



Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 62 “Providence for Evangelism” (Pt. 2 Answers for Difficult Min.)
By Pastor Jody May 01/14/2024

Acts 18:1-11 ESV

Paul in Corinth

18 After this Paul left Athens and went to **Corinth**. ²And he found a Jew named **Aquila**, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife **Priscilla**, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, ³and because he was of the same trade he **stayed with them and worked**, for they were tentmakers by trade. ⁴And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.

⁵When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. ⁶**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. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”** ⁷And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue. ⁸Crispus, 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. ⁹And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, ¹⁰**for I am with you**, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.” ¹¹And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

[READ THE TEXT]

Pastor – “People of God, this is the Word of God.”

People – “Thanks be to God.”

[PRAY]

[INTRO]

As we said last week - HCC, we have work to do this year, there are some wanderers that need to be found, and while people don't deserve the Grace of the Gospel, **it is the calling of HCC to convey it!** (According to Phil 2:1-4) So, while we may not be getting reviled yet like Paul, I recognize that our culture is not an easy mission field, whether they are lost in the religion of DEI or they



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are wandering in the fields of liberal theology, but here in Chapter 18 there is help for how we should move forward. Verses 1-17 contain three different answers to help the spread of the Gospel, even in a land of people who did not want to hear it.

- Partners for Ministry (vs.1-4)
- Predestination for Evangelism (vs.5-11)
- Protagonists for Zeal (vs.12-17)

The Drowning Man¹

A fellow was stuck on his rooftop in a flood. He was praying to God for help. Soon a man in a rowboat came by and the fellow shouted to the man on the roof, “Jump in, I can save you.”

The stranded fellow shouted back, “No, it’s OK, I’m praying to God, and he is going to save me.” So, the rowboat went on.

Then a motorboat came by. “The fellow in the motorboat shouted, “Jump in, I can save you.”

To this the stranded man said, “No thanks, I’m praying to God, and he is going to save me. I have faith.” So, the motorboat went on.

Then a helicopter came by, and the pilot shouted down, “Grab this rope and I will lift you to safety.”

To this the stranded man again replied, “No thanks, I’m praying to God, and he is going to save me. I have faith.” So, the helicopter reluctantly flew away.

Soon the water rose above the rooftop and the man drowned. He went to Heaven. He finally got his chance to discuss this whole situation with God, at which point he exclaimed, “I had faith in you, but you didn’t save me, you let me drown. I don’t understand why!”

To this God replied, “I sent you a rowboat and a motorboat and a helicopter, what more did you expect?”

We snicker at this story for two reasons, because for one we look at it and see the irony that what the man had been asking for God was supplying. The problem we assume is that in his mind he had a different picture of how God

¹ <https://truthbook.com/stories/funny-stories/popular-stories/the-drowning-man/>



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was going to save Him. I believe secondly, we snicker a little bit at it because we see ourselves in that same story.

Here's the issue, often when we are in times of duress, we pray for deliverance, we pray for help, we pray for Salvation, **but we pray already with the image of how that is supposed to be delivered.** That's all based on how we want things to work to our advantage, to our liking, on our timeline – it's as if we treat **God like an Uber Eats deliverer.** The problem with that thinking is that would make us in charge not God, and it excludes all the reasons why God may want to do something in particular way.

Proverbs 16:33

The lot is cast into the lap,
but its every decision is from the LORD.

LBCF 1689 Chp 5.2²

All things come to pass unchangeably and certainly in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, ^(Proverbs 16:33) who is the first cause. Thus, nothing happens to anyone by chance or outside of God's **providence.**⁵

Providence - *Divine providence is the governance of God by which He, with wisdom and love, cares for and directs all things in the universe.*³

[ILLUSTRATION]

When I was in my early to mid-twenties there is a time span of about 6 years I would rather not remember. It started with several failures which sent me into what should have been the beginning of a young prosperous adulthood but instead shot me into a very insecure time of life. But because of my upbringing, May's don't ask for help, I trudged through them stoic like, learning lessons the hard way. Along the way I prayed, and it felt like no one was there, I lamented, and it felt like no one was listening, I believed that because that feeling of lostness would not go away.

