

(Acts) Salvation in the City

by Brian Brodersen

Paul's ministry in Corinth is marked by rejection by the Jews, but he finds success in preaching to the Gentiles and receives encouragement from the Lord.

Duration: 56:23

Scripture: Acts 16:22-24, Acts 18:5-6, Acts 18:9-10, Acts 18:12-18, Acts 18:24-28, Acts 23:11

Topics: "Spiritual Apathy", "Evangelism"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses how familiarity with the message of God can lead to indifference and hardness of heart. He uses the example of the Jews who had become desensitized to the things of God. The speaker also highlights the challenge of ministering to children who have grown up in Christian homes and may feel like they have heard it all before. He emphasizes the importance of maintaining a fire for Jesus and praying for the next generation. The sermon also mentions the story of Paul and how he was encouraged by a vision from the Lord to continue speaking and not be afraid, despite facing opposition and attacks in his ministry.

Transcript

The 18th chapter of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, as we continue to make our way through this great historical account of the beginning of the Christian church. In the 17th chapter, we found that Paul, having to sort of flee from Thessalonica, then from Berea, ended up in the city of Athens, as you remember. Paul was there alone in Athens and he was really there waiting to be joined by Timothy and Silas.

But while he was there, he was provoked when he saw how the city was completely given over to idolatry. So he began to reason. He had reasoned in the synagogue.

He reasoned in the marketplace. And then eventually, as we considered in our last study, he ended up there in the Aeropagus on Mars Hill, speaking to the council who would have been sort of the educational council of the day. Athens, of course, as we mentioned, was sort of the academic center of the world.

And so Paul was in this city that was known for its history of philosophy going back to Socrates and Plato and Aristotle and others. And it was there that he stood up before these men and he preached the gospel to them. And he spoke of the God who actually created the world and sustained the world and the God who set men in various places so that they might seek after him.

And then he went on to challenge them that God had appointed a day for judgment as well and that he had ordained a man to judge the world. And he had set his seal upon him by raising him from the dead. And we saw how some of them scoffed at the idea of the resurrection of the dead.

But there were a handful of those who believed. And so we don't know really much else beyond that. There were believers that came about as a result of Paul's activity.

We don't have any record in the book of Acts of a church being planted in Athens, but it would stand to reason if people were converted, there must have been a church planted for them to be ministered to. But whatever the case, from there, Paul now headed to the city of Corinth. And so after these things, Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth.

Now, Corinth would have been just a bit southwest from Athens, and Corinth would have been in many ways similar to Athens, because, of course, it was the capital of Achaia. It was a great city in Greece and would have been influenced in many of the same ways that the city of Athens would have been influenced. And we know from Paul's epistles to the Corinthians that they were really caught up in the whole philosophical thing and in human wisdom and all those kinds of things.

So there would have been those challenges there in Corinth, but there also were a couple different challenges. Corinth was a great commercial city, sort of like maybe New York City or maybe like Paris or maybe like Milan in Italy. And because it was a great commercial city located on an isthmus, there was a nightlife that was there because of the many people that would have come through trading and all of that.

And Corinth became notorious for its immorality. There was a great temple there in Corinth to Aphrodite or to Venus. Aphrodite would be the Greek reference and Venus would be the Roman, but she was the goddess of love.

And there in that temple, there were many young women that would serve as priestesses in the temple. They were none other than prostitutes, and they would come into the city every evening seeking to make some money for the temple. And so this was the kind of place that, you know, a really seedy place in many ways, probably a lot like San Francisco.

You know, San Francisco today, we think of it as as a place of immorality, which it certainly is. To some extent, it has been that from its very beginning, it was kind of, you know, established back in the time of the gold rush and all of the craze that was going on around that. And if you go back into the history, you find that it's, you know, it's been very similar to what it is today from the very beginning.

So Corinth was much like that. And Paul ends up in this city of Corinth. One other little note about Corinth, they hosted biannually the Isthmian Games.

They were similar to the Olympic Games, but they were held there at Corinth. And so it was from a worldly standpoint, a real happening place. But spiritually, of course, it was a very desperate place.

