

When You are Weary from the Work

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[0:00] If Ass
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Ass Ass All right, if you've got a Bible, go to Acts chapter 18.

Acts chapter 18, I trust you are now ready for the Word of God. This has been an encouraging time of worship. And again, that responsive reading, I know that's new for us, but that's something we may incorporate more.

That Scripture, I mean, a lot of these songs obviously are based in Scripture, but to read Scripture together as public worship, well, that's what the Psalms are intended to be. And I guarantee you there are many that can relate to the Psalm we read tonight, of a time when your soul has been cast down.

And then to sing a song based on that and to sing about God's goodness, even in the darkest of days, I hope has stirred your heart and is now ready for what God wants to say to us tonight.

I know you just got comfortable, but please stand once more as we read God's Word together. You can get comfortable later. Acts chapter 18, we're going to look down through verse 11 this evening.

[1:47] Acts chapter 18 as we continue our study through the book of Acts. Luke writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He says, after this, Paul left Athens and he went to Corinth.

He found a Jew by the name of Aquila, a native of Pontus and recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome.

And when 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. 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 Christ was Jesus. And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, will your blood be on your own heads?

Yes, I'm innocent. From now on, I will go to the Gentiles. And he left there and he went to the house of Titus, Justice, a worshiper of God, whose house was next door to the synagogue.

[2 : 52] A 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 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.

Let's pray. Lord, help me teach your Word this evening to your people. I have no doubt that this is a message we all need at some point.

In fact, in many points throughout our walk with Christ, throughout our journey on this mission, we will need the truth of this passage.

So please come speak through me, people, the truth that we need to continue to endure what you've called us to.

[4 : 04] And I pray this in Christ's name and God's people said, amen. Amen. You can be seated. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. and he moves to the next round. And for the next two minutes and 32 seconds, he goes through all the normal go-to questions like a language of origin, Greek, alternate pronunciations, none, a part of speech, adjective. And even after all of that, he still has to ask for bonus time, and then what happens next would be a first ever in the Spelling Bee competition.

A lava coin. We've never seen this happen. The poor gentleman, he's a young man, apparently has fainted.

Under all of the pressure of the moment, under all the weight of the expectations, Akshay grew weary and fainted. I wonder, Faith Family, if that has ever happened to you. I don't mean that you've actually fainted in a Spelling Bee on national television. What I mean is that the pressure of a situation became so much that you grew weary and faint of heart. For you, it was the pressure of your financial situation became so desperate. The pressure at work to meet the deadline became so demanding. The pressure of that upcoming exam became so stressful. The pressure of having to live up to everybody's expectations all the time became overwhelming to you. The pressure of fighting that internal battle that nobody knows about became so intense. And just all the pressures of life, I got to be a good mom, and I got to stick to my diet, and I got to go to the gym this morning, and what about the kids? Began to suffocate you. And you became tired and weary and afraid.

[7 : 25] And you just wanted to faint. Listen, that is not just true in life. It is true in the Christian life.

In fact, it is a biblical condition that the scripture references frequently. Probably the most famous example is in Isaiah chapter 40. Notice it here. Have you not known, have you not heard, the Lord? The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint. And to him who has no might, he increases strength. Even youth shall faint and be weary. Young men shall fall exhausted, but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and say it, not faint.

What about 2 Thessalonians 3.13? As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good. Galatians chapter 6 verse 9. Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap if we do not give up. Take the smiley face mask off Christianity for just a moment. And let's be honest. There are times times when the race gets so long, the pressure becomes so much, the difficulties are so challenging, that even in our walk with the Lord, we just want to faint. We become weary. And maybe you don't like the word faint because that's not a word you use all that often. You would rather have a different word?

Well, then let me give you a different word. Discouragement. It's the same word biblically. In fact, of the three Greek words, discouragement, I believe, is only used once in the Bible or certainly in the New Testament. But listen, of the three Greek words that carry with it the idea to be disheartened or discouraged, guess what it's translated every single time? To be faint or to grow weary.

