

**The Continuation of Ministry in Corinth
Acts 18:5-11**

Turn with me if you would to Acts chapter 18. We'll be looking toward the end of the second missionary journey. If you recall that Acts chapter 15:36 to 18:23 records Paul's second missionary journey to Greece; and Acts 18, in particular, is dealing with Corinth, this city of sinfulness and immortality. It's a large city, about, at least ten times the size of Athens, maybe more. And we've gotten here through a series of travel. So, let's review where we started in Syrian Antioch, one of the largest cities in the Mediterranean area.

Seems like we've been doing this so many times, you know, I should be giving you a pop quiz by now. Right? We should be able to kind of track this, like, when we started out, who joined Paul? And so, I think we should do like a law class. That's one way to thin out the group here. Like, oh, my, we're not... Silas, that's who joined Paul. In Acts chapter 15, we left Antioch and their goal was simply to visit the churches that were established in the first missionary journey in kind of what is now modern-day Turkey. So, they did that. They went to Lystra where they picked up Timothy in Lystra and eventually traveled all the way west to Troas. They had no intention of going to Greece, but there was a vision in Acts chapter 16 of a man from Macedonia saying come. The Lord directed them. They picked up Luke in Troas, and so the "them," of the author of the book, Luke - the "them" was now Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke, and they traveled by ship to Philippi; and in Philippi, they encountered difficulties so much so where the Jews rose up against them, stirred up an opposition, a mob, and Paul and Silas ended up in prison, beaten. But the Lord delivered them through an earthquake, a super natural event that destroyed the jail, freed Paul and Silas and created such a stir among the superstitious Philippians, that the leaders just wanted them out of town so this wouldn't happen again.

So, they left Philippi and headed to Thessalonica leaving Luke behind at Philippi. Thessalonica - they encountered more opposition from the Jews who were opposed to them. They had to flee Thessalonica to Berea which they received more welcome, more people that were more understanding the Scriptures and desiring to learn, but the Thessalonian Jews weren't too happy about this and tracked them down in Berea and chased them out of Berea. And Paul was the one who had to flee down to Athens leaving Timothy and Silas behind in Berea. So, there's a ministry in Athens (that

was Acts chapter 17). The people there listened, but there was not much response. That's why you don't see an epistle to the Athenians; there were few people that believed there. So, Paul, after meeting with the religious leaders at Athens, decided to move along. And this is, really, the first time he chooses to go to a place out of his own volition. He heads west, oh, about a day or two travel to Corinth, a large, significant city that's geographically on an isthmus between two bodies of water. So, it's was really a crossing point of travel, very metropolitan area, and that's where we are now.

We're in Corinth, Acts chapter 18, where he initially had to work to support himself. He joined with a believer named Aquila who was in the business of tent making, and they worked to reason with the Jews in the synagogues. So, that's where we are. So, now we are in verse 5, and we're going to pick up the story of Corinth and the ministry there beginning in verse 5; "But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. But when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, 'Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.' Then he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue. Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized. And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, 'Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.' And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them."

So, this is the passage we'll be looking at as we continue on with the ministry in Corinth, and we see Paul's commitment to the ministry now is able to be done without having to work any longer. In verse 5; "... when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word..." Silas and Timothy arrived in Corinth from Berea (we learn that from Acts 17:14) with financial support from these Macedonian churches so that he could dedicate himself fully to the word of God. He was no longer needing to be engaged in the tent making business in order to survive this. The churches from the Macedonia area, the northern part of Greece, collected money, and we know this from 2 Corinthians 11:9, from Philippians 4:15, about the gift that had been given -

that he was now able to be completely devoted because Silas and Timothy had brought this with him. So, it really positioned Paul for ministry.

Seems like now they're really ready to hit on all cylinders, but not so fast because the next verse shows the difficulty that they encountered where they had to separate from the Jews; "But when they resisted and blasphemed [that's the Jews], he shook out his garments and said to them, 'Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.' "

This is a rather dramatic and uniquely Jewish response, this testimony against people of shaking out his garments and basically saying I'm done with you; we're done. No longer is he going to be engaging the Jews and reasoning in the synagogue. Now this is a dramatic response, but this is not a universal rejection. We've been seeing this happen in other places, and we are going to see this happen again, so this won't be the last time he goes to the synagogue. We see this later when he goes and travels to Ephesus; we'll see him in the synagogues there. We even see it at the end of the book of Acts. So, this is more of a localized turning to the Gentiles. This is a theme in the book of Acts where the Jews are being reached. The Jews, as they did with Jesus... you know John 1:11 says about Jesus; "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God..." And we see this just playing out as we go from Jewish synagogue to Jewish synagogue and these towns among the Gentile world.