² <https://founders.org/library/chapter-5-divine-providence/>

³ <https://www.gotquestions.org/divine-providence.html>



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It was years later upon reflection that I could see God’s deliverance in my life. During those years I had many people come through my life, some Christian and some not, that would show me how to live and give me direction when I felt loss. I had people that’s showed me I wasn’t stupid and convinced me to go back to school. I had people that believed in me and gave me employment opportunities that I should not have gotten. I had those that taught me how to do side work to get ahead when others my age were getting financially behind. There were those that taught me how to train and cook establishing lifelong healthy habits. All leading to the ability to purchase my own place when my friends were more apt to spend money on lifestyles. I even started going back to church due to the investment of others in my life. It was then through some of those same people I met Heather and as you know the rest is history. All of that to say that at a time in my life where I felt lost, alone, and scared I was not lost to God, I was never alone in my journey, and I really didn’t have a reason to be scared. God sent me help from **without** from those that not involved in my daily life, he sent help from **within** from people I would not expect it from, and all of that was being controlled by my Father; help **from above**.

The truth of the Gospel I learned is that God does NOT work to assuage our feelings, especially when they come from unrepentant sin, but instead works with them (those feelings) to direct our paths, providing support and guidance, through people he sends our way, to train us in righteousness to make us like His Son. That same Son that surrendered His will to the Father for us, that endured the darkest of night that would break us, that went through His suffering alone with no help from us, And He did it so that we could know we can trust the Father even when we cannot see the dawn.

MP:

**We always have the Lord’s help even when we can’t feel it,
for all is under the Lord’s plan even when we don’t see it.**

Today we are covering that section of scripture in Corinth where Paul has come to the end of his rope. We will witness through his story what it looks like when God has set the plan in motion, when He is providing the help, even though it may have seemed hopeless to Paul. As we have already shared this



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morning, perhaps your life seems unscripted and devoid of guidance, perhaps you are feeling lost and alone, perhaps you have encountered some hard ministry times and the people you care about are not listening, take heart for God is in the middle of all of it, and you are exactly where God wants you, even though you can't feel it or see it! Today we will see that Paul gets help, and so do we, from **3 different sources**, he receives **help from without, from within, and from above**, and it happens that way so that God receives all the credit!

1. Help from Without. (v.5)

⁵When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus.

Alright you may be at this point in the story so what PJ, didn't Paul just receive the dream team last week, all should be ok? Not necessarily, sometimes we can receive help and still not 'feel' as if it is enough.

1 Corinthians 2:3 ESV

And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling,

The condition of Paul's arrival, and most likely those first days of ministry in Corinth were filled with weakness, fear, and trembling. So, Paul is no superman, is he? He, just like us, is affected by his past, he knows what his limitations are, he learns from failures, he suffers spiritual PTSD, he knows fear even though Jesus is his savior. Please right now, take this to heart, Paul finished the race (2 Tim 4:7-8), you will too, Paul was used mightily for God's work, you can be used too, Paul had doubts and so do you, and just like Paul who received help even though he didn't "feel it", **you will too!** The same Gospel that not only helped Paul when he was weak will help you too, for when we are weak God is strong in us (2 Cor 12:9-11). God has decreed to save you FOR He loves you, and desires for you to gain hope seeing His victories in this world but sometimes that means we will be allowed to have fear and trembling as well all to learn of His faithfulness!

So as Paul is trying to be faithful, reasoning with the Jews every sabbath in the synagogue (v. 4), the work is slow and just to keep his head above water



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he becomes bi-vocational not relying on anyone for support. But in the midst of his trials God sends him help from **without**. Silas and Timothy arrive from Macedonia finally.

