

**“Paul Was Occupied With the Word”**

*Sermon Notes*

- **Our mission to be and make disciples of Jesus feels unbearably oppressive when our souls are running on empty**

**-1 Corinthians 2:3-**

*\*In your moments of greatest weakness, fear, and trembling - be assured that the indwelling Spirit will turn your attention to...*

1. ...the gift of Christian colleagues (vv.1-4)
2. ...the joy of new converts (vv.5-8)
3. ...the fellowship of Christ himself (vv.9-17)
4. ...the encouragement of local churches (vv.18-23)

**Next Week: Acts 18:1-23 - “A Jew Named Apollos”**

# MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the week of June 30th - July 6th

## Getting Started

1. Share with the group about a time in your life when the wheels just seemed to be falling off the wagon of your soul - where you just felt overcome and overwhelmed by the circumstances of life. What was going on? What made that time so uniquely challenging or difficult? How did you look for help and hope? In what ways did you find encouragement? Perhaps you're walking through a season like this right now...or maybe you're about to enter into one. What sort of a resource might you be to one another as you reflect on these things together?

## Digging Deeper

2. What makes suffering and adversity unique for a Christian is that our mission to be and make disciples of Jesus never takes a holiday. All of the challenges and difficulties of our lives unfold within the context of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). What does it look like not just to *walk* through adverse circumstances, but to do so as a *witness* to the worth of Jesus (Acts 1:8)? Is it possible that it's especially during these seasons where Jesus has an opportunity to be on display to those around us in an unparalleled way? Explain. Try to think of Scriptures that support your answer.

## Open Your Bible to Acts 18:1...

3. Acts 18:1 is one of the most innocuous verses in the New Testament. In other words, there's a lot more here than meets the eye. Try summarizing Paul's second missionary journey to this point (Acts 15:36-17:34). How have each of his engagements ended thus far (think of Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens)? Note how Paul reflects with the Thessalonians on his experience at Philippi (1 Thessalonians 2:1-2). Paul also tells the Corinthian church how he felt as he considered the prospect of his arrival in their city (1 Corinthians 2:3). How does he summarize his second missionary journey to this point?

4. One of the first evidences of God's grace in Paul's life upon his arrival in Corinth is the providential connection he makes with Aquila and Priscilla (18:1-4). This couple is mentioned six times in the New Testament, and always together (Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19). What do these references teach us about them? Why was this such a precious relationship for Paul? Do you have Christian colleagues like this in your life...fellow-workers in the Lord with whom you've spent a great deal of time and derived much encouragement? If so, who are they? If not, why not?

5. In addition to the arrival of Silas and Timothy in Corinth (18:5), another source of hope for him amidst opposition was undoubtedly the conversion of Crispus and his household (18:6-8). Why was this such a key moment for the advance of the gospel in Corinth? Can you think of the conversion of an influential person in your memory who in turn had a remarkable influence on the lives of others? While you and I may never be a Billy Graham or a John Piper, isn't it possible that one such person might come to know the Lord through our faithful witness? Perhaps you have a story along these lines you'd like to share.

6. One of the most remarkable scenes in the book of Acts occurs in 18:9-11. Read carefully through this portion of our text. Notice

that the prophecy of Christ in 18:10 is fulfilled in 18:12-17. 19th century Scottish pastor Horatius Bonar preached a sermon on these three verses titled: “Safety and Success in Our Work for God”.<sup>1</sup> In the words of Jesus to Paul, Bonar draws out three observations and encouragements for our evangelism: *bold speaking*, *complete security*, and *certain success*. Read through these excerpts from Bonar’s sermon and reflect on them together as a group:

First, *Bold speaking* (v.9). Here’s what he says:

“Speak out fearlessly, nobly, confidently, the words of truth, the message of God, the gospel of His grace. Let not the fear of man bring a snare. Shrink not. Preach no diluted half and half gospel. Let not your trumpet give an uncertain sound. Speak so that no man shall mistake your meaning or your message. Do not blunt or muffle your words as if afraid of creating too great an alarm, or rousing men too rudely or cutting men too deeply. Speak aloud, and speak clearly; not mistily, or circuitously...Speak with authority...Lift up your voice, utter your testimony, obey your Lord and deliver your soul.”

Second, *Complete Security* (v.10a). Here’s what he says:

“Christ’s presence is our true security. Not armed guards, nor bulwarks, nor forts, but Christ Himself. He is our rock, our strong tower, our shield and buckler. No weapon can reach the man thus sheltered; no foe can injure us who have been ‘found in him’; the security is perfect and divine; greater than that of the everlasting hills...Much there may be of seeming, nothing of real danger. All is safety. No weapon formed against us shall prosper. No enemy shall prevail. No man shall set upon us to hurt us, for greater is He that is with us than all that are against us. Come what will, we are safe. Let faith realize this heavenly presence in all difficulty or peril. A present Christ. That is our security. It is complete and divine. We are immortal till our work is done.”

Third, *Certain success* (v.10b). Here’s what he says:

“In the purpose of God there was a people there [in Corinth] already His, though still in idolatry and sin. Here is the Son of God, with His eye on those whom the Father has given Him, looking down on the ungodly multitudes,

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<sup>1</sup> The manuscript for the entire sermon can be found at the following link. It’s number xxxiv:

[https://grace-ebooks.com/library/Horatius%20Bonar/HB\\_Light%20%26%20Truth%20Acts%20and%20Larger%20Epistles.pdf](https://grace-ebooks.com/library/Horatius%20Bonar/HB_Light%20%26%20Truth%20Acts%20and%20Larger%20Epistles.pdf)

pointing with His finger to them, laying His hand on them. I have a treasure hid in this field, a flock scattered through this wilderness. Ah, here is election clearly and simply announced, - the eternal purpose and predestination of God. Those ungathered ones are already Christ's. He has them. He reckons them His own; as truly His, and as completely safe, as if they were already in the kingdom."

7. Yet another source of help and hope for Paul in his mission came from the variety of local churches with whom he had the privilege of visiting. Take a look at 18:18-23. How many congregations are referenced? While it is essential for our flourishing as believers to be a member of a particular local church and to be deeply invested in the lives of the people there, what is the role of other churches in the context of our Christian lives? We are an autonomous congregation, but we are also one that is interdependent with other churches within the North Central District of the EFCA and beyond. We also have the privilege to labor alongside other churches that preach the gospel across denominational lines here in the Westonka community and in the broader West Metro. How might we better cooperate with such churches or be a resource for one another?