

Paul in Corinth - Acts 18:1-22

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Date: 15 May 2022

Preacher: Jayson Turner

[0 : 0 0] Go ahead and turn open to Acts chapter 18. We're going to be looking at verses one through, I think it says 23, but I'm only going to go through 22 and save something for next week.

But as you're turning there, let me begin us in prayer, ask God's blessing and help during this time. So would you join me? As a Psalmist writes, Lord would you deal bountifully with your servants, that we might live, that we might keep your word?

Would you open our eyes that we may behold wonderful things from your law? For we recognize that we are sojourners on this earth. Would you hide not your commandments from us?

Lord Jesus, we are so thankful that you speak to us through this book that you have left for us. That the word written, inspired by your spirit, and it is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.

And I pray God this morning that each of us here would hear from you. Lord whatever we need, would you provide it? If it's conviction, would you provide that? If it's encouragement, would you provide that?

[1 : 2 3] If it's just a reminder that you're present and you're at work in our lives. Lord, would you speak to us through the power of your word and power of your spirit? We love you Jesus, we commit this morning, this day to you.

Thank you for the freedom we have in this country to gather and to proclaim your name Jesus. We love you and it's your name we pray and all God's people said. Amen.

Well we are going to be looking at Paul's ministry in Corinth this morning. In fact we're going to consider the final leg of Paul's second missionary journey. He is using his days well, amen.

He's been forgiven of much and he wants to give that away. He has tasted of God's mercy and has changed him. And he's giving his days to the proclamation of the gospel.

And he's a great model for us. For if we are in Christ we're no different, amen. And the missionary life may be unique, but we are not. Amen. And the missionary life may be unique to him, but we are all called to this missionary life.

[2 : 3 5] Amen. Amen. Okay, we're on the same page. So there's much that we can gain from our brother Paul this morning. So let's just begin here in verse one and we'll work through the passage and see what the Lord has for us.

So here beginning in verse one Luke writes, After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. So we're going to pause here. Not get very far, but we've got a map. We'll throw up here and you can see he was there.

We're getting towards the end of his second journey. He's there in Athens and makes about a 50 mile trip to Corinth. He doesn't stay too long in Athens. We don't have this lengthy record of time there.

He was incredibly skillful in the message. He used the cultural idioms and messengers of the day quoting the poets. Did an amazing job contextualizing the gospel, but it doesn't appear that there was this mass conversion.

There were some folks. It's recorded in Acts 17:34 that some men joined him and believed, but it doesn't appear that he spent a lot of time there. We don't see this mass conversion. We don't know of a church planted in Athens and the church of Athens.

[3 : 46] We don't know of a church planted in Athens. My sense is that he's done fishing and he's moving to a new fishing hole. So he makes his way to this city of Corinth.

Now we just finished a series earlier in the year in that book, so I don't need to go into lengthy detail. I think maybe we remember some of that which we discussed, but Corinth was a newer city.

It was just kind of demolished about a century earlier in Rome. The Romans rebuilt it. It's a newer city. It's a thriving city.

Homer in the Iliad said it's a place of wealth, but also a place of immorality. And if you recall, there's 26 shrines of different deities in this city. It's like 31 flavors of false gods that you can pick from.

And then chief among them is this center of worship for Aphrodite with a thousand temple prostitutes. And in fact, Plato writing about Corinth, he actually talked about prostitutes and he used the word to describe prostitutes as Corinthian girls.

[5 : 02] So that's how thick in sin Corinth was. And no doubt it would have been a scary place to raise a family in the fear of the Lord.

And no doubt for Paul, also a mission field that perhaps you would prefer to avoid. And I actually appreciate Paul because he's very honest in the text.

In fact, he talks about the difficulty and the intimidation that that city held for him as he proclaimed Christ. In fact, he says in 2 Corinthians 3:2, 3, he says this when he's there in Corinth.

He says, and I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. Now, I don't know if that encourages ministers to some of you.

You think about Paul, this fearless lion for the Lord, and yet he's letting us into sort of the wrestling that are going on within his heart. Like he's fearful.

[6 : 09] He's with them in much fear and trembling and in weakness. And you have to no doubt connect the dots a bit and realize that he's coming off a very difficult season of ministry there in Europe.

He's been chased out of Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea. He then gets to Athens and they sort of poke fun at him. They call him this amateur theologian philosopher.

