

Christ the King Sunday 2024

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[0 : 0 0] Pray with me. Lord, we thank you for this reliable eyewitness account of the birth of your church that is much more than just a history of the birth of your church, but is in fact exactly what you wanted us to know about the start and the development and the spread of the gospel in the first century. Lord, we thank you that we have the example of the Apostle Paul here in Acts chapter 18.

Help us to, by your Holy Spirit, seek to imitate him in every way we can. Lord, knowing that he was simply following you and your son. Paul was on mission because your son was on mission, and Lord, help us to do likewise. Pray your blessing on this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So if you are following along, we are on, maybe I should get onto the page as well, we'll start on page 104 and then 106, and I think that'll be it. So 104 and 106. So we've been in Acts for some time, and if you have been following along, it is almost impossible to read the Acts of the Apostles without coming away with this very strong impression that the will of God is for all to turn to Christ. That is God's will, and therefore, central to the Acts of the Apostle is the grace and mercy of Christ as the church grows and is strengthened, and that continues throughout the age to this very day. Central to the story then is not just the spread of the gospel, but the spreading of the gospel by people like the Apostle

Paul or Peter or any one of the unnamed members of the early church, to bear witness to the cross, to evangelize, both in word and lifestyle, so that people know what our hope is, and that hope is Christ.

But we've also seen that evangelism can be difficult, not only in the text, but we've also been confronted with the call in our own lives to evangelize and to share the faith and to bear witness to the cross. We can also see and testify to the difficulty of it today. Evangelism is difficult.

Why? Because we are putting ourselves on the line for not our own cause, but somebody else's cause, and we risk opposition, and sometimes that opposition is terrifying. Sometimes it's subtle and difficult, more of like an interpersonal opposition that put us down a few rungs on the social ladder, and sometimes it's very overt, and we see this not often in Canada, but we certainly see it across the world, that to proclaim the gospel is to invite opposition, and sometimes that opposition takes the form of violence. But evangelism can be joyful. It's going to be hard, of course, but it can also be a very joyful thing, especially when you share what your faith, and you see that that people are moved. Maybe not giving their heart to Christ immediately, but it's like they have a pebble in their shoe, or a gnawing in the back of their head. You see that the Spirit is at work, questions are being asked. A lot of consternation is happening. But nevertheless, evangelism can be very scary. I liken it to, in some ways, being conscripted to join an army, to fight in a battle you don't believe in. Sometimes. It can be difficult. So a text like ours today, although recognizing the difficulty of evangelism is not just to highlight the difficulty, but to provide an encouragement for us to see how the good Lord will help us to faithfully and confidently bear witness to our faith. That he doesn't just ask us to share the faith, but he gives us the strength to do so. It's a remarkable thing.

[4 : 2 6] So how does God provide this help? Well, he provides it through the very gospel message we are called to proclaim. So for the sake of breaking up our text, we'll look at three points. And we won't actually spend much time, I mean, Gord read all the way to verse 23, but we'll get to about verse 12 or 13.

We'll have a few mentions about the rest of this section. But so basically, Acts 18, 1 to 13, or 12 to 13, we'll see three things. The first thing, how God provides help as we share our faith, is that God provides refreshment to continue. That it is a very real thing that we would experience the need to be refreshed, and he provides that refreshment to continue. He also provides the strength to proclaim the gospel message, and also, and finally, the confidence to trust in him, that he will lead, and that he is true, and that it is worth putting our lives on the line for. So look with me, verses 1 to

5. The first point, the gospel provides refreshment to continue. I'll just read this for us again. After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. Really quickly, so the previous section, Paul is in Athens, it's very famous. This was from two weeks ago. Paul gets to Athens, and it's kind of like a bit of a furlough for him, except he gets there, and it says that his heart, or his soul, it's like he has a gut punch in his soul when he sees all the idolatry.