And so Paul came to Corinth and he found a certain Jew named Aquila born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome and he came to them. So we're introduced now to Aquila and Priscilla, who we'll read more about as we go on in the story and who will find Paul referring to in some of the epistles that he writes. But.

He meets them there in Corinth and they were there as a result of Claudius expelling the Jews from Rome. Now, that that occurred in forty nine A.D., and what had happened is there was all kinds of strife and contention among the Jews in Rome over one Christ. And what it seems happened in the edict that was given by Claudius, there was actually a reference to the contention and the disputing that had arisen among the Jews over one Christ.

It seems that the unbelieving Jews were persecuting the believing Jews and that perhaps it was as a result of that and the strife and contention that developed over it, that Claudius just threw the whole lot of them out of Rome. So they were ejected from Rome and they ended up in Corinth now because he was of the same trade. He stayed with them and worked for by occupation.

They were tent makers. So Paul was a tent maker or he worked as a craftsman. He worked with leather and tents were made of leather many times.

And so that's probably primarily what they did as a Jewish rabbi. The rabbis were responsible to have a trade. That they could provide for themselves through as they would go about sometimes in an itinerant type of a ministry teaching, and so Paul, from his early age, probably got involved in tent making, and this became something that he used to support himself as he traveled about.

And as he ministered, we today even refer sometimes to a person who's in pastoral kind of ministry, but but yet not able to be provided for by the church. We refer to them sometimes as having some tent making going on on the side. And basically what we're talking about is somebody who's having to make financial ends meet through some other sort of job that can also help them to be freed up to do the ministry.

So Paul hooked up with Aquila and Priscilla because they were of the same occupation and he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and persuaded both Jews and Greeks. So once again, Paul went into the synagogue. This was his habit.

This was the first place that he would visit for two reasons. First of all, he believed that he was responsible to get the message of Jesus, the Messiah, to the Jews. But secondly, he knew it was a place where he would be able to find an audience.

And so once again, he goes into the Sabbath and he reasons or into the synagogue and he reasons with them for several, several Sabbaths. And when Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the spirit and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ or that Jesus was the Messiah. But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, your blood be upon your own heads.

I am clean from now on. I will go to the Gentiles. So Paul is exasperated by the Jews at this point.

He's gone from city to city, going into the synagogues, reasoning with them. He, of course, is a Jew. He's bringing to them this glorious message of how their scriptures have been fulfilled and God has kept his word and he sent the Messiah.

And yet every time he goes into the synagogue, he finds for the most part that there is a rejection of his message. And here in Corinth, after reasoning with them over several Sabbaths, he becomes exasperated. And that is clearly seen in the fact that he.

Notice what he says, what it says about him, it says that he shook his garments and said to them, so Paul, just in really in utter frustration, he's just saying, you know, I'm just you know, I'm just sick and tired of. Finding this kind of response from these people who ought to be embracing the one that God sent to him, so Paul in a very just a forceful demonstration, he just says, I'm finished, I'm through with you. I'm going to the Gentiles from this point on your blood be upon your own heads, he says, and he departed from there and he entered the house of a certain man named Justice, one who worshipped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue.

So as was the case, Paul would find that the Gentiles were receptive. He would go into the synagogue, there would be Jews, of course, predominantly, but there would be Gentiles who would come into the synagogue as well, and they were being attracted to the one true and living God. And then when they heard the message of the Messiah, Jesus, and of course, Paul's emphasis that that he had come to redeem the Gentiles as well.

The Gentiles, they love the message, they embrace the message. And it was just a grief to Paul to see that his own countrymen, those who had been given the promises, those who were the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that they were. Opposing it, indifferent to it, but really, it was just as Jesus had warned, Jesus had said to the Jews during his public ministry, he said, many will come from the east and the west and sit down in the kingdom with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out.

The Jews, the ones that were to be. Those to receive the message first and to be blessed, tragically, they ended up missing the salvation of God, but the Gentiles, the ones who did not have that heritage, didn't have the patriarchs in their history, didn't have those messianic promises that they were awaiting on. But yet their hearts were open, they received and they were the ones that ended up being blessed.

You know, there's something that happens sometimes and it happens in the church as well. Those who hear the message over and over and are most familiar with it sometimes become desensitized to it. That's what happened to the Jews.

