

Keep the Mission Moving

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[0 : 0 0] Welcome to this week's message from Faith Bible Church of Lake Charles. We're excited to share a practical Bible-based teaching that we hope will encourage you and strengthen your faith.

Thanks for listening. Now, here's today's message. What do you do when you're driving down the road and you come to a dead end? Do you just stop, turn around and go home?

Probably not. What do you do? You find another way around, right? And because you have a destination to go to, you don't just give up. You know, life is like that often.

We'll hit a wall or we'll hit what seems to us to be a dead end or challenges that just seem impossible to overcome.

Maybe it's a rough situation at school or maybe at home or at work that may seem to be an impossible task or maybe even some doubts about your faith.

[1 : 0 3] You know, it's in times like these that it's easy to feel stuck. It's easy to want to give up. But just as in our drive, hitting a wall is not the end.

Or hitting a dead end in life is not the end. And in our text this morning, we find the Apostle Paul facing a similar situation.

He hits a wall where he is, but instead of giving up, what he does is he finds a new way forward. You know, now think about our world today.

Think about your very own life. You know, there's a lot of opposition to our faith. There's a lot of things going around that it's difficult for us sometimes to keep moving forward, to keep pushing the mission forward.

Whether it's in schools or workplace or at home or with friends. Sometimes standing up for what's right and standing up for what we believe can be challenging.

[2 : 0 8] But here's the good news. God invites us to stand firm and he invites us to find creative ways to share his love and truth. Because it's not always easy.

Doing right and serving God and serving others will not always be very easy. Sometimes there'll be opposition. Sometimes it'll feel like we are unproductive or things aren't working or things aren't happening.

And I believe that's when God wants us to find the way around. And I know that he will show us the way around. Just like Paul, we're called to persevere with a purpose.

You know, see, persevering, and I've heard a lot said. I've heard messages on persevering and just sticking with it. But you know what? Sticking with something that's not working is kind of foolish, isn't it?

Because our whole goal is to be productive. Our whole goal is to be effective in life, sharing the gospel, serving others, and serving him.

[3 : 1 0] So persevering alone sometimes can be like spinning your wheels without accomplishing anything. But I think what God wants us to be able to do is persevere with a purpose.

And just like Paul, sometimes we find ourselves having to adjust. Sometimes we find ourselves having to pivot and find a way around to maybe do something differently.

Or just simply do something different in order to be able to accomplish what God wants us to do. So let's start this morning by looking at chapter 19 of the book of Acts and verse number 8.

And let's see how Paul's experience can inspire us to keep moving forward, even when we face some resistance. Because when we trust God and when we step out in faith, amazing things can happen.

Are you ready? Let's go ahead and jump into Acts chapter 19, beginning with verse number 8. And he, Paul, went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.

[4 : 23] So let's see what Paul is doing. He gives us an example that we should speak boldly about God's kingdom. To speak boldly about the kingdom of God, about the things of God.

Now what is Paul doing? Paul is continuing with his ordinary routine. What does Paul do when he comes to a new city? He goes to the synagogue. He goes to the place where the Jews meet every week.

This time, how long did Paul stay? He stayed for three months. Now that was pretty much a record for Paul, right? So Paul stays there for three months without running into any trouble.

So what was he doing? He was teaching. He was speaking. He was discussing. He was reasoning with the Jews in the synagogue and persuading them.

He was teaching them the things about the kingdom of God. Now he brought a message to the synagogue or to the Jews in the synagogue that they weren't accustomed to hearing.

[5 : 30] Now the Jews in the synagogue were accustomed to talking about the Messiah. They were accustomed to going over and pouring over the Old Testament about the things of God and about the kingdom of God.

But Paul comes in and he proclaims a message that the Messiah wouldn't be coming, but that he had already come.

And this Messiah was in the person of Jesus Christ. And he didn't come here to reign this time. He came here to die. He came here to pay the penalty for our sins on the cross of Calvary.

So what did he do? Verse number 8. He went into the synagogue and he spoke boldly for a three-month period. And he was reasoning or disputing and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.

Now the word that Luke used here in verse number 8 in the language that he wrote it in means to say thoroughly or to discuss.

[6 : 37] It can also mean dispute. But our English word from this word that he reasoned or he disputed, you might see that in your version this morning.

That Greek word is the word from which we get our English word dialogue. So when you're dialoguing with someone, you're speaking. It's a back and forth discussion.

