

45—Acts 18.18-28—The Job is Not Done

- I. Introduction
 - a. The Lord Jesus said this to Ananias back in (Acts 9:15-16) concerning Paul: "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. ¹⁶ For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."
 - b. I'm not sure to what detail the Lord revealed to Paul that day about how much he would suffer for the sake of his name but he did indeed suffer. He was a seed that fell into the ground and bore much fruit.
 - c. He was a disciple who counted the cost and took up his cross and followed Jesus. Following Jesus was not and is not an invitation to an easy life. It has been estimated that Paul traveled some 10,000 miles on these three missionary journeys.
 - d. While that's staggering to think about but mile after mile brought unimaginable suffering: (2 Cor. 11:23-28) ²³ Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one-- I am talking like a madman-- with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. ²⁴ Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; ²⁶ on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; ²⁷ in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. ²⁸ And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.
 - e. I said last week that many of the details are left out of these stories. By God's infinite grace, the risen, Lord Jesus sent his messenger Paul to take the gospel to the nations. This is not so much of a display of just how strong Paul was but rather how amazing the grace of Christ is to provide what is needed to do what he has commanded.
 - f. The mission will require suffering and sacrifice and if you're not up for that then maybe following Jesus isn't for you.
- II. Main Point
 - a. The risen Lord Jesus continues to expand the Kingdom through the faithfulness of his messengers in the power of the Spirit armed with the Word of God.
- III. Outline
 - a. God Keeps Providing and Paul keeps going
 - b. Getting the water right for Apollos to water other fields
 - c. How shall we Response
- IV. Exposition
 - a. As we break into this next scene, Luke makes us look back at what happened in Corinth before we leave. Some stops were brief but new communities of faith were started. The risen Lord Jesus is directing Paul across land and sea to carry his name before all nations and peoples. For at least a year and half, Paul poured into the work at Corinth. After being brought before the tribunal, Gallio refused to hear the case against him and let him go. The Lord had kept his promise to protect him so he continued to speak the gospel and make disciples many more days. But after that long stay, he is seeking new fields to plant if God is providing.
 - i. He knows the job was not done. It's still not done. Until the risen Lord Jesus returns, God is on mission to save his people. And there's a cost to continue the mission. Let's count the cost, brothers and sisters and be spent by the Lord gladly!
 1. I bring this up because I see Paul continuing to go. If we were to trace Paul's steps from verse 18 to chapter 19 verse 1, Luke sums up a 1,500-mile journey within just a few verses.
 - a. It encourages me to see him continue while knowing the journey was hard. And God's grace is sufficient!

- b. We heard Paul describe the kinds of things that happened to him on these journeys but what fuels him to continue?
 - i. In (2 Cor. 4:17-18) ¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.
 - 1. He describes this as light and momentary.
 - a. If being nearly stoned to death is light, I'm embarrassed to think of what my own afflictions are.
 - 2. But these sufferings have a clear purpose to prepare for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.
 - a. We might consider this comparison. You should find out that it's beyond all comparison.
 - i. Imagine you are 18 years old and someone offered you a million or 5,000\$ per month for the rest of your life.
 - b. Whatever treasures you have here, they are temporary but the glories that are to come are eternal.
 - c. It's hard for us to compare our lifetime with eternity. But by faith we can look to the unseen which is forever!
 - 3. Seeing and savoring the amazing grace of God in Christ towards you must be the reason for your desire to continue going and doing and giving and serving.
 - a. What we do here is not intended to be behavior modifications in you nor in others. We are seeking a heart change that can only happen by the grace of Christ. We change from the inside out.
 - 2. We got to see how God's grace fueled Aquila and Priscillas last week. We've been seeing the fruit of grace in Paul's life for some time now. We too need more grace to gladly obey our Lord and Savior as we continue the mission.
- ii. The job is not done so there in verse 18, Paul picks up from Corinth leaving the brothers there to continue the work and set sail for Syria. We know there's an established community of faith in Corinth but there's more to be done.
 - 1. How does the Lord provide for the continuation of the work?
 - a. It seems in one way by his co-laborers in the Kingdom work are going with him. Notice that Priscilla and Aquila accompany him there in verse 18.
 - i. Ministry partners are essential to the work God is doing. Imagine God sending you to reach North America alone. We all have a part to play in the work.
 - ii. There are many dark and discouraging days in ministry. It's not always financial, these two tentmakers can be encouragers.
 - 1. You might not know it, but your disposition when we gather can encourage or discourage the ongoing ministry here in others. I heard of one last week. Come here to serve not to be served. Come here to worship not to be worshiped. Come here to fellowship not isolate. Come here to love and be loved.

