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Is The Ambassador of God's Irrepressible Truth and Grace to The World Acts Chapter 18

We are looking at the wonderful passage of the Book of Acts, Chapter Eighteen. As you know, when you read certain passages, it is easy to get immersed in the individual things that are directives for the church. It is that point that we want to focus on. Once again, what is the purpose of the Book of Acts? The purpose of the Book of Acts is to reveal to us the acts of the apostles. We will put it another way. What is the business of the apostles? The word “acts” refers to business. To put it in modern vernacular, it is the job of or the work of the apostles. What is the work of the apostles? To lay the foundation for the church. Ephesians is clear about this.

(Ephesians 2:20) “having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone,”

The word of God or the epistles or Scripture is literally overseen. The New Testament is overseen by the apostles. That is part of the foundation, and we see it being played out in real form in the Book of Acts. We are seeing doctrine lived out in the Book of Acts. What does a church look like? What should a church be doing? What should be the priorities of a church? How should they look? How should the people of the church look? In one respect, what Chapter 18 is telling us is that we are to be and to live in such a way that we are representing Christ in a dignified and honorable state. We are elder statesmen of sorts. The church is the elder statesman to the world. We are, as Paul will say, ambassadors of Christ. If you turn with me to Second Corinthians, there is a principle that I want us to see that permeates this passage.

(II Corinthians 5:20) “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.”

“Presbeuo” is the word that is used in the passage. It is where we get the word “presbytery” and also the word “elders.” What he is talking about is a position. *Presbeuo* is

a position on the level of an ambassador, and it is descriptive of an elder statesman. This person will represent the king or royalty. He has to not only be knowledgeable and sagacious in what he does, he has to also be experienced and skillful in the way he does it. What we understand that the apostles are doing in Chapter 18 is laying the foundation for us as ambassadors of Christ in how we are to convey the message of Jesus Christ to the world. We do have a message. How we convey it is as important as what we convey. As you look at your sheet, what I have given as the title of this chapter is “The Ambassador of God’s Irrepressible Truth and Grace to The World.” It is all about the church. Right? The Book of Acts of the apostles is about laying the foundation of the church. If you look in Chapter 18, the church is the ambassador of God's irrepressible truth. A key point that you see in this text is that the word cannot be repressed in this world. It does not matter what the people of the world do. The message simply cannot be repressed. God's word will sound forth. Those whom God has chosen to come will come. They will not be repressed. It is an irrepressible truth, and it is a truth of grace. It is a message of grace. We are ambassadors of these two

things. It is important that we emphasize those two words. John tells us:

(John 1:14) “And the word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

What that is telling us is that we are proclaiming Jesus Christ, who Himself is truth and grace. You can have grace, but if you do not have truth, then what happens? The favor is gone. There is nothing absolute. There is nothing true. There is nothing genuine. There is nothing sincere. It must be true and genuine and sincere and real for the message of God's favor to be valid. The two go hand in hand. The wonderful thing about the passage in Second Corinthians Chapter 5 is that we are proclaiming a message that is unlike the world; therefore, the way that we proclaim it has to be stated in a way that we are not thinking the same way the world does. In fact, if you back up in Second Corinthians to Chapter two, he states,

(II Corinthians 2:17) “For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.”

We are not like many. That is an interesting phrase, isn't it? We are not like many. Even at that time, there were many trying to get rich off of the Gospel. In other words, we speak in such a way that we believe that the only One we are answerable to is God Himself. That is a different kind of approach to speaking, and people can tell if you are trying to please them or if you are speaking as an ambassador of Christ. We represent Christ, and that is why Paul states in Chapter 4:

(II Corinthians 4:5) “For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants, for Jesus sake.”

We do not preach ourselves. Why? Because it does not matter about me. What matters to an ambassador is the message that he is called to present. Paul will reiterate this all the way through the Book of Acts and in Second Corinthians. We will see that being played out in Chapter 18. You see the doctrine in Second Corinthians. In Acts Chapter 18 we will be in Corinth. The declaration here is clear, but the action we will see comes out in Second Corinthians. As we begin Acts Chapter 18, Paul leaves