They resisted and sometimes violently. The reason that Paul separates from them is not just that they are resisting, but they are blaspheming, as he says, "Your blood be on your own heads!" You know, this is on you. The strategic time to move on from ministry, notably when blasphemy's taking place. You know, normally, when you and I... when we talk to people about Christ, you know, we want to hang with people. You know, a lot of people, they don't get it. They're not, you know, putting it all together. They're resisting. They're confused. And we're patient. Right? But there are occasions when we encounter people that they are so opposed to Christ that they blaspheme Christ. They make a mockery of Christ. They are crudely joking and just attacking Jesus. Well, in these cases, it, frankly, becomes strategic to no longer engage this because blasphemy is kind of a big deal. You know that once people go so far, they're no longer interested. They've completely reject it, and they're assigning evil to God and blaspheming. You know, what else can be done? So, this is what happens with Paul. He observes

their response, they're resisting and blasphemed, and he shakes off his garments, and then says, "Your blood be on your own heads!" You know, your ball's in your court. What else can he do? And he moves on.

So, there are times where we might need to move along in the face of blasphemy as Paul did. So, this creates a difficulty because he's moving away from the synagogue, and this creates now a division among people who believe in Christ. And we get to this next section, verses 7- 8; "Then he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God..." So, here we have a story of many Corinthians are believing among the Jews, even, and two people are highlighted as noteworthy, Titius Justus and Crispus. So, first off; "...Titius Justus [was] a worshiper of God..." This is actually something of a technical term. This is a Gentile who is following Judaism but is not a full convert. He's a God-worshiper, a God-fearer - hasn't got to the point of being circumcised, but he's a participant, and he's a worshiper of the God of Israel. He is one of the people that are receiving Christ and as a follower of Jesus. He has two names, and that indicates that he's a Roman citizen. And as a Roman citizen, it appears that he has means. He has a house, and his house is likely mentioned because of the significance it is to the church.

You know, some people believe that this house is mentioned because it's a meeting place of the church. And there's a person that we find in the Scriptures, Romans 16:23, particularly, that speaks of the church meeting in the house of Gaius. So, there are people, quite a few, that will link the name Gaius with this man Titius Justice and saying this is the same person. It's not unusual for someone to have more than one name or two names, but it's uncertain. You know, it's hard to be sure about this, but it is apparent that this house is a place where they most likely met because it's mentioned here and next to the synagogue - next to the synagogue. It is creating a challenge because he lives right by the synagogue. This shows that Christianity remains in close proximity to the Jews, and, really, sees this conflict that is going to be transpiring in the next passage, in Acts 18, which we'll look at in the future. There's this difficulty that the Jews and the Gentiles are facing. And this movement to the Gentiles, really doesn't take them very far. It takes them next door to the synagogue. So, you can see this proximity is creating the likelihood of more conflict. Sort of what Woodstock and Snoopy and Snoopy's dog house... Well, Snoopy is kind of invading Woodstock's space, so he needs to move a little further to the other side of

the doghouse so Woodstock won't be quite as annoyed by Snoopy. Well, I think the Jews and the Christians were still in proximity of one other, and we'll see the continued difficulties in the future because of this relationship between the two of them.

Secondly, there's a guy name Crispus. Crispus is referred to as a leader of the synagogue, so he becomes something of the Benedict Arnold of the Jews here. We have the leader of the synagogue who is now a follower of Jesus the Messiah, and he's actually referenced in 1 Corinthians 1:14 as being one of those people that Paul baptized. You know Paul hardly baptizes anybody, as he says "I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius..." and, oh, yeah, and "...the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other." He didn't come to, as he says, "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel..." But Crispus is significant because he is one of the people that was baptized by Paul. He's significant in the city of Corinth as "...the leader of the synagogue [who now believes] in the Lord with all his household..." And as I just have to do, one more time, we're going to refer again to baptism. He "...believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized." He's baptized. As usual, we see belief included as a prerequisite for baptism, and this household is certainly all old enough to believe because belief is the prerequisite for baptism.

