

I. Read II Corinthians 2:12-17

- A. In this passage of II Corinthians, Paul speaks of an opportunity God opened up for him. The opportunity was to preach the gospel. Opportunities of this kind may involve a *changing circumstance* or they may result from *changes in our personal relationships*. In either case, they are often a reflection of on-going conflict in the spiritual realm. They may be called *divine appointments*. Read Colossians 4:5-6 and identify what sort of *divine appointment* mentioned above is addressed.

In Col. 4:6, reference is made to the manner in which the believer responds or interacts to others. What does this mean? (See also I Peter 3:15.)

In Col. 4:3, reference is made to the prospect of changing circumstances (“open up to us a door”). What does the fact that Paul requests that the Colossians pray that a door be opened for them tell us?

- B. In II Corinthians 2:14, reference is made to the “triumph” or victory we share as believers. What is the basis of this victory? (See Romans 8:16, 17, 37.)

How does the notion of our “triumph” mentioned in II Corinthians 2:14 differ from mere positive thinking or a determination to change one’s circumstances?

- C. In II Corinthians 2:15-16, it is clear that Paul expects the unbelieving world to *react* to the presence and faithful witness of the true believer. He uses powerful metaphorical language to describe the effect of the presence of a believer on an unbeliever (“to the one an aroma from death to death”). What was he trying to convey to the readers of this epistle?

When a Christian finds that he seldom or never faces conflict, persecution, or opposition from unbelievers God has placed in his life, what does this mean?

Contrariwise, when a Christian finds that he has no affinity or attraction to other believers, there is a problem as well. Paul describes the effect of believers on other believers as “a fragrance of Christ...among those who are being saved...an aroma from life to life.” What was Paul getting at?

- D. Paul contrasts his ministry to that of those who peddle religion as a means of profit and the attaining of power over others. Read II Timothy 4:2-3; Galatians 1:6-7; Romans 1:32 and list some characteristics of religious peddlers.
- E. Perhaps more than ever before, we live in a day in which opportunities to use religion as a means of personal gain abound. Television, radio, the doctrinal ignorance of evangelicals, all work together to create an ideal situation to take advantage of professing believers. How do the things mentioned above work for the religious peddler of our day?