Athens. As he leaves Athens, we understand that the world despises the message of the truth. As Paul leaves Athens, his message is despised and rejected by many of those who are worshiping other things as well as the Judaizers. Religion and the reasonings of man will always reject the message of Christ as being foolishness to the world. We saw that played out in Chapter 17. As he leaves Athens and goes into Corinth, we see something else being played out. Paul seems to be running out of money or the ability to support himself. It is important that we all understand the context in which this is happening. We know that God is sovereign in what is happening. We know that God is leading Paul to Corinth; God has led him to this place. However, it seems as if he is arriving ill equipped, unable to minister. As most ministers would attest, "If I do not have any money, I cannot minister." Yet we do not see that happening within this passage. In fact, what we see is Paul returning to a trade that he had probably learned as a member of the Sanhedrin. In order to be a member of the Sanhedrin, a person had to have a trade, had to be well versed in all the known languages and had to be well-schooled in all of the cultures. So having been in the Sanhedrin, he would have a trade. What was his trade?

Tentmaking. Tentmaking was his trade. I know that a lot of people say Paul was a tentmaker. I think they misunderstand. Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin, and his trade was making tents. One of the reasons why they learned a trade was in case times were economically bad. They would then have a way to support themselves. As Paul wrote to the Thessalonians,

(I Thessalonians 4:11) “and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you.”

In other words, if you ever get to the point where you need an income, you need to work hard and with your hands. I think one of the unfortunate things about many people in ministry is that they go from school to college to seminary, and then directly into ministry. They do not know what it is like to be in the workforce. They do not know what it is like to sacrifice in that realm. More than likely, they will not relate well to people who work nine-to-five jobs or even work overtime and/or long hours in laborious work. Often, not only laborious, but monotonous work. This is unfortunate. This is unfortunate

because by virtue of doing that, you not only can empathize, but you also can say in your heart, “God, if you ever have me return to work so that I might continue to preach the Gospel, I will do that. But I am not going to be dependent upon man for my support. I will trust in You. If You would have me do this, so be it. But I am not going to stop preaching the Gospel.” What you will see in this passage is that Paul is not going to stop preaching. Paul does not become a tentmaker. In fact, what you will see is that Paul's support will come in while he is at Corinth. From that moment on, he will stop working with tents. If Paul was a tentmaker, then do all ministers need to make tents? No. You do not understand. This is the only place in all of Scripture where we see this written. I think one of the most famous passages of Scripture that is quoted is:

(Matthew 7:1) “Do not judge, so that you will not be judged.”

I have found that most prisoners can quote that verbatim. That is amazing. How do you know that passage? We know how people pick passages. In Chapter 18, we see Paul making tents for a sovereign reason. But God will use

this in a unique way. It is all part of God's sovereign plan. This is what we know as ambassadors of Christ. What we believe is that God has sent us on a mission; we represent Him, and the bottom line is that we will do whatever it takes to represent Him in that mission. He is calling the shots. He is the king. I am the ambassador of Him. As we come to this passage, we see this work that God has called the church to do and the way that He has called us to do it. We see this throughout the whole chapter. There are truths that are multiplied within the chapter. One truth that is seen clearly as you go through Chapter 18 is that God has called the church members to support each other in the ministry of being representatives of Christ. We see a support network within the text. It is interesting because what he is going to do is show us the support network. He also will juxtapose that over the other end of the spectrum where the Jews are fighting each other. The world is fighting each other; but the church, as Jesus said,

(John 13:35) “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

We will see that played out by their supporting one another. We understand that we support all who would further the message in honor and dignity. Here is my point. We are not going to support a lie. We are not going to support inappropriate behavior. There are times that other ministries might want us to join in their support. To many of them, my answer is that the things that they are doing are inappropriate. They are not honorable. They are not dignified. It is not what an ambassador of Christ would do. We are not going to support that. One of the great passages in the Old Testament to which we often call attention is Second Chronicles:

(II Chronicles 16:9) “For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His. You have acted foolishly in this. Indeed, from now on you will surely have wars.”

He is looking for what? A heart that is wholly His which He might--listen to phrase--strongly support. That is an interesting phrase. What it is telling us is that God does not wholly support those whose hearts are not wholly His.

The same thing would be true for us as a church. The church does not support people whose hearts are not wholly His. We support those who love God and those who are serving Him with all their heart, and we support those who are doing the right thing. If somebody decides they are going to do the wrong thing, we are not going to help them. We are not going to support that. We see that in Third John:

(III John 7) “For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles.”

(III John 8) “Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth.”

