

# No Pain, No Gain

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Preacher: Mike Scrivani

[ 0 : 00 ] Acts chapter 18, verses 1 through 23.

After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome, and he went to see them.

And because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade. And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks. When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus.

When they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments, and he said to them, Your blood be on your heads. I am innocent. From now on I go to the Gentiles. And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justice, a worshiper of God.

His house was next door to the synagogue. Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household, and many of the Corinthians, hearing Paul, believed and were baptized. And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, Do not be afraid, but go on speaking, and do not be silent.

[ 1 : 21 ] For I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people. And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. But when Galio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, saying, This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law.

But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Galio said to the Jews, If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. But since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves.

I refuse to be a judge of these things. And he drove them from the tribunal, and they all seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Galio paid no attention to any of this.

After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Sancrea he had cut off his hair, for he was under a vow.

And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there. But he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined. But on taking leave of them, he said, I will return to you if God wills.

[ 2 : 35 ] And he set sail for Ephesus. When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch. After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next, through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

Acts chapter 9 records Paul's conversion. Paul was confronted and blinded by Jesus on the road to Damascus as he was going to arrest Christians.

Paul was blinded by the bright light of Jesus, and for three days he was in Damascus unable to see.

Acts chapter 9 verses 10 through 13 say, Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias.

The Lord said to him in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Here I am, Lord. And the Lord said to him, Rise and go to the street called Straight. And at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying.

And he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay hands on him so that he might regain his sight. But Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem.

[ 3 : 50 ] And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name. I think we appreciate Ananias' honesty here. He says to the Lord, in other words, are you sure about this?

Isn't it a good thing that he's blind? Because then he can't see any of us to arrest us. And if he regains his sight, he'll arrest me and all the other Christians in Damascus.

Lord, have you really thought this through? Verses 15 through 16 record Jesus' answer. But the Lord said to him, Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel, for I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.

Jesus' answer and what he says about Paul is interesting, isn't it? Paul is the Lord's chosen instrument to be Jesus' apostle to the Gentiles to testify to the gospel before kings and the children of Israel.

But in doing this, Jesus says that Paul will suffer for his namesake. And Paul did suffer for the sake of Jesus' name.

[ 5 : 06 ] Paul spoke about his many sufferings in sharing the gospel in 2 Corinthians 11, 24 through 29. There he says, Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes, less one.

Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. A night and a day I was adrift at sea on frequent journeys. In danger from rivers. Danger from robbers. Danger from my own people. Danger from Gentiles. Danger in the city. Danger in the wilderness. Danger at sea. Danger from false brothers. In toil and hardship. Through many a sleepless night. In hunger and thirst. Often without food. In cold and exposure. And apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

Over the past three weeks, we've seen some of the ways that Paul has suffered for the Lord. Last week, we looked at Paul's time in Athens. Paul was in Athens because he had been driven out of Berea by the Jews from Thessalonica, who drove him out of Thessalonica.

[ 6 : 08 ] But though they rejected the gospel, many were still being saved. And the Lord was being faithful through Paul's proclamation of the gospel to save many. So by Acts chapter 18, Paul has experienced a lot of challenges.

And that will continue to be the case in this next city that he visits, which is the city of Corinth. Corinth was a major city during Paul's day. And as I mentioned last week, it had surpassed Athens in being the economic and commercial center of that region.

Corinth was 46 miles west of Athens. Julius Caesar rebuilt Corinth after the Romans destroyed it in order to conquer it. And it was the largest cosmopolitan city in Greece at this time.

No building in Corinth at this point in time was more than 100 years old when Paul visited. Corinth was a Roman colony. It was the capital of the province of Achaia.

It had two ports, which added to its economic prosperity and its importance to the Roman Empire. Corinth was also a very sexually immoral city, even by the standards of that time in comparison to all the other cities that had this problem as well.

