

Main Idea: In Acts 18:1-17 we see how the Lord reached the sensual city of Corinth. We also learn what it takes if we’re going to present Christ to our sensual world today, namely two requirements.

- I. The Lord uses the preaching of His Word (1-8).
 - A. Phase #1: Paul began with synagogue evangelism (1-6).
 - 1. Our approach involves teamwork (1-4).
 - 2. Our message is Christ (5).
 - 3. Our aim is to please God, not man (6).
 - B. Phase #2: Paul moved to a home Bible study (7-8).
 - 1. God can save anybody.
 - 2. God often brings unlikely people together.
- II. The Lord uses the perseverance of His people (9-17).
 - A. We have God’s assurance (9-11).
 - 1. Our responsibility is to speak.
 - 2. God’s responsibility is to save.
 - B. We can expect man’s opposition (12-17).
 - 1. The Jews attacked Paul (12-13).
 - 2. As promised, God protected His servant (14-17).
 - 3. God’s work continued according to God’s plan.

Make It Personal: Three responsibilities to embrace...

- 1. Teach the Word of God wherever you can.
- 2. Work with those in whose lives God is working.
- 3. Know that God will save His people.

Corinth. Need I say more? Take New York City, Los Angeles, and throw in a little Las Vegas, and now you have Corinth. Can the gospel of Jesus Christ reach a place like Corinth, and modern day Corinths? Indeed, it can, and we’ll find out how this morning.

Scripture Reading: Acts 18:1-17

If I were to ask you to fill in the missing word, “Our society is _____,” what word would you choose? Here are a few that come to my mind: *fractured, immoral, pagan, sex-crazed, violent, fearful*.

How do you make Christ known in a world like this? Can the gospel reach people who are flagrantly consumed with the passions of their wicked hearts?

I believe God gives us the clear, hope-giving answer in Acts 18:1-17. There we see the amazing story of how the Lord moved His people into action in what was perhaps the most sensual city in the first century world.

Of course, we’re not opening the Bible this morning merely for a history lesson, but to get to know God better (this Book is His self-revelation), as well as to get know ourselves and how He wants us to live. But by looking at what He accomplished in Corinth, we’re going to learn what it takes to make Christ known in today’s sensual world.

May I remind you that not all sinners are alike, and we’re not going to reach all sinners the same way. In our last study we looked at how Paul did evangelism in Athens. Of course, Athens was known for its philosophy, intellectualism, and Greek polytheism. In Athens you found what we might call “refined” sinners.

Not so in Corinth. Though only 53 miles to the west, what Paul met in Corinth was different, not the “refined” sinner he left behind in Athens, but a city full of blatant, in your face wickedness.

**Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

We need to know something about Corinth. It will encourage us as we think about what we're facing today. Three words can summarize Corinth: water, wealth, and wicked.

Water. Corinth was a coastal city, almost cut in two by the sea. On one side is the Saronic Gulf and on the other the Corinthian Gulf. Between the two is a neck of land less than five miles across. On that isthmus stood Corinth. That's significant because all north and south traffic in Greece had to pass through Corinth. Corinth was a cosmopolitan, melting pot of cultures brought by merchants from around the world.

Wealth. It was a booming port city of 200,000 people. In terms of political clout, it bypassed Athens and was the capital of Achaia. Julius Caesar refounded the city about a hundred years before Paul arrived and gave it the status of a Roman colony. Corinth was the home of the Isthmian Games which were second only to the Olympic Games. Money, status, power, fashion, gusto, recreation—these terms sum up life in Corinth.

But no word depicts it more accurately than this...

Wicked. In Greece whenever a Corinthian was shown on the stage he was shown drunk. The Greeks actually coined a verb, "to play the Corinthian," which meant (as Barclay summarizes) "to live a life of lustful debauchery."¹ To Corinthianize meant to go a-whoring. A "Corinthian woman" was a harlot. High above the city stood the hill of the Acropolis which was home to the temple of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love. Living there were 1,000 priestesses of Aphrodite, sacred prostitutes. Every night these ladies came down into the city to ply their trade in the name of religion. Barclay says it had become a proverb, "Not every man can afford a journey to Corinth."

If ever the term applied, Corinth was *sin-city*. It's significant that when Paul later wrote these words in Romans 1:24-25, he was living in Corinth: "Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen."

That was Corinth. And that was the place where Paul took the gospel in Acts 18.