Do not even open your door to people who are telling a lie. We are not going to support this kind of characteristic.

(I Peter 2:12) “Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they, because of your good deeds as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.”

We are called to represent Christ. That is why He says,

(I Peter 2:9) “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;”

We have been called to be unique and different.

(Romans 12:17) “Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.”

Paul wrote something similar to this,

(II Corinthians 8:21) “for we have regard for what is honorable not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.”

That is a great verse, isn't it? What we are talking about is honorable behavior. Honorable behavior is one of the ways we testify about Christ. It is not only the words that we say, but it is the way we say it and the way we present it. An honorable elder statesman is not going to be kicking

and screaming and fighting in the streets. He is not going to do that. That is not the way he operates. Scripture says that we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but in the sight of men. You and I know that there will be times when the Lord is going to call us into certain cultures or into certain places. It is important that you understand that there is decorum here. There is a sense of what is right and what is wrong in this place, and you want to take note of that so that you can represent Christ in an honorable way. We will see that in Acts Chapter 18. Also, you will see the opposite of it coming into play all the way through the chapter. The emphasis will be that you want to support people who are honorable. That means that you want to stand out. When you and I are doing the right thing and we are doing that which is honorable and that which is dignified in the name of the Lord and we are supporting people who are doing that, we will stand out “like a sore thumb” to the world because the world is fighting and clawing and hating themselves. They are acting ungodly and unruly. That is where the passage opens up. The Jews have been kicked out of Rome. Why were they kicked out? They were unruly. What is also interesting is that Aquila and Priscilla

are among them. Often when a group of people do the wrong thing, there is collateral damage. There are people who are in the mix who are doing the right thing. The initial thought is that this was not fair to Aquila and Priscilla. We will understand later on as we get to know them a bit better that they are wealthy individuals who have businesses plus multiple houses. I guess they go, “We will go to our beach house now.” Whatever they thought, God moves them. You would think that if these are honorable people, then they are getting the short end of the stick. God says, “No, no, no. I am using this in their life.” There is no collateral damage with God; Scripture tells us that the Lord knows those who are His, and He knows those who are searching. I was recently reading in John 10 again that wonderful passage,

(John 10:14) “I am the good shepherd, and I know My own (sheep) and My own know Me.”

(John 10:27) “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”

Then He says clearly in the text:

(John 10:28) “and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.”

He also states within that same chapter,

(John 10:16) “I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice, and they will become one flock with one shepherd.”

The verse ends with a great phrase, doesn't it? I know people think, “How will God ever find me?” He is going to get you because He knows your heart and He knows if you are seeking for truth or not. Aquila and Priscilla were that couple. They seemed to be abused and mistreated, but God is saving them and bringing them into the presence of a man who can further their understanding of what they have been seeking all along. Possibly they had heard this truth at Pentecost because we know that many of the Jews came from Rome for the Day of Pentecost and did hear the message. This could be one of the reasons why they were drawn to hear Paul speaking. God is going to shore them up. Towards the end of the Book of Acts, we

will read of them ministering to Apollos. What we realize is that these people were not victims. God is using this irrepressible truth to bring those who are His, and there are no victims of the faith. We come to the passage in Chapter Eighteen:

(Acts 18:1) “After these things, he (Paul) left Athens and went to Corinth.”

(Acts 18:2) “And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife, Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them,”

(Acts 18:3) “and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers.”

That was fortuitous, wasn't it? What an accident that he happened to be of the same trade as Aquila and Priscilla. Paul had to make tents. What was the only way he could get into a conversation with Aquila and Priscilla? Paul is not a victim here either. It is his willingness to sacrifice for the message. It does not matter what it takes. He is not thinking in terms of, “Well, I have to have this or I have to

have that or I have to do this.” He is there to be an ambassador, and he is not thinking about himself. He is thinking about the message. What is interesting is that Paul is making tents, but do you think for one moment he is thinking about having to make tents? No. He is talking about the faith, the message. He knows that he is an ambassador. There was a time when I had to return to work in a secular job again. I told the Lord, “Okay. You have me here in this business. I am going to go through everybody who is here, and I am going to talk to them about receiving Christ. I am going to go through the Gospel.” I made a list of all the people who were there. One by one, I started checking them off. I talked to this one about the Gospel. I talked to that one about the Gospel. God allowed me to go through the list to talk with everyone. In fact, that is how this church got started. Men who were saved at that place where I was working and I started a Bible study. You need to be faithful where you are. Make the message the focus, not the condition or the circumstances that you are in. That is what an ambassador does. He does not represent himself. If you look at the passage, it says that Paul worked with them because they

were of the same trade. He even stayed with them. They were tentmakers.