As Scott referenced last week, a seed picker picking up ideas from, you know, and putting them together, but not really being very cogent in his thinking. And so he's coming off of this and thinking, I'm wondering, you know, the second journey, this is difficult.

This is difficult. This is a hard, hard time. You have to wonder if he gets to Corinth and he's like, you know, I was unwelcome in those other cities.

What's in store for me now in Corinth? One of the arrows that the enemy loves to fire at God's people is that of discouragement.

[7 : 19] And if he can discourage God's people, it leads to a multitude of destructive fruits, leads to doubt, unbelief, timidity.

We are weaker against temptation in discouragement because we give ourselves that, that permission. I'm, I'm discouraged. So now I have an excuse for my sin.

And ultimately, when we're discouraged, it can lead to finally just giving up, kind of throwing the towel in, that it's just too hard to live for Jesus in this life.

And if the enemy can get God's people there, then we are sidelined. We're not part of God's advance. Seeing His kingdom move out in throughout Spokane and throughout the world.

The enemy loves to discourage. Can any of you relate? Amen? A few of you have been discouraged here. There might be something for you here in this text.

[8 : 27] Paul's Corinthian ministry, I think, is actually a chapter in how we can fight against discouragement for those committed to making much of Jesus in this life. And I actually, I love this, this section in Acts because it's actually a testimony of God, that God is the hero, that God provides exactly what Paul needs to be encouraged for just one more day.

And so throughout the text, let's identify four ways that God brings encouragement to Paul in this particular season of life, beginning here then in verse two.

And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontius. Recently, he came 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 tent makers by trade. First gift that the Lord provides for Paul for his encouragement are friends.

Godly Christian friends. God provides Paul community. These Jewish believers, it appears, Aquila and Priscilla, and they come alongside Paul in this very difficult season of ministry here in Corinth, this husband and wife team.

[9 : 59] And these friends, they had just been expelled from Rome under Caesar, Claudius. Why? Why were they kicked out of their home?

Well, we can find out some from extra biblical texts because in the first century, first and second century, we have some Roman historians that have something to say on the matter.

So, Tinius wrote this in the second century. He wrote, since the Jews constantly made disturbance at the instigation of Crestus, he expelled them from Rome.

So, there's an individual named Crestus. Who is Crestus? It's misspelled, but I believe that's a reference to Crestus, to Christ. And you couple that then with the Roman historian Tacitus, and he says this.

He says, Christianity is an evil superstition that started in Judea and spread like a disease to Rome. The world has never thought kindly towards followers of Christ.

[11 : 13] In fact, we know actually 10 years from this event, Nero, Rome burns and who does he blame? He blames the Christians. It is the Christians that are the problem on planet Earth, whether it's the first century, whether it's the 21st century.

There's nothing new here, my friends. And we will be misunderstood in this life, because our Savior was. And we're no greater than He.

And so, we should expect suffering, we should expect persecution. Well, Aquila and Priscilla are Jewish believers. They become business partners with Paul.

They are of the same trade. So Paul actually knew how to do other things and just preached the Bible. He was very skilled as a tent maker. In the first century, it was the Father's job to teach the Son a trade.

And the adage in the day was if you don't teach your Son a trade, you will teach Him to be a thief. And so Paul knew how to work with his hands and he would work alongside his friends in the marketplace during the week.