Now lest we think the gospel can't reach the really "bad" sinners, let's fast forward about three or four years. Paul, who eventually wrote at least four letters to the Corinthian church he started in Acts 18 (two are lost, the other two are 1 & 2 Corinthians), said this to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11:

"Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. *And that is what some of you were.* But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

That's what you *were*, past tense, just three or four years earlier. But no longer! What made the difference? Jesus Christ did. Jesus can save any kind of sinner. But how? How does Jesus transform sinners in a sensual society like Corinth, or like *ours*? By looking at Paul's example in Acts 18, we learn that the Lord uses two means.

I. The Lord uses the preaching of His Word (1-8).

God's Word is powerful. God's Word will deliver enslaved people. But to do so, we must unleash it. We must make it known. We must *preach* it.

¹ William Barclay, p. 134.

When I use the term “preach,” please don’t think merely of an activity behind a pulpit. To preach simply means “to herald the good news,” and we can do that in a variety of ways and settings. Paul’s preaching in Corinth went through two phases.

A. Phase #1: Paul began with synagogue evangelism (1-6). Jump ahead to verse 4, “Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.” This was Paul’s bread-and-butter approach in opening up a ministry in a new city. *Synagogue evangelism.* He would find the city’s synagogue—since Corinth had a sizeable Jewish population this was no problem. Then he would go to the synagogue and mention his credentials as a trained rabbi in the school of Gamaliel. He would then be invited to address the assembly, which he did, and of course told them that the Messiah had come.

Luke says he “reasoned” with them. Other texts (e.g. Acts 13:16ff.) make it clear he did so by preaching from the Word of God.

Did he do other things? Certainly, and so must we. We love our neighbors, pay our bills, raise our families in ways that make Christ attractive to onlookers. But here’s the central activity. How do we make Jesus known to lost people? We find ways to make the Word of God known to people. We *preach* the Book that reveals the person and work of the Savior of mankind, Jesus Christ.

And what does this preaching ministry involve? By looking at Paul’s example in verses 1-6 we discover three features of a Word-centered outreach.

1. *Our approach involves teamwork (1-4).* Verse 1—“After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.” Paul’s been kicked out of three cities in recent months. Though he left Athens of his own accord, he did so with limited results. He arrived in Corinth alone. Was he discouraged? Perhaps. But God gave him exactly what he needed, two people who would end up being life-long friends and ministry partners.

Verses 2-3—“There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them.”

Here we see one of the greatest joys the Lord brings into our lives. *Special people.* He often does this at critical points in our lives. A new student comes to your school. A new neighbor moves in. A new family sits next to you in church. And by His gracious design, a shared bond in Christ begins to grow.

Aquila and Priscilla, like Paul, were Jews. Some believe that Priscilla, whom Paul elsewhere refers to as Prisca, was from an influential Roman family. They were travelers, too. Aquila was a native of Pontus (modern day Turkey) but most recently the pair came from Italy.

Apparently, Paul’s missionary support had run out so he began to generate some income by using his trade as a tentmaker. In Paul’s home province of Cilicia, there were herds of a certain kind of goat with a special kind of fleece. Barclay says that out of that fleece a cloth called “cilicium” was made which was popular for making tents, curtains, and wall-hangings. The term “tentmaker” is actually a little too specific for the Greek word. “Leather worker” is probably better.

So Paul was a craftsman. So too were Priscilla and Aquila, tentmakers in fact. Maybe that’s what brought the three together. But what bound their hearts was their mutual love for their Savior.

The text doesn’t indicate how Aquila and Priscilla became Christians. The reference to the edict of Emperor Claudius is significant. In extra-biblical literature, the Roman

historian Suetonius commented on this edict, “As the Jews were indulging in constant riots at the instigation of Chrestus, [Claudius] banished them from Rome.”² Chrestus differs in only one letter from Christus (Latin for “Christ”) which lead some to conclude that the disturbances in the Jewish community were caused by the preaching of Christ.

So this couple got kicked out of their home. A bad thing? Yes, but the Sovereign Lord used a bad ruling by a pagan dictator to bring this couple into Paul’s life, and at just the right time. They later assisted Paul in his work in Ephesus (18:18-28) where they opened their home for church meetings (1 Cor 16:19).

It’s wonderful to watch, isn’t it? Just when Paul needed it, God sent a blessing into his life, a husband and wife who became friends and a vital part of his ministry team.