- b. The second way we might piece together God providing for this ongoing work is through a woman who uses her resources to fund the mission for God's glory.
 - i. First, notice there at the end of verse 18 Paul sets sail from Cenchreae. This was the eastern port at Corinth.
 - ii. It's very possible that she helps financially because she was from Cenchreae. I mean, she can't Venmo the funds to Paul. And according to (Rom. 16:1-2), she had given to Paul and others. "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, ² that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well."
 - 1. Here's another example of normal people being faithful to lay up treasures in heaven.
 - 2. And there are countless unnamed people who have counted the cost for which God has used in amazing ways and for whom the world is not worthy.
 - 3. I want to be one of those unknown servants of the Lord and I hope you do too.
 - iii. Well, maybe in response to the provisions or he had been seeking God's help to provide for the journey, Paul had made a vow and cut off his hair.
 - 1. We aren't given the details of this vow; they were usually for thanking God for his ongoing care or it was for seeking aid from the Lord. It might also be a Nazarite vow found in Numbers 6.
 - 2. Either way, he sets out with Priscilla and Aquila on a 250-mile trip to Syria obviously with the funds to make the trip. The Lord has been faithful to provide what he has called them to do.
 - 3. You might think that you need a vision in the night to do certain things. But I would point out that Paul was only led that way a few times. Most of the time he is being obedient to the call and the situations play a part in moving him from place to place.
 - 4. So, don't wait for a handwriting on the wall when it's very clearly written in God's word. The job is not done and you have a part to play in that.
 - iv. Well, they land in Syria at a major port called Ephesus.
 - 1. There he plans to leave Priscilla and Aquila behind and we know from the sermon last week that there's a church in their home while they are there in Ephesus.
 - 2. But before he goes, Paul visits the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. This is no surprise for Paul continues to do this even though he has said that he has turned to the Gentiles.
 - a. They ask him to stay longer but Paul declines.
 - b. And notice how Paul makes that decision. He says, "I will return to you if God wills."
 - i. No vision. He seems to have a plan in mind and has no idea whether he will return. And yet, in chapter 19 he's back in Ephesus.
 - ii. Let's gladly obey what is clear in the Scriptures. Making disciples of all nations isn't something we have seek the Lord about among many other things.
 - v. Well, in verse 22 Paul lands in Caesarea which is back in Palestine.
 - 1. It says he went up and greeted the church. What church do you think this is?

- a. Normally when we talk like this, we mean somewhere north of us. To go up as we've talked about before usually means Jerusalem. It sat on Mt. Zion and though it wasn't north from Caesarea, one would have to go up to get there.
 - b. No details about that visit are given.
 - 2. His next stop is in Antioch which as we know was the sending church.
 - a. As he and Barnabus had returned here after the first missionary journey so too Paul again.
 - b. Most likely he got them up to speed on what was going on like before. Reporting was an important part of missions work and still remains important.
 - c. The church in Antioch holds some level of accountability in this matter and has the right to know what's been going on. He's been gone for almost three years.
 - vi. But the job is not done. Paul soon leaves for the beginning of the third missionary journey with the same desire as before: strengthen the disciples.
- b. Our second point in this scene begins in verse 24. In the outline, I used the image Paul did when he said in (1 Cor. 3:6) ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. In this section, we discover that Apollos has an incomplete understanding that needs correcting. So, if an important part of the life of the mission is watering then the water needs to be right to give life.
 - i. While Paul is making his rounds, a certain Jew by the name of Apollos comes to Ephesus.
 - 1. Luke describes him as a native of Alexandria. This city was well known as an intellectual center. It would be like a Cambridge maybe. If you were to search on Google the most famous library in the world, Alexandria would be on that list.
 - 2. If you've heard of the Septuagint which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew OT, that happened in Alexandria.
 - 3. Not only is Apollos from a place where education is important but he is himself a very learned man.
 - a. This word eloquent means (1) skilled in speech; (2) learned, educated, skilled in knowledge.
 - b. And this isn't merely in general, but he is described to be mighty in the Scriptures.
 - c. Somewhere along the way, he had been instructed in the way of the Lord.
 - 4. He's also a man fervent in spirit which has the idea of boiling! In other words, his spirit burned within him.
 - a. Indeed, it is one of the marks of a true Christian for which Paul commands this to be so of those who follow Christ in (Rom. 12:11) ¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.
 - 5. Yet, though he taught accurately the way of the Lord there were some things he had not yet been taught.
 - a. We find ourselves in a unique place in history here. As we will see next week, Paul will encounter a couple of disciples who lacked the full extent of baptism of the Holy Spirit.
 - i. This overlap will soon fizzle out but here in this passage we still have people who didn't know the whole gospel story.
 - b. I would assume that Apollos is possibly missing the same thing.
 - c. He has all the marks of a true believer though he's incomplete on some things.
 - i. While it might be difficult to know for certain from these verses, like Aquila and Priscilla there's much more to see.