- [12 : 22] Preach on the weekends. And this couple, they just loved on Paul. They were the encouragement that he needed and recall Timothy and Silas. They were still in Berea.
- They didn't go with Paul to Athens or now to Corinth. And yet God provides this couple for his refreshment, his encouragement. And I love what Paul says about this couple in Romans 16, four-way says, Aquila Priscilla, they risk their necks for my life.
- Exactly what Paul needed in this moment, the God of all providence, providing him with friends. And these friends, they understood suffering. They were just removed from their homeland.
- No doubt they were able to encourage their friend. And I think there's just an aside there for us that if you are currently in a space of suffering, know that that may be God preparing you for a future ministry that lies ahead.
- And so you can take comfort, you can take hope in that, that God is yet preparing you to minister to another. And Scripture says that. Scripture says clearly in 2 Corinthians 1, 4 that those who are comforted, that God comforts us in our affliction so that we in turn can comfort those who are in affliction.
- [13 : 52] So there should be encouragement for those that are in perhaps a season where they are experiencing suffering. I know I'm a better pastor because I have experienced some suffering in life.
- Scott Wendy, they're better pastor wife, we can call you pastor Wendy. But Scott's a better pastor because he's experienced suffering.
- And you guys are the recipients, you benefit from that. And so if you're in that space where you're experiencing suffering, be encouraged that God may be preparing you for a yet future ministry.
- But all that said, we need friends. They are a source of encouragement that the Lord has chosen that means of people encouraging people.
- And I think it's just another way of saying, you know what, we need what? We need the church. Amen? We need the church. Amen? I know and I'm with you on the first one because I hate it too.
- [14 : 52] But we need one another. We are better followers of Christ because of one another. It's just how the Lord has designed it.
- We need the church. We need the church in all its beauty, all its brokenness, all its failings, but in all of its grace.
- We need the church. In fact, listen to what Solomon says on this front related to needing the community of faith and Ecclesiastes 410.
- He says, whoa, to him who is alone. Which is another way of saying, don't be alone. Alas, the last thing you want is to be alone for when he falls and has not another to lift him up.
- If you're struggling with a besetting sin this morning, maybe you're discouraged, there's an addiction that you are continued to fall to and you have isolated yourself and maybe you're here presently, but for all intents and purposes, you have chosen to say, nobody's getting in.
- [16 : 08] Then hear the words of Solomon. Whoa, what are you? Whoa. You need others to be invited in to your story.
- Because I don't know any perfect people in here, not a one. We need the Lord's grace daily. And sometimes we hit a season where we need others to come alongside and help carry a burden.
- And I was a little bit worried about that. I would just encourage you to make a commitment to say, I will be known. And I get it, it takes trust and maybe you've been burned.

But I tell you what, I kid you not, I think this is a pretty, pretty kind leadership here in the church of elders and pastors. There's good people here that would love to walk with you if you're in that space.

We've been called to be connected and maybe you're here this morning thinking, man, I'm not connected. I don't know, Jay, I've tried to make friends. I'm not making friends and I can't solve all these problems for you this morning, but I can say this.

[17 : 16] If you're feeling alone, the one encouragement, excitement I would make to you, if you want to be connected with the body, just find a place and begin to serve. Serve. Because as you serve, you will connect and you'll be doing it with other members of the body of Christ.

I mean, serve number one because God's worthy, amen? But secondly, because you're going to connect at a deeper level. You're going to be soldiering with other Christians.

And you know, I believe that there's a day yet ahead when we will be in eternal peace. And we will look back and the nostalgia, the reminiscing, the celebration will be the times, the ministry that we got to do together.

I think it'll be a wonderful piece of heaven. This morning I got a dear friend of mine, Victor and Luda Samookin, are here. Raise your hand, Victor, just so people know who you are. I know you hate that. Nice, thank you.

And then with them, Naomi and I, we're going to be going to the church. Thank you. And then with them, Naomi and John's not with us anymore. John passed away a year ago, Naomi's husband, but these are dear saints and friends of mine because we've served for over 20 years on the other side of the globe in Russia.

[18 : 35] And we're connected. And there's a joy, there's going to be a reunion and a celebration of ministry that was accomplished that we got to be a part of.

And I want that for all of us. And it begins by a serving in the body that God has called us to. You don't feel connected. We're going to find a place for you to serve. Amen, Scott.

So please, let's continue on. Look at verse four. And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and tried to persuade the 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. And when the opposing reviled him, no big surprise there, he shook out his garments and said to them, Your blood beyond your own hands, I am innocent. From now on, I will go to the Gentiles.

And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titus 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.

[19 : 51] 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, 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.

So first thing to note here, Silas and Timothy have now arrived from Macedonia. It says in 2 Corinthians 11 that it may be that they came and they brought some missionary support with them for Paul so that he could stay focused.

He was very focused. It says he was occupied with the word when he was there in Corinth. And yet with all this focus on ministry and sharing the good news, Corinth was still a very discouraging place to minister.

The religious folks, they reject Paul. This man used to be a respected academic and now he's sort of given that up.

[21 : 03] Some of us just finished the book Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert by Rosario Butterfield. This academic that was willing to cash that in to know Jesus.

Robbish. And because the religious folks are reviling Paul, who is left to evangelize?