[ 7 : 24 ] The Greek word Corinthias estai meant to live like a Corinthian. And that was an expression that they used for anyone who was living immorally.

They were using it as a put down. You're living like a Corinthian. Corinth was home to the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. And that temple stood on a 1,900-foot-tall hill overlooking the city. And it was the home of thousands of female slave priestesses who were associated with the worship of Aphrodite and who would walk through the city streets as prostitutes in search of worshipers for Aphrodite.

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians thus addressed a lot of issues regarding sexual immorality and the purity of believers. Paul wrote 1 and 2 Corinthians after his ministry in the city.

But what he said in 1 Corinthians 2, verses 1-3 is noteworthy for us as we look at his first visit there in Acts 18. In 1 Corinthians 2, verses 1-3, Paul says, And when I came to you, and he's speaking of this moment, recorded in Acts 18, Brothers, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom, for I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

[ 8 : 43 ] And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling. Paul had been beaten. He had been imprisoned in Philippi. Again, he had been run out of Thessalonica and Berea.

He had been ridiculed by some of the Greek philosophers in Athens. And now he'd come to a city full of sexual immorality and people who worshipped it. Paul endured a lot, but no doubt all the

suffering had taken a toll on him.

And again, there would be more things for him to suffer and endure in Corinth, but he would also receive encouragement from the Lord with the promise that he was with Paul and that Paul had no reason to be afraid.

And so the main idea from our study tonight is that Christians can rest assured that their suffering for the Lord is not in vain. Christians can rest assured that their suffering for the Lord is not in vain. Jesus suffered, but he did not suffer without a purpose. Jesus called Paul to suffer, but his suffering was also not without a purpose. When Christians suffer for their faith, for their obedience to Jesus, their suffering is likewise not without purpose.

[ 9 : 56 ] Peter writes about this in 1 Peter 4, 20-21. For what credit is you when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it, if you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you might follow in his steps. That's chapter 2, verses 20-21.

Chapter 4, verses 12-13 say, Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you as though something strange were happening to you, but rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

So in this passage, Paul will suffer some more, but we also see the glory of the Lord revealed in it. And this passage is a good reminder that when you suffer for Christ, it doesn't mean that you're doing something wrong.

It means that you're doing something right. And so Acts chapter 18, verses 1-23 can be broken into five scenes. And as we look at each of these scenes, we'll see how suffering for the Lord is not in vain.

[ 11 : 03 ] So scene one, making tents and speaking in the synagogue. Making tents and speaking in the synagogue. Biblical scholars believe that Paul was somewhere between the ages of 49 and 52 years old at this point in time.

And he had traveled around 2,000 miles by foot and another 1,000 miles by boat. This means that this 50-year-old, close to 50, or maybe over 50-year-old man walked the equivalent of the distance between Raleigh, North Carolina and Denver, Colorado, just to tell people about Jesus.

That's probably not that impressive to a retired postman like Oscar. But that's a lot of walking for the rest of us. In verse 1, Luke tells us that Paul moved from Athens to Corinth.

And verses 2-3 tell us about some new friends that he made while he was there. And again it says, Aquila and Priscilla may have converted to Christianity prior to meeting Paul, or they may have been saved after meeting Paul.

We don't know for sure, but what we do know from Scripture is that this couple became very close to Paul. Romans 16, 3-4, Paul says, Greet Prisca, that's Priscilla, and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well.

[ 12 : 50 ] Aquila and Priscilla were expelled from Italy by the Emperor Claudius. The reason some people think they were Christians prior to meeting Paul in Corinth is due to the testimony of the 2nd century historian Swintonis who said Claudius expelled all the Jews because of an uproar instigated by Crestus, which they think is a Latin transliteration of Christos, which in English is Christ.

That would mean this disturbance in Rome had to do with whether Jesus was the Messiah or not. Claudius expelled the Jews to maintain peace, but it appears that after this time, his order was relaxed because eventually Aquila and Priscilla end up back in Rome.