And I wish I could stand before you after 25 years of ministry and say, I've never experienced this. I wish I could say, yeah, there was that one time way back when, but if I'm very honest with you and we're just going to be really honest tonight, can we just be honest? Amen. I've been there many times and I still find myself there often. And listen, I'm type A hard charger, get it done type guy. And there's just something about ministry that gets discouraging. And if you've got a problem with that, you've got a problem with many people throughout church history that struggled with this. And you've got a problem with people in the Bible. I don't know, like the psalmist in Psalm 42, whose soul was cast down and was fighting for hope in God. Oh, this, this faint of heart, this weariness is something that is a part of the mission. A pastor, Peter Allison wrote this in Table Talk magazine about his going into the ministry. I resonate with this so much. Here's what he said, quote, it was going to be relatively simple, this work of pastoring. This is the place where you laugh. Jesus had come and conquered with blinding glory, the cross and the tomb, teach and preach the word with accuracy, clarity, and practicality, and they will come and they will mature. And together we will win the world for King Jesus.

[11 : 35] Not an uncommon perspective from a seminarian with a divinity degree freshly in hand. It was my earnest conviction and expectation, but cracks soon appeared in that optimistic theological position. Idealism eventually gave way to reality. Worship attendance grows. Babies die and have to be buried. A businessman becomes hungry for God. A convert slips back into the drug lifestyle. A marriage is reconciled. Christians continue to bicker with one another. I love this next line. The already not yet of the kingdom of God is in the practical theology department for pastors. We live it and experience it every day. Blessing, power, and joy seem to alternate daily with loss, weakness, and grief. Church life is a carousel of defeat and victory.

Yes, it is. Pastor Allison, yes, it is. And when we come to Acts 18, we find the apostle Paul on the defeat side of that carousel. The apostle Paul is faint. He is weary. And I want you to get that in your minds. The man that said, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me is weak. The man who said, I labored more than all of them wants to give up. The man that would say, I finished the race almost quit. Verse 9.

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.

When you come to Acts chapter 18, what you find is a discouraged preacher. We have a discouraged preacher. We are invited here to see a side of the apostle Paul that we do not often see. And I hope that you understand that it is a gift of God's grace that you get to see it. Because sometimes we have a tendency to put Paul on this pedestal. Oh, he's an apostle. He's one of the greats. He probably never had a bad day.

Let me tell you about the kind of day he had in Corinth, the day he wanted to give it all up and walk away from it all. He is discouraged, afraid, and wants to stop preaching. And you say, how do you know this? How do you know that the Lord in these verses is not being preemptive rather than descriptive. That is, how do you know that the Lord is not trying to keep him from discouragement rather than the fact that he is discouraged? I'll give you three reasons why.

[14 : 45] Number one, the Greek verbs here in Acts 18 and the verses that we just read are in the present imperative, which means that Paul presently feels this way. It's not past or a will be, it's a right now. In fact, any NASB translators, New American Standard, we use the ESV. I like literal translations. ESV is a literal translation, and so is the NASB. And the NASB actually in its translation kind of gets this idea better. So notice, here's the translation from the New American Standard. And the Lord said to Paul by a vision at night, don't be afraid, say it any longer.

Meaning he is currently afraid. So it's present imperative verbs. Number two, why would the Lord tell Paul not to be afraid if he's not afraid?

Why would the Lord tell Paul to keep speaking if he didn't want to stop speaking? In other words, notice this on the screen. The Lord's encouragement would not make sense without Paul's discouragement.

These are words that have no meaning without a reality. And the reality is our brother has fainted. He is weary. And the third reason is where is the apostle Paul? Anybody want to shout out what city is he in? He is in Corinth. And what do we know about when Paul went to Corinth? Well, what did he tell the Corinthians? I went to seminary for this, right? Look at Corinthians. First Corinthians 2 verse 3 says this, I also was with you in weakness and fear and in great trembling. Do you know what Paul is saying?