(Acts 18:4) “And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.”

He knew why he was there. You almost get the feeling that he was working all day and talking all night. Every Sabbath, he visited the synagogues and did whatever he could. You do what you can, whatever God has placed before you. That said, his greatest fruit was not as much in the synagogue as it was while working at the tent-making with Aquila and Priscilla. That is interesting, isn't it? It was from this that the beginning of a strong church began to come to fruition. As it goes on, we see another transformation within the text that describes that sense of purpose. “I am here to serve the Lord.” This is the truth of being an ambassador. As we go into verses 5-11, we see that an ambassador stays devoted to the cause. An ambassador stays devoted to the cause. It does not matter how difficult things get. He stays devoted. He stays “in there.” He hangs in there. He stays devoted. He is not going to leave. We will see Paul struggling, which is

uncomfortable. We do not think of him as somebody who struggled with fear. Who thinks of Paul as struggling with fear? It is hard to imagine this guy struggling with fears.

(Acts 18:5) “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.”

He stopped making tents. Why? Because they came down from Macedonia. Well, what is in Macedonia? One place we know about in Macedonia is Philippi. What is it about Philippi? Well, okay. Since you asked, turn to Philippians Chapter . Since you asked, I am compelled to answer.

(Philippians 4:12) “I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.”

He is a good ambassador, isn't he? He knows how to live in extreme circumstances. That is a good ambassador. You

cannot go before royalty when you stink. You have to take a bath sometime and maybe look a bit nicer. You have to comb your hair.

(Philippians 4:13) “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”

(Philippians 4:14) “Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction.”

The Philippians are in Macedonia.

(Philippians 4:15) “You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the Gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;”

Would that be where we are now in the Book of Acts? He headed for Greece and now is in Corinth.

(Philippians 4:16) “for even in Thessalonica, you sent a gift more than once for my needs.”

(Philippians 4:17) “Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.”

Put these verses together with Chapter 18. When Silas and Timothy come down from Macedonia, he stops making tents. Why? He does not need to. What should he do? He should devote himself to the Word of God. There is no Scripture that says that a minister should devote himself to making tents. There are Scriptures that emphasize that the minister should focus on the Word of God. There will be times when a minister may have to make tents, and he needs to be willing to do that at any time. However, when he can, he needs to completely be devoted to the word. Is that what Paul was doing in verse 5? Yes!

(Philippians 18:6) “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.’”

(Acts 18:7) “Then he left there and went to the house of a Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue.”

Isn't that interesting? The Jews kicked him out of the synagogues, but there happened to be a guy who wanted to listen who lived right next to the synagogue. You have to ask yourself, "What if there was somebody in the synagogue who wanted to believe? But then Paul was kicked out. They are not going to get a chance to hear. God goes, "There is somebody in the synagogue who wants to believe, so I am going to have Paul talk right next door. The guy who is in the synagogue who wants to hear is going to hear. He will come because you cannot stop God's people from coming.

(Acts 13:48) "When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life, believed."

Absolutely! God declared this to Paul.

(Acts 18:10) "for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city."

We will get them, Paul. We are not going to leave until we get them. I know those who are mine; and we will get them. We will find them. How do you think God finds them? It is the nature of man to throw up his hands when something goes wrong. Paul got kicked out of the synagogue, so everybody in the synagogue is not going to hear. That is not true. If there is one man in the synagogue who wants to hear, guess what? God is going to make sure he hears. What is God going to do? What in the world can He do? We will move next door to the synagogue. Now watch verse 8.

(Acts 18:8) “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.”

Crispus was hungry. This guy was searching. He is the leader of the synagogue that kicked Paul out. Yet, he still longed for truth, and God knew that. It was not a mistake that Paul had no money. It was not a mistake that he had to make tents. It was not a mistake that Aquila and Priscilla were kicked out of Rome. It is irrepressible. The

word of God draws His people; He knows those who are His. That truth is true. The truth rings true to those who are His. They will come. They will come. They are hungry. They are looking for it. They are listening for it. “The eyes of the Lord are searching to and fro,” looking for that heart that will be wholly His. He knows the true seekers, and He will find you. He will bring you into the place where you can hear. He will put you next door to some neighbor who speaks the truth. You might overhear a conversation, and somehow you will recognize the truth. This guy believed and was baptized.