Aquila and Priscilla were a great husband and wife team. Together, they were a huge blessing to the church, and they are always mentioned together in Scripture.

They worked as a team. At the end of this chapter, we read how they took Apollos, a gifted preacher, and they took him aside and they filled in some of the theological gaps that was missing from his teaching and his thinking.

They were also willing to go wherever was needed. In Acts 18, verses 18-19, we see that they left Corinth with Paul and the Ephesian church met in their house for worship.

[ 14 : 14 ] Eventually, they returned to Rome only to appear back in Ephesus in 2 Timothy 4-19. They probably owned the tent-making business and employed Paul to work alongside of them in Corinth.

That was their trade. That was a business that they could easily pick up and move to new locations. Paul worked with this couple, traveled with this couple, and he stayed with this couple. They were a huge blessing to him, and they were not afraid to stick out their necks for him.

This is a good reminder of the huge impact that just an ordinary married couple can have. Priscilla and Aquila knew what they believed.

They helped Apollos improve in his theology, which thus helped him become a better preacher.

They opened their home to the church for worship. They supported Paul in his ministry.

And they're a reminder that any couple willing to serve the Lord can be used by him to be a huge blessing to the church.

[ 15 : 20 ] These verses also tell us something about Paul's work ethic. Not that that would be in question, given how selfless he was, how far he was willing to go, and how much he was willing to endure to share the gospel.

Paul spent a lot of time preaching. He spent a lot of time writing. And he also made tents. Paul mentions in Acts 20, verse 34, in 1 Corinthians 4, 12, and 1 Thessalonians 2, 9, and 2 Thessalonians 3, 7-9, and 2 Corinthians 11, 7, that he worked to support himself.

But only here are we told about the work he did to support himself. Some biblical scholars render the term tent making as a leather worker.

The tents that Paul made were probably made of leather. They didn't have nylon back then. I think you guys probably knew that. Maybe they were made of cloth. Who knows? Whatever the case, Paul worked with his hands.

He could do that. He knew how to work with his hands. He was willing to work with his hands. In letters to the Corinthians, Paul encouraged believers to compensate their pastors. But it was his conviction to not receive such support to avoid any obstacles to the gospel's progress.

[ 16 : 38 ] He talks about that in 1 Corinthians 9, 9-13. He says, For it is written in the law of Moses, You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain. Is it oxen that God is concerned?

Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope, and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.

Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

In Paul's case, he didn't want anyone to think, because he was often the first one in the city sharing the gospel. There was no church established there. That's what he would do. But he didn't want anyone to think that he was selling the gospel.

[ 17 : 41 ] He didn't want anyone to think that his motive for sharing the gospel was primarily financial prosperity. While Paul made tents, he did what he needed to do to support himself.

While he was making tents, we see him doing what he does throughout the book of Acts. He's making tents, and he's also going to the synagogue, or the place where the Jews met, wherever that was in the cities that he would go to.

And he would use Scripture to reason with them, proving to them that Jesus is the promised Messiah, and that his death on the cross was necessary to atone for their sins. In verse 5, Timothy and Silas show up.

They probably brought with them an offering from the churches, because we see Paul engaging in more of a full-time ministry from this point on in Acts chapter 18. Paul was effective in ministry because he was a gifted teacher, but he was also effective in ministry because he was a hard worker.

Kevin Durant, the all-star basketball player, former Texas Longhorn, and Oklahoma City Thunder forward, who none of us is probably a fan of anymore because of those things, did say something once that was pretty profound.

[ 18 : 56 ] He said, hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work. Some athletes try to get by solely on their talent. I can think of a lot of athletes, and I'm sure that you can too, who were drafted in the top 10 in the NFL or the NBA, but who had very brief careers because they just weren't willing to work hard.

Michael Jordan, the greatest basketball player of all time, perhaps the greatest athlete of all time, I've heard stories from guys who used to play with him and used to play against him about he was the first one in the gym.