The things of God had become too familiar to them, they had really begun to take them for granted and their hearts became hardened. And that's happened in the church. You know, you see a generation that's on fire for the Lord and then they have children and their children aren't quite as committed sometimes.

And then just, you know, as you go down through the generations, you find that eventually there's really not anything there anymore. They know it. They've heard it.

They were brought up with it. I'll tell you, one of the biggest challenges in the world that we have right here in our ministry is to minister to our kids that have been brought up in Christian homes. The toughest audience I ever have to address is when I stand in this pulpit and communicate with our high school kids who come over for chapels.

I mean, talk about feeling at a loss, talk about sometimes even feeling intimidated. You know, they're sitting back just saying, hey, I've heard it all before. You know, what are you going to tell me that I don't already know? And there's there's an indifference and a hardness.

And that's such a tragic thing. But history repeats itself. That's what happened with the Jews.

And it's happened in many generations in the church as well. That's why it's so important that we maintain the fire. And as we maintain that fire for Jesus and through that, we pray for the next generation.

Really, the only way we're going to inspire them and pass it on to them is if we're really passionate about it ourselves, you know. And a lot of times the indifference that we find in these young people is a result of the fact that they come to church on Sunday with their parents, but all week long they see their parents behaving in ways that seem to indicate that this whole Christian thing isn't a reality in their life. And so they just sort of write it all off as hypocrisy and their hearts become hardened to it.

God help us not to be like that. But the Jews were hardened. So Paul took it to the Gentiles and this man justice, this this Gentile, he lived right next door to the synagogue.

Paul just moved over to his house and picked up where he left off. Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized. So the ruler of the synagogue, the one who was in charge, and I think we pointed out before the ruler of the synagogue wasn't the ruler in us in the sense of like a pastor is of a church today.

He wasn't the one who was necessarily leading the flock spiritually or, you know, the one to teach the scriptures or that sort of thing. He was really more the attendant to the practical side of the synagogue. He took care of the facility and made sure the doors were open and the place was cleaned and, you know, that people were able to come in and attend the worship services.

And often it would be the itinerant rabbis that would come in and speak. And there would also be local teachers that would be connected to it. But this man, Crispus, he does embrace the Lord and he does so with his whole household.

They were baptized. The implication is they were then ejected from the synagogue. They also had to go out of the synagogue.

Now, the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision. Do not be afraid, but speak and do not keep silent. For I am with you and no one will attack you to hurt you.

For I have many people in this city. Now, remember, Paul had experienced one riotous situation after another. Everywhere he'd gone, with the exception of Athens, he had been attacked.

Going back to Philippi, you remember he was taken and imprisoned and flogged. And then in Thessalonica, they were mobbed. And then the same thing happened in Berea.

And so Paul is a little bit. Concerned about that, I think that Paul was afraid, the great Apostle Paul, he was afraid. He even tells us he was afraid at times.

But the Lord knew his fear and the Lord came just as he needed him to come and spoke to him. Words of encouragement. Do not be afraid, but speak and do not keep silent.

So Paul was obviously feeling sort of some pressure, probably just an oppressive sort of a thing that was, you know, satanically. Energized and just kind of harassing him, maybe even mentally, just telling him not to speak, oh, if you do this, this is going to happen and you better watch out and you're going to be attacked and all of this is going on. But the Lord then comes and gives him assurance that he's going to protect him.

Now, the ministry does have its challenges and those who would take up the ministry. Have to be aware of that, and there's a real need to be courageous, you know, the ministry for many years was sort of looked on by a lot of people and many years speaking more recently. As one of those no hazard kind of occupations, you know, even the insurance company, oh, you're a minister now, you know, what do you have to worry about? You might get hit in the head with a golf ball or something, you know, because that's their perception of ministers.

They spend most of their time on the golf course. But apart from that, you know, not much of a health risk. And so they're quick to sign you up and give you the policy and all that.

But, you know, the real ministry is full of. Dangerous kinds of situations, there's hostilities, there's opposition. And in some places, it's downright dangerous to be in the ministry.