Well, it's the carnal Gentiles hanging out at the temple of Aphrodite, right? Which is essentially, it's a brothel, okay? I know they call it church, but it's not.

And you just wonder if Paul is thinking about the Macedonia call the whole time. What in the world did I say yes to, right? And I don't know if you have ever felt that like just even in the city that the Lord has called us to.

God, are you going to rescue anymore here in Spokane? I was actually discouraged significantly two weeks ago. I'm not today, but two weeks ago, because I spent a couple days driving Uber, spending time with folks, just living in our city.

[22 : 16] And it was a very, in my mind, fruitless weekend. I didn't get to have great conversations with individuals. I didn't get to pray for anyone.

And I just was, the first ride Saturday morning was picking up two guys at 9.30 who needed to ride back to their house because the bar wasn't open. And it's like, I mean, I just said you guys are definitely overachievers.

But I mean, there was no spiritual conversation that took place. And then after them, it was, I picked up two who I thought were women, but then they got in my car and they weren't women and they didn't speak English.

It was an odd, I couldn't even interact with them. Like, it's like they didn't speak English. A couple trips to the Drug Rehab Center.

And then I picked up a gal from Plant Parenthood and wanted to go directly to the dispensary. And it just was, it just was like, oh, Lord, there's so many lost. It was like, you just, you're reminded there's so much brokenness in this city.

[23 : 26] And it was discouraging. And yet again, Paul, or God, provides for Paul what he needed to minister for one more day.

He provided him some fellowship, some dear brothers and sisters. Next two gifts, the second thing he provides is a key conversion. And then thirdly, he gives Paul this incredible promise.

So let's look at the second gift for encouragement. There's this key conversion. A leader in the synagogue gets saved. Crispus in verse eight, it says, this ruler of the synagogue, he believed in the Lord and his entire household.

And we don't know, it's interesting because Paul's not even ministering at the synagogue anymore. And you have to wonder if Crispus heard the words, right? Maybe he's like Nicodemus and snuck over to the house next door to hear more about the gospel.

But you have this key leader, this influencer who repents of sin, trusts in Christ. And what Paul gets to see at that moment is fruit. There's fruit.

[24 : 33] And that was an encouragement that he needed. So a week ago, I drove again and I got to have a conversation with an individual. And it was exactly what I needed because I'm thinking, why am I spending so many hours in my car seat?

I could be home sitting in my tractor. A different kind of seat. See my strategy here? Wherever I can sit. But I picked up a fellow who just got out of jail and trying to be a good dad to his daughter, living with the mother, not sure how to be a good guy around her.

And so I just talked about being a man. He's like 28 years old. Like, man, why don't you do one thing to serve for each day? He's like, whoa, I never thought about it. Like what? I don't know. Like how about you empty the dishwasher or maybe help make a meal?

And he's like, man, I could do that. I'm like, yes, you could. We talked about how selflessness is like a marker of maturity. And it's like revelatory for him.

He never had such a smart Uber driver before. And then I said, hey, I'm also a pastor. He's like, you're a pastor. Like, yeah, and I serve at a church in your neighborhood.

[25 : 50] Why don't you come on a Sunday? And like, I kid you not, he just freaked out. He's like, this is a miracle. I was just on the phone with my mom 15 minutes ago.

And she said, son, you just got out of jail. You need to recommit your life to God and you need to find a church. So 15 minutes later, we get to have a conversation and he gets an invitation.

But it's like, I haven't seen him yet, but he knows we're here. But I got to be an answer to the mom's prayer. That was like fruit that I just needed in that moment.

And it was such a gift. And I think we need to mark when we write those things down, the prayer is answered, write it down. And if you have been ministered to from somebody, would you share that with them?

Because they may need to hear that, that God is using them. Amen? Well, on top of this conversion, God makes this incredible promise to Paul.

[26 : 58] It's a third gift to Paul to encourage him. And Lord says, hey, don't be afraid. Speak in my name. I got people in this city. No one's going to harm you.

Church, we have the same promise. In terms of there are people in this city that God aims to rescue. Did you know that?

Like in God's word, such a fascinating verse in Romans 11.25, Paul writes, lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers.

A partial hardening has come upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. Christ has not yet returned for his church, so the fullness of the Gentiles has not yet been completed, which means because Christ has yet not returned for the church that he aims to add more people to his family.

