

Sermon #244  
Acts 18:1-11  
June 17, 2018

## A New Opportunity

When was the last time that you were discouraged? Maybe you were just a little discouraged, or perhaps you were completely down, seeing little or no hope for your situation. What kind of feelings or thoughts were going through your mind? What were you afraid of? Maybe you might even be discouraged today, right now in some way.

If that's the case, then you are actually in good company, because everyone here including myself has been in the throes of discouragement. Even the great saints of the faith have written about the dark night of the soul, when they didn't even feel God's presence, even though they knew he was there. In Mother Teresa's journal, that has been released more recently, it was evident that in the last several years of her life she was going through a very dark time for whatever reason.

Discouragement and even despair can be very tangible in life, even for the Christian. That's where we will start today, but it's not where I want us to go. Yes, we recognize this dark reality, but we don't have to stay there. That's because in the middle of the darkness, God provides a light, an open door, a new opportunity. It's up to us to see it and take advantage of it. We don't have to stay in the depths of despair, not as individuals or as a church.

I'd like to share with you this morning a heartwarming, inspirational story that comes right out of Acts chapter 18 that we read earlier. The story begins with the arrival of the Apostle Paul in Corinth, a very diverse and large metropolitan city. This was during Paul's third missionary journey, just after visiting places in Berea and Athens, where he had to escape fierce opposition for his stance on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this new city, he meets Priscilla and Aquila, a couple who would become very prominent in the early church movement. They and himself were involved in tentmakers by trade, a profitable business. But Paul's main objective was to preach every Sabbath in the Jewish Synagogue, where a large group of Jews gathered. Silas and Timothy also later joined him there in Corinth, giving Paul more time to devote himself completely to preaching and teaching the gospel.

So, the story is off to a good start, but it won't stay that way. Paul knows how risky it is to preach the gospel of a dead man being raised from the dead who can forgive sins. He's been beaten and has suffered much already before coming to Corinth, and he's been thrown out of other synagogues before, which soon takes place here in Corinth as well. This story, however, is one of hope – hope for all who are discouraged, and especially for those in ministry or church work where discouragement can settle in quickly. In this story, there are several main tensions that work against each other. Yet these tensions find resolution through a new opportunity of renewed hope. Let's follow this story and find the hope for our discouragement today.

- I. First Tension: Jewish opposition versus Jewish openness to Paul and his gospel message.

- A. Opposition

(Paul was thrown out of the synagogue by a number of Jews, but at least six Jews accepted the gospel message and became influential members of the new church and young movement)

- B. Openness

- II. Opportunity squelched and opportunity seized.

(Paul was thrown out of the synagogue, but was accepted just one door down. When a door closes door, he opens another, perhaps even more strategic.)

- III. Discouragement versus encouragement.

(Paul was discouraged when he came, see notes above (1 Cor. 2:3), but Jesus encouraged him in the vision to stay strong (v. 9, 10)

Conclusion