Corinthians, do you remember when I first came to you and I was a basket case? Do you remember when I came to you and I was an absolute nervous wreck? Do you think of the apostle Paul this way? You should. Because that's how he feels in Acts 18. He's faint-hearted and weary and discouraged and disheartened in the mission of God. And why is he in this condition? Let me give you four quick reasons. Number one, the loneliness of the mission. The loneliness of the mission. The apostle Paul comes to Corinth in the same situation he was in when he was in Athens, namely alone. Do you remember? You can go back to Acts chapter 17 and read this. Last week, we talked about the fact that he's waiting in Athens for Silas and Timothy to join him, but they are delayed and he finds himself all alone in Athens. And he comes to Corinth the same way. Paul, most of his missionary journeys does the ministry with people. But this was a season where he was all alone and it drained him. A comedian back in the 1980s had a little bit that went like this, quote, the population of this country is 220 million. 84 million are over the age of 60, which leaves 136 million to do the work. Don't kill the messenger. He said it, not me.

[17 : 59] 95 million are under the age of 20. That leaves 41 million. 22 million are employed by the government. That leaves 19 million. 4 million are in the armed forces. That leaves 15 million. 14.8 million work in state and city offices. That leaves 200,000. 188,000 are in hospitals and insane asylums. That leaves 12,000.

11,998 people are in jail. That leaves two people, me and you, to do all the work. And frankly, I'm tired of doing everything myself. Now that's funny, but be honest, how many of you have felt like that?

I'm the only one at my job that cares. I'm the only one in this church that does anything. I'm the only one in my family that's trying. I'm the only Christian that seems to take their faith seriously. Oh, if you got to live it alone for very long, it will drain all of it out of you.

Paul's alone and he's doing ministry alone and he's weary. But the loneliness of the mission is not the only reason. Number two is the weariness of the mission. The weariness of the mission, put your seat belt on. Because I'm going to go back and I'm in a few seconds going to remind you of everything. Our dear brother, he is our dear brother, right? We're going to join him in heaven one day. Can't you wait to let Paul tell you more about Acts 18 someday? And listen, this is our dear brother and he is weary. And let me just remind you what our brother has been through. Acts 13, Paul and Barnabas have set apart for the mission. They go to Cyprus only to face opposition.

They go to Antioch where the Jews, quote, stir up persecution against them. Acts 14, they go to Iconium where the Jews try to, quote, poison the minds of others so that they will not believe the message of the gospel. They go to then Lystra where they get stoned with rocks. Acts chapter 15 is the conflict in Jerusalem over what the true gospel is. Is it by grace through faith or is it by works of the law? And he fights and fights and fights for the truth of the gospel. And then by the end of Acts chapter 15, he's in a conflict with Barnabas on what to do with John Mark, who had abandoned them in the mission earlier. And then in Acts chapter 16, Paul wants to go to Asia. God won't let him, redirects him to Macedonia where he ends up getting beaten up and thrown into prison. Then in Acts chapter 17, he goes to Thessalonica. He's chased out of there to Berea. They follow him to Berea, making him flee to Athens, one of the most pagan cities in all the Roman Empire. And while some are open to what Paul is saying, most of them call him a silly babbler with strange ideas.

[20 : 52] How's your day going? That's the last few chapters of what our brother has gone through. And so what's my point? Listen very closely. This mission has been filled with enormous success, the great things that God has done. But it has also been full of opposition, persecution, conflict, changed plans, loneliness, division, long nights and long days and rejection. And I don't care even if you are the apostle Paul, there comes a point when you say, I can't handle another thing. I'm done. I'm out.

I'm not going to say another word. You just want to faint. You just want to throw in the towel. You just want to be done. And I think I spent some time just meditating on this particular phrase in verse 10. Look at it again. Oh, look at what God specifically has to tell our dear brother, Paul.