In Paul's day, it was a dangerous occupation because, of course, whenever a persecution would develop, they would go for the leaders, first of all. And that's true today in communist dominated countries. It's true today in Islamic dominated countries.

And, you know, it's still true. And so there is a need for courage. Because there are real enemies, there are real threats.

But. Despite all of that, the Lord says, don't be afraid, speak and do not keep silent, for I'm with you. You know, when I had lived in London about six months.

I found that it was a different. World than I had ever known or imagined. Very different place than from where I'd been.

Prior to that, as far as ministry went, I was pastoring here in Vista, California, for 13 years. And, you know, we had some struggles and battles and conflicts and things like that. But, you know, it was a relatively safe environment.

Prior to that, I was here as an intern pastor. This was a relatively safe environment. But I'll tell you, when I got to London, it was a different world.

And it was a hostile world and we would go out into the streets and we would go into places like Speaker's Corner in Hyde Park and we would find that there were great hostilities there toward those who might take it upon themselves to share the gospel. And there were the imams and the crowds of Muslims coming together and, you know, basically just cursing Christ and the Christians and promoting Allah and Mohammed and all of that. And as we began to, you know, sort of challenge them and all, it got really hostile.

And I remember one time finding myself suddenly standing there, surrounded by probably 50 enraged Muslims, because I dared to challenge their imam who was denouncing Christ from his little, you know, podium that he was standing on. And I'll never forget suddenly thinking, Lord, I hope you're with me because I'm in big trouble if you're not. And evidently he was because I got away without any scars.

But as those kinds of things, you know, would happen and just that hardcore, secular sort of atheistic environment that we were in there and, you know, just as we're preaching and going through the scriptures and dealing with issues of immorality and things and addressing things like homosexuality and finding that, you know, many of the leading governmental figures are themselves involved in the gay

lifestyle and all that. I'll never forget one time there just suddenly came upon me this great fear. I just suddenly became afraid.

And thought, what am I doing, what am I doing here? And because I had been broadcasting on the radio there and, you know, a lot of the teaching that I was broadcasting had been recorded here in the States and, you know, some of it you're speaking to and this this is before I had any international consciousness. I mean, I just thought, you know, the world just the boundaries of the universe stopped, you know, at the boundaries of the United States. I gave a message one time that was just, you know, more than anything, it just sound like this big pro-American kind of a thing.

And somehow that thing got aired in London. And I'll never forget driving home one night and hearing it on the radio and thinking, oh, my goodness, I can't believe that's going out over the air. You know, I mean, I was just I was blasting everybody.

I was blasting every country I was talking about, you know, just the pathetic condition of India and how Gandhi was just, you know, the guy was out to lunch and, you know, I was just going off on all of this stuff. And and oh, man, you know, as I, you know, kind of looked looked at it a bit later with a little more humor, I thought, you know, I want to retitle that message because it came from John 8. I wanted to retitle it a xenophobe looks at John Chapter 8, you know, because it's just a xenophobe is a person who, you know, their own country, their own people, they every they're afraid of everything else outside. So anyway, you know, the next thing I know, I'm getting all of these letters and I'm getting letters from, you know, there's a large Indian community and I'm getting letters about how dare you speak of Gandhi in these terms.

And, you know, and of course, I obviously would have addressed the Islamic issue as well in Mohammed. And so so all of these things coming together, I find that all of a sudden I'm thinking, man, this is scary. I began to get intimidated, I began to be afraid and quite frankly, I thought, I don't know if I want to do this anymore.

And it was one of those things, you know, looking back and I realized it was really a satanic things. It was just one of those times where Satan really, you know, just in a very oppressive way, just came and sort of this dark cloud came upon me and this fear began to develop. And this went on for a few days, but I'll never forget this one evening.

And I just remember it so vividly in my mind as I was sitting there in my little tiny office preparing for Sunday morning and just having some of that apprehension with those fears kind of, you know, just there in the back of my mind. The Lord spoke this verse to me and in such a way that you know how it is sometimes when you're you're reading through the scriptures and you know, but suddenly something you read just leaps off the page and that's exactly what happened to me. And the Lord just spoke to me and said, don't be afraid, speak, do not keep silent.

I'm with you. No one will attack you to hurt you. And then this was the clincher, for I have many people in this city.