And he goes to the Acropolis, or to Mars Hill, rather, and he debates with the leading thinkers at the time. Some come to faith, some mock him, and then he makes his way to Corinth, which is some 75, 80 kilometers away from Athens. So that's where we are, verse 2. And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native Apontis, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked, for they were tent makers by trade. And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks. I have this habit, maybe you do as well. I see the Apostle Paul as almost like a mythical figure. Like, yeah, he's a human being, but he's not really a human being, because he does some crazy things. He's super strong, super faith, incredible man of courage, knowledge, mental fortitude. But this text is very clear he's a man. A man that leans on the grace of God, but a man nevertheless. And he was susceptible to bodily harm. So we've journeyed with

Paul, so to speak, these past few chapters. And we have seen him subject to bodily harm, emotional hurt, and weariness. He's experienced relational breakdown between him and his dear friend Barnabas.

He's been imprisoned wrongfully after a severe public beating without trial. He's had a tumultuous time in Thessalonica and in Berea at the hands of his own people. Like I mentioned, he gets to Athens, and one of the things they accuse him of, of being essentially a half-baked philosopher.

[7 : 50] He is constantly, constantly both in the midst of a joyful ministry and difficult opposition.

And he gets to a Corinth, and he is fairly beaten up. I mean, in our text today, it just says that after Paul left Athens and went to Corinth, it doesn't comment on his personal well-being, but Paul actually comments on this in 1 Corinthians chapter 2. And this is what he says. It's a short bit, but it paints a picture of how weary this man was. This is verses 1 and then following, just a snippet of 1 Corinthians 2, 1 to 3. And I, when I came to you, brothers, he's talking to the Corinthians, I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. Weakness, fear, and trembling.

Say what you want about the Bible, some of the grand claims it makes, miracles, are they real, are they not real? Well, you can have those kind of pushbacks, but you can't push back against the reality that the Bible's a very human book, that it records a very human reaction to very difficult things. It doesn't sugarcoat things.

Paul was weak, he was fearful, and he had much trembling. It's a very human book. So the apostle comes to Corinth, he's exhausted, he's beat down, he needs refreshment and encouragement. Not long after he arrives, he finds a husband and wife, who've just arrived, somewhat recently from Italy. Claudius, the emperor, expels the Jews from Rome in 49 AD, and they seem to have settled in Corinth.

[9 : 40] And they're not just this Jewish couple, but they're believers, which is to say that the gospel went before Paul to Rome. Interestingly, some historians think that the reason why Claudius expelled the Jews was because of Christianity landing in Rome and causing a kerfuffle with the existing synagogues.

Anyways, whether that's true or not, here they are. And not just fellow Jews, not just fellow believers, but fellow tradesmen. And Paul later on in, where is it, in 1 Thessalonians and in Romans 16, oh sorry, just in Romans 16, he will say of Aquila and Priscilla that they were dear friends and workers of the gospel, and that they stuck their necks out on the line for him.

Not exactly sure when that happened or how it went down, but these, this couple, they're a godsend to the apostle. I don't know if you've needed a, just a kind word, a real embrace, somebody just to be a listening ear, a good meal, in a time where you are beat down.

I was, I was homesick, so I went to Redeemer in Ancaster, Ontario for a year before I came to Ottawa. I had a bad interaction with somebody very close to me.

I was homesick, I was 18, wasn't as much bravado as I thought. And, and where my parents were living at the time was about two hours away. And they phoned them up, they drove all the way, and they bought me a steak.

[11 : 25] We went out for dinner. And it didn't solve my problem, but it was, it was a refreshment. It was what I needed. They, we, we didn't just buy me a steak. We went to a restaurant and we ate a steak.

But I don't know what it was. It just, it was like wind in my sails. It was the refreshment that I needed. That's what Aquila and Priscilla are like here. They are an encouragement from God when refreshment is needed by the apostle.

A bit later in the narrative, Silas and Timothy arrive from Macedonia, and they bring with them good news twofold. The first, we learn later on in, in, uh, first Thessalonians, that they reported that the church in Thessalonica and Macedonia was still going strong.

Wow. Paul proclaims the gospel, then he takes off. Nobody's phoning him up about it. He's not getting letters. He's not too sure what the, what is, what has happened.

He's entrusted these believers to the Lord. He's left Timothy and Silas as well. They come back, they say, hey, listen, it's still going strong. Uh, your labor has not been in vain. Encouragement again.

[12 : 34] And also with them, they brought, um, uh, financial aid from Corinth, uh, as well. Uh, relief so that Paul could continue on in his, in his, uh, focus on spreading the gospel.