They would show up early and they'd try to get there before Michael Jordan, but he was already there. In fact, not only was he there, by the time they showed up, he had often been finished with his first workout and was already sweaty.

He would push himself and his teammates harder in practice than in the game. He was a great talent, but he was also a really, really hard worker.

Rest and vacation are necessary, but all of us as Christians should work hard, and we should be good at the work that we do, and we should do it to glorify the Lord.

[ 20 : 08 ] Colossians 3, 23-24 says, Whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

Now we come to scene two. Paul shakes out his garments. Paul shakes out his garments. In verse 5, Luke notes that Paul was occupied with the Word.

Paul's occupations may have changed, but his devotion to the Word was his true occupation. Paul was making tents and preaching when he could, but with the arrival of Silas and Timothy, Paul was able to give more of his full attention to the Word.

Paul was able to go from bivocational ministry to full-time ministry due to the generous gift given by, most likely, the Macedonian church. Luke doesn't mention that, but Paul does in Philippians and in 2 Corinthians.

Philippians 4, 15-16 says, And you, Philippians yourselves, know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving except you only.

[ 21 : 16 ] Even in Thessalonica, you sent me help for my needs once and again. 2 Corinthians 11, 9, he says, And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my needs, so I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way.

In addition to delivering financial support, Silas and Timothy probably brought encouraging news back to Paul about the Christians in Thessalonica who he had recently been with.

Paul writes about that in 1 Thessalonians 3, 6-7. But now that Timothy has come to us from you and has brought the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, we long to see you.

For this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction, we have been comforted about you through your faith. This passage reminds us of the truth that the whole body of Christ is important in fulfilling the mission of Christ.

You may not be a skilled Bible teacher. You may not be called to vocational ministry, but you can and you should support the ministry of the Word. You can support the ministry of the Word here by serving in a variety of ways, and your service, no matter how small it may seem to you, has a big impact on others.

[ 22 : 37 ] When Paul talks about the generosity of the Macedonians in 2 Corinthians 8-9, he reminds the church that we should likewise give generously and cheerfully, motivated by a desire to be like Jesus.

2 Corinthians 8-9 says, For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich.

In other words, Jesus gave everything so that we might be spiritually rich in Him. The more we understand the grace of the Lord to save us, the more we desire to work hard and to give cheerfully for His glory.

So, Paul now has his friends, he has his funds, but in verse 6 we read that his testimony of Jesus as the Messiah to the Jews was opposed. Verse 6 again says, Earlier in Pisidian Antioch, Paul and Barnabas shook off their sandals in response to the stubborn rejection of their listeners.

During this time, Jews would show their distaste for Gentiles by shaking off the dust that they had collected on themselves as they walked through Gentile country.

[ 23 : 53 ] And so once they would get to Israel, they would shake off, shake out their garments, shake off their sandals, just in disgust of the Gentiles. We don't want to carry any of that Gentile dirt into our holy land.

And so Paul used that same practice against them to say that, I'm done with you guys. I've been passionate, I've been clear, and you've rejected it, and so guess what? I'm going to those Gentiles that you despise. Paul's statement to the Jews who rejected the gospel that their blood was on their own heads, that he was innocent, summarized the truth communicated in Ezekiel 3, 16 through 19.

This is where he gets that phrase from, and they would have understood what he was meaning from this passage. And that passage says, And at the end of seven days, the word of the Lord came to me, Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel.

Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. If I say to the wicked, you shall surely die, and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.

[ 25 : 03 ] But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his wicked way, he shall die for his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul. In other words, like Paul says, I'm innocent.

I've done my part. I've warned you. I've done my job. He'd been obedient to clearly and passionately share the gospel with them. He proved from their scriptures that Jesus is the Christ. He no doubt warned them about the consequences of rejecting Jesus, but his teaching and his warning went unheeded, and so he moved on.