(Acts 18:9) “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;’”

We never think of Paul as being silent or being afraid. Something had taken place. We know that he had been stoned in Lystra, and we know that he seems to be going from one adversarial place to another. That stress wears on you. After all, the flesh grows weary. The Scripture is encouraging us by telling us that, yes, even Paul was afraid. In fact, it will be one of the letters to the

Corinthians, Second Corinthians Chapter 1, in which Paul will confess to them. Do you remember what it says?

(II Corinthians 1:8) “For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life;”

(II Corinthians 1:9) “indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead;”

Paul admits that he was afraid, but God had a purpose in this. Paul confesses his moment of weakness. Gods turn to him and says, “Do not stop now. We have many others who must come. You cannot stop. This is not a time to be silent. It is not a time to shrink back. It is not a time to not be bold. Paul, I have called you for this reason.” An ambassador does not think in terms of his own life. He is willing to sacrifice for the message, and he is willing to do whatever it takes. This individual will stay devoted to the cause. What is the cause? God tells him that He has many others. God’s ultimate proclamation is, “No man will attack you in order to harm you.” Why? God will not let

him. God has a plan for Paul and needed for Paul to finish the job. I can tell you this: There will be times when God will allow men to attack Paul. There will be a time when God will allow men to put him in prison. Why? Because there are men in prison with whom God wants Paul to talk.

In Philippians Chapter 1, the Praetorian Guard are coming; that is to say the upper echelon of the soldiers who would be the generals and senators. They are coming because they are now in contact with Paul as he is in prison. God has so ordained that Paul is in prison. In fact, we see this in Ephesians.

(Ephesians 6:20) “for which I am an ambassador in chains;...”

There will be times when God will call him to be put in chains; there will be times when God will call him to be persecuted. But not in this text because God’s purpose is to bring more people to Himself through Paul in Corinth. Ambassadors do not think in terms of circumstances.

(Philippians 4:11) “Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.”

All Paul can think about is what is necessary for the job. It is the kindness of God to reveal to us in this passage that God has orchestrated our lives to where He knows when we are weak and cannot do any more. He says, “Okay, we will give you a desk job this week, but we are not finished. Even this desk job is to lead those people around us to the Lord.” He will move us around. But you can see the kindness of God in the fact that Paul is wrestling with these fears and problems. Yet God says, “Okay. I will call off the bulldogs, and they are not going to mess with you.” That does not mean that there is not going to be hostility in the surroundings because there will be. It means that God will protect Paul and not include them in the mix at this point. How long did Paul settle in the city?

(Acts 18:11) “And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.”

A year and a half. Wow. That is a long time. God has so ordained that, as we saw in verse 5-11, Paul stayed

devoted to the cause. You can see his struggles, and you can see his hardship. Even so, he will not leave. I often reflect upon the upset state of mind that Paul got himself into, especially when John Mark left because he deserted them. No doubt, God was using his past experiences to remind Paul to not desert Him. “Do not desert Me. We will see this thing through. We will finish the course.” That is what an ambassador does. If we look at verses 12-17, what we will see is that an ambassador will be subject to the laws of the land. An ambassador will be subject to the laws of the land. The church, therefore, as an ambassador of Christ will what? We will subject ourselves to the law of the land. Unless the law of the land goes against our claiming Christ, our following Christ. But we are looking to do everything that is honorable. Even when we say, “We are sorry, sir, we cannot do that,” we are not going to fight. We will congratulate the police officer. You are doing a good job. You are arresting me. That is exactly what you need to do. I am proud of you, son. We will praise God. I am so thankful for you because you are obeying the law. I am going with you. I am not going to give you any trouble. By the way, how is your family? That is what we will do because we believe that God is sovereign in this. We are

not going to resist authority. We believe, as it says in Romans Chapter 13, that all authority is ordained by God. Christ went willingly to the cross. Pilate told Him, “Do you not know that I have authority to take Your life?” Jesus replied, “You do not have authority unless it was given to you by My Father.” Therefore, I have no problem acquiescing to your authority because I know that God is in control of what you are doing. This crucifixion has to take place in order to offer you salvation. You can see the hand of God in this.

