

God's Mission To Kinsale

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[0 : 0 0] Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them and because he was a tent maker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue trying to persuade Jews and Greeks. When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. But when the Jews opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, your blood be on your head.

I am clear of my responsibility. From now on I will go to the Gentiles. Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justice, a worshipper of God.

Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord, and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptised. One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision. Do not be afraid. Keep on speaking. Do not be silent. For I am with you and no one is going to attack and harm you because I have many people in this city. So Paul stayed for a year and a half teaching them the word of God. While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him into court. This man, they charged, is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law. Just as Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to the Jews, if you Jews were making a complaint about some misdemeanour or a serious crime, it would be reasonable for me to listen to you. But since it involves questions about words and names and your own law, settle a matter yourselves. I will not be judge of such things. So he had them ejected from the court. Then they all turned on Sosthenes, the synagogue ruler, and beat him in front of the court.

But Gallio showed no concern whatever. Well, let's pray and ask for God's help as we look at his word together. Father, we thank you for this great record of how a church began. And we pray that it would not just be a story, an event that happened in the past, but that this true story and God's work in people's lives and through the church would also shape us.

shape us into the kind of church you have called us to be. And we pray that through this morning that we will all leave as people who are sent, sent to bring your good news wherever we are.

[3 : 3 7] So please encourage us and help us, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, today is the greatest day, I think, in the life of this church. It's the greatest day so far because we as a church family, for the first time, are sending people to help plant a new church. We have helped by sending gifts and we have prayed about other church plants, but this is the first time we have actually sent people. And in partnership with the church in Bandon and Douglas, we're sending Ian, Jan, Amy and Kim to join with 14 others, as we saw on the screen a moment ago, to start a new church in the town of Kinsale. Their mission, should you choose to accept it, their mission, and you have accepted it, is to reach out with the good news of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit so that churches are established, not just in Kinsale, but also beyond.

In Acts 18, we see something of the same thing going on. So what's going on in Kinsale is not new, it's been going on right from the beginning of the New Testament. In Acts 18 there, we see that Paul is nearing the end of his second church planting trip. He's been moving to different locations and he's been sent out by his home church in Antioch, which is in southeast of Turkey, and he has now reached all the way across to mainland Europe to a place called Corinth, which is in Greece. And there he continues to preach the gospel and establish new churches. Now I'm sure we all know a little bit about Paul, and that he saw many people become Christians, he saw many churches planted, and we can get the impression as we read through Acts that, well this is easy, I'm sure anybody could go off to Kinsale or anywhere else. That's not really that difficult. But it's really not

like that. Being sent to go and plant a church is a daunting and a difficult task. It's no wonder then that when Paul would actually write to this church that he established, he would write a letter to them and he would remind them of what it was like when he first arrived. He says, I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling. In fact, aware of

Paul's great fear, look at verse 9 of chapter 18. Acts 18 verse 9, aware of Paul's fear, one night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision, do not be afraid, keep on speaking, do not be silent, for I am with you.

Now as Jan and Ian and Kim and Amy are being sent out to Kinsale, there's also a sense, and I'm sure if you were to ask them where they feel weakness, a bit of fear, and I'm quite sure a bit of trembling.

What if people don't listen? What if this whole church plant doesn't work? What happens if people oppose us? What happens if people leave?

[7 : 43] Well, as Paul starts his church planting work in Corinth, there are four great promises that we can take with us and that those who are going to Kinsale specifically are to take with them. And here's the first, the first great big promise that we can take from God. That God rules his mission to Kinsale.

It's a very small statement, but it has a huge significance. Look at verse 1, the very first verse. After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. Now it doesn't seem much, it's a little bit of a travel detail telling us where he's been and where he's going. But behind all of that stands God's rule over his mission.

Because before he ever arrived in Corinth, he was travelling in other places and where he travelled was really, really tough. So when he was in Philippi, Paul faced beatings and imprisonment. In Thessalonica, he had to hide from a rioting mob who were out to get him. In Berea, he had to run for his life because there was opposition and it was closing in.