In Matthew 7, verse 6, Jesus said, Do not give dogs what is holy and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

There comes a time when sharing the gospel with someone who is antagonistic to it becomes a waste of our time. Sometimes with such people, we stop sharing the gospel and we start trying to win an argument.

And in those cases, it's best to just walk away. It's best to pray, and it's best to hope that a seed of truth was planted and that hopefully the Lord will send someone else to share the gospel again with them in the hopes that God will be gracious to save that person.

[ 26 : 21 ] Prior to coming here to the beautiful state of Oklahoma, which I'm so happy to be a part of, I do love Oklahoma. Kansas is good. You're like a politician.

Yeah, I want to announce my candidacy for mayor of Bartlesville. I don't know when that election is, but anyhow. Prior to coming to this beautiful, lovely state, my home, I love it, I was meeting with a young man.

He was in his early 20s. He was the son of a couple in our church, and this couple was concerned about him, what he was getting into. He wasn't a Christian. He was antagonistic towards the gospel, and so his mom and his dad say, hey, would you call him and just see if he would meet with you?

And so I said, sure. And so I called him, and we met. Smart guy. He had all of his arguments for why he didn't believe that God existed. He was brought up in the church, so he had a lot of comments about the church, things about the church that he didn't like, and so we met, and then we met again, and we met again, and felt like, well, I was making some progress, and invited, hey, just come to church.

It's like, you don't have to go to Sunday school. You don't have to do anything. Just come, and just sit, and just be a part of it. We want you to be here. He never came, and it eventually got to the point where the progress I thought I was making with him was just completely lost, because he just went back wanting to argue, and I was convinced that what I need to do right now is just walk away.

[ 27 : 53 ] I wasn't planning to move completely to another state. I wasn't trying to go that far away. That all came afterwards, but praise God, he's a Christian now. He friended me on Facebook and checking out his profile and seeing all of these Bible verses that he's pasting.

I don't know what happened. I know that God saved him. I don't know what was the next thing, but praise God that he's a Christian now, so there's a time to walk away, and we pray, and we hope that that person is eventually convicted by the Lord of their sins and turns to him in faith.

But Paul shakes out his garments in discouragement in protest of the Jews' rejection. And then I love verse 7, because look where he goes next. Verse 7 says, And he left there, and he went to the house of a man named Tidious Justice, a worshiper of God.

His house was next door to the synagogue. So Paul's like, all right. He shakes out his garment, and he leaves, and he says, you know what? I'm going to go next door, and I'm just going to keep doing the same thing.

Tidious was a believer. He was probably a God-fearer who heard the gospel and who was saved through the ministry of the Apostle Paul. And verse 8 says that Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, along with his entire family, became believers also.

[ 29 : 07 ] The rest of verse 9 says that many other Corinthians were likewise saved. And I'm sure this really annoyed the Jews. After Paul shook off his garment, they rejected the gospel.

He went to their next-door neighbor. Their next-door neighbor was saved. Eventually, the ruler of their synagogue, their main teacher, was saved. Other Corinthians were being saved. And you'd think that this turnaround and this ministry's success would bring Paul a lot of confidence and a lot of peace.

But in the next scene, we learn that that's not the case. And so scene 3, Jesus tells Paul not to be silent. In 1 Corinthians 2.3, Paul says, again, about his time with the Corinthians, I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling.

We know the external factors which caused the weakness, the fear, and the trembling. And I think maybe all those things caught up to Paul despite the fruitfulness he experienced in Corinth at this point.

maybe, I'm speculating, but maybe Paul was facing a little bit of burnout. A lot of people joined the church and sometimes more people means more problems to address.

[ 30 : 18 ] I'm not confident that was the case. But it is encouraging here that Paul needed encouragement and it's Jesus who encouraged him. Jesus speaks to Paul and he begins with a gentle rebuke.

The Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, do not be afraid. Jesus consistently told his disciples, taught his disciples, commanded his disciples and his followers to not be afraid.