In verse 10, he says, I am with you. And no one will attack you to harm you. I want you to think about that. After everything I've just went through in these last few chapters of the book of Acts, God has to tell his suffering missionary, his downcast missionary, Paul, no one's going to attack you here. No one's going to harm you here. In other words, God has to speak. Lord, please give me the words to share what you've taught me this week. God has to speak to Paul's past wounds.

I know everywhere you've been, they've hurt you.

I know you've been run out of town. I know you've been chased from one place to another. I know you've been in prisons and I know you've had rock after rock after rock after rock slung in your direction. But I want to speak to that. No one's going to harm you here.

[23 : 09] And if I just opened a vein, dangerously so, before you as your pastor, can I just tell you that after 25 years of this, I don't handle church conflict the same way.

I just don't. And you can look at me and you can say, you should just get over it. And you could say, you should just trust more. And you can say, but this town will be different.

And I'm just telling you that I relate to the apostle Paul. After you've been hit with enough rocks, and you know this in your own life, after you've been hit with enough rocks, it's hard to walk outside some days for fear of another stoning. I don't want to be hurt again.

Paul, no one's going to harm you here. I promise.

What a gracious high priest we have who can sympathize with our weakness. Amen? Oh, what I want you to see is this is not some generic, you're going to be okay.

[24 : 24] Oh, no, no, no. This is the Lord addressing Paul's personal wounds. He's lonely. He's weary. Third is the weightiness of the mission. The weightiness of the mission.

Where is Paul again geographically? Corinth. Corinth was one of the places, again, that I got to go on my sabbatical. I'd never visited Corinth before. And so, I got to spend time in Corinth studying the apostle Paul and studying the city of Corinth. And so, this is how I would describe Corinth for you.

Okay, you with me? It's San Francisco plus New York City plus Washington, D.C. with a whole lot of Vegas. All right, that is Corinth. That is Corinth. Let me explain what I mean here. Here's a map of Corinth. And I know this doesn't quite look like a dumbbell, but if you could imagine a dumbbell that's got like on one end a really big landmass and on the other end a big landmass and in between is the handle, that's Corinth. Corinth is the handle that leads to these two large landmasses. And so, to get from one landmass to the other, guess what you had to go through? Corinth. To get from one body of water to the other, you don't want to go all the way around. That's going to take forever. And I actually have got to see this. Here's a picture where they would build these little trenches where they would carry their boats across and move them through the land from one part of the body of water to the other so they didn't have to go around. The point here is Corinth was a grand central station of the ancient

Near East. Everything is coming through. It's like San Francisco in that it's a port city. It's like New York because you've got all backgrounds that are represented here. A major financial district, lots of wealthy people, and it is enormous. Faith family, do you realize that Corinth back in these days was estimated to be around 700,000 people? Now, granted, a lot of those were slaves, but still, the population was huge. In fact, it isn't until 1850, this is crazy, 1850, that you have four cities with over a million. And at this particular time in history, you have almost 700,000 people. It is huge.

Like D.C., you have a government center that's here. And like Vegas, Corinth has the temple to Aphrodite, the goddess of fertility or sex. In other words, notice this on the screen. If Athens was the intellectual capital, last week's sermon, Corinth is the immoral capital. There was over 1,000 priestesses in the temple.

[27 : 14] They weren't priestesses. They were prostitutes. Sex wasn't worshiped. It was worship. I mean, literally, you would go to the temple of Aphrodite and you would engage in that as an act of worship.

So here's the point I'm getting at. What I'm getting at is I want you to take everything that I've just talked about in mind. Paul is lonely. Paul is weary. And you want me to go where next?

Corinth. Corinth. It's like Jonah being told to go to Nineveh.

There's no chance. Me against Corinth? Like there's absolutely no possible way I will be able to reach people in Corinth. I mean, faith in my mind, I thought planning a church was hard. Imagine being called to Corinth. Are you tracking with me? Are you sympathizing with our brother? He's alone. He's weary. He's got the weightiness of going to Corinth. But then there's one more. There's one more.