Again, encouragement. A time needed of refreshment. So what does this tell us about ministry? And when I say ministry, I don't mean me up here, paid minister. I mean, the ministry that we are all called to, to follow the Lord by his strength to the best of our ability and to seek to obey him.

Again, by his strength to the best of our ability. What does this tell us about ministry? First thing is that ministry can be difficult. With the beautiful and the glorious joy of, of seeing people consider the Christian faith or your children.

If, if this is kind of just the focus of your life right now, or coworkers or employees or fellow employees, that there's great joy in seeing people consider the Christian faith.

There's also the reality of opposition and disappointment. And that opposition and disappointment, it takes many different forms.

[13 : 47] And in every case, opposition isn't exactly easy. It's always, to a certain degree, difficult to endure. So it's difficult to withstand such abuse or gossip.

Whether it's mockery, false accusations, or physical harm, as we see with the Apostle Paul. But how about when it seems, actually, it's not so much opposition, but an apathy.

We share the gospel. We do not see any fruit. It's like the needle doesn't, it doesn't move. Not an inch, not a centimeter, not a millimeter.

Like what, like what gives? I'm following the Lord. I'm seeking to obey him. I see in the Acts of the Apostles, it's like, boom, action, non-stop throughout these pages.

But I haven't seen somebody even consider the Christian faith. I'm telling you, apathy can sometimes be more discouraging than outright opposition. It can be difficult. It can be difficult.

Especially when there's apathy as you seek to bear witness to Christ to those that are close to us.

[14 : 56] Friends, children, adult children who seem completely unresponsive and indifferent. So, ministry is difficult. But it also tells us, this text, that it is not a sin to feel exhausted.

It's not a sin to feel worn out. It's not a sin to feel emotionally beat up. It is not wrong. And it's also not evidence of faithlessness.

I think that's a big thing. To hear that. If you are seeking to follow the Lord, and it is just discouraging because, we talk about the parable of the sower.

It's not just that there's four kinds of soil, if you know the parable. There's only one. And it's not hard soil. It's like, it's cement. And nothing seems to bear fruit.

That, friends, is not a sinful thing to feel discouraged. And it's not a sign of faithlessness. So, furloughs, retreats, rests, times of healing are appropriate and needed.

[16 : 05] In this humanity, if you remember some of the gospel stories, Christ would, he would, he would retire away from the crowds to commune with the Father. Christ himself.

Christ himself. However, there is a real temptation to allow such difficulty to undermine our faith. We shrink.

We hide. We start to give excuses for not bearing witness. Again, not that we're out there evangelizing every person we see, but when we feel like a prompt, when we feel like, man, this is an opportunity to share my faith, and we say, maybe not today.

I'll wait till the next time. We give up on the call to give a reason for our hope in Christ. Friends, we must fight against this. And how do we fight against this fear? And in this, in this case, it's faithlessness.

We ask the Lord for his help and his strength and a fresh filling of his spirit. If not, then that faithlessness, that, that real temptation to undermine our faith, it subtly creeps in and grows and grows and becomes a lot bigger than we would ever want, want it to be.

[17 : 15] So we acknowledge the difficulty as a reality of sharing the faith, that it's important, but we never, we never stay there. We look to the Lord for strength. An example about this.

So I was away at our synod. That's Anglican speak for an annual general meeting. But before, I had a privilege just a couple days before to spend some time with some church planners and one of the speakers that came to it, it was a small group, there's six of us, was this man named David Short. Now, David Short, if you've never heard of the name, that's fine. He, well, he's actually on his way to retirement now, but he has been the lead pastor of a church called St. John's Vancouver. That is where J.I. Packer, if you're familiar with that name, J.I. Packer, famous evangelical, that's where he worshipped until he died. David Short was the pastor of St. John's Shaughnessy. St. John's Shaughnessy was the first church to leave the Anglican Church of Canada over the issue of the blessing of same-sex marriage, but really it was the issue of leaving orthodoxy. And he was a courageous man and a bold man. He was also a man that went on leave for two years because of stress. Because it took its toll on him. Licking his wounds, regrouping, dealing with his mental exhaustion, his spiritual exhaustion.