When he arrived in Athens, he arrived there on his own, without any help, and he was ridiculed as a babbling. But in each circumstance, in each town that he went to, his life was spared.

[9 : 29] And so we read in 18 verse 1, after this, after all of these trials, after all of these difficulties, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.

You see, God rules over his mission. Not even prison. Not even beatings. Not even rioting mobs. Not even loneliness can hinder all that God intends to do in his world.

It's as if Paul was never meant to plant a single church, the opposition that he faced. But as we read through Acts, the message is so crystal clear that God will see his message preached, his messenger will be preserved, and his mission will prevail.

Nothing and no one can stand in God's way of all that he is going to do. Now I think you'd be very thankful to know that I don't think you're going to face imprisonment when you go to Kinsale, or rioting mobs.

But you will face hardship and opposition. And so you need to know two things. The first thing, God rules over your life.

[10 : 50] God's in control over every detail of our lives. Being sent to Kinsale is because God has ordered your life in this particular way.

If you're in this church, you're here because God has ordered your life in a particular way. Yes, of course we make decisions and choices, but they are all under the ruling hand of God.

That means God will only allow in your life what he wills and what he permits. And second, he doesn't just rule over our life.

God rules over the town of Kinsale. He rules over every person that you will meet and over every power that there is.

Whatever objection you may face, nothing and no one can stand in the way of God's mission. God has made his promise and God will keep his promise.

[11 : 56] God will see that his message is preached, that his messengers are preserved, and that his mission will prevail.

So that's the first thing that we can take with us, that God rules his mission to Kinsale. The second is this. God provides his gospel partners for Kinsale.

Look at verse 1 again, verse 2. After this, Paul left Athens and he went to Corinth. There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome.

Now the Jews were well known for rioting in Rome. Rome was the capital. They were the ones in charge. The Jews didn't like it.

And they rioted. In fact, they'd become such a headache to Claudius, who was ruling there, he kicked them all out. It was a form of ethnic cleansing. So politically speaking, Aquila and Priscilla had become refugees, kicked out of their house, no home and no work.

[13:12] However, missionally speaking, they were all part of God's provision to Paul to partner in his work, because they arrive in Corinth.

Look at verse 3. Paul went to see them, and because he was a tent maker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. Every Sabbath, he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks about the Lord Jesus Christ.

You see, they had joined Paul as partners in the work that he was doing. In fact, when Paul would write to another church, he would say how great Priscilla and Aquila were.

He called them my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their lives for me and for the churches. So church planting is not to be a solo effort.

It is meant to be a partnership. And those who are going to Kinsale have their partners first in Kinsale. We saw that great picture.

[14:22] Isn't it wonderful? Four people here, and another 14 other people, including children, 18 in all, who will be there to encourage and support each other in this task.

God has gifted each one of them, so that together as a church, they can reach out to Kinsale with the good news of Christ. Church planting isn't something we do alone.

It is working together with the people that God puts around us. And it's the same for this church.

Look around you. The person that is sitting there with you is God's gift to you to support you and encourage you in the work of the gospel.

But you just don't have partners in Kinsale. We want you to be encouraged that you have got partners in Carigaline. Look at verse 5. When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia.

So isn't that amazing? There's even more provision of people. Paul and Silas, or Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, and Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

[15:38] You see, God knows the needs. And he provides all the people that are needed and necessary to accomplish the task. For a number of years, the McLennahans, the family in this church, were able to be a part of those early stages.

And God provided other people who did similar things. And just as Silas and Timothy came for a short time to support Paul in his work, be assured that God will continue to partner you by providing people for the task that you are sent to.

And let me speak especially to those of us who will not be going to Kinsale. To the church here in Carigaline. We have a responsibility to go on supporting and caring for Ian and Jan and Amy and Kim.

We have a responsibility. We are to provide ongoing practical care. Ring them up. Visit them.

Or as they even said, we would go to them on a church, to a Sunday service, to support them and encourage them in the work that they are doing. Starting off is going to be difficult.

