



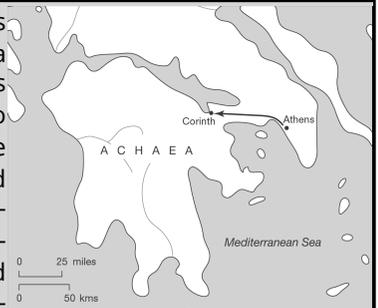
We all face times of discouragement, and followers of Jesus are NOT immune to feeling like throwing in the towel. DON'T. Today we discover how God helps us through these difficult days.

**Catch the Context:** Paul started this missionary journey with a hurt in his heart.

- Paul & Barnabas separated over a disagreement of whether to bring John Mark along (Acts 15:37-39).
- Paul & Silas picked up Timothy in **Lystra**, visiting churches planted on 1st missionary journey.
- Paul planned to go to **Asia & Bithynia**, but God shut the door on that (Acts 16:6-7) and gave a vision that sent Paul to **Macedonia** (Acts 16:8-10).
- The team had moderate success in **Philippi** as Lydia & her household trusted Jesus along with several other Jews. Then came persecution: beaten, jailed, & miraculously released - leading to jailor & family to Jesus; Finally, released but kicked out of Philippi.
- Then came **Thessalonica** (Acts 17:1-9) where some responded to the Gospel but others formed a mob to hunt Paul & Silas down; disciplining Jason, the man who had housed Paul & Silas.
- Now Paul & Silas headed to **Berea** where the Jews examined Scriptures & many believed. Angry Jews from Thessalonica made long journey to stir up crowds against Paul. Paul sent away; Silas stayed (Acts 17:10-16).
- Paul went to **Athens**, disgusted by their idol worship. Paul used different tactics with the Jews & pagan Gentiles: **Scripture** with Jews & **nature & reason** with pagan Gentiles. Some scoffed, some wanted talk again, & some believed.
- Paul had seen some real life change, but discouragement was beginning to set in.

**Acts 18:1-11** (NET) <sup>1</sup> After this Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth.<sup>2</sup> There he found 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 depart from Rome. Paul approached them,<sup>3</sup> and because he worked at the same trade, he stayed with them and worked with them (for they were tentmakers by trade).<sup>4</sup> He addressed both Jews and Greeks in the synagogue every Sabbath, attempting to persuade them.<sup>5</sup> Now when Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul became wholly absorbed with proclaiming the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.<sup>6</sup> When they opposed him and reviled him, he protested by shaking out his clothes and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am guiltless! From now on I will go to the Gentiles!"

<sup>7</sup> Then Paul left the synagogue and went to the house of a person named Titius Justus, a Gentile who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue.<sup>8</sup> Crispus, the president of the synagogue, believed in the Lord together with his entire household, and many of the Corinthians who heard about it believed and were baptized.<sup>9</sup> The Lord said to Paul by a vision in the night, "Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent,<sup>10</sup> because I am with you, and no one will assault you to harm you, because I have many people in this city."<sup>11</sup> So he stayed there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.



**Acts 18:1** After this Paul departed from Athens and went to **Corinth**.

**Corinth** was a wealthy place. The **wall** of Corinth enclosed an area 2.5 times the size of Athens. The 55 rows of seats in the **theater** could seat about 14,000.<sup>1</sup> Many estimate roughly 80,000-100,000<sup>2</sup> (at least 30,000 more than Valdosta). The **narrow isthmus** with water on both sides made it an ideal place to unload on one side and then move the goods & sometimes the entire boat across land by a stone path to the other body of water.<sup>3</sup>

Corinth was a wealthy place, but it was also a wicked place. The many men disembarking from this boats were looking for a good time. Every evening 1,000 prostitute priestesses descended from the temple of Aphrodite - the goddess of love - to offer their services.<sup>4</sup>

Although Paul had some success in Corinth, the ever-present opposition from the unbelieving Jews constantly nagged at Paul. Along with some spiritual fruit, the very real danger of being mocked, beaten, thrown in jail, or run out of town lurked at every new destination.