[18 : 50] Listen, the Bible, in the scriptures, they don't say, it doesn't say, hey, listen, just go do up your wounds and jump back into it right away. We need you. No, no, no, no, no. This is Christ's mission.

And Christ uses us, but he certainly does not need us. I love that story because St. John's now is the most vibrant church and the biggest Anglican church in the West Coast. They have been faithful.

David returned, and he's had 10 plus ministries after his return of fruitful ministry. I'll just say this, we are not disposable slaves of Christ. He doesn't use us until we are spent foul, and then we were off to the slaughterhouse. This is the Christ who lived for us and bled for us and who died for us and who was buried instead of us being buried and who rose again to new life, defeating death, and who sits at the right hand of God. And it says that we too will join him in glory, sitting with him and enjoying him forever. We are not disposable.

We are not these slaves that he easily tosses away. You don't die for somebody that you find as a disposable slave. This is not the behavior of some cosmic tyrant or this evil manipulative boss or abusive leader or heavenly narcissist.

And yet, because Christ lays down his life, sacrificially pouring it out for us so that we could have abundant life, that begins to change us. So that we say, hold on a second, my life was bought at a cost. And if Christ is willing to do that for me, by his strength, I will grow to do that for others. How will we do that? By bearing witness, by laying down our lives for our friends, by giving without expecting to receive, because we know when we give, especially to the poor, but when we give in general, we are lending to the Lord. It's a beautiful thing. And it's not under a compulsion.

[21 : 14] It's not under a gun to our heads. If you don't do this, you're going to hell. It is an act of joyful obedience because of what Christ has done for us.

So as we obey his example and proclaim that sweet gospel to those that are far off, and we get tired, and we get beat up, and we get broken, he will refresh us. I don't know how.

I don't know what it will look like. I don't know if we have any vegetarians. It's not going to be a steak like what I needed when I was 18 years old. I mean, it's a bit of a different, not the greatest, it's a bit of apples and oranges because I was just homesick. I wasn't doing the Lord's work.

But nevertheless, I don't know how he will refresh you, but he will. He will. Pray for it. Trust him for it. Expect him to provide what you need to obey him because he delights in giving good gifts.

He delights in his children. So as we transition to the next section, Paul would need such an encouragement, and he would need strength as he continued proclaiming the gospel to the Corinthian people.

[22 : 22] So the second point, that the gospel provides strength to proclaim the good news. So look with me, verses 6 to 8. And when they opposed, so we'll go back actually to verse 5.

When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, Your blood be on your own heads. I am innocent.

For now I will go to the Gentiles. And he left there, and he went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, A worshiper of God, his house, was next door to the synagogue.

Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing Paul, believed and were baptized. It's just a beautiful picture of the gospel going forth.

So once again we see Paul proclaiming the gospel to his Jewish brethren. And once again, as is the theme in verses 18 and 19, they reject both the gospel and Paul.

[23 : 22] And Paul, faithfully proclaiming the message, he shakes out his garment, just to say that he is leaving them behind.

And what he quotes here, Your blood be on your own heads. I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles. That bit about your blood being on your own head. That is a quote from Ezekiel chapter 33, and it won't get into it, but in Ezekiel 33 there's watchmen.

They're supposed to be the nation of Israel. They are to watch for the sword that will come. And if the watchman sounds the alarm, the people have to respond.

And if they respond correctly, they will be saved. If they don't respond correctly, the sword will come down on them. And then that's on them. It's not on the watchman.

And if the watchman doesn't do his job, then it's on him. And Paul is just simply saying, listen, I've declared to you the gospel. It is up to you to embrace it or not.

[24 : 23] And if you don't embrace it, your blood is on your hands. It's not on me. It would have been a stark thing and an offensive thing for these religious Jews in the synagogue to hear such an indictment against them.

They would have certainly have caught the reference. I'll say just on an aside, it is both a warning for us to hear rightly the gospel, but also to proclaim rightly the gospel. So, continue on.

Let us be faithful, friends, in sharing our hope in Christ as he directs and leads and gives us the strength to be faithful to him. So, Paul here, notice, thinking through his time in Athens, he has all the time in the world for skeptics.

And I think we ought to too. Seekers, listen, sharing the gospel and seeing people come to faith, it's not some linear line, but often it kind of goes like this. You wonder, did somebody understand it?

