



# The Tri-Cities Edifier

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## Running from Opportunity

by Mike Pittman

*"But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries" (1 Cor. 16:8-9).*

The word "door" is frequently used for "opportunity." Paul would not leave Ephesus because the opportunities for teaching the gospel were too great.

In addition to the door opened unto Paul in Ephesus, there were *"many adversaries."* One might have expected Paul to say, "I must leave Ephesus because of my many adversaries." Instead he said, "I must stay in Ephesus in spite of my many adversaries. The opportunities for accomplishing good are too great."

I'm afraid that while Paul stayed, we often run from our opportunities. Paul allowed his opportunities for good to outweigh his adversaries, so he stayed put. We sometimes get discouraged by looking at our adversaries, so we flee opportunities to teach the gospel. We may never be subjected to mob violence for teaching the lost, as Paul was while in Ephesus (Acts 19:21-34), but we have our adversaries.

One of our adversaries is our **lack of confidence in our ability to teach**. It is not our ability to teach that is going to convert people. The gospel does that. Besides, we can surely teach others what we did in order to be saved. We can also bring the lost to some teacher in whom we do have confidence. If you do not have confidence in your own ability to teach the lost, what are you doing in order that you may improve your ability?

Another adversary is **fear of rejection**. Folks, the Lord was rejected! That didn't keep Him from teaching as many as He could. When your teaching is rejected, don't take it personally. Israel told their old prophet and judge, Samuel, that they wanted a king to rule over them. The Lord told Samuel, *"Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you: for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them"* (1 Sam. 8:7). When people despise the doctrine that you bring unto them, this is not a rejection of you but of the Lord. While you are fearing the adversary of rejection, consider this: how will our friends ever enjoy **acceptance** of the truth if no one offers it unto them?

A third adversary some face is **not enough confidence in the gospel**. When we say, "people just won't listen to the truth anymore," we need more confidence in people and in the gospel. Do you have reason to disbelieve Paul when he said, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek"* (Rom. 1:16)? The gospel works! It **has** worked, it **is** working, and it **will always** work when sown in good and honest hearts.

Are you praying for open doors? Are you looking for them? What would you do if you found one? Would you run away or stay?

Great thoughts below, but let me add a couple of Scriptures to the thoughts. STACY

"Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin." James 4:17

"But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.'" Luke 9:62

# The Procrastinating Servant

- by Jack Williams

**14 years old** - "I've just become a Christian, I don't know enough and I'm still too young to be involved in the work of the church."

**16 years old** "I've just got my driver's license. I have to work to take care of my driving expenses. And of course this is the time in my life when I am very busy with friends, and you wouldn't believe all the school activities I have! I'll get involved a little later."

**18 years old** - "I just graduated from high school! Now I need a little time for myself before I enter the 'real world.' I'll have more time for the work of the church later."

**20 years old** - "I never knew college took so much time! When I get out and on my own I'll have time for church work then."

**22 years old** "Boy, did you have any idea how hard it was to get started in the work place? It takes all my energy to get my career on line. And on top of that I just got married... I have to spend time to mold my new family life, too. In a couple of years I'll be ready to really dig into the work of the church."

**24 years old** - "Children! I never believed my parents when they told me how much time and money it took to raise them. I sure don't have time for the work of the church now ... but when my kids get older I'll be able to do my share of the work then."

**36 years old** - "It seems the older he kids get the more they are involved in! Home from work, then to the school functions, then sports ... I'll be glad when the kids get older so I can really be involved in the work of the church."

**46 years old** - "I've never had so much fun! Grandchildren! I should have had them first (Ha!). I can't deprive them ... when they get older I'll be able to really be involved in the church."

**56 years old** "I'm on my last push at work now. I've got to really bear down for a few years now so I can be ready for retirement. And of course we have our place at the lake we're fixing up. In a few years I'll be able to quit the 'rat race' and really get involved in the church."

**66 years old** - "Retirement at last! I've worked hard so many years and now I can enjoy the fruit of my efforts. It's time now for the young ones here at church to carry on and let us 'veterans' rest a little."

Instead of such a person as described above, isn't it great to see people who can use their abilities in God's service **NOW?** Which are **YOU?**