

## ***BLESSING THE BROKEN, ACTS 18:1-17***

The Church You've Always Longed For #6

◆ A fellow once quipped, "They say that God leaves us on earth until we've accomplished everything we were supposed to do. Well right now I'm so far behind I'm pretty sure I'm never gonna die!" Maybe you've felt that way.

◆ **1. As long as you remain on this earth, you have a calling from God.**

◆ *"For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed." Acts 13:36, NIV.*

◆ I'll bet we don't think about that all that often. It implies that God has reasons, and assignments for which we each exist. God's sovereign control over our moments is clear in Scripture. His sovereignty implies that you and I are not accidental, but intended. I want you to notice a phrase in our text:

◆ *"For I am with you, and no-one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city."* Acts 18:10, NIV.

◆ "I have many people in this city." Paul was there to tell people about the true God, and Jesus the Messiah. And God already had those people! He knows who they are, though they don't, and Paul is there to gather them. Two verses later Paul actually is attacked! But he doesn't even end up defending himself. In fact, the Jewish church leader ends up getting beat (17). God has a calling for Paul. Lets scan through Acts on this sovereignty theme:

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◆Chapter 4: the believers are praying and recalling Jesus' crucifixion. "They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen." Acts 4:28, NIV.

◆"When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life."" Acts 11:18, NIV.

◆"When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honoured the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed." Acts 13:48, NIV.

◆You're getting the idea, right? God works out everything according to his divine will (Eph.1:11). And we see it over and over with Paul. Acts 13-28 chronicles

the events and locations of Paul's three missionary journeys through Asia Minor, or what today is called Turkey. He visited over 50 different cities from Palestine to Italy. In chapter 16 Paul



tries to go north but the text says the Holy Spirit wouldn't let him. This happens twice. I'm trying to show us how intricately comprehensive God is about the purposes of his children's lives. Rest in that.

◆B. In our text God had a specific calling in mind for Paul, in Corinth. I wonder if Paul watched people drive by, fill up their camels at the corner station, and wondered "Is that one of yours, Lord? Do you want me to reach him?" Do you ever wonder that

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when you watch people? Paul was in Corinth to be God's speaker about Jesus.

◆ Now we know Paul had a job. He was a tentmaker(3). But that was only how he supplied his income. His calling was bigger than his job, and by the way, so is yours. You calling is bigger than your occupation. Paul's calling was preaching. Check v5. Silas and Timothy arrive and Paul stops making tents. How could that happen? Did Silas go, "Yo P. You go preach. Tim and I will make the tents now with Quil & Cill." No not exactly. Silas and Timothy brought a financial gift from Macedonia. Later he writes a letter back to the Corinthians:

◆ *"I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you. And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so." 2 Corinthians 11:8, 9, NIV.*

◆ You know what that means. There were Christians in Macedonia, specifically Philippi, who worked long hours, six days a week, and then like some of you here, instead of buying more toys, or taking more trips, or buying more upgrades, simply followed the biblical injunction to give money away (tithe 10% often more!) The church collected it, and sent it off to Paul so people in a whole different city

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could find about how greats Jesus' love is! *They saw their existence as a calling to serve God by serving others.*

◆ *"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." 1 Peter 4:10, NIV.*

◆ Remember, as a Christian, your calling is bigger than your job! One of the things we make a point of in Reformed theology is the truth that all God's people work for God's kingdom. All Christians are ministers. If you sell Coke, your purpose rises beyond the provision of sweet drinks for mankind. If you build structures your purpose is bigger than the buildings. You are a minister of Christ in a broken world! Your occupation is just a part of the package, and not the main part. You are still on earth to bless God's name by blessing people in his name! Now that being said lets narrow it down a little.

◆ **2. Christians are specifically called to bring blessing to brokenness.** Let's not get confused and think our callings are to say, be a famous singer, or to build a better business, or to be known for what I invented. Those things may happen but Christians get up daily for different reasons. Every day this week you will read in your 50 Day journal a passage in the Bible that reveals that calling! In Genesis God calls humanity to steward the whole creation, the earth, the plants, the animals. In Isaiah God tells his people that showing up in church isn't really what he's after. He wants your heart to see hurting people and help

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them! That brings glory to his name even more than a super cool song Sunday morning! In Matthew Jesus basically says the inmate, the sick person, the gal struggling to pay her bills: that's him and we love him when we love them. In James you will read about how we can have all the right doctrine and understand the Bible clearly, and teach all kinds of true things, but if you and I don't DO anything, give our faith flesh, it's bogus!

◆B. Lets run through a short list of blessings in brokenness that began with followers of Jesus Christ.

- ◆1. the Deacons: Acts 6. People who cared for the hungry and widows.
- ◆2. collegia: voluntary associations to aid the unfortunate. Began already in the 2nd century.
- ◆3. orphanages: homes for children without parents (4th C).
- ◆4. the practice of naming godparents so children didn't become orphans.
- ◆5. mental asylums begun in 321. Contrary to the horror movies you might watch, these began as places of compassion.
- ◆6. gerontocomia: institutions for the aged in society (5th C.)
- ◆7. the whole concept of hospitals, the first institute for the blind in 630, Jerusalem. And the list goes on and on: the study of biology, the formation of colleges, etc.

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◆ These all came about because of believers in Jesus Christ as God's Son and our savior!

◆ C. A place to start is to ask "What brokenness do I know about?" Then, how has God wired you? Do you know your gifts, your latent talents. God says he puts them in everyone of us. If you have the gift of prayer, we need you in the prayer room before church calling on the presence of the Holy Spirit. If you have a passion for kids, we need you with kids. Take a piano player and put her with eight five-year-olds and she might take her life! And this applies to what happens beyond our walls too, doesn't it? By the front door it says "You are now entering the mission field." God may send you to another city. Do you feel a passion to bring relief to people whose homes have been destroyed by flood? We need you to help us reconvene our missions team. Do you like the playground? Think about serving the kids at Mayflower Mill in the Playworks program.

◆ [Im gonna ask Mitch Nettesheim to come up and give you a plug on that one right now.]

◆ **Conclusion:** In retrospect Paul did have plenty of hardships on his missionary journeys, and folks, you will too. Any time you get serious about affecting this broken world for Christ, there will be backlash. But don't forget, God's path for you is divinely ordained. The more we cooperate with it, the greater the results. Pray daily about God's purpose for you, for your day. Ask him to show you who to touch, to encourage or love.

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◆ One couple lived in London 130 years ago. For the first 10 years of their marriage, Bill, especially, was in a quandary: What was God calling him to do? Then his wife, Cathy, a skillful Bible teacher, was invited to preach in London. While they were there, William took a late-night walk through the slums of London's East End. Every fifth building was a pub. Most had steps at the counter so little children could climb up and order gin. That night he told Catherine, "I seemed to hear a voice sounding in my ears, 'Where can you go and find such heathen as these, and where is there so great a need for your labors?' Darling, I have found my destiny!" Later that year, 1865, the William and Catherine Booth opened the "Christian Mission" in London's slums. Their life vision: to reach the "down and outers" that other Christians ignored. That simple vision of two people grew into the Salvation Army, which now ministers through 3 million members in 91 countries.

◆ We're going to give you an opportunity to fill out possible ministry interests you might have right now...