and to me. It is opened unto us as individuals and it is opened to us as churches: "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me."

What an opportunity Paul had! "great and effectual"! But is not ours also? More prayer is needed than we find time to perform. More money is needed than we find resources to give. More witnessing is needed than we find opportunity to do. More tasks remain undone than we find strength to execute. Millions still are waiting. Close your eyes and envisage the hands of the world. The opportunity is large and extensive.

How great Paul's opportunity was we do not know. How many people were involved, how much time was required, how great the prospects were—we do not know. But we know this: Paul considered the opportunity great. Nothing was small that Paul did for Christ. "Whatsoever you do . . . do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" was his standard.

Have we belittled our opportunities in the year past? Have we been waiting for a greater opportunity, while a smaller opportunity was waiting for us? Hear the advice of the Preacher: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it" and "do it with all thy might." There

is nothing too small for you and me to do for Christ, although we may be too "small" to do it.

Apart from that special task God may call us to do, there is a ministry for all of us, laymen and preacher, to fulfill: a ministry in holy living, in soul winning and evangelization, in prayer, in home visitation, and tract distribution. This is our door, but few dare to enter. This is our individual door, our church door, and our denominational door.

Not only was the door facing Paul great, it was effectual. That is, it demanded and required great efforts.

The Open Doors of '56

C. E. Stairs

Some people are so "pious" they leave all the work to God. They say a little prayer and let God do the sweating, if I may put it thus.

Such was not Paul's philosophy of Kingdom extension. Rather it was: "We are labourers together with God." "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you." "Neither count I mine own life dear unto myself." In vindicating his ministry to the Corinthian Church, he could say that he had served God "in labours more abundant" than other ministers (2 Cor. 11:23), although he admits the foolishness and unChristlikeness of boasting (2 Cor. 11:16-17), "for not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth." (2 Cor. 10:18).

Could Paul's efforts have had anything to do with his success? And did John Wesley's getting up at four o'clock every morning for years have anything to do with his accomplishments for God? Riding horseback, writing, preaching, he labored on into his eighties and merited in his own generation the tribute of St. Paul: "in labours more abundant." Ah, Lord, let me learn their secret. "Let me burn out for Thee."

The importance of human effort does not underestimate or overlook the indispensibility of Divine grace and blessing. "Without me you can do nothing." But even this intimates that "with me you can do something"!

Yes, accomplishments—even in the Kingdom—require great ambition and effort. God's plan never encourages laziness. Paul felt that his opportunity challenged all his energies and abilities.

I recall the story of a young father whose tractor became stuck in the snow. Being a Christian, the man started to pray for God's

help in the predicament. His young son, however, being of a practical nature, piped up the suggestion: "Daddy, why don't you get off and shovel?"

Maybe more "shovelling" in '56 would help us.

The word "effectual" carries another thought, the thought of "promising great results." Usually it is so that great opportunities promise great results, especially if the opportunities are God-created ones; and, although the greatness of the challenge may bring a sense of timidity to us, the prospect of the results should bring fire to our souls.

This new year is one of promise for everyone who is willing to enter doors with God. New chapters can be added to "The Book of Acts"; new heroes can be listed in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews.

But before you face 1956 I must tell you that there will be opposition—opposition even in the midst of opportunity. As Paul said, "A great and effectual door is open unto me, and there are many adversaries."

We might think that the presence of adversaries would indicate the absence of opportunity. We would say: "A great and effectual door is opened unto me, but there are many adversaries." Not so, says Paul—"and there are many adversaries." The door was open; Paul was going in.

According to authorities, the source of opposition was both Jewish and heathen: on one hand, religious forces fighting religious forces and, on the other hand, anti-religious forces fighting religious forces.

It should cheer us some to know that our problems and adversaries are not altogether new. The names have been changed but the faces are similar. Always there have been forces inside the church and outside the church that have tried to stop the march of God.

Inside the church we meet carnality with all her children; ignorance with all its blindness; prejudice with all its stubbornness; and coldness with all its sluggishness. Combined, they would drag the soldier's feet into the slough, if it were not for the promised renewal of strength. Fight on, Friend, and do not faint.

Outside the church there are the forces which are openly at war with the cause of righteousness. These and the forces of righteousness can not co-exist; they must fight for supremacy. "For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet."

As Paul, we face an open door: presenting many problems and requiring great efforts, but promising great results and rewards. The gates of hell may rattle; they shall not prevail. With God-inspired confidence and courage we enter nineteen hundred and fifty-six. Onward, Christian soldiers.