Are they interested at all? They might have pushed you away or ignored you and then six months, nine months, a year later, all of a sudden, they're on this faith journey or like, where did this come from? We ought to be patient with skeptics and spiritual seekers.

[25 : 39] But a section like this, it tells us that, listen, there's only so much that is appropriate to put up with if people are going to oppose you.

And it is completely okay to kind of wash your hands of them. Move on. It doesn't mean you have to be hate-filled or tell them that to their face. But it is okay to just move on to another group of people. Listen, we have this incredible opportunity, I think, in our day. I mean, I talked about the ground being as if it were cement, let alone, you know, hard ground. But I think we might be on our way to like a golden age of evangelism in the next few years or maybe the next few decades.

There is a giant vacuum and people are seeing it, it seems, that the promise of consumerism, the promise of entertainment, the promise of pleasure on tap, the promise of endless progress, it is being seen as wanting.

It is not producing the life that people want. Depression is high. Suicide, especially among younger people, unfortunately, does not go down but continues to rise.

[26 : 59] Friends, we have a wonderful opportunity. Let us look to the Lord to strengthen us for we don't have a competing ideology. I mean, in some ways, it competes if people are just all the way into, say, consumerism or a type of pleasure on tap or progress.

But we don't have a competing ideology. We have the hope of the nations. We have the gospel that is the sure and true promise that we will abide with Christ forever because our sins are forgiven.

So as we look to the Lord for strength, let us then have confidence as we proclaim this wonderful, truthful, beautiful gospel of Christ.

And this leads us into our third and final section that the gospel doesn't just refresh us when we need it, doesn't just strengthen us when we need strengthening, but it gives us confidence to trust

that God is truly at work and that his son did truly rise from the grave.

Look with me verses 9 and 10. These are the words of Christ himself. 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 the city who are my people.

[28 : 24] What's incredible about this is that the Lord has already counted those who have yet to hear the gospel as his people. His people. That's in the original language that is who Jesus is referring to.

There are some people in the city that are already mine but go, share the gospel. It is Christ who does the saving. He is the one who calls his sheep. They are the one who know his voice and he invites us in the case of the Apostle Paul, the Impulse Paul but he invites us to simply be a herald. We don't twist arms, we proclaim the gospel and then it's up to the Lord. We can pray of course but he does the saving and he knows who are his and when he calls they will know his voice and I'm telling you this is an excellent, exciting, and comforting, confidence building insight into the idea of evangelism throughout the Bible.

this is God predestining people to salvation and it assures us that God is at work that as we obey him he does the rest.

So the Bible provides us great confidence to trust that although we are on mission it is Christ who is on mission. Although we are doing the proclaiming it is Christ that is moving in the hearts and he is calling all sorts of people to himself.

[29 : 52] Interestingly here Jesus will say in the gospels that there are sheep that are not of this flock but that are of his own and this seems to be a confirmation of that.

The gospel is going out to the Jewish people but it is also going out to the Gentiles. Those that are far will be welcomed into the spiritual people of Israel that they will call Abraham their spiritual father.

It's a beautiful thing. One fold of sheep Jew and Gentile together but he doesn't just call the nice people the wonderful people he calls the Corinthians. Just a brief bit about the Corinthians.

Corinth was apart from Athens and Ephesus and of Rome it was a leading city in the ancient world. It was an economic and cultural hub and two things among others marked Corinth pride and immorality.

It's tied to idolatry but pride and immorality. They enjoyed wealth and political prestige as the capital of this province that they were in. They boasted the temple of Aphrodite which at its height had some a thousand cultic prostitutes.

[31 : 06] They dominated the religious and social landscape. So so intense was the immorality of Corinth that for centuries derivatives of the name Corinth was used to describe immorality and harlotry.

To say you're acting like a Corinthian everybody understood what that meant. They treated people as commodities cash was king image bearers treated like animals.

The fair and the just thing would have been to end that city. It was evil. Death and decay filled the air of Corinth and the just thing would have been to deal with it.

And yet the Lord Jesus loved Corinth. He died for her people and what does he do? He sends his chief apostle to proclaim the good news of salvation through the forgiveness of sins.

