

## “Ob Portu!”

1. **Intro:**

- 1.1. **Mark Ritter** – Persecuted Church, Prayer cards.
- 1.2. **Pastor Kareem** – Read email.
- 1.3. I wrote to **Li Mei** – Very easy to do.
- 1.4. **Book Outline:** Now starts the gospel opportunity *to the ends of the earth*.
- 1.5. **Chapter Outline: Opportunities Come to Those Who Serve! And, Opposition Comes to Most Opportunities!**
- 1.6. **Ob Portu** - In the days before modern harbors, a ship had to wait for the **flood tide** before it could make it to port. The term for this situation in **Latin** was **ob portu**, that is, *a ship standing over off a port*, waiting for the moment when it could **ride the turn of the tide** to harbor.  
The **English word opportunity** is derived from this original meaning. The captain and the crew were ready and waiting for that one moment for they knew that if they missed it, they would have to wait for another tide to come in.  
**Shakespeare** turned this background of the exact meaning of opportunity into one of his most famous passages. [It’s from **Julius Caesar, Act 4, Scene 3**]  
There is a tide in the affairs of men, Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life Is bound in shallows and in miseries.  
On such a full sea are we now afloat; And we must take the current when it serves,  
Or lose our ventures.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.7. **Read:** 11:30; 12:25; **Then** 13:1-3.

2. **OPPORTUNITIES COME TO THOSE WHO SERVE! (1-3)**

- 2.1. **CHOSEN BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD!** (1,2)
- 2.2. The missionary call came **when?** When they were busy **servicing** the Lord.
  - 2.2.1. You might ask, **How should I participate in missionary work?**
  - 2.2.2. {**Read** about it, **Pray** for it, **Give** towards it, **Go** into it(short term), **Help others** go into it, **encourage your children** to go into it}
- 2.3. God calls people who take time to worship & **minister** to the Lord.<sup>2</sup>
  - 2.3.1. **Want God’s direction?** Get busy serving, He’ll show you the next step
- 2.4. **COMMISSIONED BY THE CHURCH OF GOD!** (3)
- 2.5. Antioch serves as a base for Paul.
  - 2.5.1. He **maintains close ties** throughout his missionary career.
- 2.6. **Fasting** – Often makes us more sensitive to the Spirit’s leading.

<sup>1</sup> Bits & Pieces, March 2, 1995, pp. 16-17

<sup>2</sup> Warren Wiersbe; With The Word; pg.715.

### 3. **OPPOSITION COMES TO MOST OPPORTUNITIES! (4-12)**

- 3.1. Here starts Paul's *1<sup>st</sup> Missionary Journey*.
- 3.1.1. Time to **blaze the trails** into areas that had never heard the gospel.
- 3.2. **EAST CYPRUS, SALAMIS!** (4,5)
- 3.3. Barnabas a native of Cyprus. (130 miles from port to port)
- 3.3.1. Island itself is 140 miles long. **Paphos** was the capitol at the time.
- 3.4. 2 Greek words for **sent** – *pempo* (3) which is usually a more **proactive** kind of sending or dispatching (i.e. the Spirit); **and apoluo** (4) which frequently means releasing something that has its own inherent source of energy (i.e. the church).<sup>3</sup>
- 3.5. (5) **In the synagogues** – **1<sup>st</sup> stop the synagogues!** Sets a **precedent** here for the rest of his ministry. [Probably for 3 reasons]
- 3.5.1. [1] **Theological reason:** Abrahamic covenant hadn't been nullified (**I will bless those who bless you**)
- 3.5.2. Thus, Rom.1:16 **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.**
- 3.5.3. [2] **Social reason:** The law of natural affinity. To his own.
- 3.5.4. [3] **Strategic reason:** There were 3 groups there: **Jews**; **Proselytes** (born gentiles, converted); **God-fearers** (born gentiles, but chose to maintain their gentile identity)
- 3.5.4.1. This **3<sup>rd</sup> group** being the **most receptive** to Paul's message.
- 3.5.4.1.1. **See Acts 13:16.**
- 3.5.4.2. **So Paul targets those who are already "seeking".**
- 3.5.4.3. NT pattern is to **"seek the seekers"**. [**who** sought in vs.7?]
- 3.6. **WEST CYPRUS, PAPHOS!** (6-12)
- 3.7. **Opportunities Usually Produce Opposition...Expect it!**
- 3.7.1. 1 Cor.16:9 **a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.** (NIV)
- 3.8. **His business card read:** Bar-Jesus, a.k.a. Elymas: *Jew/Sorcerer/False Prophet*.
- 3.8.1. **Bar-Jesus** (Heb name); **Elymas**(Arabic name = "wise")
- 3.9. This is what some call a **"Power Encounter!"**
- 3.9.1. (i.e. ) "A visible demonstration that the power of God is greater than the power of the spirits worshiped or feared by different individuals."
- 3.9.1.1. (e.g.) **Elijah w/the Baal prophets.**
- 3.10. As **Peter** had a run in w/*Simon Magus*, **Paul** has his w/*Elymas*!