Back and forth. As a matter of fact, that same word is used again by Luke in verse number 9 when he runs into opposition and he takes the disciples, those that were followers of Jesus, those that had believed in Jesus, and he takes them and he moves them over to the school of Tyrannus.

And it says in verse 9 that he reasoned daily with them. Same word. So I doubt very seriously that he was arguing with the disciples. He was probably dialoguing with them, question and answer, back and forth.

So I'm sure there was a give and take. In the synagogue, it might have been heated at times. But what do we see? We see that Paul comes back for three months. So obviously they didn't throw him out for a whole three-month period.

[7 : 50] So they wanted to hear what he had to say. They wanted to dialogue with him. So he was most likely speaking to the majority of those that, remember when Paul was there before in Ephesus, and he had to leave to go to fulfill his vow when he had taken that Nazarite vow.

And they persuaded him and said, please, Paul, don't leave us. He said, well, I'll come back if God wills. And so here is, God willing, Paul came back, and he is back in the synagogue.

And this was the longest period of time that Paul spent in any one of the synagogues up to this time. Obviously they were willing to discuss the matter with him. But also what else did he do?

He says in verse number eight, he was reasoning and he was persuading concerning the things of God. This word in the original for persuading is in the present tense.

So what that would indicate would be the ongoing results of Paul speaking in the synagogue. He was probably weekly. More and more people were coming to know Jesus as their Savior.

[9 : 01] He was having ongoing results during that three-month period. And God used the Apostle Paul to convince and to persuade many of these Jews to trust in their Messiah, who is Jesus Christ.

So he is using persuasive language. He's probably using even Old Testament Scripture to support what he is trying to reason with them.

One commentator wrote this. He said the meaning of the Greek word conveys the idea that Paul was teaching the word of God with good reasoning. Paul was an excellent teacher.

He did something more than pound on the pulpit and yell and holler and walk up and down the aisles. Says he gave forth good facts, used good logical arguments, and supported his teaching well with Scripture.

This commentator goes on to say, The spiritual ignorance that is present in our churches today indicates we need a lot more of this skillful teaching in our churches today than we are getting.

[10 : 06] A few months ago, we had two or three folks that came, and they said they were looking for a church that preached the word of God. And I was also talking to a friend of mine who retired from the pastorate, is now working for K-Love, and he's up in Tennessee.

And he said he and his wife were looking for a local church. And he said, Bart, you wouldn't imagine how many churches we have visited. And he said sometimes the pastor or the preacher would open his Bible at the beginning, read a verse, and would never refer to God's word again.

Or he said sometimes he would not even read a verse of Scripture until the end, and he would just talk. And I've heard this over and over and over again.

In so many of our pulpits across America, there's no good teaching of the word of God. And I've heard some preachers holler, spit, and pound the pulpit, and walk around and really not say a whole lot of anything.

They just raise their voice like as if that would make a difference. So what Paul was doing was Paul was teaching. Paul was preaching. Paul was reasoning with them. And I'm sure, as Paul's habit was, using Scripture, the Old Testament Scripture, to teach them about the Messiah and the kingdom of God.

[11 : 35] So think about what it means to speak boldly. It's not about being loud. And it's not always about being aggressive. It's just simply taking time with someone and not backing down.

Just saying, well, this is what the word of God says. And this is what I believe the word of God says. It's about having the courage to share with someone what you believe, even when it's not popular.

So Paul reasoned with them. He's persuading some in the synagogue. And he's engaging them in meaningful conversations about Jesus. He didn't shy away from the tough topics.

Instead, I believe he approached them with humility. And he approached them with the truth. Now, how often do we have opportunities like that to share our faith? But we hold back, maybe because we're concerned about what people might think about us.

It's an example where if we sometimes step or are willing to step out of our comfort zones, it's about trusting God that he will work through our words, even when we don't see immediate results.

[12 : 37] See, that's the thing. Getting results is not up to us as followers of Christ. We just share the message. We just tell people about God.

We just tell people about what Jesus Christ has done for us. And it's up to the Holy Spirit to work in the heart of someone and then produce the faith that is necessary for a person to trust and to begin to follow Jesus Christ.

So for three months, people are putting up with Paul's preaching. They heard him. They asked questions. They made statements. And some were persuaded.