Ministry, by God’s design, takes teamwork. Let that sink in. If we’re going to reach lost people in a hostile environment, we’re not likely going to do it alone. We’re not supposed to do it alone, but as a team.

Are you a team player? Are you looking for people with which to work in making Christ known to the lost? Are you praying for them?

2. *Our message is Christ (5)*. “When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.”

As you may recall, Paul had left these two ministry partners behind in Berea with instructions to join him in Athens (17:15). Apparently, they did so but then later left Athens to do further follow-up work. Some believe Silas went to Philippi and Timothy went to Thessalonica, and then both rejoined Paul in Corinth.

According to verse 4, prior to their coming Paul had to work during the week so he could preach in the synagogue on the Sabbath. After the arrival of Silas and Timothy, the ministry strategy changed. Paul now began to preach full time, apparently supported by their efforts or perhaps by a love gift they delivered from the Macedonian churches (2 Cor 11:9; Phil 4:15). The ESV says, “When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word.”

I see a principle here. It’s important to use a person’s spiritual gifts to the fullest for kingdom work. Paul certainly wasn’t “too good” to do manual work, and when necessary, he did, as a tentmaker. But God had gifted him to preach. Silas and Timothy understood that and did all they could to free him up to preach.

Once again, ministry is a team effort. It takes all of us to do it. In order for preaching to occur at WBC, we need trustees to care for our facility, nursery workers to care for the babies so parents can hear, greeters to provide a warm environment, and sound system people to enable the message to be heard. In addition, we need folks to do counseling and discipleship to follow-up those who have questions about the preaching. And certainly we need prayer warriors who beseech God to bless His Word.

And when everyone is doing what God has gifted him or her to do, the church can fulfill its mission. When not, then someone has to do double duty, often doing a ministry that prevents them from devoting their energies to where they are most gifted.

Brothers and sisters, you are important, every one of you in this church. Like pieces in a puzzle, the Lord has spread out gifts to the members of this body, and all are needed.

Yet let us never forget this. While we are needed, we are not indispensable. And while our ministry is important, it’s all about Christ, not us. He is the focus of the ministry. He is the message we make known.

² *Life of Claudius*, cited in F. F. Bruce, p. 368.

In his first letter Paul reminded the Corinthians about what and how he preached when he first came to their city (1 Cor 2:1-5): “When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.”

This is the only message that can save sinners, Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And this message *does* save sinners, no matter how wicked they may be.

My friend, if you are here today trapped in your sin, I have a message of hope for you. Though your sin is offensive to God and deserving of His wrath, He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world, and He paid the penalty for your sin on the cross. Three days later God raised His Son from the dead, so that He can now justify you, which means that since He treated Jesus the way you deserve to be treated, He can now treat you the way Jesus deserves to be treated. To put it simply, today God offers to forgive you of all your sins and put the robe of His Son’s righteousness on you, if you will repent and believe in His Son. I invite you to do so today, dear friend. Repent, and ask Jesus Christ to save you, and He will.

Yes, our message is Christ. There’s one more element in a Word-centered outreach.

3. *Our aim is to please God, not man (6)*. “But when the Jews opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, ‘Your blood be on your own heads! I am clear of my responsibility. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.’”

Until we settle the issue of who we’re trying to please, we’ll live roller coaster lives, up and down and up and down. We can’t be a people pleaser and a God pleaser at the same time.

Furthermore, we can’t be a God-pleaser and not be serious about making Christ known to lost people, for this is the mission He’s given us. What’s more, if we preach Christ, we will irritate some and even create opposition. That’s inevitable. The Jews flat out didn’t want to hear Paul any more. So he left them, in good conscience.

But he didn’t leave town. He wasn’t a quitter. He just went next door. Remember, there’s not just one way to preach to lost people. In phase #1, synagogue evangelism.

B. Phase #2: Paul moved to a home Bible study (7-8). “Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.”

In phase one Paul preached in the synagogue, primarily to Jews. In phase two, Paul preached in a home, primarily to Gentiles. It was the home of Titius Justus and it just happened to be right next to the...*synagogue!*

I love Paul’s strategy here. We can learn from it. In essence, he began to use a home Bible study to reach pagans right in the heart of Corinth.

You say, “How do you start an evangelistic home Bible study?”

