

1 After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. **2** 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 Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, **3** and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. **4** Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

5 When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. **6** But when they 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 innocent of it. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”

7 Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. **8** Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized.

9 One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. **10** For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.” **11** So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.

Still Ticking

I hate to admit it but I would buy cheap tools when I worked side jobs. Usually it was because I needed something immediately to finish a job. So I would turn to the classifieds for a tool that was either serviceable or could be fixed. But often that backfired. In other words you end up with a cheap grinder that you can't wait for to die so you can upgrade to something better but no matter how much you abuse that tool it just keeps going. You ever have anything like that? It takes a licking but keeps on ticking, something like a Timex watch? A car you couldn't kill. A kitchen appliance that just wouldn't die. Whatever it may be it takes a licking but it keeps on ticking.

On the surface it appears as if God has an apostle that takes a licking but keeps on ticking. But Paul was not a well designed machine capable of keeping on. And while, we may idolize the apostle and put him on a throne he never intended to occupy, he is not an invincible preacher who is never lonely or depressed. He's not a Timex watch that takes a licking and keeps on ticking. He's just like you or me and here we find him ready to give up.

Christians may feel like they are fighting a losing battle. Life can be lonely and depressing as we become aware that not everyone holds the same values as they once used to. It can be discouraging when family leaves the church. You may feel ready to give up. Just as any tool, car, or kitchen appliance occasionally needs to have the dirt banged off and put back

to work. Christians too need to be refreshed. Paul needed to be hear God's Word. Then we realize that God's word works. If God can work in a place like Corinth, and with his apostle, his word can work among us as well. The only reason Paul can take a licking and keep on ticking is only because God's Word empowers and equips him and us to keep on ticking. We are still ticking.

But Paul looks like he's ticking a little slower. In 1 Corinthians Paul admits that when he came to Corinth, *"I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling."* But what could possible bring down the apostle Paul? Looking at the history of the 2nd missionary journey. Paul enters Macedonia and in Philippi he is falsely accused, wrongly beaten, severely flogged, thrown into prison and put into the stocks. Upon discovery that Paul and Silas were Roman Citizens their treatment changed but Paul still had to leave behind a brand new mission congregation. Moving on to Thessalonica they found success but that was before jealousy created a riot. Paul wasn't dragged to court but Jason a lay person was and he was forced to post bond guaranteeing that another riot would not break out. From there the church smuggled Paul off in the middle of the night to a place off the beaten path: Berea. But the same thing happened there. Jews from Thessalonica came and stirred up the crowds.

Paul is then shipped 150 miles to the South: Athens. There Paul is alone but he goes about business as usual but instead of opposition he is ridiculed. They won't even listen to him. Help hasn't arrived. Timothy and Silas still aren't around but Paul presses West about 50 miles to Corinth. Alone, anxious about those left behind, probably suffering physically from his beatings. Tired and now probably out of funding Paul starts to work. *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 Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them.*

This is the first time Paul has to work. He's away from home. Away from news about the other congregations. Timothy and Silas still haven't shown up. And Corinth is a corrupt morally bankrupt society. The temple of Aphrodite is located in Corinth boasting 1,000 temple prostitutes. This is where Paul is at work day and night and *Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.* When life gets a little better. *Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching.* Paul is able to go back to preaching full time probably because Silas and Timothy brought a gift from the church in Philippi as well as words of encouragement from the congregations. But Paul's seen this pattern before. Success, jealousy, beatings, and another move. In fact that's what he finds, *"But when they 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 innocent of it. From now on I will go to the*

Gentiles.” Paul keeps on ticking but he doesn’t seem to be ticking so fast. His vision tells us he was afraid and understandably so.

If Paul can be discouraged, I think it’s fair to say, “We too can become discouraged.” We may not be beaten and driven out of the city, forced from one location to the next but we probably know what it’s like to live among an immoral people. We probably know what it’s like to suffer and struggle against a world that seems so hopeless and beyond repair, suffering physically, and grow tired, lonely, and depressed.

That’s why we need the church. The church is not a one man operation where we send out well oiled machines that can take a licking but keep on ticking. Far from that. The Apostle Paul and the Christian church the lay people suffered and struggled together. If anyone thinks that the pastor bears the brunt of oppression remember Jason was a lay person who was dragged from his house and forced to post bond. The lives of Lydia, Crispus, Titius were all affected by their association with Christianity.

Christianity is not one person but every member works together for the building up of the body. Many work behind the scenes to pull a Sunday off. The worst possible thing we can do is assume, “They don’t need my help. I can’t do anything for them or the church. I don’t need to bring my gifts or be used in the church.” Or even turn away from God’s Word to gimmicks and sell ourselves short.

Encouragement comes from other Christians who speak the word of God in their words and actions. That is the reason the church is still ticking. The church may not be a well oiled machine efficiently working to call all to Christ. But look what God was able to accomplish through his church. Last week we heard Joshua tell us God has been faithful to his promises in the past, and because of his past faithfulness we can be certain that he will carry us on now and into the future. God’s Word works just as he said it would.

When Paul needed encouragement. God sent Priscilla and Aquila Christians who probably needed encouragement of their own because *Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome.* God then sent Timothy to minister and encourage. *Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia.* He sent a gift from the church in Philippi. Paul is able to quit his day job and fully commit himself to the work of the Lord. Most importantly, Paul was able to claim Christians in Corinth. But when he was opposed and the Jews become abusive Paul moved on just not as far as used to *Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God.* And then he took, *Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household* with him. Can you imagine walking out of the synagogue and setting up shop across the

street? And yet that's what he did and *many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized*. God's Word worked.

God came to Paul and promised, "*Do not be afraid; 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.*" Three promises are made. "*I am with you. No one shall harm you. I have many people in this city.*" It was as if God were speaking to Elijah all over again. I reserve 7,000 in Israel. There are others just like you out there. *So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.* God was faithful and his word worked. That doesn't mean Corinth was without problems. We have two letters that Paul wrote to this problem congregation. There was drunkenness at Communion. A Son was sleeping with his mother in law and they were proud of their tolerance. Members were taking others to court and settling disputes there. The Word of God worked even among them. It's still ticking.

That word works because of the content of that word that God has indeed been involved in this world. That he has done something about our pain and suffering. That's what Jesus experienced for us and in our place. Jesus came among us and he generously sows his Christians where-ever and whenever they are needed. This all he has done for us and in our place. Sending Christians to spread the news of a God who came down to suffer and die so we might have life.

That's what Paul needed to hear. That's what we need to hear. Christianity doesn't depend on us. We can't argue anyone into heaven we can only say it as it is. That's what's what keeps us ticking even when we suffer and struggle in this world. Don't back down from a city like Corinth or Lodi. God's promise is certain. His Word works. Be encouraged. We have God's Promise that "He's still with us." Surely I am with you to the very end of the age... but as far as not being harmed... that was a specific promise to as specific person at a specific time. We also have the promise that his word works.

Realize you don't have to wait for a tool to die before you upgrade to something better. I give those tools to my brother and find a new one for myself. But there isn't anything better that you can give someone than the tool that works no matter what is thrown at it. It's not a timex watch but it takes a licking, even if nailed to a cross and buried in a tomb, Jesus comes back ticking, working through his Word and Sacrament to strengthen us to share that same word with others.