And the Lord just really spoke that to my heart, I've got many people here, don't be silent, keep speaking, don't be afraid. Remember what we said about Corinth here initially, notorious for its wickedness, notorious for its perversion, its immorality, its debauchery, its materialism. Very much.

A city, although on a smaller scale, very much like. The world we know today, but what does the Lord say about this place, he says, I have many people in this place. This is a place where you could describe it using Paul's terminology.

It was a place where sin abounded. But remember what Paul said there in Romans. Where sin abounded, grace did abound much more.

And in these places that are given over to sin. Oftentimes there's a great harvest to be had in these places. But, you know, I think it's unfortunate that much of the church today honestly has sort of vacated.

These kinds of places. They call them now the inner cities. And who in the world wants to live in the inner city, nobody wants to be in the inner city, everybody's out in the suburbs.

But the inner city, those are the places. Where there could be a great harvest taken, and I really hope and pray that more and more men in the future would take the challenge and go into the inner cities. And see what God might do, because that's where the sin is abounding, but where sin abounds, grace abounds much more, and I believe that God has many.

I think of Jim Cymbala in there in New York, in Brooklyn. With the Brooklyn Tabernacle. And here's a place where, you know, if you're looking to settle down with your family, I mean, that's not really the place you're going to go necessarily, but it's a place that God put him and the great work that God has done through him there.

And I look at some of the different places where within our own family of churches, within the Calvary family, we're seeing the Lord begin to sort of, you know, put people more in. These inner city kinds of situations that, of course, was our situation in London, we're right smack in the heart of the city. And there's something like that happening with the fellowship there, the Harvest Fellowship in New York City, and I think of Bill Stonebraker in Honolulu right there in the heart of the city.

But these places that are bastions of sin. Are also. Potentially great harvest fields.

But we've got to be bold, we've got to be courageous, we've got to be up for the challenge, we've got to trust the Lord. There were many people in Corinth that God wanted to reach, and so Paul. He's encouraged by that, and he continued there a year and a half, a year and six months teaching the word of God among them.

That's what Paul did, taught the word of God. That's what we're doing and that's what we're supposed to be doing, because that's where the power of God is able to be unleashed to work in the lives of people. We just had our pastors conference this week, several hundred guys from all over the country coming out and just a great time being together.

But just again, you know, reminding one another of what it is that we're doing. And it's so encouraging to get together and to see men coming from all over the world and to see the good things that God is doing as people are just going out and faithfully teaching the word of God. We were talking to K.P. Yohanan, K.P. Yohanan is the director of Gospel for Asia and Gospel for Asia has been connected with Calvary Chapel over the years in a in a very close way and is probably becoming more and more connected as time goes on.

But what K.P. is involved in is spreading the gospel in India and spreading it through the the nationals they take and they train young men and equip them and send them out to evangelize and plant churches. He told us this week that they had started twenty one thousand churches in India, twenty one thousand. Can you believe that? That is worth clapping for, it's glorious.

And here's, you know, a country that is just so desperately needy of the message of Christ and people are open, obviously, people are receiving and. We're finding that this is true in so many places, but. It's all taking place really through this really simple thing that we do that we perhaps quite often even take for granted.

But it's a thing the apostle Paul did, he taught them the word of God, boy, teaching the word of God, that's what God has called us to do, and that's how God does his great work as his word goes out. And so a year and a half, Paul remained there with him. Now, when Galileo was pro council of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat.

So this is a year and a half has passed and now the Jews are still antagonistic toward Paul and they bring him before Galileo, the pro council. So they say to him, this fellow persuades men to worship God, contrary to the law. And when Paul was about to open his mouth, Galileo said to the Jews, if it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, oh, Jews, there would be reason why I should bear with you.

But if it is a question of words and names and your own law, look to it yourself, for I do not want to be a judge of such matters. Now, Galileo was the pro council about fifty one, fifty two a.d. He was the brother of the philosopher Seneca. Seneca was the tutor of Caesar Nero.