It’s not complicated. You find the home of someone who’s interested in studying the Bible and go there. You start meeting regularly to teach the Bible in that home. You invite others to come. You teach them what the Bible says about Jesus. You keep working with those God sends until they either stop coming or God saves them.

We learn two realities from Paul’s Bible study.

1. *God can save anybody*. Who accepted Jesus as their Messiah at this home Bible study? Crispus did, as did his household. Who was Crispus? None other than the

ruler of the synagogue that Paul just left! Apparently, to reach him Paul had to leave the synagogue. God has a million ways to bring sinners to the knowledge of His Son.

And what did Crispus and the other babes in Christ do to show they were sincere about their profession of faith? They were baptized, that is, they went into the water and by their actions and words publicly identified with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (see Matt 28:19).

It's significant that, according to 1 Corinthians 1:14, Paul himself baptized Crispus, an action the apostle typically left to others. Why? I'm not sure. I'm not even sure it's the same Crispus. But if it was, this was a big deal. The leader of the group that kicked Paul out, now repents and goes public in making known, "I believe Jesus is the Christ!" Maybe it reminded Paul of his story. I'm going to baptize that man, because that's my story too, a hater of Christ who because of the grace of Christ is now a lover of Christ!

God can save anybody, yes, *anybody*. That includes religious sinners like Crispus. That also includes reckless sinners like others in Corinth, who embraced the gospel, too. The text says that *many* of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized.

2. *God often brings unlikely people together.* When the text says that many of the Corinthians believed, just remember what these people were like. Some of them used to be womanizers. Some were homosexual. Some were bold-faced liars. Some were thieves, drunkards, and swindlers. Some were idolaters who worshiped Aphrodite. That's what they *were*, says 1 Corinthians 6:11.

But then God washed them through the blood of Jesus Christ. God cleansed them from their sin-stained past, gave them the Holy Spirit, who gave them new lives.

Yet that's not all He did. He also brought them together and "baptized them into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—all were made to drink of one Spirit (1 Cor 12:13)." There's Crispus, a Jew, a former synagogue ruler. And there's Titius Justus and a whole bunch of other Gentiles, formerly raw pagans. Now they are one in Christ.

Did their differences simply vanish? In God's eyes, yes. But brand new Christians don't automatically see things through God's eyes. They need to grow. That's what sanctification is all about. "Because by one sacrifice He made perfect forever those who are being made holy (Heb 10:14)."

Did these brand new Corinthian Christians have problems to work through? Oh yes, a boatload of them. And Paul helped them. That's the job the Lord gives to the spiritually mature in His church, to help the babes grow up.

What kind of problems did this young church have? Take a look at 1 & 2 Corinthians, and you'll see, and how Paul addressed them.

Keep the context in mind. Paul preached in Corinth around 51-52 AD during his second missionary journey and the church was established. Then he left to preach elsewhere, but through various means, he learned about problems in the young church. So he wrote 1 Corinthians around 54-55 AD. What issues does he address? Division. Immorality. Spiritual immaturity. Lawsuits. Marital problems. Confusion about singleness. Questions about divorce. Abuse of the Lord's table. False teaching regarding the resurrection. Misuse of spiritual gifts. And more. Paul invests 10,000 words to deal with these problems in 1 Corinthians.

Later the same year, he put another 6,000 words on paper in the letter we call 2 Corinthians. Why? Because he'd learned about another problem in the church, perhaps more dangerous than the others. Some people were questioning *him*, both his credentials and his motives for ministry. They accused him of being deceptive, of being after the money.

My point is this. When we read in Acts 18:8 that many believed and were baptized, we ought to respond in two ways, the same two ways we ought to respond when the Lord saves a sinner today. First, praise God! And second, get ready for more work, for it's going to get messy real soon! As it always does when you raise a family, and the church is a family.

So what does it take to see the mission of Christ penetrate wicked places like Corinth? It takes the preaching of God's Word. That's what is needed in the Corinths of today, too, brothers and sisters. We must embrace the primacy of preaching in the plan of God, for God changes lives, God changes *cities*, as His Word is proclaimed.

Something else is needed, a second requirement.

II. The Lord uses the perseverance of His people (9-17).

A man was shoveling snow from his driveway when two boys with shovels came up to him. "We'll shovel your snow, Mister, only \$2." The man looked down at them and said, "Can't you see that I'm doing it myself?" To which one of the fellows responded, "Sure, that's why we asked. We get most of our business from people who are half through and feel like quitting!"³

Spurgeon once said, "By perseverance, the snail reached the ark." If we're going to do anything for God, especially rescue work in today's culture, perseverance is vital.