So let's be inspired by Paul's boldness. Just be willing to share Jesus with those around you. Sometimes it might just be doing something kind for someone else. It might open up an opportunity to talk about the Lord.

Know that God's with you every single step of the way. But not everything stayed rosy. We also see what Paul does when he faces opposition. So what does he do?

[13 : 41] We'll see that in verse number 9. What Paul does is he adapts and he pivots. Verse number 9 says, But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of tyrannous.

Luke tells us that some of the Jews had had enough. They reached their boiling point. They had heard their last sermon. And so they started cursing the way.

They started talking badly about Christianity and about Jesus and his followers. So Luke tells us in verse number 9 that their hearts were hardened.

That some were hardened. And the tense of the word that Luke used here for hardened indicates to us that this hardening was a process.

It didn't just happen overnight, immediately. So over the span of these three months, some of the people's hearts gradually hardened against the gospel.

[14 : 51] And what we see there is that when people reject the truth repeatedly, it hardens the heart. You see, when you say no once or twice or three times, it gets easier to say no the next time.

So this hardening was a process. They didn't like what they heard. They began to mull over it. And over time, they got to the point where they said, we've had enough.

And they started talking bad and reviling what the Bible calls the way. In the book of Acts, Christianity or the followers of Jesus Christ or what they believed was very often called the way in the book of Acts.

Why would that be? Do you remember what Jesus said? Jesus said, I am the way. I am the truth.

I am the life. No man comes to the Father except through me. And so Christianity became to be called the way. So verse 9 says, But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the way, most likely because Jesus said he was the way as we said.

[16 : 09] So how does Paul respond? Does Paul just hit the wall and quit? He says, what? They don't want to listen to me anymore, so I'm just taking my stuff and going home.

No. No. What does he do? Like Paul, we need to learn to pivot when we hit a wall. To pivot when we hit a wall.

We learned a little bit about that when everything shut down during COVID. Did we not? We can't meet together. So what did we do?

We went digital. And so from the breakfast nook at home, every Sunday, we would, as many as possible, meet online, and we kept meeting.

On Wednesday evenings, we would meet online over Zoom. We would have our prayer time. So we pivoted. We needed to stop meeting together.

[17 : 11] And so we need to learn how to do something differently when it's necessary. So what does he do? Verse number nine, he departed from them, and he took the disciples with him.

He withdrew those who had trusted Jesus. So those Jews who were following Christ, he withdrew the disciples, and he went over to the school of Tyrannus.

Reasoning daily with them. So Paul's worn out his welcome in the synagogue. He didn't fight them. He didn't resist them. But he took those who believed, and he started a church down the street.

So what he's doing is he moves to the school of Tyrannus, probably during their off hours. Tyrannus was most likely a local philosopher, and he met somewhere.

And during probably the midday, when everyone would take their break, most likely this is when Paul would go and use the hall there, and he would reason, and he was teaching, and he was discussing the things of God with these followers of Jesus Christ.

[18 : 20] And it's funny, the name Tyrannus, by the way, means tyrant. Now what parent would call their kid tyrant? Well, most likely it was his students that gave him the nickname of Tyrannus.

Maybe he was kind of a tyrant in the classroom. We don't know. But this is what Paul does. He pivots, he adjusts, he moves out of the synagogue, and he continues to teach the disciples.

So Paul was adaptable. Paul wasn't just stuck on one way of doing something. God closes one door, Paul looks for the other. In the same way, when we hit a wall, sharing our faith or serving others, we need to be willing to adjust our approach without obviously compromising the message.

So Paul's adaptability teaches us that when we hit a wall, it's not the end. It's simply an opportunity to find a new path. It's an opportunity to find a new way of accomplishing something.

So what we need to do is recognize that when what we're doing is unproductive, we need to shift our focus. Trusting that God will guide us to what or to where we can be the most effective.

[19 : 33] So let's learn from Paul, being willing to adjust, being willing to pivot when necessary, so God can use our flexibility to reach even more people with his love.

So Paul pivots. Now let's see how his adaptability or what his adaptability and his perseverance, what it accomplishes and how it pays off. Look at verse number 10.

And this, this meeting in the hall of Tyrannus, this continued for two years so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

So for two years, Paul continues teaching daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. So what's the result? What does Luke say in verse number 10?

All who dwelt in Asia heard the word of God, heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. Now this may sound a little bit like an exaggeration, and it probably is because Luke loved to use hyperbole.