We got a long message. So hang on. Here we go. Number four is the foolishness of the message. And you say, did he just call the gospel foolish? I didn't. Paul did. Listen, in addition to everything else I've just described, Paul knows that the very message he's going to preach in Corinth is going to be viewed as ridiculous. That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard. God becomes a man and dies on a cross and is resurrected from the grave. What are you smoking? That is foolish talk.

[29 : 05] In fact, it's why he wants to quit talking. Verse 9 again, the Lord said to Paul, when I in a vision, do not be afraid, but go on speaking and don't be silent. That is, Paul is struggling with preaching.

And why is he struggling with preaching? Because the message itself. Do you want me to prove it to you? Say yes. What does he say from Corinthians? First Corinthians 1 18. For the word of the cross, that is the gospel, is folly to those who are perishing. But to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. Let's be really honest this evening. Part of the reason we're afraid to share the gospel is the message of the gospel. If we're really honest. Oh, don't get me wrong.

The gospel is the greatest news in the entire world. Amen? But it runs counter to everything everybody you're sharing it with believes. Which means you're going to have to say things like you can't save yourself and you're not good enough and God became a man and died on a cross and rose from the grave. And salvation is not by what you do, but what God has done for you. It is offensive.

It is offensive. It is strange. And at the same time, the very power of God to save. And if I think we're being really honest, there are times when the reason why we don't share, the reason why we don't speak 18 verse 9 is because we know what we're about to say is going to make us look foolish.

Has God done great things on this mission? You better believe he has. People have been saved. There have been miracles. Lives have been changed. Churches are growing. But in all that success, sometimes the opposition is too much. The laborers are too few.

[31 : 05] The mission is too large and the message is too strange. And in the pressure of it all, you just want to faint. Have you been there? You don't need to say this out loud. I'm asking you to answer within.

Are you discouraged tonight? Are you tired? Are you lonely? Do you think I can't do this when it comes to your job or your marriage or raising children or your walk with the Lord?

Are you weary? If you're not, cheer up. You will be at some point. You're going to be discouraged. I like what Jack Cranfield said one time in his book. He said he was driving home from work and he stopped at a Little League baseball game and he sat down behind the bench and he asked one of the little boys what the score was. And the boy said, we're behind 14 to nothing.

He said with a smile on his face. Jack said, well, you don't look very discouraged. And the little boy said, discouraged? Why should we be discouraged? We haven't even been up to bat yet. Like that's how life feels at times that they're just running up the score and it's never going to end.

And you just want to quit. So, so I'm not ending here with Paul's discouragement. We're going to look at how does God encourage this apostle and how will he encourage you?

[32 : 32] So hang with me. We're going to go through this quickly. Verse 18 or chapter 18, verse 1. After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. He found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently 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. So here's the second thing we see is not just a discouraged preacher, but a devoted partnership. Now, in addition to the fact that later in this text, Silas and Timothy rejoin Paul, we're introduced here to a couple, a married couple that will be instrumental in the apostle Paul's life, a couple by the name of Priscilla and Aquila. Now, all God's people said, aww. I mean, isn't that, you know you're in love when you marry someone whose name rhymes with yours? Like, that is just the best Valentine's Day gift ever, right? Priscilla and Aquila. It's like the ancient Near Eastern version of airbrushed t-shirts, you know? You know what I'm talking about? Where you're like, yeah, you really shouldn't have. That, no, okay? Like, I would put this couple up there with the more bacon wedding. I mean, because, I mean, who doesn't like more bacon? Or maybe the hardy-har couple, right? Or how about the hunt-capture couple, right? That's pretty sweet.

Or my favorite, crap beer. But anyway, like, you really should have thought that through before you decided to get married. I know that's inappropriate. Anyways, I just couldn't let that slide. Really? Priscilla and Aquila, that's so sweet. So, no doubt, God brought these two together, and he uses these two as a great encouragement in the Apostle Paul's life. And here's why. I'm just going to hit it quickly for the sake of time. The first is they knew what it was like to bleed.