What makes it possible to persevere in God's work when we feel like quitting? First of all, the Holy Spirit, for long-suffering is part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23). But to produce this long-suffering, the Spirit uses something we see in verses 9-11.

A. We have God's assurance (9-11). "One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: 'Do not be afraid.'" Stop and think about that charge. Keep in mind Paul has been kicked out of city after city, and now the heat of hostility is rising in Corinth. Is this going to be a way of life for me, *preach and run*? He battled fear just like we do.

Oh, how God's next words must have encouraged him! Verse 9—"Keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city."

"Don't fear!" God said. "Keep preaching, keep persevering, *for I am with you.*"

Florence White Willett penned the following:

*I thank God for bitter things;
They've been a 'friend to grace';
They've driven me from paths of ease
To storm the secret place.*

*I thank Him for the friends who failed
To fill my heart's deep need;
They've driven me to the Savior's feet,
Upon His love to feed.*

*I'm grateful too, through all life's way
No one could satisfy,
And so I've found in God alone
My rich, my full supply!⁴*

³ Wiersbe, p. 474.

⁴ Taken from C. Swindoll, *Paul*, p. 242.

John Wesley's dying words were, "The best of all is, God is with us!"

God's message to Paul reminds us of two motivators which inspire perseverance.

1. *Our responsibility is to speak.* "Keep on speaking," God told Paul. That's our task, too. "Keep telling people in Wheelersburg about My Son. Tell your neighbors, your children, your classmates, your work associates. Do not be silent. Preach and persevere."

But what if it's not popular? What if we don't see results? Oh, there will be results. How do I know?

2. *God's responsibility is to save.* "I have many people in this city." Did you catch that? God told Paul He had people, specific people that He was going to save in the city of Corinth. *I have people in this city.* Granted, they may be Satan's people now, and they may be living sin-filled, offensive, foul-smelling lives now, *but...*

They are mine! And I am going to use you to reach them. This was God's message of assurance to Paul.

Fellow ambassadors of Christ, this is how we too can keep loving the hard to love in our wicked society. We must look past the outward corruption, and know this about the people around us. God says some of them are His.

That truth, the truth that the Sovereign God has chosen a people that He will save, indeed He calls them "my people" even before He saves them, is what makes perseverance possible. It did for Paul, time and time again.

Indeed, he himself said in his final letter (2 Timothy 2:8-10), "This is my gospel, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained. Therefore *I endure everything for the sake of the elect*, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory."

Our responsibility is to speak. God's responsibility is to save. Two motivators, and the second makes the first possible. We preach because God has people He will save.

Notice the effect God's assurance had on Paul. Verse 11—"So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God."

It's significant to note a change in Paul's missionary strategy from this point on. James Boice comments, "Before this Paul had been moving from place to place. He spent a week here, three weeks there, a month somewhere else. Then he moved on. But as soon as God spoke to him Paul changed his tactics and stayed on. And do you know what happened? People believed and came to Jesus Christ."⁵

This was a turning point for Paul. Knowing what's coming made all the difference. He stayed in Corinth 18 months. The next major city he ministered in was Ephesus and he stayed there two years. Then he was imprisoned in Caesarea for two years. Eventually he ended up in Rome and spent several years there.

Boice again observes, "Paul was no longer a missionary gadfly, even though he recognized that he still had the same call to take the gospel throughout the Roman world. It is as if he now put down roots and began to teach in-depth over a period of time in order that those who were being won to Christ might be faithfully grounded in the Bible."⁶

This is what we're trying to do at WBC. We're not after quick results in this community, which means there's no substitution for perseverance. And what makes perseverance possible? First, we have God's assurance.

⁵ James Boice, p. 309.

⁶ Boice, p. 309-10.

Something else is true, which we see in the next paragraph.

B. We can expect man's opposition (12-17). Spurgeon used to say that the devil never kicks a dead horse. The opposition of the world is proof that God is using us.

1. *The Jews attacked Paul (12-13).* “While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him into court. ‘This man,’ they charged, ‘is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law.’”