<sup>3</sup> Peter Wagner; Acts of the Holy Spirit; pg.289.

- 3.11. Here is another example of the parable of the Tares.  
 3.11.1. **God** sowed the good seed (Paul & Barnabas) & **Satan** sowed a counterfeit (Elymas).
- 3.12. **It was the clash of 2 kingdoms:** The kingdom of **God** /The kingdom of **Satan**.  
 3.12.1. **The prize?** Not only the **conversion of Paulus** but most likely the **opening** of perhaps all of Cyprus to the gospel of Christ. {Story}
- 3.13. **In 1269 Kublai Khan** sent a request from **Peking to Rome** for “100 wise men of the Christian religion...And so I shall be baptized, and when I shall be baptized all my baron and great men will be baptized, and their subjects baptized, and so there will be more Christians here than there are in your parts.”  
*The Mongols were then wavering in the choice of a religion. It might have been, as Kublai forecast, the greatest mass religious movement the world has ever seen. The history of all Asia would have been changed. But what actually happened? Pope Gregory X* answered by sending **2 Dominican friars**. They got as far as Armenia, could endure no longer and returned home. So passed the great missionary opportunity in the history of the church!<sup>4</sup>
- 3.14. (8) **Elymas withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the truth.**  
 3.14.1. **Why?** – Because if he failed he’d be **out a job**. No need for a court magician if this guy gets saved.  
 3.14.2. When you **open heaven** you also **open hell!**<sup>5</sup>
- 3.15. (9) **Saul also called Paul** – Saul *Latinized* his name!  
 3.15.1. **Q:** Would you change your name to Mohammad to win Muslims?  
 3.15.2. As Paul moves closer to the center of the Roman Empire, Luke switches names!<sup>6</sup>
- 3.16. (11) I wonder if Paul was surprised when this came rolling off his tongue?  
 3.16.1. Often that’s what happens when the Lord gives you a word to speak.  
 3.16.2. **Story** – P.I. experience 1988. Creepy young man following us around. Grabbing all the attention while we were in Bacolod Square w/Psalty. I confronted him & told him to leave else I would ask God to blind him ...he left! [had I thought, I never would have said that]
- 3.17. **Turn to** - 1 Cor.16:9 a great door for **effective work** has opened to me, and there are many who **oppose me**. (NIV)
- 3.18. A **door** is a metaphor for “**opportunity**”!!!  
 3.18.1. 2 Cor.2:12 **Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord,**
- 3.19. **Effective** – or “*adapted to success*”.
- 3.20. **Open** – Lit. “*stands wide open*”.

