“God’s Work in Our Evangelism Efforts”

2 Corinthians 2:12 – 3:3

11-8-2026

Introduction:

***In evangelism, we must let God do what only God can do.**

What does God do?

I. **He <u>opens doors</u> for us** (v. 12-13)
(God is credited when He opens up opportunities for us to share)

II. **He dispenses a <u>fragrant message</u> by us** (v. 14-16)
(God is credited by the response of those we witness to)

III. **He produces <u>sincere motives</u> in us** (v. 17)
(God is credited for ministry accomplished for right reasons)

IV. **He <u>transforms lives</u> through us** (3:1-3)
(God is credited when converts become living epistles)

Conclusion:

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What does God expect of us when it comes to evangelism? What is our part? Our Job?

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I. He <u>opens doors</u> for us (v. 12-13)
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v. 12
Christ’s Gospel –

--The “Gospel” is Good News; a good announcement; a good message (share it with <u>joy</u>)

--The fact that it is Christ’s Gospel conveys two truths:

1) It is Good news <u>about</u> Christ
(He is the subject matter of the Gospel)

2) It is Good news <u>belonging</u> to Christ
(It is His message, originating in Him and not Paul or anyone else)

“Open doors” - for the gospel include:

--Open <u>hearts</u> (receptivity)
--Open <u>avenues</u> (opportunity)
--Fruitfulness

“A door was opened” - This door was a door of opportunity; a door that led to sinners who were open and responsive to the Gospel. Open doors are something only God can provide.

Revelation 3:8
I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

NOTE: The One with the keys (Rev.3:7) can open doors!

An "open door" speaks of opportunity, spiritual opportunity for preaching the gospel.

The Lord opened the door for Paul on his first missionary journey (Acts 14:27 - "And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.").

The Lord closed the door at Asia (Acts 16:6 - "Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia...")

The Lord opened the door at Ephesus (I Cor. 16:8-9 - "But I will tarry at Ephesus...For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries").

There may be adversaries, but the door stays open until Christ closes it!

When Paul was imprisoned, he requested prayer that God would open more doors to evangelize (Col. 4:3 - "Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds").

The door has been open in the USA for over 200 years. Today, opportunity still awaits you to share the gospel. If we do not take advantage, the Lord may have to close it!

"Behold" - an attention-grabbing word; "it means "see for yourself" (middle voice).

Our problem often is not open doors, but that we don't see the open doors!

The Lord opens doors:

- **a. For those who are <u>unable</u> to do so for themselves** (Rev.3:8a)
- **b. For those who are <u>obedient</u> to His Word (v. 8b)**
- **c. For those who <u>refuse to deny</u> His Name (v. 8c)**

2 Cor. 1:13

Because Paul was unsure of how his severe letter of correction had been received by the Corinthians, he had no relief of mind.

Titus, who was going to report to Paul the good news of how the Corinthians had responded, had not yet been seen by Paul after he left Corinth.

While in Macedonia, Paul would face trouble on every side (2 Cor. 7:5), but God would comfort him, and news from Titus about the state of the Corinthian church would encourage him there.

Ministry is not always easy. Sometimes we will have open doors like at Troas, and sometimes we will have trouble like at Macedonia. In either case, we triumph. In one place we might be a fragrance of life and in another the fragrance of death (cp. V. 15-16).

In either case we are victorious because we have done God's will (v. 14).

II. He dispenses a <u>fragrant message</u> by us (v. 14-16)

(God is credited by the response of those we witness to)

v. 14

"Causeth us to triumph" - Leading in triumph; the picture is of a <u>victory parade</u> in which a victorious general returned home in a triumphal procession (a victory march) (cp. This word in Col. 2:15-16). Believers are on the winning side in Christ!

"In the ancient processional that Barclay describes, an aroma was emitted along the way by the priests swinging giant jars of smoking incense. The smell would flow equally over those exulting in triumph and those hanging their heads in defeat. To the former, it was the sweet scent of a victorious life; to the latter, an acrid reminder of their imminent death." (Swindoll, p. 39).

God is worthy of all the thanks and praise an evangelist can give Him because it is of His grace and power that we enjoy victories in ministry.

Every time we share the Gospel, we are being used by God to spread a message which—like a fragrant aroma—allows the lost world to understand and perceive truth about God which they would otherwise never comprehend.

v. 15

This aroma flows <u>upward</u> to God (v. 15) and <u>outward</u> to the world (v. 16).

As far as God is concerned, he Is pleased no matter what the result. The witness pleases God whether people become saved or end up perishing.

We need to simply concern ourselves with obedience and leave the results up to God.

You are not responsible for results. That is God's job; we are simply responsible to spread the fragrant message of the Gospel.

v. 16
To the world, the believers' Gospel message produces either a fragrance of life or death.