And Galileo had this reputation for being a very good man, a very kind man, a very fair man. And what it seems happened is that when Galileo came to the post of pro council, that the Jews sought to capitalize on, you know, just his initial time there in that administrative role. They sought to get in early before he could settle in and get his bearings about him probably and try to take advantage of this person who's, you know, here recently assigned to this post and see if they can get a judgment against Paul.

But Galileo is a wise man and he recognizes what's going on, he can see through their plot. Now, remember, back in Rome, Claudius had driven the Jews out and it probably again centered around the issue of the the Jewish Christians, really, Judaism was. A Roman sanctioned religion.

It was legal to be a Jew and to practice Judaism within the Roman Empire. What these Jews are trying to insinuate is that Paul's practice of Judaism is illegal, that it's not true Judaism, that it shouldn't be protected under the same laws that Judaism itself was protected under. But Galileo rejects that, and this is a major victory for Christianity at the time, really.

As he makes this decision, what he does is he doesn't make a distinction between Judaism and Christianity, he sees them as one in the same thing, and so he rejects their attempt to bring these things against the apostle. And so he says, but if it is a question of words and names and of your own law, look to it yourself, for I do not want to be a judge in these matters. And they drove them from the judgment seat.

Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, evidently Sosthenes became the ruler after Crispus was removed because of his faith. They took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and they beat him before the judgment seat. But Galileo took no notice of these things.

The Greeks, the the idea here is that the Greeks kind of formed a mob and, you know, those who were trying to harm Paul, they ended up. Getting mobbed. So the whole thing backfired on them, basically.

Everything reversed and they ended up being the ones who suffered as a result of it. Now, this man, Sosthenes, interesting. Situation here, if you go to first Corinthians.

And you read Paul's introduction to. The church in Corinth, he mentioned Sosthenes as a brother. And what it appears is that this guy who probably in some ways was out front sort of leading the charge against Paul, that might be why they took him and beat him.

Well, it appears that they really did beat the hell out of him because he got saved. Excuse the pun. He got saved.

And you find Paul addressing the church of Corinth and acknowledging Sosthenes, and that's what it seems happened that, you know, and perhaps it was. Who knows? We don't know any of the details, but I'm absolutely certain it's the same person. But it's interesting and it could very well be that that Paul might have even and probably did reach out compassionately to Sosthenes after he had led this attempt against Paul to persecute him.

And after he had himself been beaten, perhaps Paul came along and loved him and ministered to him. And through that, he came to put his faith and trust in Jesus Christ, we don't know the details of his conversion, but he was definitely converted. And so God was working in powerful ways there in Corinth.

So even Sosthenes came to know the Lord ultimately through it. So Paul still remained a good while. And then he took leave of the brethren and he sailed for Syria.

So Paul spent some more time in Corinth. Again, Luke doesn't give us the details of how much more time, but he continued to minister there. Now, the the letters of Paul to the Corinthians.

Are very insightful. Because they they give us a real understanding of the situation in Corinth, the cultural situation, the religious situation, the condition of, you know, the people. And it was really a rough place to minister.

And from the problems that would develop in the church, you know, you can kind of see how they you know, the problems that develop in the church kind of stem from the background that a lot of the people came from. It was a rough ministry and it remained rough even when the people, you know, came. And were saved, they still had a tendency to be sucked back into a lot of the old lifestyle and that and so so Paul's letters to the Corinthians, he's there really, especially First Corinthians, it's it's very much a corrective epistle.

All the way through, he's just correcting their misunderstandings of their bad behavior and, you know, all the different problems that had arisen from, you know, just a real arrogance and a party spirit that he addresses in the first part of the epistle. And then he talks about the fact they were going to court and suing each other. And then he talks about the immorality that had crept into the church.

And he has to remind them that you're the temple of God. Don't you realize that? And then he addresses the issues of marriage and divorce. And then he talks about the dangers of idolatry and and food sacrifice to idols and all of those kinds of things.

And then he goes on to deal with their their misunderstanding of the gifts of the spirit and their elevation of one gift over above another. And then finally comes down to addressing their their heretical view of of the resurrection. Actually, they rejected the resurrection.

They said there was no resurrection. And Paul has to to deal with all of that. And so he he sends this letter, but it's it's a corrective epistle, but it sort of gives you an insight into the kinds of people that he was having to deal with.

