



# THE EXHORTER

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***“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40***

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. ([prchurchofchrist.org](http://prchurchofchrist.org))

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## JUMP START #249

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***1 Cor. 16:8,9- “But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.”***

Opportunity, that’s what our verses today define. Paul is concluding his first letter to the Corinthians. He tells them his plans. He tells them where Timothy and Apollos are. He lets them know that he wants to come and spend some time with them. But for the immediate, Paul will stay in Ephesus.

His words seem like a contradiction to us. He states that there is a wide door for effective service. The service he has in mind is preaching and teaching the Gospel. He calls himself a “bond-servant” of Jesus Christ. A door opened, and here, a WIDE door opened, means opportunity. There are things that can be done and the time is right. The farmer can’t plant the seed when he feels like it, but when the time is right. He might feel like it in the fall, but that is not the right time to plant seed. He might feel like it on a rainy day, but that’s not the time. He must be ready when the conditions are right. Paul realized that. He wanted to be with the Corinthians and they needed him, but the time was right to stay in Ephesus.

When he says there is a wide door for effective service, he also states that there are many adversaries. That is the apparent contradiction in our way of thinking. We tend to think, if there is an open door, then opposition will be little. We’d expect an open door to mean, easy and with very little effort. In the chapter before, Paul states the he fought “wild beasts at Ephesus.” (15:32) I don’t think he meant lions and tigers but rather, opposition and the adversaries that he names here. It was a struggle. It was hard and taxing on the emotions and heart of this apostle. The good that he was doing was being overturned by the Jewish opponents. He fought and defended by teaching. Error falls apart when exposed to the truth. The only thing that suffers from investigation is error. Paul remained at the helm, preaching and teaching the gospel of Jesus.

What a powerful concept and mind changing passage for us. Opportunity in the midst of opposition! Often, when opposition and resistance takes place, we close up and move on. Not a good time, people aren’t ready, too much resistance we tell ourselves. Not Paul. Not at Ephesus. There was terrible opposition, yet he saw a wide door opened for service. Roll up the sleeves, toughen your resolve, dig in and hold your ground! That’s the Paul we see here. He doesn’t quit easy nor early. He doesn’t scare away. He doesn’t melt when someone disagrees.

Could we learn something here? How about your place of work or school? Could that be your Ephesus? Do you see folks that need the gospel? Do you see people hurting on the inside? Do you see chances to invite others to church services or to make time to sit down and study the Bible? Not at this

place, you might say. The language is off the charts! They gossip. They are mean spirited and they make fun of “church-going” people. So we tend to hide our light of influence. We don’t want to draw attention and we especially don’t want to end up in a confrontation. Many will just blend in. Some will even go along, for fear that they would seem to be different. Silent saints. Do you remember Joseph? The man who buried Jesus in his tomb? John describes him as, “a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews.” (19:38) Jesus doesn’t have a secret service. Realize there may be much opposition, but that doesn’t close those open doors.

This is not a call to be rude, obnoxious or “in your face.” But it is a call to defend your Lord and his word. Opponents of Christ are often, very often, loud, and lacking even a fundamental understanding of the Bible. They may have had a bad experience in the past or many have heard things and not checked them out. So they proclaim unfounded and prejudicial statements, such as “no one can understand the Bible.” Really? That’s not what God says. Or “all they want in church is your money.” Not where I attend. Not a church that follows the Bible. “Everyone thinks they are better than the rest.” The only people I hear saying that are the people who don’t make a commitment to Christ. “They are all hypocrites.” No, they are imperfect people who are following a perfect Jesus.

God opens doors for you to serve. Everyday you have opportunities to be kind, to share the gospel, to teach others, to influence for good, to make a difference. Look around today. There are open doors, do you see them? They are first found at home. What better place? But then, with people that know us.

Take courage from Paul. Not everyone wants Jesus, even though they need him. Don’t let Satan or the opinions of some, shut the doors that God has opened.

God is counting on you. Easy? No. Take some prayers, thoughts and actions, but go through those open doors and see who is on the other side that you can help!

Roger Shouse

**Some additional thoughts:**

**Monday-** Gal. 6:10

**Tuesday-** Mark 16:15,16

**Wednesday-** Rom. 1:15,16

**Thursday-** Rom. 10:15

**Friday-** 1 Thess. 2:4

**Saturday-** 1 Pet. 4:17