As we look at verses 12-17, we are introduced to a guy by the name of Gallio who was the proconsul of this region. He was the epitome of a politician which is one of the reasons why Scripture is sticking him in here. He is only concerned about how the things that happen makes him look and how it affects his job. He is not concerned about right or wrong or whether anyone gets hurt. He is not concerned about that. He wants to know if what happens will put him on the news that evening or not. He is the judge. Our initial thought would be that with a guy like that in control, what can you do? You cannot minister

appropriately when somebody like that is in charge. God says, “Watch Me.”

(Acts 18: 12) “But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul, and brought him before the judgment seat”

(Acts 18:13) “saying, ‘This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.’”

They began throwing out accusations against Paul. Now remember, he is in front of a politician who does not care what is right or wrong. He will do what is politically expedient or correct.

(Acts 18:14) “But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, ‘If it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to put up with you;’”

God goes, “I will take care of this, Paul. Remember I told you to relax. Just relax.” God causes Gallio to stick up for Paul. The benefit of the Jews being obnoxious is that they have a reputation. This Greek proconsul goes, “Look, if

you had some remotely legitimate excuse, then I might put up with you today.” That tells us that he is getting tired of putting up with them. God uses their bad record to shore up Paul.

(Acts 18:15) “but if there are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters.”

(Acts 18:16) “And he drove them away from the judgment seat.”

Now I want you to see verse 17. It is a very interesting verse.

(Acts 18:17) “And they took hold of Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue and began beating him.”

Wait a minute. I thought Crispus was the leader of the synagogue. Crispus quit. He was baptized. He went with Paul. They appointed a successor. Sosthenes is an interesting name. The name means “savior of the nation.” Here is this guy who is now the successor. What happens? I do not want to get too much into the different

manuscripts, but I know that the King James translates it that the Greeks took hold of him. However, the word Greek is not in the ancient manuscripts. A scribe at some point had interjected the word Greeks in there. I am not saying that the Greeks did not take hold of him, but the text seems to lean more towards the Jews took hold of him. Read verse 14. Gallio is talking to the Jews. It is the Jews who are coming before the proconsul. It is the Jews who are bringing the accusations. It is the Jews who are driven away from the judgment seat. It says in verse 16 that he drove them away. Who is the “them”? The Jews. He drove them away. Who are “they” The same ones as the “them.” That would be the Jews. They took hold of Sosthenes, their leader. In other words, the Jews took hold of their own “savior”. They started to strangle him. Why were they strangling their own leader? They elected him to take over from Crispus, and his task was to convince this proconsul to take action against the troublemaker, Paul. He did a terrible job, so they took their anger out on him. They started to attack their own guy. What a sight that made! What kind of belief did they have? The world is looking at what kind of faith this is. Everyone was watching Paul and expected him to say

something. But he did not need to because the proconsul said it for him. He was acting honorably all along. The church has been acting honorably all along. Honor speaks for itself. Isn't it interesting that they beat the leader of the synagogue in front of the judgment seat, in front of the proconsul? That shows that they were not in charge of their faculties at that moment. They were so angry. You do know that you are beating somebody in front of the judge? Then the judge goes, "I do not care." Isn't that what it says? "Those Jews will beat up anybody. One less Jew I have to worry about." What you do not see in the text, but what I truly believe is true, is that this man who was beaten was eventually saved. I believe that God was using the hostility of His own people to save Him. Why would I say that? Because He is listed in First Corinthians, Chapter 1.

(I Corinthians 1:1) "Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,"

(I Corinthians 1:2) "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours."

Isn't his name in the first verse? Are you saying that God will take people who are being run out of their country, being shut out of their synagogue, being beaten in front of their own people? Will God use these circumstances to bring people to Himself. Yes. Yes. Often, the actual inconveniences of your life are the very things that God uses to bring us to Him. The truth will bring people to Him. God knows those who are His, and He knows what it takes for them to hear and listen. Sosthenes had to be beaten by his own people for him to reject his own people. Otherwise, he would not have rejected the synagogue. He would not have rejected the Jewish faith had he not been put in that situation. God is orchestrating all these things, and we are seeing God's hand moving from one place to the next so that he might redeem a people for Himself. It is the message of the ambassadors of Christ who proclaim this irrepressible truth and a grace that is indescribable and unmatched by the world. The world is watching. They are claiming that everything is in a mess. They are advocating and proclaiming other religions. However, all you have to do is look at the religions and what they are doing. They are fighting in the

streets, and they are not believers. That is why it is so important that we as believers not only proclaim the truth, but we must do it with dignity and honor. Then God will use this in a great way.