A little background about this ruler is helpful. Gallio was the brother of Seneca, the famed Roman philosopher and tutor of Nero. Seneca described his brother as “an intelligent person who hated flattery, and was blessed with an ‘unaffectedly pleasant personality.’”⁷

So the Jews attacked Paul and brought him before this man, Gallio, in the court of law. Keep in mind that Gallio wasn't simply the mayor of Corinth or some local councilman, but “proconsul.” That means he's the ruler over the entire Roman district of Achaia (like a governor). And that means this court proceeding could be disastrous for the future spread of Christianity, for if Gallio rules against Paul, this legal action will set precedent throughout the Roman empire.

This was a sticky situation. The preacher enters the world of politics. Christ confronts Caesar. And Christ is not wringing His hands, something we must keep in mind as we enter the political arena and cast our votes in the November election.

2. *As promised, God protected His servant (14-17).* “Just as Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to the Jews, ‘If you Jews were making a complaint about some misdemeanor or serious crime, it would be reasonable for me to listen to you. But since it involves questions about words and names and your own law—settle the matter yourselves. I will not be a judge of such things.’ So he had them ejected from the court. Then they all turned on Sosthenes the synagogue ruler and beat him in front of the court. But Gallio showed no concern whatever.”

The hearts of kings are in the hands of the Lord. Gallio threw the case out of court, and the prosecution team starts beating the synagogue ruler, Sosthenes.

Do you feel sorrow for Sosthenes? We probably shouldn't. That beating may have saved his eternal destiny. Look at 1 Corinthians 1:1. Who wrote this letter? “Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, *and our brother Sosthenes.*”

Is that the same Sosthenes? Maybe not. But maybe the Lord used this beating and the subsequent preaching of Paul to rescue yet another sinner too.

Verse 18 says, “After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers.” Notice that. Because of the court outcome he stayed *many days longer*. And then he left behind many *brothers*. Amazing.

3. *God's work continued according to God's plan.* Friends, sometimes God allows political rulers to cause opposition to the gospel. Sometimes He stops it. He does both for a reason, *His* reason.

As the story goes, when Leonides, the noble hero of the Spartans who defended Greece from the Persians, was in battle against thousands of invaders, one of his men said to him, “General, when the Persians shoot their arrows, there are so many of them that they darken the sky.” Leonides replied, “Then we will fight in the shade.”⁸

How do we make Christ known in wicked places like Corinth? It takes the preaching of God's Word and the perseverance of God's people. We must preach and persevere.

⁷ In J. MacArthur, p. 151.

⁸ As told by Kent Hughes, p. 244.

Make It Personal: Three responsibilities to embrace...

1. *Teach the Word of God wherever you can.* I want to challenge you to pray about something. Ask God if He would like you to start or be part of an evangelistic, home Bible study. Some of you, like Titius Justus, could make your home available. Others of you, like Paul, could teach God's Word. Others could invite friends and pray.

2. *Work with those in whose lives God is working.* Answer this. Do you think Paul liked living in Corinth? I can't imagine that he did. When a person loves God and godliness, sin grieves his soul. Why then did Paul pour his life into reaching Corinth? For this simple reason. God had people there.

Friends, none of us lives in a perfect neighborhood, or works in a perfect environment, or goes to school in a perfect place. Sin is rampant all around us, but what will keep us going is this truth. God has chosen to save sinners, and He had chosen to use us to reach them. So let's reach them, right where we are.

3. *Know that God will save His people.* We have His Word on it.

Closing Song: #349 "*Trust and Obey*" (verses 1, 3, 5)

Community Group Discussion:

1. This week's message was entitled, "*Making Christ Known in Corinth.*" Take time as a group to re-read the passage, Acts 18:1-17. What stands out most to you when you hear this passage read?

2. What was significant about the city of Corinth? What were people like there? You may want to consult your study Bible notes for help. What challenges had to be overcome in order to make Christ known in Corinth?

3. Why do we (living in the present day in the USA) need to know about what happened in Corinth? Why did the Holy Spirit give us this account in the Scriptures?

4. The Lord gave Paul an encouraging message in a vision in verses 9-10. What was it? What did the Lord mean when He said (ESV), "I have many in this city who are my people," and what are some implications for us? For further insight, see Paul's words in 2 Timothy 2:8-10.

5. What practical lessons do we learn from today's text regarding how to live for Christ in today's world? After sharing, spend time in prayer giving thanks for these lessons, and then interceding for one another that we might apply them this week.