That's a promise that God has continued to rescue people. That's encouragement for us. And I'm so thankful that we serve an electing God because often my evangelism is fairly pathetic.

[28 : 14] And so thankful that God uses sometimes even as I would stumble over words. That's a promise to us. And I think for encouragement, there are many promises in Scripture that we have to claim, walk in, and enjoy, savor.

You're getting arrows from the enemy that you are not clean, you're not forgiven, and you've confessed to sin. Romans 8.1, there's no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. That's a promise.

So you take that and you believe that shield of faith. You believe. Isaiah 41.10, fear not. I'm with you.

Be not dismayed for I'm your God and I will strengthen you and I will help you and I will uphold you by my righteous right hand. That's a promise.

Fear not. Victor and Luda spent three weeks in iced attention, part of that underground, no communication, but they got the promises of the Lord.

[29 : 15] Fear not. So they're in this space. Everybody's sort of freaking out and they're experiencing God's peace. And as a result, now that they're out, there's 28 people that want to continue to hear from Victor.

Because like, there's something about this guy. He knows something. He's connected with God somehow. And there's now future ministry. But it all starts with us trusting that God is who he claimed to be, right?

I'm with you always, he says, to the end of the age. To the end of the age. Here's another promise.

I love this even as the world around us thinks that we are just foolish, dumb, idiotic. 2 Corinthians 4.17. Paul says, for this light momentary affliction is preparing for us to see the eternal weight of glory beyond comparison.

It's such a contrast. And I love the imagery of the fact that heaven, there's going to be a substance to it, a reality to it that's going to be more real than the life that we've experienced in the here and now.

[30 : 29] And the joy will far outweigh anything that we had to endure in this life. It's a great promise. I like how Eugene Peterson writes it in the message.

He says, these hard times are small potatoes compared to the coming good times, the lavish celebration prepared for us.

It's a promise from the Lord. Promise for the Lord. Well, the results of that encouragement, it affected Paul because it says then at the end of that section, he stayed a year and six months.

He stayed longer because of the encouragement that the Lord brought into his path. Does it mean it's going to be smooth sailing? Devoid of tribulation? Not at all. Look at verse 12 to 17.

It says, but when Galio was proconsol of Achaia, this region where Corinth is located, the Jews made a united attack on Paul, brought him before the tribunal, saying this man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law.

[31 : 36] But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Galio said to the Jews, if it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, oh 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 yourself. This is great. I refuse to be a judge of these things.

And he drove them from the tribunal and they all seized Thausonys, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal, but Galio paid no attention to any of this.

So the Jews in Corinth, they don't want Christianity to sort of fall under an offshoot of Judaism here. They don't want it to be protected under Roman law.

So they take Paul to court. It completely fails. It backfires. Galio, who is the Roman authority in Corinth, he throws the case out.

[32 : 50] And what I love about this section is what we're actually seeing in this section. And this was like a discovery for me this week. I had never connected the dots, but what we see here is actually a fulfillment of the promise God made to Paul.

No one's going to harm you. No one's going to harm you. And you have the fulfillment here. Paul is now given protection. The God of all providence using Galio to ensure Paul's safety as he ministers.

Is that the coolest? That was kind of a fun discovery for me this week. That one decision from Galio, it protected Paul while he was in Corinth. And actually, it gave him another 10 years of ministry to safely preach the gospel throughout the Roman Empire.

And it was then in 10 years where Galio was finally executed by Nero and then ultimately Paul, but he has another 10 years of ministry as a result.

Well, since the Jews, they can't go through legal channels. What do they do? They find the ruler of the synagogue, Sassanese, and we believe that he is a sympathizer to the gospel because they take him, well, we'll beat him.

[34 : 05] But what we learn about that individual is he actually becomes a ministry partner with Paul. Because in 1 Corinthians 1-1, it says, Paul called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus and our brother Sassanese.

So what we see in Sassanese life is that maybe the suffering that he experienced became the springboard for his ministry as well. It's just...

it's a delight to see the God's hand working and to get to see it. And so maybe your current suffering too is that means of this next chapter of maybe even more fruitful ministry.

Be encouraged. Be encouraged, church. Let's look at verse 18 to the end here. 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, ascentria, he had cut his hair for he was under a vow.