First Corinthians, I believe, is one of the most relevant epistles to the current situation we find in the church in the Western world. If you want to, you know, an epistle that really addresses so much of what's the matter in the church today, First Corinthians is it throughout church history, different parts of the New Testament and different of Paul's epistles have really been applicable, you know, at certain times and very instrumental in bringing about that work of God's spirit in that particular generation. Going back to the time of the Reformation, when Roman Catholicism pretty much dominated the Christian landscape and the idea of salvation by works was part and parcel of that whole system.

The Book of Romans and the Book of Galatians were the two books that God used powerfully to bring about the Reformation and to break the stronghold of Rome over the church. And, of course, Romans is still a power, of course, it's the word of God and is still relevant today and very powerful and and God uses it in great and mighty ways. But First Corinthians seems to me to be the epistle for so much of what's going on in the church today, so much of the church is caught up in human wisdom.

And boasting in human wisdom, rather in rather than in God's wisdom, so many in the church are, you know, sort of wanting to avoid the hard issues of sin, wanting to avoid speaking about Christ and him crucified. Because they're embracing human wisdom and human methods and philosophies for, you know, church growth and things of that nature. And so Paul really addresses that in there.

And, of course, we've got immorality issues that dominate many of our churches today. We've got issues in the family and we've got divorce at an all time high in the church. We've got problems with idolatry, we've got mass confusion over the spiritual gifts, we've got people denying the core doctrines of the Christian faith, the resurrection.

And so First Corinthians, a great epistle to study in this day and age, and then Second Corinthians is also a very interesting epistle. It is probably the most personal letter that Paul ever wrote, he writes the first epistle and he just, you know, as I said, as correctively he's writing them and he's rebuking them and he's chastising them and he's seeking to get them to snap out of it and repent. In Second Corinthians, he writes.

A much more fatherly kind of an epistle, and it's there in Second Corinthians that Paul just bares his heart to him, pours out his heart, because what had happened in the meantime is that some false teachers had come in and they had began to try to undermine Paul's authority, his apostleship and draw people away after themselves and so on. And Paul comes back and he pleads with them and he says things like this. He says, you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, but you only have one father because I got you in the gospel.

And he really pours his heart out to them intimately and passionately as as a father figure and, you know, just lays himself bare before them. Interesting, these two epistles, but they were written back to this church that Paul labored in. And I can imagine with Paul, you know, you spend so much time ministering to

people and, you know, if you went away and then everything started to unravel and they were deceived and started turning against you.

Oh, that just that would be difficult. Rip your heart out. And Paul had his ripped out many times over those kinds of things.

But he took leave and he sailed for Syria and Priscilla and Aquila were with him. He had his hair cut off at Sentries, for he had taken a vow. Now, Sentries was just the harbor there on the western side of the isthmus.

And so there Paul had his hair cut off because he had taken a vow. Paul had probably taken the Nazarite vow. The Nazarite vow was a vow of consecration.

It was a vow of just expressing, you know, separation unto God, but a vow of expressing gratitude. And perhaps just because of the great work God had done in Corinth and how God had fulfilled his word to Paul, how he had protected him. He took a vow and at the end of the Nazarite vow, you know, part of the Nazarite vow was not to not to cut your hair.

Remember, Samson was a Nazarite. It was also not to partake of anything from the vine. But at the end of the vow, they would they would cut off their hair and they would take their hair and they would offer it in the sacrifice to the Lord.

So Paul had his hair cut off in Sentries. But he was on his way to Jerusalem, so he would have had his hair cut. And then he actually would have taken that with him and he would have offered that in his offering there back in Jerusalem.

But on his way to Jerusalem, he came to Ephesus and left them there. So he left Priscilla and Aquila there in Ephesus, but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. And when they asked him to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent, but took leave of them, saying, I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem, but I will return again to you, God willing.

And he sailed from Ephesus. So he comes to Ephesus and he finds some receptivity. But Paul wants to get to Jerusalem and he wants to get there in time for the feast.

We don't know what feast. Some people speculate it was the Passover. Whatever the case, Paul is in a hurry to get there.

