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Never Give In

Acts 18:5-10

Introduction

1. From September 1940 - May 1941, Great Britain had been on the receiving end of a sustained aerial bombing campaign by the German Luftwaffe (Air Force).
2. During those ten months they had targeted London, Coventry and various industrial centers causing widespread destruction.
3. Tens of thousands of British citizens had been killed and over a million homes had been damaged.
4. All of this was an effort to break British morale and force surrender.
5. On October 29, 1941, a little over a month before the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, thus drawing the United States into WWII, Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister of Great Britain visited Harrow School, a boy's boarding school where he had once attended.

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6. One of the most famous lines for which he is often remembered comes from the speech which he made that day.

“But for everyone, surely, what we have gone through in this period — I am addressing myself to the School — surely from this period of ten months this is the lesson: never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never—in nothing, great or small, large or petty — never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense. Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.”

7. You and I here today live on the other side of the conflict which precipitated that speech.
8. We, as the redeemed of God, are confronted at times with what appears to be an enemy of overwhelming might.

9. However, we know that Satan has been defeated and that his time is short.
10. What God calls upon each of us who are Christians here this morning to do is to stay the course, to keep pressing on “toward the goal for prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14).
11. Nowhere do we find a better example of someone doing that than the apostle Paul in the early days of his efforts to reach the lost in Corinth.
12. As we look at these verses here in Acts 18, I want us to see more clearly the struggles of this faithful servant of Christ and what God did to strengthen and encourage him in the work before him.

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I. Paul Became Discouraged Because of . . .

A. THE REJECTION HE EXPERIENCED

“And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.” (Acts 18:4, NASB95)

1. Since coming to Macedonia, Paul had suffered a great deal for the cause of Christ.
 - a. In Philippi he and Silas had been beaten and imprisoned.
 - b. He had to leave Thessalonica and Berea because of the riots and civil rejection.
 - c. Those in Athens were indifferent to him, considering him to be an “idle babbler,” a “seedpicker,” someone who picked up bits and pieces of learning here and there and then passed it off as his own.
2. As he left Athens and walked the fifty miles to Corinth, he must have felt at least a little dejected.
3. No doubt Paul was still reeling from his various encounters he had experienced.
4. It is very likely that he had not fully recovered from his beating in Philippi.
5. He was tired and he was alone.

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6. By the time Paul arrived in Corinth, as he would later write in his first letter to the church there, “I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling” (1 Corinthians 2:1a, 3).
7. These words portray a man who had been put through the wringer.
8. Because of all that Paul had been through, he was losing his ability to rebound.
9. Even though the arrival of Silas and Timothy allowed him to devote himself “completely to [the preaching and teaching of] the word” (v. 5), there were those among the Jews who “resisted and blasphemed” (v. 6).
10. These were people of Paul’s own nationality, descendants of Abraham, people for whom he deeply cared.
11. Their rejection forced him to turn to the Gentiles in Corinth, many of whom “believed and were baptized” (Acts 18:8).

Slide 4**B. THE IMMORALITY HE ENCOUNTERED**

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

1. Corinth was the most populated city in Greece (approx. 750,000 — a little more than the present population of Nashville, TN).
2. It was a commercial center because of its position on a narrow land bridge which connected the southern part of Greece, the Peloponnessus, with the northern part of Greece.
 - a. All commercial land traffic going between northern and southern Greece had to travel through Corinth.
 - b. Likewise, all cargo going east or west had to be unloaded at one of the two sea ports and pass through Corinth — this was done because sailing around the tip of Greece was considered too dangerous in those days.
3. One of the most prominent features of the city was the Temple of Aphrodite, located on a large hill, overlooking the city, known as the Acrocorinth.

4. Aphrodite (Venus) was the goddess of love.
5. There were 1,000 temple prostitutes associated with the temple who entered the city each evening to ply their trade.
6. Many people in Paul's day believed they were worshiping the goddess of love when they had immoral relations with one of these individuals.
7. Immorality in Corinth was so well known that *korinthiazomai* meant to practice immorality, and *korinthiastes* was a synonym for harlot.
8. It was said there was no city in the Roman Empire which was more corrupt.
9. Later when Paul wrote his first letter to the Christians in Corinth, he reminded them that those who practiced such unrighteousness would not enter the kingdom of God.

“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.” (1 Corinthians 6:9–10, NASB95)

10. Having to confront such blatant immorality every day certainly took its toll upon Paul.

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II. All Of God's Servants Are Subject To Discouragement

A. THE GREAT DELIVERER, MOSES

1. The Bible is full of servants of God who at times became discouraged.
2. Moses was confronted with the constant complaints of the Israelites (Numbers 11:11).

“So Moses said to the Lord, “Why have You been so hard on Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all this people on me?” (Numbers 11:11, NASB95)

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B. KING DAVID

1. David at times found himself in great distress (*Psalm 55:4-7*).

“My heart is in anguish within me,
And the terrors of death have fallen upon me.
Fear and trembling come upon me,
And horror has overwhelmed me.
I said, “Oh, that I had wings like a dove!
I would fly away and be at rest.
“Behold, I would wander far away,
I would lodge in the wilderness.”

(*Psalm 55:4–7, NASB95*)

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C. THE PROPHET ELIJAH

1. Elijah was a bold prophet of God who issued a challenge to King Ahab and the prophets of Baal to a showdown on Mt. Carmel (*1 Kings 18:20-46*).
2. After his great victory on Mount Carmel and the death of the 450 prophets of Baal, Elijah received a death threat from Queen Jezebel.
3. This prompted Elijah to flee into the desert where he asked God to take his life (*1 Kings 19:4*).