And they came to Ephesus and he left them there, but he himself went on to 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.

[35 : 31] And he set sail from Ephesus. And when he had landed in Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church in Jerusalem.

You always go up to Jerusalem. And then he went down, even though he was going north, he was visiting Antioch. That completes missionary trip number two.

But it's interesting, there's this comment here about Paul having taken a vow. And then the first stop for Paul, once he gets out of Corinth, the very first stop, the port city of Corinth, right, centria, he completes this vow.

Now, what's the vow about? Our best guess, having to do with the hair, is that this is a Nazarite vow.

The word Nazir, it means to be devoted. And typically this vow is taken to express devotion, thanksgiving to God. In the Bible, we have three Nazarites for life, Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist.

[36 : 42] But the significance of the Nazarite vow in number six, three things were required. First, no wine, symbol of sacrifice, no haircut, symbol of shame or humility, active humility.

And then thirdly, no contact with the dead body. So it's just an image of being separated, separated for a work. I actually, and this is Jay, so don't take this as authoritatively, but my sense is that Paul took this vow as a result of the difficult ministry there in Corinth.

That difficult year and a half, discouraged. And I think he was declaring to God, God, just use me. Use me in this most difficult context.

Set me apart for this difficult mission. And I believe for Paul, it was a way for him to draw near, to God, in a very difficult season. Sort of like fasting, like there's times when we would give up food or something else to devote our heart, our mind to Scripture, to reading, to prayer.

And that's what this vow was like for Paul. And so I actually believe as a number of Bible scholars, not alone, this is not some aberrant thought, that Paul actually took this vow when he began his Corinthian ministry.

[38 : 07] God, I need you. I'm desperate for you in this place. And it's interesting because the first thing that Paul does, once he leaves Corinth, the next city over, what does he do?

He cuts his hair and he gives thanks to the Lord for the faithfulness of him during that past year and a half of ministry. And I think we have our final source of encouragement that God provides here for Paul.

And it's this. It's that Paul intentionally drew near to the Lord. How was Paul encouraged by the very presence of God?

By the intimacy that was present in his relationship with God. It was real. Paul didn't live life by a set of rules to just, you know, obey and then try to get other people to...

He knew the living God. And in this particular time, he drew near. I believe it was a massive source of encouragement in this season of ministry.

[39 : 14] I love how Billy Graham is honest on this issue as well. He says this, the Christian life is not a constant high.

I have my moments of deep discouragement. It's Billy Graham. I have to go to God in prayer with tears in my eyes and say, God help me.

Sometimes that's all you can pray. You discouraged, draw near to the Lord. Draw near to the Lord.

In the darkest days of my life, I had lost much, including my health. It was all I could do to get out of bed and get down the stairs. The thing that sustained me through that was that I would get out of bed and get down the stairs and I would sit down and I'd open the book and I would just hear from the Lord.

And it was enough. And it was enough. If you will but draw near to the Lord. I believe He'll respond. I believe He'll respond.

[40 : 22] Father, thank you for the words of Paul. Thank you that he is a bit transparent here with us. Lord, I love the fact that your servants, there's days when they are discouraged.

And yet you meet those needs. And Lord, you do it in different ways. Sometimes it's through another brother or sister. Lord, I pray that we would be your people filled with your spirit and as you prompt us that we would reach out.

Lord, that if there's a name that you put on our heart to call, to encourage, just to connect with, that we would see that as your voice, as your guiding and we would just obey.

Because Lord, you may want to use us. So help us to be sensitive to you. Lord, thank you for those times where we are encouraged by the fruit that's occurring.

Lord, thank you for this morning. You're going to encourage us now with the testimony that you continue to rescue sinners. Lord, as we get to celebrate with Julia.

[41 : 28] Father, thank you for your promises for they are life to us. Lord, when you crush the spirit of doubt, the devices of the enemy, might we be a people that believe what you say is true.

And Father, thank you that you meet with us as we would but repent of sin and draw near to you. For you've promised that it is in your presence where those times of refreshment come.

And Lord, as your people, we long for you. So forgive us for being distracted. Forgive us for chasing after other means of refreshment. Might we recommit our hearts to you and that even today we would seek to draw near.

We love you Lord. You're so good to us Jesus. It's in your name we pray. Amen. Let's stand and raise our voices and praise together.

Amen.