[17:04] They will need financial support. And so as a church, we will be giving a gift towards that work. But this is something that must go on. Yes, we are sending them.

But we are also partnering them. We might not be going physically to Kinsale. But never ever lose sight of the fact that we are part of God's provision to that work.

We are not simply observers watching other people go and do something. We are partners in the work that goes on.

So God provides his gospel partners for Kinsale. And third, another great promise.

God empowers his church for Kinsale. Look at verse 5. Let's read it again. When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

[18:13] Now what kind of response did he get from the crowd as he began to explain and teach about the Lord Jesus? Well, look at verse 6. But when the Jews opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, Your blood be on your own heads.

I am clear of my responsibility. From now on, I will go to the Gentiles. It was difficult. There was a closed door.

People didn't want to know. They refused to accept that Jesus Christ was God's saving King. There's no story of repentance.

There's no story of faith. And so we're left wondering, How is anybody ever going to become a Christian in this city?

And maybe that's the question we ask about Kinsale. How long is it going to take? How long will it be until the first person from Kinsale becomes a Christian and joins that church?

[19 : 31] How long is it going to be until the first person from Kinsale? How long is it going to be until the first person from Kinsale? Well, have a look at 1 Corinthians chapter 2. Keep your finger in Acts 18. And go to 1 Corinthians, which is, you've got Acts, then Romans, and then 1 Corinthians chapter 2.

So it seems there's a closed door. How are they ever going to break through, as it were, to see people changed?

Well, in this letter, which Paul wrote a few years later, he remembers the very first time he arrived in that city.

And here's what he says. Chapter 2, verse 1. When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom, as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God.

For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you, except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear and with much trembling.

[20 : 45] My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

You see, it's not about being a great speaker in Kinsale. It's not about your clever arguments. It's not about the right program or organising the right events for the town.

It is simply proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ depending on the power of God's Holy Spirit. Because that is always how God works.

The Spirit of God takes the gospel of God to do the work of God. The Spirit takes the gospel of God to do the work of God in people's lives.

Which reminds us, reminds all of us, that none of us can make people believe. You see, none of us here can make anyone become a Christian.

[22 : 00] None of us can make our friends and our families believe. Our responsibility is to simply share Christ with others.

That's why Paul says, back in Acts chapter 18, verse 6, he says, Your blood be on your heads, I'm clear of my responsibility. We're not responsible for how people are going to respond, what their reactions might be.

We simply, with gentleness and love, bring the good news of Christ. The offer of salvation, the warning of judgment to come, the need to be right with God.

But we do all of that in prayerful dependence upon the Spirit of God who moves in power. We can't do it. But second, let's remember that it is God who makes people in Kinsale believe.

Look at verse 7 of Acts chapter 18. Having been refused by others and been rejected by others, verse 7, we're told, Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justice, a worshipper of God.

[23 : 16] So just somebody's house. And who was there? Crispus, the synagogue ruler. And his entire household believed in the Lord.

And many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptised. Paul's message didn't change. He said the same thing to one group and he said the same thing to another group.

So why did Crispus and his family and other people believe? Well, it simply shows us that salvation is God's work and not our work.

It's the Spirit of God taking the Gospel of God and doing his work in people's lives. And so we are to speak the message.

But perhaps more importantly, we are to pray for God's Spirit to cause people to believe and be baptised. If we are to see that in Kinsale, we as a church in Carragalline are to pray for God's Spirit to be at work.

[24 : 25] So third, God empowers his church. And the last great big promise is God will save his people in Kinsale.

Look at verse 9. This is a fabulous verse. One night, the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision. Do not be afraid.

Keep on speaking. Do not be silent. For I am with you and no one is going to attack and harm you because I have many people in this city.

Now that's a great promise, isn't it? But, we have to be very careful that we don't claim too much from this promise. For example, verse 10 says, For I am with you and no one is going to attack and harm you.

So there's Paul thinking, right, nobody's going to attack or harm me. But, we only need to read on a couple of chapters. In chapter 20, verse 22, we read this, that Paul, compelled by the Spirit, said, I'm off to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen me there.