They'd experienced common hardships in life. Priscilla and Aquila had been kicked out of Rome. They knew what it was like to go through difficulty, and God providentially brought them together.

Notice this verse. It says, this is Proverbs 17, 7. It says, a friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. A brother is born for adversity. You've heard the phrase, you find out who your friends are. I think it's a country lyric, too. You find out who your friends are. Paul finds a friend through hardships. Second is they have common interest. Not only are they both Jewish, but they're both tent makers. They have the same trade. And then thirdly, they share a common faith. Most believe that Priscilla and Aquila are already believers at this point, and their faith brings them together. You've heard me say this before. If all you have is Jesus in common, you have everything you need in common, to have a partnership, a brotherhood, a sisterhood in the mission. Here's the quick point I'm making, is that God encouraged Paul at his lowest point through Christian fellowship.

[35 : 45] In fact, so strong was this relationship that the Lord gave Paul with Priscilla and Aquila. Listen to what he says to the church at Rome in Romans chapter 16, verse 3. Notice it here.

Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risk their necks for my life.

To whom not only I give thanks, but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. That's a beautiful gift from God. And faith family, my point to you is that you will not endure the mission without the fellowship and encouragement of other believers. I don't care how strong you think you are. It's why the New Testament is filled with the one another commands to pray for one another, encourage one another, love one another, bear with one another. And in fact, I'm not going to take much time here because earlier in this series in the book of Acts, remember with Barnabas, I preached a whole sermon about the important ministry of encouragement. And I would ask you to go back and to listen to that just for the biblical content. And what I would encourage as a pastor of this congregation is this. For every one thing you say that's critical, you should say at least 10 things that are edifying. I'm not saying there aren't things in church life that we can't critique.

I mean, I've been in this 25 years. Are you kidding me? I know that there are people that have different views and different thoughts and would do it a different way. And I'm telling you that there's a place for that. But it is a shame on you in the mission of Jesus Christ and me as well, if we are more critical than encouraging, because this is just too hard to tear one another down.

It's hard enough walking with the Lord and being on this mission and living life as the best as we can to come to the very people of God only to get kicked as well. Oh, that this would be. I'm not saying this because there is an issue. I want to speak into the culture that is this faith family. May this, while there is a place for criticism, may this be a place where we encourage one another to endure.

[38 : 12] This was the partnership that Paul had with Priscilla and Aquila. But this is not all that God did to encourage Paul. One other thing in verse 9 and 10, and this is where we'll close.

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. Why? Because I have many in this city who are my people. Discouraged preacher gets encouraged through a devoted partnership and thirdly, a divine promise. A divine promise. Paul's encouragement would not just come from the devoted partners in the mission, Priscilla, Aquila, Silas, Timothy, people like that, but from a divine promise from God. Let me give you to this, give you, give this to you quickly. Number one, Paul is encouraged with a promise. Encouraged with a promise. Do you remember how I told you earlier in the sermon that Paul is struggling with the loneliness of the mission? Then what does God specifically say to him? I am with you. Paul, you feel like you're alone, but let me just promise you something. I ain't going anywhere. You feel alone, but you're not alone. I am with you. And this is the presence that God promises to his people throughout the scripture. To Moses in Deuteronomy 31, he says, be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them. For it is the Lord, your God, that goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you. To Joshua and Joshua 1, he says, no man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. To the Hebrews in Hebrews 13, 5, he said of himself, I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you. And he said to the disciples and all of us that are a part of his church in the great commission of Matthew 28, go and make disciples. And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. The promise of God to us is we never walk alone. No matter if you feel alone, no matter if you feel abandoned, God doesn't forsake his people. Number two, not only is he encouraged with a promise, he's encouraged with protection.