In verse 18-21, what I believe the paragraph is conveying to us is that an ambassador commits to finishing the task. We see that Paul is committed. I am going to try to summarize the verses as we do not have time to read everything. They begged Paul to stay longer in the place, but he says no. He took a vow, which was a promise, so he must fulfill it. He goes back to the coast of Syria to the region of Caesarea, which is north of Jerusalem. In fact, it is a place that you go on your way to Jerusalem. However, he does not go to Jerusalem. At a time when this Jew would probably be seen going to Jerusalem, he bypasses Jerusalem as he goes thousands of miles to the church at Antioch rather than to the church in Jerusalem. He begins to minister to them, and we see in this paragraph that this is a man who has taken a vow. This is a man who will complete his mission, and he does. This chapter ends with the proclamation of the message being passed on through Aquila and Priscilla. They began to proclaim the message to a man named Apollos who came to Ephesus. He knows

the truth. He has been acquainted with the baptism of John. However, he was not completely accurate. This tells us that an ambassador makes sure that the message is clear and accurate and that Christ is the focus. An ambassador is concerned about the message being clear. Ambassadors are concerned about the message being accurate, and the ambassador is always clear about the one he is representing.

(Acts 18:24) “Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures.”

Alexandria was the place where they had the greatest library in all the world. Obviously, this a very learned man.

(Acts 18:25) “This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John;”

(Acts 18:26) “and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they

took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.”

This is the couple that was making tents, and they had been able to listen to Paul day after day after day. Don't you think they got a head full of knowledge, more specifically, doctrine that came into their hearts and became a part of them? Absolutely! They did. No doubt about it. He began to speak out boldly in the scenario, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard this, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God how? More accurately. More accurately. Yes. Because ambassadors are representing Christ. They were thrilled to death that somebody was doing the right thing. But if the details are a little off, wait a minute. You are doing a great job, but let's make sure that every detail is right.

(Acts 18:27) “And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace,”

In other words, he goes back to Corinth and ministers to the people whom Paul had left. Isn't it interesting how God begins to pull the body together as we go back to our first fundamental point. We begin to support all who would further the message in honor and dignity. We begin to pull together, and we support them. We encourage one another and ultimately end up complementing each other. The message continues to be strengthened. I received a call from some friends this week. I had not seen them for a while, Janie and Kendal. I was supposed to be with Kendal on Friday. I am always excited when I hear from Kendal. We do a lot of emailing and texting. He is teaching a class. They are going through a study together with an older group of people. I am always encouraged to hear that he is continuing with the truth. He will text or write me to ask, "Is this right?" I will say, "Well, that is a little off. Then we will talk about it. His desire is to get this right. Let's get it straight. You do not always have to agree with me; you do not even have to always like me. But the goal is to get this message straight. There will be personality differences. But let's proclaim this message, and let's do it right. I am always encouraged

when people do that. Aren't you? If you look at the passage, it finally ends this way;

(Acts 18:28) “for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.”

The message does not change. The ambassadors continue in their ministry. We are ambassadors to Christ, supporting all who would further the message with dignity and honor. We are willing to sacrifice for the message. We stay devoted to the cause. We are subject to the laws of the land. We are committed to finishing the task; and we make sure that the message is clear, accurate, and Christ-centered. If that is true, you will be a great ambassador. That is what the church is called to do.

Prayer

Father, we give You thanks once again for this chapter that encourages us as we begin to see that there are no accidents. There are no victims in Your body, for You are orchestrating all things to bring Your saints to Yourself.

How wonderful it is that You will use beatings and abuse and the hostility and the chaos of man and bring forth order and glory and dignity in the name of Christ in order that Your Gospel will be proclaimed, that Your people will proclaim, that Your people will come, and that they will begin to unite and encourage one another. They will strengthen people they had not even known before. They will begin to talk with each other, strengthening each other, and encouraging one another. The message goes on. Father, we know why we are called. We know what this church is about. May we support all who proclaim the name with dignity and honor. We do this in Jesus' name. Amen.