[25 : 40] I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. So was God going to protect him or was he not? Well, I think it's quite clear that this promise was quite specific to the town of Corinth.

That no harm would befall him in Corinth. But this promise is still very encouraging for Paul because it renews his confidence, verse 11.

Paul stayed there a year and a half teaching them the word of God. With God's promise that God was going to keep him and protect him, he stayed there for a year and a half teaching and encouraging the people.

Now here's our big question. How much is verse 9 and 10 a promise for those who are going to Kinsale? And how much is that a promise for you and me?

Well, the promise is first and foremost a promise for Paul. But through the promise, God has revealed truth for us.

[26 : 49] Look at verse 10 again. He says, I am with you. No one is going to attack and harm you because I have many people in this city.

So I think the principle behind the promise is this. A promise that we can take to Kinsale. A promise that we can keep for ourselves here. And here it comes.

It comes in two parts. Here's the first part. God has people whom he will save through you. God has people whom he will save through you.

Now isn't that an amazing encouragement for our lives? This means that the people we work with, the people we go to college with, the people we hang out with, the people that we spend our time around are not coincidences.

It's not by chance. God has us in those relationships and with those people because God knows who his people are and who is going to believe.

[27 : 55] And so verse 9 we read, Do not be afraid. Keep on speaking. Do not be silent. God has people whom he will save through you.

Now for those in Kinsale, that doesn't mean when you go around next Christmas delivering invitations to the carol service or inviting people to some particular event, you don't knock on the door and say, here we have this.

By the way, are you elect? Are you predestined by any chances? Has God chosen you? Be an odd thing to say, wouldn't it? The fact is, they don't know, we don't know, but God knows who his people are.

And God knows the ones that he will save. That is his business. God's grace is great and it is big. And God has you in relationships with the people that he has you with because there are those that God will save through you.

That is the encouragement that we can take. And here's the second big encouragement. encouragement. That God will keep you until they are saved.

[29 : 12] God will keep you until they are saved. The encouragement is, God will save people through you and he is going to keep us.

Because that's the ultimate purpose of why we are here. Why we are in relationship with God. Why we are in the communities that we are in. God will keep your life.

He will preserve your life until he has brought salvation to all those that he will save through you. No harm will come to you.

Nothing will happen to your life that will distract you from accomplishing that task until God says so. Isn't that exactly what happened to Paul as we read on in the following verses?

Verse 12, while Gallia was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made an attack on Paul and brought him into the court. I thought God said he wouldn't be harmed or nothing would happen. This man they charged is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law.

[30 : 20] They want Paul's life. But what was the outcome? Verse 16, he had them ejected from the courts. to judge through the case out.

And Paul was let go without being harmed and able to carry on his work. So let me encourage us all that God will preserve your life.

Not all the time, not every time, but he will do so until all those whom he will save through you are saved.

We take those promises with us. So going to Kinsale, we may feel weak. There's fear.

There's trembling. Being a Christian in our workplace, in our family, we may feel weak and afraid.

But we have these great big promises from God.

[31 : 28] God rules his mission. He provides his gospel partners. He empowers his church and he saves his people. So in our weakness, we are encouraged.

In our fear, we are confident. And in our trembling, we are assured. Do not be afraid.

Keep on speaking. Do not be silent. For I am with you. Let's pray together.

Father, we are amazed at the work that you have done in a town, a city like Corinth all those years ago.

And you are the same God who has done the same kind of work in this town, in Carragaline. causing people to believe, providing partners, workers, empowering your church by your spirit and fulfilling your promise to bring people to faith.

[33 : 01] We thank you that we stand here this morning as testimony of that very fact, God's work work in this town.

And we thank you that we too can take these promises and send Ian and Jan and Kim and Amy with these same promises, knowing that God will be faithful to them and that God will build his church in that town.

That people will come to love him and trust him. And we pray that the work will not stop there, but that very church would also have an occasion like this when they send out others to bring the good news of Christ to a world in need.

Father, you are good and you are faithful and we entrust one another into your good care.

In Jesus' name. Amen.