6. We could go to 1 Corinthians and see what Paul says about him there in many places and there's NO question what Paul thinks about his relationship with Christ, there's still plenty here in Acts to see.
 - a. He was doing the same things Paul did when he goes into the synagogues and speaking boldly concerning Jesus.
7. But Priscilla and Aquila where in the synagogue and heard him speak. They were able to know that some things were missing.
 - a. They pull him aside privately as they should and explain the way of God more accurately to him.
- ii. Now, the build up of this man has set us up for this encounter.
 1. Do you want to know if he's a true believer? Take note of how this learned man from Alexandria responds to this correction.
 - a. He most assuredly receives it.
 - b. He desires to take what he has learned to Achaia.
 - i. So the church there in Ephesus agrees that he's ready to do that.
 1. They encourage him to go.
 2. They write a letter affirming that he can be trusted and that he be welcomed by the church there.
 2. There, he greatly helps those who had believed and this is most certainly in Corinth.
 3. And he didn't shy away from confounding the Jews in public by showing them from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.
- iii. We might not have known for sure whether he was a true follower of Christ when we first met him, but we should know now by the fruit of his life.
 1. How you respond to correction in your understanding of the word reveals something about your faith. If it is like Apollos then it reveals genuine faith and you continue to be fruitful. But if you refuse, it might reveal a false faith.
 2. I will end with this statement from Paul about Apollos from (1 Cor. 16:12) ¹² Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brothers, but it was not at all his will to come now. He will come when he has opportunity.

V. Response

- a. The job is not done and the Lord always provides for what he calls us to do. Not only financially but the strength to endure by his grace. We serve in the strength he provides.
- b. But as we close, I want to circle back to something Paul found necessary to do within the ongoing mission of the Lord: strengthen the disciples.
 - i. We live here in the south where more often than not most people will tell you they are a Christian. I can affirm that means something different here in the south than it does in much of the rest of the world.
 - ii. We need the more accurate way of God here in the Bible belt.
 - iii. There seems to be disconnect with a true follower of Jesus and the cultural Christians we have here.
 - iv. They don't love Jesus ultimately. They live in open, grievous unrepentant sin. They have no fruit of the Spirit and we are fine with calling them Christians here in the south.
- c. Part of the job is not done is actually addressing this among us. There's a need to evangelism these so-called Christians to repent and take up their cross and follow Jesus.
 - i. There's this belief that if you saw them get baptized or they made a profession of faith at some point in their life that they are good to go no matter how they willfully and consistently live there lives in rebellion.

- d. We are about to sing Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross.
 - i. We are acknowledging the need to be kept...a need to persevere in faith.
 - ii. All the promises of God are only for those who have true faith.
 - iii. And one mark of true faith is desiring to be near the cross of Christ. Only persevering faith...faith that endures to the end is genuine faith. It is a faith that desires "Help me walk from day to day with its shadow (the shadow of the cross) over me."
 - iv. It's a faith that's watching and waiting, hoping, trusting ever. Till I reach the golden strand!"
- e. And you can sing this next song and have no desire for any of it.
- f. Or you can sing this song and long for it to be so.