To those who reject the Gospel, our message is repulsive; it seems as a reminder of their present state of spiritual death as well as their future eternal death.

"Of death unto death . . . of life unto life" - The rabbis used similar words concerning the Law. For some it was a medicine unto healing and to others unto death" (Barret, cited by Reinecker, p. 396).

To those who accept the Gospel, our message is pleasing; it serves as a reminder of their present state of spiritual life as well as their future eternal life.

The same message produces the same odor, but to one it means death and to the other it means life. It's all in how it is received.

ILLUS: How the same fragrance can remind one person of one thing and another of something else.

"Who is sufficient for these things?" - Who on their own is <u>adequate</u> to produce the effect of life? Not one of us has the power to produce life; this is God's job.

III. He produces <u>sincere motives</u> in us (v. 17)
(God is credited for ministry accomplished for right reasons)

"We are not as many" - Unfortunately, it's <u>not</u> a few who corrupt God's Word, but a majority according to this text. Spiritual hucksters have abounded throughout Church history.

"Corrupt" - "to peddle, to pawn off a product for gain. The word was used in the LXX in Isaiah 1:22 for those who mix wine with water in order to cheat the buyers" (Plummer cited by Reinecker, p. 396).

Paul is saying that he did not minister the Word of God for profit, but with sincere motives.

"Sincerity" – lit. to judge by light. ILLUS: of holding a jug or ceramic vessel up to the light to look for cracks and defects.

"Of God. . . in the sight of God . . . in Christ" - lit. from God. . . before God . . . in Christ.

--Paul was <u>sent from</u> God.
--Paul's ministry was performed <u>in open view</u> of God.
--Paul's ministry was performed in Christ's <u>power and motivation</u>

IV. He <u>transforms lives</u> through us (3:1-3)

(God is credited when converts become living epistles)

3:1

Paul is saying: "Do we need some sort of human validation to prove ourselves as bonifide ministers of Christ?"

When someone we don't know desires to transfer from another church of like faith and practice, we expect a letter of commendation. Why? Because the person's credibility is unknown to us. Paul's, however, was not unknown to the Corinthians. He had led them to Christ. The proof of his being a sincere minister of God was in the fact that his ministry led to their conversion.

3:2

Paul says in effect: You are our letter of commendation.

3:3

"The work of the Spirit in the changed lives of the Corinthians was sufficient recommendation of Paul's ministry" (Ryrie note).

Isn't it amazing how the very person God used to lead them to Christ was the one they stood in suspicion of? This is "biting the hand that fed them."

All believers are an "open book," or as stated her, "an open letter." People whose lives have been re-written by the direct working of God.

God does <u>not</u> use ink to mark the change in us (not some sort of tattoo), but He employs His Holy Spirit. The Spirit did not write on stone (as the Decalogue was written by God to Moses at Sinai – cp. V. 7), but He wrote the changes in our hearts.

Does your life bear God's writing?

Has your heart been transformed?

Conclusion:
Important Points to ***Remember*

1. REMEMBER
God must prepare the "soil" of the heart.
(Psalm 126:5, 6; Matthew 13; Luke 9; John 4:34; I Corinthians 3:1-9)

Four basic ingredients to harvesting:
a. Cultivating the soil
How?
1) Pray for them
2) Show compassion to them
3) Build trust with them
b. Sowing the seed
c. Watering the soil and seed
d. Harvesting the field

Be patient! It takes time to cultivate, plant, water, and harvest.
Allow God's Word to take root. Allow God to open the person's heart (Lk. 16:14).
Only God can give the "increase"; we are simply His tools.

2. REMEMBER
The real "Soulwinner" is the Holy Spirit

"The Holy Spirit is the soulwinner; we are but a vessel He wants to use. As we labor in this God-commanded task, our total dependence must be upon His power, ability and enablement. We are the vessel He desires to use, for He wants our minds, our hands, our feet, our lips to do the work of winning the lost." (Dr. Ed Watke)

a. The Holy Spirit must convict of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come (Jn. 16:6-8).
b. Let the Holy Spirit fill you (Eph. 5:18) and guide you (Acts 8:26-40).
c. Unless one is *"born of the Spirit"* they are not "born!" (Jn. 3:5-8; Titus 3:5)

3. REMEMBER
The power is not your persuasiveness but the Word of God

a. The instrument the Holy Spirit uses to bring people to Himself is the Bible (Heb. 4:12). The Bible is *"the sword of the Spirit"* (Eph.6:17)
b. Faith (belief) only comes as one first hears the Word of God. *"Faith comes by hearing. . . the Word of God"* (Rom. 10:17). Faith does not come by gimmicks, manipulation, emotional services, signs and wonders, etc., but by the Scriptures.

If you make a "convert" there will be no real change. Those God converts, get converted!