<sup>4</sup> R. Dunkerly, in Resource, No. 2

<sup>5</sup> Griffith Thomas; pg.247

<sup>6</sup> Shepherd’s Notes; pg.47

- 3.20.1. **Open** infers that some doors **are**, or **can be**, “**shut**”!
- 3.20.2. Alexander Graham Bell said, “When one door closes, another opens, **but we often look so long and regretfully at the closed door, that we do not see the one that has opened for us.**”
- 3.21. **Q:** Are there any doors in front of your face at this time that you are still staring at?
- 3.22. **Q:** Is it not a great way **to pray**, to ask the Lord to **open or close** “*doors/opportunities*” regarding His direction for your life?
- 3.23. **There are many adversaries** – A **Pessimist** is one who “*sees a difficulty in every opportunity*”; an **Optimist** is one who “*sees an opportunity in every difficulty*”!
- 3.24. When you find an **open door**, it doesn’t help you unless you **walk through it!**
- 3.24.1. Ex.14:15 **And the LORD said to Moses, “Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward.** (Red Sea crossing)
- 3.25. **Q:** Any doors you’re **trying to kick down**?
- 3.26. **Q:** Any doors you’ve just been **standing in its threshold**?
- 3.27. **Q:** Any “opportunities” you **haven’t taken** because of **fear**?
- 3.28. (12) It was **what he saw & the teaching of the Lord.**
- 3.28.1. A report that came back from the Himalayas recently said,  
“**The Western missionaries brought us the Knowledge of God, but The 3<sup>rd</sup> World Missionaries are bringing us the Power of God!**”
- 3.28.2. Without the working of **the Holy Spirit** (vs.2,4,9) our orthodoxy, our churchmanship, our talents are **worthless!**  
3.28.2.1. **He calls; He commissions; He equips!**
- 3.29. **The proconsul believed!** – He stepped over the line. The gospel line!
- 3.29.1. **Q:** Have you stepped over the line that marks life/death?
- 3.29.2. Let me end w/an illustration I heard this week from **Michael Ramsden** w/RZIM.
- 3.30. **Life is like a Bookshelf!**
- 3.30.1. [Apostle Paul, Barnabas, Mark, leaders in Antioch church, Sergius Paulus, Bar-Jesus/a.k.a. Elymas]
- 3.31. **Top shelf** – **International Hero’s.** People that led great exemplary lives. Ghandi, Mother Theresa, Billy Graham, etc.
- 3.32. **Shelf below** – **National Hero’s.** People not known outside of their country.
- 3.33. **Next shelf** – **Decent ordinary people.** You’d give them the keys to your house when you go on vacation.
- 3.34. **Next shelf** – **People a little closer to the edge.** Creative with their taxes. Never let them borrow your car.
- 3.35. **Next shelf** – **People who steal for a living.**
- 3.36. **Bottom shelf** – **Truly evil people.** Those who truly enjoy inflicting pain on other people...like dentists. ☺
- 3.36.1. **Q:** If God gave you a pen, where would you draw a line of judgment?

- 3.36.2. Wherever you draw the line is where people would **get in**.
- 3.36.3. **Q: How far down** the bookshelf would you go?
- 3.36.4. **Q: At what point** would you draw it?
- 3.36.4.1. God **will** draw a line of judgment one day. **Yet**, He doesn't draw it this way(Horiz) He draws it this way(vert). Straight through the middle of the bookshelf.
- 3.36.4.2. On **one side** people who led *imperfect lives* no matter how noble, who were offered forgiveness & accepted it.
- 3.36.4.3. On the **other side**, people who led *imperfect lives*, who were offered forgiveness, but rejected it.
- 3.36.5. **Q: What side of the line** are you on?<sup>7</sup>
- 3.37. I would like to give you this morning *Ob Portu!* As you stand “off of port”, **now is the time** to ride the high tide into God's *Harbor of Hope*.

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<sup>7</sup> Adapted from RZIM Podcast; *Michael Ramsden*; Why are we Here? 4 of 4; 4-16-08