“But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree; and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, “It is enough; now, O Lord, take my life, for I am not better than my fathers.”” (*1 Kings 19:4, NASB95*)

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D. THE PROPHET JEREMIAH

1. God had sent him to speak to the final kings of Judah before its collapse.
2. His message was not well received — some wanted to kill him, others through him into an empty cistern.

3. Such treatment prompted him to cry out to God (Jeremiah 20:7b-8).

“O LORD, You have deceived me and I was deceived;

You have overcome me and prevailed.

I have become a laughingstock all day long;

Everyone mocks me.

For each time I speak, I cry aloud;

I proclaim violence and destruction,

Because for me the word of the LORD has resulted

In reproach and derision all day long.”

(Jeremiah 20:7–8, NASB95)

❑ When we become discouraged, we are no different from these faithful servants of days gone by.

4. While the devil is actively working to discourage us, God is actively working to encourage us.
5. While the devil is trying to drag us down, God is working to lift us up.
6. While the devil aims at getting us to quit, God exhorts us to keep up the good fight.

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II. The Encouragement Which God Provides

A. FRIENDS OF LIKE PRECIOUS FAITH

1. One of the greatest encouragements God gives us are our brothers and sisters in Christ.
2. With Silas and Timothy still in Berea, God in His providence brought others into Paul's life to encourage him.
3. The first, as we noticed last week were Aquila and Priscilla, who were forced by an edict from the Roman Emperor Claudius to leave Rome and come To Corinth.
4. Here, they set up their tent-making business.

5. Paul, who had also been trained in this craft, joined them in their business.

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

6. They provided a great encouragement to Paul, not only in Corinth but throughout the rest of his life.
7. Then God sent Silas and Timothy from Macedonia (*Acts 18:5*) to Corinth to reunite with Paul.
 - a. They brought him good news about the brethren in Thessalonica — of their faith and love and that they were standing firm in the Lord (1 *Thessalonians 3:6-8*).
 - b. They also brought him financial support from those in the church at Philippi (2 *Corinthians 11:9*).
8. Encouraged by these friends, Paul began “devoting himself completely to the word” (*18:5*).
10. Each of us should stand for what is right even if we have to stand alone.
11. But it is much easier to stand against the pressure of the opposition if there are those who will support, strengthen and stand with us.
12. We must thank God for the friends who He brings alongside of us to encourage us in the work of the Lord.

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B. NEW CONVERTS TO THE GOSPEL (5B-8)

1. Though Paul still faced opposition, even to the point that some “resisted and blasphemed” (*18:6*), Paul began to see success.
2. Having been forced to leave the synagogue, Paul began teaching in “the house of Titus Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue” (*18:7*)
 - a. “Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household” (*18:8a*).

- b. “Many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized” (18:8b)
- 3. Others in Corinth who obeyed the gospel, not mentioned here by Luke, but in later letters by Paul include,
 - a. “Erastus, the city treasurer” (Romans 16:23)
 - b. “Stephanas, Fortunatas and Achaicus (1 Corinthians 16:17)
- 4. As a result, he was able to stay there for 18 months “teaching the word of God among them” (18:11).
- 5. As we consider our work here, I want to encourage each of you to look out at those who have obeyed the Gospel over the last three years.
- 6. Also, take a moment to look among you at those brothers and sisters in Christ who have made Waverly their home and placed membership with us.
- 7. All of this is evidence that God is encouraging us in the work here.

Slide 11**C. HIS PROMISES (9-11)**

- 1. *The promise of His presence*
 - a. While it is true we are encouraged by our Christians friends and by those who obey the Gospel, the greatest encouragement of all is the Lord Himself.
 - b. The Lord spoke to Paul “in the night by a vision,” and said to him, “Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city” (18:9-10).
 - c. In essence, the Lord said to Paul, ‘don’t stop, don’t quit, don’t let up, but keep on speaking.’
 - d. The Lord assured him, “I am with you.”
 - e. What encouragement it is to have the Lord standing with us.

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2. *The promise of His protection*

- a. Not only did the Lord promise Paul that He would be with him, He also promised him, “no man will attack you in order to harm you.” (18:10).
- b. Not only would our Lord be present, but He would also protect.
- c. There were those who sought to harm Paul — verses 12-17 testify to that, but the matter was dismissed by Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia.
- d. If we only had the eyes to see the times the Lord has protected us so that we might continue to carry out His will.

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3. *The promise of His power*

- a. There is one final promise which I believe that the Lord gives to Paul, it is the promise of His power — “I have many people in this city” (18:10b).
- b. Our Lord knew that there were many lost people in the city of Corinth who when they came under the power of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of Paul would come to obedience.
- c. In his letter to the church at Rome which was more than likely written while he was in Corinth, Paul wrote, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of god for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16).
- d. Long ago, the prophet Isaiah knew that God’s Word would always accomplish its purposes. Paul was simply reiterating that.

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.” (Isaiah 55:10–11, NASB95)

Conclusion

1. I believe that God has many people in this city.
2. Even though we may at times become discouraged, our Lord provides those things which encourage us to press forward.
3. He sends workers into the vineyard to stand beside us and labor with us.
4. He lets us see positive results and assures us that our labor is not in vain.
5. But most of all He promises to be with us and keep us in His constant care working through the proclamation of His Word to bring many souls to salvation.
6. Our work here is not finished, there is much to be done — so let's press the battle until the victory is won!