But apparently the opposition from the Jews, the lostness of the Corinthians who were not saved, the pattern that Paul experienced of being run out of town, and the anticipation of that same thing happening again to him made Paul afraid.

Kent Hughes says, the vision and its opening words, the fact that God made the effort to encourage Paul not to fear meant that God loved and cared for his ambassador.

The assurance ministered to Paul's heart just as 1 John 4.18 teaches us, there is no fear in love but perfect love drives out fear. The simple words in the vision filled Paul's heart with God's love and fear was put to flight.

[ 31 : 29 ] Time and time again the scripture tells us to fear not, to stop worrying about tomorrow, to stop borrowing time because we are divinely loved and God's love is enough. Psalm 56 is a good passage of scripture to memorize which helps us to resist the temptation to fear.

Psalm 56 verses 3-4 says, When I was afraid I put my trust in you in God whose word I praise in God I trust I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?

Verses 9-11 Then my enemies will turn back in the day when I call. This I know that God is for me. In God whose word I praise and the Lord whose word I praise in God I trust I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me? God loves His people and we can trust Him. We have no reason to fear people. Jesus tells Paul here not to be afraid.

In the rest of verse 9 He says, But go on speaking and do not be silent. It's hard to imagine Paul being tempted to be silent. As we've read through the book of Acts he's very bold he's very courageous he's not afraid to speak.

[ 32 : 36 ] In verse 10 though we learn from Jesus' words that Paul was tempted to be silent. In verse 10 our Lord reminds him for I am with you and no one will attack you and harm you for I have many in this city who are my people.

And so here Jesus reminds Paul that he was with him and that he would not let anyone attack him or harm him while he was in Corinth because Jesus had more sheep in Corinth to bring into his fold. And Paul was his servant his instrument to preach the gospel to them. Paul had faced harsh beatings. He had faced nights in prison.

And he knew that the more he preached and the more God saved people the greater the opposition against him was going to be. But Jesus put those fears to rest.

And so I think that's what speculation here but what I think why would Paul be tempted to be silent is almost like I know how this goes. People are saved.

[ 33 : 40 ] Things are great right now. I'm going to keep on preaching and eventually I'm going to face more intense persecution more intense opposition more beatings more imprisonments and so

he was tempted to be silent and he needed the Lord's encouragement.

It's a good reminder for us too as great as the Apostle Paul was Paul needed Jesus. And as great as some of the great pastors of the past have been they needed Jesus too.

And they're men. So we have to be careful about idolizing them or thinking too highly of them as we ought to. One man who I admire is Charles Spurgeon.

He was a powerful instrument of the Lord but Spurgeon despite his many many ministry successes battled depression. He once said I am the subject of depression of spirit so fearful that I hope none of you ever get to such extremes of wretchedness as I go to.

He also said the road to sorrow has been well trodden. It is the regular sheep track to heaven and all the flock of God have had to pass along it. He also said an ointment for every wound a cordial for every faintness a remedy for every disease.

[ 34 : 59 ] Blessed is he who is skilled in heavenly pharmacy and knows how to lay hold of the healing virtues of the promises of God. when we are fearful when we are sorrowful when we are depressed when we are tempted to be silent we must remember that our Lord knows us that he loves us as we saw in our passage in Hebrews last Sunday that he sympathizes with us and that his grace is sufficient for us and so instead of retreating we press on.