[20 : 38] He liked to speak in hyperbole. But what he's saying is, it kept spreading. The word of the gospel just kept spreading. And, excuse me, but I think what it does is, it shows the incredible reach of what happens when Paul was willing to adapt and adjust and just simply move and start doing something a little bit differently.

So his dedication in Ephesus, what it did was, it turned Ephesus into a hub of church planting. People went out and planted churches from this hall of Tyrannus.

His ministry even influenced cities like Colossae and Laodicea. And during this time that Paul was there in Ephesus, the ministry team founded churches in Colossae and Laodicea and Hierapolis, known as the churches of the Lycus Valley.

So they were church planters as well. Now think about the power of perseverance. It has a ripple effect. It's just like a teacher who invests time and energy in mentoring students year after year.

And over time, those students go out and they reach others and they impact others, creating a chain reaction of positive change. So just like us, when we are persevering and we are continuing to serve God, we are going to have an impact.

[22 : 00] That impact is going to grow. So that's what Paul does in Ephesus. His daily commitment to teaching the gospel, sharing the word of God, multiplied his impact far beyond what Paul could have done on his own.

He was one man. But think about everyone who came to know Jesus. They would leave and they would go somewhere else and they would start another church. And then more people would come to know Jesus Christ.

And many of those in those churches would go out and they would start another, plant another church. And that's how the gospel grows. when we become church planters. And I think it's a good thing when people leave a church and go plant a church.

Why? Because the gospel is spreading. Because, and matter of fact, the New Testament model pretty much is churches, planting churches, where people will go and maybe they move, a job moves them somewhere else.

And they're like that person who's trying to find the local church. They can't find the local church that preaches the word of God. And so maybe they'd get a few other families together and they say, let's start a Bible study and let's start meeting and those who want to come, let's meet together.

[23 : 11] And before you know it, a church is planted. And then they, in turn, plant other churches as well. So this is what's happening here in Ephesus. They become a hub of church planting because Paul takes time, a couple of years, and he's teaching and he's discipling and he is mentoring.

So this teaches us to, number three, stick with it. Don't give it up. Stick with it. And when we persevere and stick with it in our faith journey, it can lead to, I believe, exponential impact.

So we might not always see immediate results, but when we're doing and when we're serving according to the will of God, when he has us where he wants us, he's going to be accomplishing his plan.

What did he promise? That his word would not go out, his word would not return void. It would not come back without accomplishing its intended purpose. So God can use our faithfulness in ways we cannot even begin to imagine.

So it's about investing in daily habits that reflect our commitment to God's mission, trusting that he'll use our efforts. And he will use our efforts to transform the lives of others.

[24 : 23] So let's be inspired by Paul's example. Let's persevere in our own lives when we're doing something and we hit a wall, learn to adapt, learn to pivot, and look for another open door.

When God closes one door, I believe he will open another way, another door of opportunity. So whether it's through consistent prayer, sharing our faith, or serving others, our perseverance can have a lasting impact on our world around us.

God doesn't just want us to share the gospel. He wants us to serve others. He wants us to be his hands, his feet. And he wants us to, he said, who wants to be the greatest?

We become the greatest by serving others, by being humbly willing to serve someone else. So as we leave here today, I challenge you to ask yourself, where is God calling me to be bold in my faith?

Or where is God calling me to serve someone else? Step out this week and engage someone in conversation, or just serve someone for the glory of God.

[25 : 34] So trust that God is with you, trust that God is guiding you, and he's using you to expand your kingdom. Remember, your faithfulness can transform lives, just as Paul's did.

So let's go out and make a difference one conversation at a time. Let's pray. Father, we come to you this morning. We thank you for your goodness. We thank you for your mercy, your grace.

We ask, Lord God, that you would use us to expand your kingdom, whether it's serving someone, whether it's a kind word or deed, or whether it is actually sharing about Jesus with someone else.

Father, help us to be willing to adapt when necessary. Lord, Lord, we pray that you would make a difference in our lives, that we in turn may be able to make a difference in the lives of others.

We thank you for what you're going to do. We also thank you, Father, for each one here today. May you bless each family here represented. Lord, we pray this in Jesus' name.

[26 : 43] Amen. Amen. Thanks for joining us today. We hope this message encouraged you and gave you something to apply to your life this week.

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