Baptism isn't one of these things that, hey, if it works out, it's a good thing to do. This is God's way of you identifying publicly as a believer in Christ. This is why we find this repeatedly again and again in the book of Acts. This is why Jesus says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." This is what we ought to do as believers in Christ, to, through baptism, give a public testimony of our faith in Christ. That's what Jesus designed. That's what His followers did. And it's really not, hey, if it works out for you. This is what you ought to do, and the prerequisite is belief. So, if you're like me, and somebody has told you, oh, you were baptized when you were a baby, then you should know, like me, that was probably something that somebody did to me. I don't think I was believing in anything. This was just me getting wet with some water. That is not what the Scripture is describing as baptism. What the Scripture's describing as baptism in order to have a public declaration of faith in Christ, identifying yourself with Christ, and a profession of faith and belief, requires an active participation on your part in

order to do this. This isn't something that just happens to you, particularly when you were a baby, this is something that you do in active obedience to Jesus, and this ought to be done. And at our church, we do this through the relational groups of our church. So, we want to connect you in the process of baptism with the groups of our church, so that you can have brothers or sisters in Christ that you are with. All right, so there is baptism, and it's important.

That brings us now to this vision that the Lord brings to Paul. So, we see verses 9-10, and there's... on occasion in the book of Acts, we find visions. In fact, this isn't the only time they happen at night. The vision of the man from Macedonia saying come to the Macedonians, back in Acts 16, was also at night. So, "...the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent." So, this is now going to be the decree of salvation for the Corinthians. Jesus says, "...for I have many people in this city." There are Corinthians that are going to be reached by Paul. So, there's this exhortation that's being given, and you may think, well, he's the apostle Paul. He's not fearful. Well, here's what Paul had to say about what he experienced, and I think it's worth reading. 2 Corinthians chapter 11 describes for us in Paul's own words what he had faced, and he told the Corinthians of his sagas. Verse 23, he talks about him being... "Are they servants of Christ? — ... —I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. We, in some of this, not all of this, but some of this, we'll even have seen and will see in the book of Acts that he encountered a lot of trials and a physical opposition from the Jews. So, it's a normal thing for people to fear and have difficulties, even the apostle Paul.

So, what the Lord does is give him two commands. There are two commands. You could, probably, even figure this out in English. In Greek, it just is. You know, it's the imperative mood, and the two commands are, first, "Do not be afraid..." So, there's a command, do not fear. And this is not unusual in the Scriptures. In fact, we look at the same words with the same emphasis given in the Old Testament, and as the people of Israel were about to take the land, Deuteronomy 31 encourages them because this is a time when they may be encountering physical challenges and difficulties,

and we read them being told by Moses, “Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you.” And the book of Isaiah says, “Do not fear, for I am with you; [Do not be dismayed.] Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God.” God is with the Jewish people of Israel. God is also with the disciples, and you know one of the things that we find Jesus rebuking his disciples for and teaching them about is fear. The Sermon on the Mount - He tells them, “So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself.” When with Peter walking on the water, and He says, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” And then He said in Matthew 10, “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” You know, that was something Jesus taught his disciples about was regarding fear. We all encounter this.

Now you are probably pretty secure as far as physical attack. You’re probably not, really, being threatened the way that Paul had been threatened, and when you leave here, you’re not, probably, concerned with your physical life, but we as people do have fears. We have concerns. We have concerns about the future. We have concerns about our relationships. The difficulties that we encounter, the unknown and just the temptation of fear, this is something that’s real life. That all of this, whether you’re the apostle Paul or whether you’re just having irrational fears over nothing, all of this boils down with the same challenge because the opposite of fear is faith. So, the reason you’re fearful, and we become fearful at times, the reason you are challenged and tempted in this area is because of lack of faith. We need to trust God. And so this is part of what we’re going to see here where God speaks to Paul. Paul can either listen and trust what the Lord says, or he can have it go in one ear and out the other and be fearful. So, we should be trusting what the Lord says and not be fearful because He is God, and He is able to take care of it and we can trust He has a better way of dealing with things and rest on Him.