1 Thessalonians 3:6-9 ESV

⁶But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you— ⁷for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction **we have been comforted** about you through your faith. ⁸For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord. ⁹For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God,

First thing he receives is **console and affirmation**. What makes Paul happy is not just their presence but the fact that they let him know that **the churches are doing well**, they are abiding in faith and love. That’s a good lesson in and of itself, as in **what should be making us happy**. I have found the longer I live in this world the happier I become when someone gets my focus off of my pains and misery and celebrates with me what Christ is doing in their lives. There is something so special about hearing how people are growing in faith, then it doubles your joy if you have had a part of building that faith in them. Listen why would you want to do your part of sharing the Gospel, - because it makes your joy complete!

Now how else was he receiving help from those outside?

2 Corinthians 11:9 ESV

⁹And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way.

The help that comes from without also comes bearing gifts, Paul can now focus on ministry full time. Look I can’t promise you that you will always have enough money for your everyday lives but what I do see in the scripture over and over again, is that God always supplies monetarily or at least physically for the work of the Gospel that He wants done. I am reminded that when Herod made plans to kill Jesus God used an outside empire (wisemen) to send



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Joseph and Mary funds to go to Egypt and live until Herod was dead. Let us not become like the man on the house in the flood and we too are failing to see how God is answering prayers right in front of our noses?

Before we start this week in our prayers asking God for everything under the stars how about we spend some time thanking Him for all that He has already done. Don't let your feelings tell you whether your prayers are being answered BUT let us work on seeing His blessings that He so loves to bestow on His people. **Remember we always have the Lord's help even when we don't feel it, because life is His plan, but we just can't see it.**

2. Help from Within (v.6-8)

⁶And 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. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”

Well, sometimes even when you have received help from the outside, when things have shown up when you least expected, when there has been surprising news that has brought you joy, you can still reach a point of exasperation. Paul has money, time, support, and encouragement but he still gets to this moment where he shakes out his cloak and wants nothing to do anymore with the synagogue in Corinth. I don't think he's sinning here guys, I think he's just seen the writing on the walls and he knows that this is not going anywhere. They are defaming him at this point seeking to destroy his reputation, that's what 'reviling' means there in v.6. He knows from his past that his preaching has led to his beatings, arrest, and expulsion from previous towns. BUT at the height of his angst God then provides for Paul through someone from within.

⁷And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus (Gaius), a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue.

Justus becomes a traveling companion of Paul's (Col. 4:11) so this was the beginning of a long-lasting relationship. At Paul's most frustrating moment in Corinth, God touches Justus' heart, and gets him to open his home for the



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new church. I wonder how the Jews felt after that!? Wow talk about hometown church splits, there must have been some taunting. Point is when Paul saw failure, God had already ensured a victory; a new convert, the base for the church in Corinth, and a future elder of the church. Just because you don't see it or feel it doesn't mean God is not using your endeavors.

Right now, for many of us the target of our ministry endeavors may totally be missing the mark, but God can and still wants to use our efforts. People are watching us all the time, they are listening to our words, because God already has promised that His Words will never return void (Is. 55:11). Victory is not in whether you can convince someone to follow God, you can't, only the HS can, and according to Jesus in John 3 you have no idea where He goes or who's ears He will open, but it must happen for one to be born again and God uses your efforts of sharing the Gospel to make that happen. That speaks to this next verse here in our story.

⁸Crispus, 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.

When Paul thought he was done with the Jews, when he had shaken out his cloak, God delivers the leader of the synagogue from false ideals and false theology, and according to 1 Corinthians 1:14 he baptizes both these men. That's the funny thing about doing ministry in hard places sometimes, you reap the harvest and sometimes others will (many of the Corinthians), but it's not important who gets to do the baptizing the important thing is that we all do our parts.

John 4:36-37 ESV

³⁶Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. ³⁷For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.

Out of all those baptized in Corinth these two men were the only ones that Paul had the pleasure of doing that. Paul had learned not to rely on feelings connected to ministry trophies like big budgets, baptisms, and butts in seats.