Paul later wrote to the Corinthians,

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**1 Corinthians 2:1-3** (NET)<sup>1</sup> When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come with superior eloquence or wisdom as I proclaimed the testimony of God. <sup>2</sup> For I decided to be concerned about nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. <sup>3</sup> And I was with you in **weakness** and in **fear** and with much trembling.

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The Lord Jesus gave Paul an encouraging vision, but He did MUCH MORE to help Paul through the difficult days.

**Acts 18:2-3**<sup>2</sup> There he found 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 depart from Rome. Paul approached them, <sup>3</sup> and because **he worked at the same trade, he stayed with them** and worked with them (for they were tentmakers by trade).

**God provides the friends we need.** Like Paul, this couple was Jewish. Like Paul, these folks had trusted the Lord Jesus as Messiah and pledged allegiance to Him. Further, they had the **same trade** and Paul **stayed with them!**

One of the greatest ways God helps us in dealing with discouragement is by bringing us Christian friends, but it's often least appreciated reminder of God's Presence in our lives.

**BIG TRUTH: God is present through His People.**

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<sup>1</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*: 15:1-23:35, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 2685.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Keener, 2686-2687.

<sup>4</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *Acts, MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 326.

**Acts 18:4-7** <sup>4</sup> He addressed both Jews and Greeks in the synagogue every Sabbath, attempting to persuade them. <sup>5</sup> Now when Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul became wholly absorbed with proclaiming the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. <sup>6</sup> When they opposed him and reviled him, he protested by shaking out his clothes and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am guiltless! From now on I will go to the Gentiles!" <sup>7</sup> Then Paul left the synagogue and went to the house of a person named Titius Justus, a Gentile who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue.

With Christian friends at his side, Paul was able to focus on the task once again - to show **the Jews that Jesus was the Christ** (Messiah) they had been waiting for. Sadly, many didn't receive Paul's message.

Once again, the Jews **reviled** (Greek = *blasphemed*)<sup>5</sup> Paul & his Gospel message. Paul responded **by shaking out his clothes** - a warning that God's judgment would fall on them (as Nehemiah did - Neh 5:13). Paul refused to let his mission be stopped.

Paul went to the **house...next door to the synagogue** that had kicked him out, in direct competition with the Jewish synagogue. And the Corinthian church was launched!

**Acts 18:8-11** <sup>8</sup> Crispus, the president of the synagogue, believed in the Lord together with his entire household, and **many of the Corinthians** who heard about it **believed and were baptized**.<sup>9</sup> The Lord said to Paul by a vision in the night, "Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent, <sup>10</sup> because **I am with you**, and no one will assault you to harm you, because **I have many people in this city**." <sup>11</sup> So he stayed there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Despite the success Paul had experienced, discouragement was stirring. Paul must have wondered, "*When will the fruitful ministry result in painful persecution?*" It's at that point that the Lord Jesus gave Paul a special word to sustain him.

1) **I am with you.** What if you KNEW, that despite the discouragement, through the tough times...**Jesus is WITH you!** This is the universal promise to those who obey Jesus:

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*"I will never leave you and I will never abandon you." (Heb. 13:5)*

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2) **I will keep you from harm...for now.** [no one will assault you to harm you] Later Paul would again face persecution and eventually be beheaded. God CAN protect us from danger, but even when He doesn't...the FIRST PROMISE is still true - **I am with you!**

3) **I have put many other believers around you.** [I have many people in this city] One of the greatest helps through discouragement is to know...I'M NOT IN THIS ALONE! (Don't stiff-arm brothers/sisters God sends to help.)

**God is present through His People.**

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<sup>5</sup> to speak against someone in such a way as to harm or injure his or her reputation - Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 433.

So, your discouragement might be deep and your circumstances might look bleak, but have you ASKED God for help? AND...have you ACCEPTED the help he has sent?



- 1) ***Trust Jesus with your life.***
- 2) ***Respond when God sends help to you.***
- 3) ***Respond when God sends YOU to help!***

Maybe YOU are the believer God has put in the path of a person who is deeply discouraged.

***“Carry one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”*** (Gal. 6:2)

***God is present through His People.***