That's what Paul does in scene 4 Paul stays in Corinth he stays in Corinth this is the first time Paul stays for an extended period of time in any of the cities that he's visited and eventually there is trouble the Jews made a united attack against Paul and they brought him before the tribunal of the city verse 14 says that Paul was ready after they brought their accusations he was ready to open his mouth he wasn't going to be silent the Lord had encouraged him he was ready to open his mouth and give a defense for himself against the accusations of his enemies but then something funny happens Galio the proconsul speaks for him he dismisses the charges and he sends Paul's opponents away however his opponents need to take their rage out on someone they came for their pound of flesh and so they choose Sothanus the ruler who replaced Crispus in their synagogue verse 17 says and they all seized

Sothanus I hate that that name I don't hate it hate's a strong word but let's just call him we need to shorten that like Soth Soth the ruler of the synagogue!

and they beat him in front of the tribunal but Galio paid no attention to any of this so it's probably Sothanus' job to present the charges against Paul and so he was the primary spokesman for the Jews this is what I think was probably happening somebody was bringing the accusations against Paul it was probably the ruler of their synagogue's job to do that and so the the Jews probably blamed him for his ineffectiveness to persuade Galio to punish Paul again I'm not sure if that was the case and I'm not sure why they thought beating him in front of Galio would achieve anything maybe they thought that by beating him Galio would see how serious they were about this that maybe they were threatening to riot and that that would persuade him to do something to punish Paul to quell that but Galio just ignores them and goes on his business whatever the case we learn that Sothanus

Sothanus that was pretty good amazingly is saved later in 1 Corinthians 1-1 Paul mentions him in the introduction of his letter Paul called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus and our brother Sothanus again we see the graciousness of our Savior to save those who oppose him and his church now we come to scene 5 Paul sets sail these verses record Paul's path back to Antioch and the conclusion of his second missionary journey in Sincrea Paul cuts his hair for he had taken a Nazarite vow probably to show his gratitude to God for helping him through such a difficult time in Corinth and the difficult times that preceded that and so Paul made a special offering to the Lord committing himself devoting himself to the Lord while he was in Corinth not to cut his hair the time had come for him to return to Antioch and so he cuts his hair off as an offering of thanksgiving to the Lord for how he encouraged him and sustained him in Corinth

[ 38 : 55 ] Luke doesn't mention Paul going to Jerusalem on his way to Antioch but the statement that he went up to greet the church and then went down to Antioch implies that that's what happened he would have gone to Jerusalem to offer his hair to complete his vow but Paul doesn't stay idle for long he's soon off on his third missionary journey revisiting the churches and strengthening the disciples and so how do we adjust according to what we've seen in Acts chapter 18 verses 1 through 23 I think it's this reminder the Lord will sustain us in our suffering the Lord will sustain us in our suffering in my experience and I'm sure it's been your experience too it's in times of suffering that I've learned more about the Lord and I've learned more about myself I've said this

before I didn't come up with it you've probably heard somebody else say you've probably heard me say it before but if you look at the valley and the mountain peak all the growth takes place in the valley there's no vegetation up on the mountain peak and so it's in those moments where we're down in the valley that great spiritual growth takes place because we're just more aware of how totally dependent we are on the Lord and sometimes it's through our suffering that we long for him more we long to be in heaven we long for his return and he just helps us keep things in perspective and so our suffering achieves all of those things and it's a reminder that the

Lord is faithful to us it's a reminder that he loves us it's a reminder that he doesn't leave us or forsake us that he sustains us I want to close by reading Psalm 55 verse 22 cast your burden on the Lord and he will sustain you he will never permit the righteous to be moved let's pray Lord we thank you for the time that we've had to be in your word tonight we're thankful for just the truth that you sustain us in our suffering God would thank you for how we see that in the life of the Apostle Paul a man whom you used powerfully Lord to spread the gospel but he was a man and he like us father experienced times of fear he faced the temptation to be silent and yet Lord you encouraged him and he was obedient and so Lord we pray that you would do the same for us God that when we're afraid when we are distressed when we're depressed that we would keep in mind how much you love us that you are for us that you sustain us and that father we would cast our burdens on you and that we would be just encouraged by the truth that you do not permit the righteous to be moved so thank you

Lord for saving us thank you Lord for keeping us and father help us to be faithful to you in this life to do what you've commanded us to do and we pray that you would receive all the glory for it we ask these things in Jesus name amen you