So, that brings us to the second command. Speak, that’s the second command. Speak, “...go on speaking and do not be silent...” In fact, this is so emphasized, it gets restated with its corollary, “...do not be silent...” Because we’re so tempted to swallow our tongue and not say anything because we can be fearful. Like Linus said one time, “There are three things I have learned never to discuss with people: religion, politics, and the Great

Pumpkin.” We can find the Great Pumpkin is really not something that people want to hear about, and so then, we say, ah, I’m not going to talk about that because, you know, somebody might not like it, and we’re silent. That is not what the Lord wants. The Lord wants us to speak, and the remedy for fear is speaking, like we kind of heard this morning about Evangelism Explosion. And, you know, one of the great blessings of Evangelism Explosion is it helps you overcome this fear, and really irrational fear, that when I talk to people, they’re going to turn me off. They’re going to slam the door in my face. They’re going to insult me, and I’m going to feel bad, and then, when we actually speak, what we see is it’s not as bad as it seems. In fact, it’s actually exciting. It’s enjoyable. We want to do this more because this is serving the Lord, and how blessed that is. So, this concern that we have gets fueled by us not speaking, by us not doing anything and then kind of standing off to the side concerned about all of what might happen if we said something. We’re like the person standing outside the pool looking at the diving board saying I’m not going up there, but then you find these other people diving and they seem to be having a great time. Once you get started, you find the Lord works through this in order to help you overcome your irrational fear, and, actually, it becomes a blessing, not a phobia.

All right, so two commands, “Do not be afraid...,” “do not fear and speak.” You know, in the Scripture, we’re just not given a bunch of do this, don’t do that. Right? We’re actually taught why we should do this, and there is this left for us. We have... and I should follow up with speaking. I don’t want to get ahead of myself. The reason we need to speak is there is no salvation apart from words. Because, you know, sometimes, we can think that, well, if I just am a real Godly guy, somebody will come up and ask me why are you such a wonderful guy? And then I’ll say, well, it’s because of God, and they’ll say, really, oh, tell me all about this. And, please, you know, that doesn’t really happen very much. Maybe I’m not this wonderful, Godly guy, and people just aren’t coming up to me and saying, oh, tell me about why you’re so wonderful. You need to speak in order for people to hear. Romans 10:13-17, you know, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” Or, “How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard?” They can’t. They need to hear. We need to speak. It’s the way God communicates Himself to people.

Now, back to the reasons why we should obey. The Lord here gives reasons. He, actually, gives three reasons in verse 10 about why we should not be fearful, and about why we should go on speaking. And the first reason is His presence. He says, "...for I am with you..." And He is with us. He has told us this. In fact, when He gave us the Great Commission, He told us, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations..." And He concluded this with these words, "...and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." His presence remains with us, and that gives us strength, enduring strength. Christ has promised enduring strength. Acts 1:8 - that's our key verse in the book of Acts; "... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." So, when the Holy Spirit is with us which He is, He empowers us. He enables us to be His witnesses. So, Christ's presence gives us the strength. He's with us. This isn't just on us to communicate. This is Christ working through us to communicate. This is Him giving us His ability, His strength, His power, to accomplish His work. Because Christ who is with us, we will overcome the world. That's what 1 John 4:4 says; "...greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world." And so, all this fear that we have of what the world may do to us is really not something that we should be dismayed over. Because Christ has overcome the world, He has more power within us than that exists in the world, and He is with us. This isn't just us on our own. So, this blessing of Christ's presence with us should be pivotal in bringing you, not fear, but the strength to speak. Christ is with you.

The second thing is His protection. Christ has promised eternal security here. Now I will grant you in verse 10, He is speaking specifically to Paul, and He's speaking specifically about his time in Corinth when He says, "...no man will attack you in order to harm you..." Now, that is true. When Paul is in Corinth, he was not attacked and harmed like we find him being beaten and stoned in other cities in Corinth. He managed to be there for a year and a half without being attacked and harmed; this promise was for Corinth. But there's a bigger thing here, and that's Christ's protection, because Christ has promised eternal security for us and for Paul. So, Paul will go from Corinth, and he will not be free from attack. In fact, he will be arrested. He will be tried. And eventually we know he becomes martyred for his faith, but throughout all of this, Christ is with him, and Christ will deliver him, and Christ will eternally secure him and will eternally secure all believers because that's why he says, "Do not fear those who kill the body but are

unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” And “...all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day - John 6:39. And because Christ has secured us, He will deliver us. He will. Romans 8:29-30 - everyone who’s justified will be glorified. You will arrive at the destination that He has secured for me, for you, in heaven, and all the trials and tribulations of this earth will pass away, and we will enjoy Him forever, securely. So, we have that, we have that promise.