He doesn't treat the Corinthians as they ought to be treated. Instead what does he refer to them as? My people who are in the city. Not all of them but his people that were in the city.

[32 : 21] People that deserve death and what does he do? He instead gives mercy and grace and love. Friends the gospel can transform even Corinth which is to say that a passage like this can help us to say maybe Christ says go proclaim the gospel in Ottawa.

I still have people in that city. Imagine. You have no idea who those people are. This idea of predestination doesn't mean that we judge who is in who is out.

That is up to God. We proclaim the gospel. But it means that we have no idea who God is calling. My goodness it could be anybody. It's a very exciting thing.

The Lord knows and his gospel will go forward. Two things how the gospel will transform Corinth and how it might transform our city as well.

Corinth the two things that I mentioned that mark it pride and immorality the gospel destroys pride. How? Because grace humbles prideful people and the humble receive grace.

[33 : 35] The gospel tells us we cannot achieve a utopia with innovation achieve a utopia with economic prowess and growth better education higher standards of living more regulations more taxation more wealth distribution more environmental saviorism for lack of a better term.

all good things that are taken to utopian ends that can't solve the issue of pride can't bring human flourishing in a city but the gospel rather changes that.

It says that yes work hard but don't somehow think salvation is around the corner. Don't somehow think that if you only got GHG down 2% salvation is around the corner or that if you get the government a bit smaller salvation is around the corner.

If our welfare system was fantastic salvation is around the corner. You put it in left to right on the political spectrum. You put it in.

Not salvation. The gospel says it is only by the grace of Christ when we know our sinfulness and then we look up at the cross and we revel in saying he would die for me.

[34 : 57] Transforms the culture. The second thing it destroys immorality. Why? Because it calls believers to holiness. And how does that change a society? Well, no longer do we see pleasure as the ultimate end in itself.

Instead, our ultimate end becomes the knowledge and enjoyment of Christ himself. We know him and we get a foretaste of heaven now that will be what we experience in full in the life to come. Our lives become rightly ordered and that we enjoy pleasure in its rightful spot. And when it comes to physical pleasure between a man and a woman, it is in the context of a committed monogamous relationship, marriage between one man and one woman.

It rightly orders society. And then all of a sudden the things that are vices turn in to gifts. It's a beautiful thing what the gospel does to an immoral society.

It helps us to seek what is truly true, what is beautiful, and what is good. Two things that define the Christian soul seem like a joy kill, but they're actually the pathway to true joy, humility, and self-denial.

[36 : 14] It's wonderful. Listen, we can rail on the decay of the West or the decay of Canada, and this weekend, if anything, has shown that there is maybe a difficult road ahead, a very difficult road ahead.

But we are people who hope in Christ. Not hope in a plan or an ideology that we need to work towards, but towards, we hope in a risen Christ who has already done the work.

And he calls us just to bear witness to that. So friends, does Christ have people, his own flock here in the city, that have yet to come into his fold?

The answer is yes. Let us be very confident in proclaiming that. And the gospel gives us that confidence. Just to wrap things up, Jesus has this, Paul has this vision of Jesus, and it says very specifically that, I'll read it again, do not be afraid, go on speaking, and do not be silent.

I think that is something for all believers. But then he says this, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in the city who are my people. There was a promise to Paul that for a time he would go without any fear for his life.

[37 : 40] But the apostle Paul died by a sword. All of us will experience some kind of harm. That is not a promise for us, but what is promised is that as we proclaim the goodness of God, as we look to heaven itself, we can be sure that we will be with Christ.

And not only that, but that he is with us now. God will be so to God. So, let us entrust ourselves to the Lord, trusting that he will refresh us when we need it, that he will strengthen us as we seek to obey him, that he will give us great confidence in the gospel, in the power of his gospel, as we seek to proclaim the goodness of God.

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for this example of the Apostle Paul in Acts 18, but really it's the example of your care for your people.

Lord, we pray that we would be bold, that you would give us great confidence in the gospel, but Lord, more than that, help us to just look to you, to just seek your face, to the best of our ability, Lord, help us to make these incremental changes, spiritual disciplines, taking time in your word, taking time in prayer by your strength, Lord, so that we can grow in our faith and get to enjoy the goodness of the gospel of Christ.

We pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen.