

Acts 18:1-23

The Better Way

Good morning church, it is a joy to be with you this morning.

If you are able to, please open your Bibles to Acts Chapter 18, we will be starting in verse 1 of that chapter this morning as we continue our verse-by-verse study of the Book of Acts.

Let's Pray, and we will get into it this morning.

Our Message is entitled "The Better Way."

Remember Paul had just done battle with the Philosophical Giants at Mars Hill.

The Stoic and Epicurean Philosophers gathered against Paul and with all the snobbery of the elite of the day looked down upon the tent making minister.

Remember Paul's sermon was superb, it was filled with great wisdom, he was relevant to their culture, and even quoted their own poets.

The response however to this spectacular presentation was minimal, and we learned that some mocked him, some wanted to hear more later, and there were a handful that believed.

And it will seem Paul left Athens really feeling defeated, we can picture him kicking rocks on the way to Corinth.

He had a lot to think about, “Why did I not mention Jesus’ Name, and why did I not mention the cross.”

There is a lot of debate over what happened in Athens.

Many see this as the greatest moment in Paul’s ministry.

However many see it as a low point.

I remember being at a pastor’s round table years ago, and the discussion got brought up on why the young people were leaving the church in droves.

And many of those pastors used this text to present the case that we need to equip them with apologetics, and we need to prepare them to combat the culture they are in.

Instead of teaching them Bible Studies we need to teach them how to combat and argue.

And I like to stay quiet in such settings, I don't like to talk, because I usually see things differently, and through a more unpopular lens.

I am a basic Bible teacher, and I try to see things simply through the scriptures.

And I watched the discussion pop around with excitement, as they laid their battle plans out.

And up on the wall behind the one guy kind of leading the discussion in this direction, he was from a big church, and had a lot of clout.

I saw behind him verses from Paul's letter to Corinth...

The verses came from Chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians.

1 Cor. 13

The Greatest Gift

13:1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift

of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part. 10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 12 For now we see in a

mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

And out of nowhere, one of the pastors from across the table shouted, "Gary we want to know what you think about all of this."

And I hanged my head down, not wanting to get involved.

But I looked at those verses and it clicked.

I told them, Paul had a great sermon that day at Mars Hill, and listen Apologetics are great.

But Paul surely did have a crisis between Athens and Corinth.

He found a Better Way, better than arguing with people with clanging words and noise.

In fact, it seems that was a more immature approach, a childlike approach, and Paul put those things away when he came to Corinth, his approach was through

simpler means, and more reliance on the Gospel of Christ.

Paul actually tells us how he came into Corinth...

1 Cor. 2:1-5 And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. 3 I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. 4 And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

Paul came not with the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

This is a huge contrast, and whatever happened in Athens was never again repeated.

I told those guys, a Better Way, is not through more debate and argument, and equipping the youth for a war of words.

Paul demonstrated Christianity through a longsuffering and patient, Agape Love there in Corinth.

I said “really, I don’t think the problem with the kids leaving the church in droves is their Atheist Professors stealing their minds.”

I said “I think the church is no longer demonstrating the Power of God.”

Sure their parents drag them to church, and they see their parents raising their hands in worship on Sunday, but then they go home, and they see their parents living like the world, speaking like a heathen, indulging in pornography, getting drunk, fighting with one another, or chasing the financial carrot the world dangles in front of their nose.

I said “I think the problem is not the world at all, and you can teach the kids to argue a good point, a right point, but are we teaching them the Better Way, to

love to the sacrificial degree that Paul did their in Corinth.”

I ended by saying, “it seems we might be settling for raising up an army of Pharisees who can argue every religious point to the tee, who can make the church culturally relevant, but in their heart of hearts the Power of God is absent in their demonstration.”

And after I said that, the gentlemen from the big church, did not appreciate my Words and Accusations toward the Church, and he shut me down promptly and went on with his diatribe.

I want back to being silent and just listened.

Shortly thereafter, I had found out, that that gentlemen is no longer in that big exciting, culturally dynamic ministry, that was raising up an army of young debaters.

It all faded out as quickly as Paul’s time on Mars Hill.

So Paul at this point in the ministry, has been beaten, imprisoned, and persecuted at every stop, and now he was intellectually humiliated.

And it is easy to understand why he was in Corinth in weakness and in fear with much trembling.

I want you to understand here, Paul is not a Super Hero, he is a man, and all of this trauma is taking its toll on the Great Apostle, and we can even picture him here experiencing PTSD and ministerial fatigue.

Take the image of Superman out of your head for the Apostle, and understand the fragile frame of mind that he is in at this point as we come now to Corinth.

Let's look at verse 1 here...

Ministering at Corinth

18:1 After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth.

Corinth, for context sake, was the major Greek city at the time Rome's Empire ruled around the Mediterranean.

It was an important crossroad for trade and travel and it was a city notorious for its sexual immorality.

In fact Paul wrote the Book of Romans from this city.

Looking right out his window, he saw the depravity of man in an amplified way.

When he wrote **Rom 1:26-27** For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. 27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

Corinth was known for its sexual perversions, and had a reputation for drunkenness and carousing.

Interestingly enough, in Classical Greek stage performances, actors that played Corinthians were shown as drunks and with a prostitute as a companion.

So now, the discouraged, beaten, weary Apostle Paul will now be confronted with a spiritual depravity that will buffet directly up against the moral Spirit of this godly Apostle.

Understand please the spiritual toll this kind of perversion would have on his soul would be trying and difficult.

Look now starting in verse 2...

2 And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. 3 So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers. 4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.

So, we get a glimpse or a summary of the ministry in Corinth, the first people Paul meets are a couple Aquila and Priscilla.

They were Jews, and we see they were forced to leave Rome during the rule of Claudius.

It was in the year 49 AD that Anti-Semitism rose up in Rome, and Claudius expelled the Jews.

They were tent makers as well, and Paul met them through his trade.

Now this is something I really appreciate about the Jews, whereas the Greeks thought that Labor or Work was appalling and meant for the lower class, the Jews actually taught that Work was a very important and honorable part of life.

They taught that every Jewish boy needed to learn a Trade, and if the parents failed to teach them a Trade, they had a saying, “If you do not teach your son a Trade, you are raising him to be a thief.”

This is something that has been greatly lost, once again, this is something I advocate for Bible Colleges today, and again it is not a popular viewpoint.

Our Bible Colleges have more incorporated the Greeks view of Work.

The reason the rabbis in Paul’s day needed to work was so they could never lose touch with the ordinary folk in their teachings.

It protected them from getting to high and lofty in their knowledge, to where it lost all application for the average person.

I am an advocate of Tent Making, the ministry is very unpredictable, anything could happen, and things can change dramatically here for us as Pastors.

I believe part of what I teach the Pastors here, is to include a good work habit, to stay efficient in an outside craft.

In fact, when a pastor comes on staff here, not only do they get a Book Allowance for their studies, but we get them a janitor key, a sufficient tool set, and a big ol' 32 ounce framing hammer, because I refuse to have a man on staff here to use the same size hammer that my wife uses to hang pictures on the wall.

So, you see this prepares them mentally for what lay ahead in the ministry, this is important.

I remember Pastor Josh, our incredibly gifted Worship Pastor, on his week, I was feeling him out, I gave him a

task that required a cordless drill, something up here with my pulpit.

And he had a little trouble operating the tool.

And at first I admit, I was a little judgmental.

I went home, and told my wife, who was quick to remind me that I cannot play a guitar, and Josh can make spoon playing sound wonderful.

She quickly came to his defense, “You understand he plays 2 instruments at a time and sings as well?”

“Well, honey you have a valid point.”

But over the last 5 years Pastor Josh has not only mastered the use of a cordless drill, he has developed in his work ethic leaps and bounds, he has learned many trades now.

The other day he was wiring in some new lights and cameras here, and I told Ashley, “It is a humbling thing to see Josh now surpassing anything I have ever taught him.”

He is working here doing things I cannot do as far as the trades are concerned, and I still cannot play the guitar!

Pastor Jason just started his tenure here, and his first mission was to replace the toilets, and he is hard at work, I saw him on Friday with his new tools out, figuring and measuring, running from here to there.

But, you see we have to keep our tent making skills proficient, we have to know how to work, because we don't want to become out of touch philosophers.

I keep a wood business on the side, to remind me what labor is like, it is good bone crushing work, it is just good for the soul.

I texted a young man the other day, to see if he wanted to join me in this bone crushing labor, and he did join me, but he said, "Pastor if you want to get my generation to work, you should not use that headline."

But he and his brother came, and we had a good day in the wood pile.

But you see it keeps us in touch with people.

I get to share Jesus with people, and have even gotten to pray with people and neighbors during the deliveries.

It is also a humbling thing, you know there are deliveries where the customer just treats me like their petty servant.

And you know what kind of servant you really are when someone treats you like a servant.

You see I have found, that too many church leaders are treated as the big cheese in their churches, and the sad thing is that they believe they are the big cheese and they are out of touch with the common person and they know very little of servanthood.

I had a pastor here one time, helping with a memorial, and he said he would help clean up afterward.

He put the backpack vacuum on and started vacuuming the sanctuary, I thought that was nice.

Until I found it in the middle of the sanctuary, a sanctuary that was not vacuumed, but later on his Facebook, his pal had taken a picture of him with the

thing on, and the headline said “Look at my pastor the servant.”

He just wanted to get a picture of himself, it was a false advertisement, but he is a big cheese somewhere, so the petty workers here handled it.

It is a sad thing that so many ministers today are slothful and lazy in the work.

Working is a godly attribute.

Paul made this connection here in Corinth while working in his trade, and there is nothing more effective in building strong relationships with someone, then getting shoulder to shoulder with them, and working hard and completing a project together.

It is important that a minister of God has not only a good study habit, but a fervent work ethic.

And there are times in the ministry, where these things become very important.

I think an honest look at the scriptures, would show that a minister of God’s Word needs to be skilled in

other things as well, or they become nothing more than the philosophers at Athens just hearing and debating every new thing that comes through the church, and they lose touch.

I remember my father for decades, was a reserve deputy for the San Bernardino Sheriff Department.

And this was his way of not losing touch with the community and the people in his community, he ministered to the other police officers, and of course those he arrested were a captive audience on the way to the jail, so he got to preach to them in the back of the patrol car.

So Paul here, makes this connection, and things are looking up as God sends him some friends.

And God does this, usually at just the right time, just connects your heart spiritually with someone.

These friends here will be dear to the Apostle Paul for many years to come.

We can imagine this is starting to bring life back to his soul once again.

And next we will see at last, Silas and Timothy find Paul, and although Paul called for them in Athens, they finally catch up to him here in Corinth, and if you remember from our study of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, they arrived with good news, that the church in northern Greece is established and flourishing.

Not only did these two faithful friends in the ministry bring Good News, but also a missionary offering from Philippi.

Paul reminded the Corinthians how he worked with his own hands, and was not a burden to them, and how the church in Northern Greece or Macedonia sent aid to lighten the burden for him.

2 Cor. 11:9 And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself.

The arrival of Silas and Timothy would be another blessed moment for Paul, look now at verse 5...

5 When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.

And these two fellow workers brought a measure of strength to Paul's ministry, he was blessed by the gift from the north, and had the ability to devote more time to the ministry.

The Holy Spirit compels him to go to the Jews, and to preach Jesus as the Christ, their Long Awaited Messiah. Remember Paul had an incredible burden for his fellow Jews, but here we see, he would not linger long with them.

He still kept his ministry to the Jew first, but he is not willing to get bogged down in the ministry with them, and he will move on after their rejection.

Verse 6 now...

6 But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." 7 And he departed from there and

entered the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. 8 Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.

Because Paul did not get bogged down with Jews, he was able to enter into this powerful work among the Gentiles, and right in front of the Jewish synagogue.

We see here Crispus, who was the ruler of the synagogue actually came to faith in Jesus, and we will see later, that he is replaced by a vengeful and spiteful man.

Now, Paul knew the routine, once he stirred up the bee hive at the synagogue, he knew that hostile adversity was coming quickly.

And here in Corinth, Paul, even with the encouragement, the high moment in ministry, he is here is dealing with some PTSD and immense pressure. Maybe even depressed, and afraid.

You may disagree with that assessment, because in your mind Paul is more than a man, but understand God would not have to comfort Paul in the manner that He does next, unless Paul was suffering from destabilizing fears.

9 Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision,
"Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent;
10 for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt
you; for I have many people in this city." 11 And he
continued there a year and six months, teaching the
word of God among them.

And this is the case in ministry, when you are being used in this fallen world to bring others into the Kingdom of God out from the Kingdom of Darkness, there is immense Joy and immense Hardship all at once.

The fruit from the ministry is cause for celebration, when people are coming to salvation, and the church is growing, you rejoice with heaven and those with you in the ministry.

But like Paul here, it comes at a great cost.

And God being so merciful, gives Paul this incredible Promise.

Paul could not take another beating, he could not take another imprisonment, he had not rested for hundreds of miles now, and from city to city he was rushed out.

He has not even had time to recover from his severe beatings, and his wounds very well still could be raw and painful.

God knew this incredible man's limits, and here in Corinth, and really this is the only place we see Paul get this reprieve, but here God gives him a Sure Word.

You see, although the encouragement from meeting True friends in Aquila and Priscilla, even being rejoined with his ministry companions Silas and Timothy, receiving the blessing of the offering from the north, the Apostle Paul's fears of what may come seemingly superseded it all.

And God granted him a vision, and a Good Word.

But understand, although God gave this promise, it doesn't mean that that Roaring Lion, Satan will not circle, and still try to strike more fear into Paul's ministry.

Look what happens next...

12 When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat, 13 saying, "This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law."

The Jews bring a similar accusation to Gallio the proconsul of this region as they have in other places.

Now, this trial here, this ruling would have had a great impact on Paul's ministry.

If Gallio ruled against Paul, it would have impacted him all throughout Achaia, not just in this one city in the province.

If the Jews had any chance, it was in this courtroom.

We can picture Paul looking at those Roman Lictors standing next to Gallio with their rods in hand.

The Lictor was like a bailiff today, but they were brutal, and feared, and Paul had felt their wrath before.

Paul perhaps fearing the worst here, had a promise from God concerning the happenings in Corinth.

And as we will see this promise was so true and sure, Paul will not even have to bring his defense before the proconsul.

God had already moved on this powerful man's heart.

Look what happens now in verse 14...

14 And when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, O Jews, there would be reason why I should bear with you. 15 But if it is a question of words and names and your own law, look to it yourselves; for I do not want to be a judge of such matters." 16 And he drove them from the judgment seat. 17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. But Gallio took no notice of these things.

Now, Gallio had an interesting reputation, according to his brother Seneca, “he was the kindest man who ever lived.”

And here he does not see that government has a legitimate role in deciding religious matters, and he is correct in this thinking.

We see too when street justice took place right in front of him, he looked the other way.

Remember now, Crispus, the former leader of the synagogue was Born Again, and he is with the Church now, and this man Sosthenes took his place.

And this has always fascinated me greatly.

Remember Paul told the Corinthians that his ministry there was not validated by human words of wisdom, or pontificating, but **1 Cor. 2:4-5 ...in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.**

So what happened when this man Sosthenes was humiliated and beaten here?

He was leading the charge against the Church, he was evil in his intentions, and diabolical in his actions against Paul.

And here the wrath that he tried to get to befall on the Apostle Paul fell on him.

Now, what did Paul demonstrate so powerfully there in Corinth, in his weakness and trembling?

What happened here, that was Better than the defense Paul gave up at Mars Hill?

Perhaps Paul demonstrated that great Love that Jesus taught about, and that he would actually write about from here in Corinth...

Paul wrote to Rome from Corinth **Rom 12:17-21**

Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19

Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. 20 Therefore

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

If he is thirsty, give him a drink;

For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Paul could have looked at Sosthenes beaten there on the ground, humiliated and shamed, and Paul could have gloated over the pitiful man.

He could have kicked him while he was down, he could have led others in jeering him further, and he could have taught from this scene how this man reaped what he had sown.

Sosthenes deserved this, for coming after the Church in such a way, this is justice for interfering with the Gospel.

But Paul demonstrated something here, and there is good reason to believe that Paul did not repay this man for evil, and that he actually had regard for good toward him.

As much as was possible, as up to the Apostle Paul, he was committed to living peaceably with all men.

How could Paul avenge himself here, how could he rejoice in the vengeance that God brought upon this man.

Paul knew the pain of a beating, Paul perhaps feeling every strike upon Sosthenes, Paul's wounds are still healing and throbbing at this point.

He knows Jesus taught, "If your enemy is hungry feed him, if he is thirsty, give him a drink."

Paul ultimately knew, to overcome this kind of evil, was to do so with good intentions.

We don't know the whole story of what happened here, but the dots connect for us, when we read the very first verse of the first letter to the Corinthian Church.

Paul addresses the church there with a greeting from himself, and a very interesting brother...

1 Cor. 1:1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,

Paul fought evil with THE kindness and goodness that our God asks of us, and the results were incredibly fruitful.

You understand when you fight evil with evil, evil wins out the day.

But when you love your wife, even when she does not respect you, eventually good will win out the day.

I have seen so many marriages saved by one person remaining on the good side, and evil was overcome by the good eventually.

When you have the ability to cheat your boss at work, and your boss treats you so unfairly, but you remain honest and upright, good will win out the day.

I remember early on in our marriage and walk with the Lord, Jess presented me with a great jobsite gift.

Her eyes were so big and excited to give it to me, she had a grin ear to ear.

It was a big DeWalt Jobsite Radio...

But she said, “Promise me you will listen to nothing but Christian Radio on this.”

I gave her my word.

The Superintendent of our company hated the fact that I subjected my crew to Christian Radio, and every time he came to check on our project, the first thing he would do is shut it off.

And I always reminded him of the promise I made my wife.

One day he told me to change it to the classical rock station that he loved, and I said I cannot.

He rebutted, by reminding me that Sweetpea, my wife would never know.

I told him, “Well Marty, every week you ask me to give you all these time cards to these guys here, how would you ever know if I added a couple hours here or there, you are not here, and you trust me to keep my word, and I do.”

He just looked at me, and huffed a little, and he never again asked me to change the station on the radio.

But the good way, the right way, the Jesus way, has a way of overcoming evil.

Whatever Paul demonstrated in Corinth, Sosthenes was saved, and brought into the Church.

This is why Paul could write to the Corinthians about the depths of this Better Way...

Hear his words again... **1 Cor. 13:4-8 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails.**

Those are powerful words considering all that took place in Corinth.

So let's finish out this next section here, and these verses will conclude the Second Missionary Journey, when Paul arrives back in Antioch.

Paul Returns to Antioch

18 So Paul still remained a good while. Actually 18 months, this was one of the longest timespans that Paul stayed in a city.

Again the Better Way is a patient, longsuffering kind of ministry.

We can also imagine that the Protective Promise Paul had from the Lord was a good reason to stay in Corinth.

That promise did not hold for the other cities, and Paul had more perils ahead...

Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him. He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow. 19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there; but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. 20 When they asked him to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent, 21 but took leave of them, saying, "I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing." And he sailed from Ephesus.

22 And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch. 23 After he had spent some time there, he departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

So Paul leaves Corinth with Aquila and Priscilla, and we are informed that his hair was cut off at Cenchrea, because of a vow.

Now this was probably the Nazirite Vow from Numbers 6, and the vow lasted a determined amount of time, and when the vow was completed, the hair that was uncut during the vow was then cut, and offered to the Lord in a special ceremony in Jerusalem.

So Paul hurried through Ephesus this time around, he would spend some time there later.

So why did Paul perform this vow at this time, and hurry back to Jerusalem?

William Barclay suggests that Paul was thinking of all of God's Goodness to him in Corinth, and took this vow to show his gratitude.

Others suggest that since the Nazirite vow was one of consecration, that it was because of the extreme worldliness in Corinth, that Paul had this desire to renew his commitment and dedication to the Lord, declaring his separation from this world, and his devotion to the Lord.

We can understand this today, we live in an incredibly perverted society.

Maybe you are watching something on your TV, and something terrible comes on before you can turn it off, and you feel that need to be cleansed from it?

This is perhaps how Paul felt.

I would like to quickly insert here, there is a neat streaming service that filters all the filth out of your movies and TV shows, called VidAngel.

You might say it doesn't affect you, but it does.

So Paul ends up back in Antioch at the end of verse 22, and you can make a note in your Bible that the Second Missionary Journey of the Apostle has ended there, and in verse 23 Paul sets out now on his Third

Missionary journey, and that is where we will pick it up next time...

The text this morning, and this journey through Greece, as I mentioned before are some of my favorite scriptures, some of the greatest lessons for my own ministry have come from this portion.

You see, in my young zeal, I loved to argue and debate, so much so, it did not matter the subject, whatever side of the argument you took, I took the opposite, and I tried to win it out.

It was a fruitless time in my Christian Walk.

And we saw here in this text, there is a Better Way, a ministry through a demonstration of the Spirit, a faith lived out, not shouted out.

It was to the Corinthians Paul said he put childish things away... and concluded...

1 Cor. 13:13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

The Better Way is love in action.

Church, as we mentioned last week, no one will want to hear what you have to say through debate and argument.

But when they know that you love them, even when they mean evil toward you... that is how you get them to listen to the Gospel message.

They have to know you care, they have to know our love is genuine, and when we can demonstrate this level of Love that we are called too, that is where true and lasting fruit will abound.

Again Paul wrote this from the city of Corinth...

Rom 2:4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

Church, it is the goodness of God that will lead others to repentance, and they have to see this demonstrated in His Church.

Keep this understanding at the forefront of your heart and mind, and be willing to do life with people, for your ministry to be one of patience and longsuffering.

This is the Better Representation of who are God is.

Maybe this morning, and you did not realize that God was good, and that He is so patient and longsuffering toward us.

Maybe in your mind God was up there with a lightning bolt in hand just ready and willing to strike you down when you mess up.

That is not the picture of God in the Bible. He is full of Mercy, He is Kind, and He Loves you so much, and desires a relationship with you so much, that He sent His Only Begotten Son to die a death you deserve for your sins.

This is the Gospel, and the Gospel is Good News.

If you have never given your life to our Loving God, do so today, come up during this last song and pray and ask Jesus come into your life.

Let's pray...