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Just because we don't feel it, doesn't mean that God is not preparing a harvest, a crop of souls to be reaped, even though you may not see the fruition of those endeavors. We can still rejoice though over the work God is doing. It took Christ all his earthly years to get just 12 men to be ready to hear Him and then they only believed when He came back from the dead. We get upset when people we have been talking to for a few months choose not to believe and we are no Jesus. Sorry family we are not called to get our feelings hurt when they don't accept the Gospel, but we should pray for the lost and those we do share the good news with **expectantly**, because God can save them any time He wants. **Remember we always have the Lord's help even when we don't feel it, because the harvest of souls is set by His preordained will, but we just can't see it.**

3. Help from Above (v.9-11)

⁹And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, ¹⁰for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.”

Even when Paul is tired and wants to quit, even when he is receiving help and is possibly misinterpreting God's desire for this place, God's rebuke of Paul is loving, gentle, corrective, and assuring.

You see it's **Jesus talking to Paul**, He knows how Paul feels, that's one of the reasons He came to the earth, the Son of Man, to understand how scary and lonely it can be as a follower of God. Jesus always knows how we feel, and His response to our fear is not anger and retribution but love, assurance, and the guarantee that **“He is with us”!** Nothing we are encountering is outside of Jesus' knowledge nor concern, but I will say this, if you want to sense that concern and peace of Christ you are going to find it pursuing the things He wants, for the people He loves.

It is good to know we have this type of support. Did you see the Lord's soft rebuke for Paul, “do not be afraid, but go on speaking, do not be silent”. The best gospel teacher, explainer of the 1st century was afraid to open his mouth.



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That’s how intimidating it can get explaining the gospel to a hostile world. I know it can be daunting to share your faith but let us all be reminded of several things from God’s Word, and allow again His voice, through scripture to comfort us.

[CHALLENGE]

First in Matthew 28, Jesus, when giving us the great commission told us that He is with us. This is further clarified by the author of Hebrews:

Hebrews 13:5 ESV

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

We have in writing, His **presence** all the time.

Secondly, we also have the promise of Paul from **Romans 8:28** that in this church we love to quote so much, “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” Which gives us the assurance that nothing in our lives happens without the consent nor guidance/providence of Christ in our lives.

We have in writing, His **guidance** all the time.

Thirdly, we also have the promise that God is actively engaged in seeking His own, there is never a time when He is not moving or awakening people to His Kingdom and the need of repentance.

John 6:37 & 39 ESV

³⁷All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. ³⁹And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.

We have this in writing, His **searching** all the time.

What this means for us is that we can move into our daily lives knowing God is present, He is guiding, and He is calling sinners to repent all the time, **THEREFORE** we can live with confidence because evangelism is not guaranteed by our effectiveness in Apologetics but by God’s sovereign election through His **PROVIDENCE** for God **will get** those He has determined to call!



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Lastly, what we don't have like Paul, is the specific promise of not being harmed for a specific amount of time, that was for Paul only not us and that was fore there in Corinth at that time. I would like to point out though that none of us had been prophesied over by Christ as having to suffer for His name as Paul was in Acts 9, this was Jesus simply giving Paul a vacation from his normal MO, that's not ours. Well, it was finally enough for Paul he got an assurance of safety, and that God would save many.

11 And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Family we have the guarantee of God that if we truly pursue God together here at HCC, and we truly **seek** to know Him better, we **steward** our resources for the Gospel, and we **sacrifice** our personal desires and wants, God's desire will come to fruition, for it has been preordained before time. If you are here in this room today and you call Jesus Lord then know that is because He sought you out first, while a sinner, and sent help to you, from people without and within. He saved you by the HS from above, and that's how He will continue to work until His return. Let us be about this good work and do as our Lord says.

Luke 12: 35_37 ESV

35 “Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, **36** and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks.

37 Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them.

Keep pressing on, he's with us, keep speaking, for He shall return, and please remember, just because you don't feel His presence with you doesn't mean He's not there, He is, you have His promises in writing.

[PRAYER]

[COMMUNION]



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[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, the has preordained that He would save many through the efforts of His people.

Go in the name of the Son, who endured His fears without sinning, accepting God’s will for His life, and in return reigns over ours.

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, that sends people to us for help, calms us when we are afraid, and convicts us to stop and remember He is near.