But there’s something else that we have that is... (don’t miss this) and that is His purpose. He concludes this message to Paul. Jesus says, “...for I have many people in this city.” Let me ask you who are these people? These people are people in Corinth who have yet to believe. Those are His people that have not yet believed. They still exist. They don’t know that they’re His people, and He has a plan for them. So, the reason Paul should persevere, not being afraid to speak, is because Christ has promised evangelistic success. Now, we know that it’s not the multitudes. You know, Jesus said (back to the Sermon on the Mount - Matthew 7) ... He said, “...for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.” But there are a few that find it, and there are people and this is a large city, Corinth. So, in Corinth, those few in Corinth, equal many people. There are many people to be won because Christ has many people. He will use us to serve His people, those people that He has. We can be confident that there are people that He’s drawn to Himself, and that we can serve because they are His people.

I was at a missions thing while back, and the guy speaking is kind of encouraging church leaders to be more mission minded, and he used this phrase which I found very interesting - You know, you need to do this with your people, and I do this with my people, and he talks about his people. And I was thinking, they’re not my people, they’re God’s people. And when we are involved in ministering to people, sometimes we can look at them as, they’re my people. They’re not my people. They’re His people, and He has people, and I think this is the truth. He has people, and some of these people, they don’t even know they’re His people. We don’t even know they’re His people. But they’re His people, and they’re going to come to faith, and we have an opportunity to be a participant in helping them; and what a glorious

thing that is - all this mission of helping people being reconciled to the Lord and knowing Him.

There's a passage that Paul wrote to the Corinthians that I really think is worth reading, and that's in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 14 and to the end of the chapter. I'm just going to read a part of this, and then I'm going to make my point out of this. He says, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." That's what our role is; we are trying to help people be reconciled to God.

And he starts out with this in verses 14-15; "For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. Therefore..." (He goes on to say this about being the ministry of reconciliation.) So, all of this, not being afraid, speaking, God is with us, He has many people... all this is rooted in living for Christ, not for ourselves. If we're living for ourselves, we don't want to do any of this. If we're living for Christ, then, "...He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. Therefore..." and "...the ministry of reconciliation..." And we should engage as the ambassadors of Christ. And what did Paul do? Paul did that. He responded, and he went to the Corinthians, and he did this fearlessly; and he stayed there for eighteen months in spite of the continued opposition from the Jews which we'll learn about, and he did that from, it turns out, from probably about the spring of 51 AD to the fall of 52 AD. Eighteen months he's there in Corinth serving the Lord. This mission that He has given us will overcome fear.

Yeah, I was thinking yesterday, when I came to Lancaster (and I actually look up the date) ... because I got here... because I got this job at NASA. A letter came in the mail. I just applied, and they said, hey, you're starting on this date. So, my dad dropped me off here August 14, 1981. Thirty-five years ago, today, I set foot in Lancaster, California, and guess what? I

probably said the same thing you did. I said uh ho, ha, this isn't what I had in mind. You know, I'd seen California on TV. So for two months, seriously, for two months, I practically was counting down the days until I could leave. But after some time went by, because I was only supposed to be here for four months, so, at the two-month mark, because I'd been attending this church, that there was something bigger than living for myself here, that Christ had a mission for me, and as this dawned on me, and I began to be involved in this, suddenly, the 106-degree temperature wasn't as big of a deal. Suddenly, the brown all around me wasn't as big of a deal. And I truly enjoyed trying to reach these people of this city for Christ, and here I am thirty-five years later still doing it.

If you adopt the purpose that Christ has for us on earth, all of these things that kind of seem negatives and that we can become fearful about and dislike and grumble about... they start to disappear; and the excitement of living for what Christ has intended for us overcomes that, and that really changes our life. That's my testimony to you, and I hope it's something that you can embrace. And if you embrace this, I believe your life will change, and you'll be busy about trying to do the very thing that Paul was trying to do because there's people in the city. When I came in 1981, there were people in this city. I suspect some of you were unbelievers in this city, not that I reached you, but there you were out there. You were His people. God has more people that have not been reached that He has a plan for, and we can participate in this.

Just let me finish with this. And I'd like your enthusiasm for reaching the lost to correspond with Christ's enablement for reaching the lost. Christ is given you the means, the power, the Spirit of God, the knowledge of the gospel, and you have this opportunity. You have people that you know. You have people that might be one of these people that belonged to the Lord. And if you can be a part in that, what a blessing that is. May your enthusiasm of reaching the lost correspond to Christ's enablement for reaching the lost.