He's encouraged with protection. Do you remember how I told you that the apostle Paul struggled with weariness? I don't want another stone. I don't want another rock thrown in my direction. And what does God promise him here? No one will attack you. In other words, and praise the Lord that he does this sometimes. He gives us seasons of comfort. So I just want you to know, Paul, here's what I'm doing. I'm, because I'm sovereign God, and no one can thwart my plan. No one has power over me. I am putting the guardrails around your life. And I'm telling you this, for this season, nobody's throwing a rock at you. Nobody's going to harm you.

I'm going to be your shield. And sure enough, we're not going to read it, but I'd ask you to read it later. In Acts 18, 12 through 15, Paul's going to be accused of misusing the law. The Jews are going to bring him before the Roman and pro-council, and the case will be dismissed, and Paul will go free. Why? Notice it on the screen. God always keeps his promises. Number three, he's encouraged with productivity.

He's encouraged with productivity. You remember how I told you that Paul struggled with the weightiness of Corinth? I came to you trembling. What does God say to him? What does Jesus say to him through this vision? I have many in this city who are my people. They don't know it yet, but they soon will, because I am sovereign, and I am telling you that I have people in this city. So God encourages Paul to keep sharing the gospel, because there are people in Corinth who will believe. Look at verse eight. 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. Say it again, God always keeps his promises. Lastly, he was encouraged to keep preaching. Encouraged to keep preaching. Remember how Paul wanted to stop preaching? He wanted to be silent, and God tells him, I want you to go on, keep speaking, and not be silent? In other words, the Lord is telling him, because of all these promises, don't quit. Don't give up. Keep sharing the good news. What happens? Verse 11, and he stayed a year in six months teaching the word of God among them. Our brother got up.

[44 : 03] Let's be honest. There are times in the Christian life when the pressure becomes so great, and the stress becomes so intense, and the struggle becomes so hard, that like Akshay, we just want to faint.

But you know what? That wasn't the end of that young man's story. Here's what happened next.

Fainted on stage. I think he's okay, but they did stop the clock. A-L-O-P-E-C-O-I-D.

A lock card. That is correct. He seems to be okay, and he spelled the word correctly. That was unbelievable. We're going to take a quick break. He is all right. That young man got up, and he finished his mission.

So did Paul. And so will you. You say, how do you know that I will get up and finish this mission?

[45 : 17] Because there was a night in a garden when your own Savior fainted. Matthew, tell us.

Matthew 26, 38. And then he said to them, my soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch with me.

And going a little farther, Jesus fell on his face and prayed. Faith family, one night in the garden of Gethsemane, Gethsemane, Jesus grew weary.

The mission of the cross seemed too much to bear. But our Savior didn't quit.

He got up, and he went to the cross, and three days later, he finished his race. And that's why I know you'll finish yours.

[46 : 27] As an apostle who knew what it was like to grow weary, once said, he that began the good work in you will complete it.

And all God's people said, amen. Pray with me. Lord, I trust that you have spoken to your people this evening.

There is so much from Acts 18 that we need to take in. And I don't know how many in this room or those that watch online or at that place of just being faint and weary.

But I know that if we walk with you long enough, we're going to be where Paul was. There's just times when whether it's the loneliness or the weightiness or the heaviness, even just the mission itself and all the pressures that come with life and being a Christian in this world, it's just enough to drop us on our face.

And as much as we'd love to be prideful and stick out our chest and say, oh, I never struggle with discouragement, the good thing is, Lord, it's actually you meet us in those moments when we're on our face and remind us that this mission isn't about our strength, it's about yours.

[47 : 50] And we're reminded how desperately we need you to get to the finish line. How we have to cling to your promises to get to the end.

So speak, I trust the Lord to your people and I trust you you already have in other ways throughout this evening. And now as we enter into a time of remembrance that we would remember those moments in our own Savior's life where he grew faint and weary but didn't turn back.

And that this time of remembrance would be an encouragement to any discouragement in our hearts, in our lives. So we remember now in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.