Now, look at what Luke does here in verse twenty two. And when he had landed at Caesarea, Caesarea, of course, would be the port there when he had landed at Caesarea and gone up and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch. Here's Paul's visit to Jerusalem.

And this is the this is the record of it by Luke. He went up. That was it.

He doesn't tell us anything else about what happened there. And from Jerusalem, he went down to Antioch. Now, if you look at a map, Jerusalem is not down from Antioch, if you're talking north, south, east and west.

Antioch is north of Jerusalem. But whenever Jerusalem is referred to in the scripture, whenever you go to Jerusalem, you go up anywhere from Jerusalem is down. It's true.

That's the way the scriptures always present it. So he went up to Jerusalem greeted the church and then went down to Antioch after he had spent some time there, he departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

Now, here's the thing I want you to just see in this little bit right here. This is not a complete and thorough history of everything that happened in the early church, and we need to understand that. You see, months and months transpired here, Paul going from Ephesus over to Caesarea up to Jerusalem, back to Antioch and then back through Galatia again.

But we're not told anything about what happened. Now, in some of Paul's epistles, he will make reference to things that aren't recorded in Acts, so we get a little more of a thorough picture. But there were many things going on.

And the Holy Spirit, for whatever reason, just didn't see fit to give us any of the details of this part of Paul's journey. You know, there are so many things that God is doing right now that aren't necessarily being recorded, but it doesn't mean they're not happening. And the same is true throughout all of church history, and I've said this before, so I'm back on my hobby horse about this church history thing.

But so many things happened that never got recorded. It doesn't mean they didn't take place, it just means we don't have any record of it, but that doesn't matter. God's got a record of it.

You know, we seem to think and unless some person called a historian comes along and writes it down, it didn't happen. Well, it certainly did happen. And what if man didn't pay much attention to it doesn't matter, God pays attention to it.

And I personally believe, as I've said before, that church history is so much broader, so much vaster, so much deeper and wider than we even know. We have just a little sliver of it. Church history, what happened in Europe.

For fifteen hundred years, that's. To some degree, the extent of church history, but God has been working all over the planet from the very beginning. Of the gospel going out to this very day and God's working all over the planet still tonight and in places that we don't know anything about, God is doing great things and I'm excited about that.

We don't have to get a detailed account of it for it to be a legitimate thing, God's keeping record of all of it. And so Luke here, it's just for whatever reason, he just completely skips over all of the ministry that took place here. But you can imagine it was a lot of stuff that went on, but it wasn't the spirit's purpose to.

Draw to our attention for whatever reason, so as we close tonight, we'll pick up in verse twenty four next week, but as we close tonight, looking at Corinth. And realizing the similarities between our world and that world, the only difference is we've got more people. And.

We've invented more ways to sin. That's probably about the difference. So sin is abounding.

Isn't it? Boy, it's amazing how inundated with sin our culture is these days. You can't even watch a basketball game without. Just being inundated with every kind of perversion, well, not every kind, thank God, but too much.

But we're here we are, Western civilization is just immersed in iniquity, in immorality. And all of this perversity. But.

I believe. That just like in Corinth and Paul's day, there were many people. That God had many people in that place, I believe that there are still many people God wants to save.

I believe that God still wants to pull people out of the pit. And I believe he wants to do it right here in Orange County. And all over our country and right across the Atlantic and all over Europe and everywhere else, I believe he wants to do it.

And God works through people, some he calls to pray, some he calls to support, some he calls to go. All of us, he calls to follow him. And he'll lead us into those good works that he has ordained for us.

But let's take up the challenge. Let's realize. There are still many people.

Many people that God wants to touch and let's yield ourselves like Paul did, make ourselves available and see what God might do through us in these days. Lord, we thank you for. This great story we're reading of acts, the acts of the Holy Spirit, the acts of.

Many of the apostles and Christians in those early days. And Lord, just as you encourage Paul. To speak and not be silent.

Because you had many people. Lord, we believe that's true tonight. And so help us to speak and not be silent.

Help us to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves help us to be full of love, Lord, so that even a scoundrel than us who might persecute us could eventually become one of the family. Lord, fill us with your spirit as we go out into this dark world. Use us to touch lives, we pray in Jesus name, amen.

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