

## Catching Your Second Wind Spiritually

### Acts 18:1-11

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Intro:

It's very easy to get discouraged when things don't go the way we had hoped. Perhaps your spouse may not have reacted to your sacrificial work the way you had hoped, or your boss may not have given you the raise you had asked for, or it looks like your finances will run out before the bills do, or your candidate for office may not have won. There are any number of things that can cause us to get discouraged. And after you have been hit over and over like Paul had, the discouragement can run very deep. In verse 9, when God calls Paul to not be afraid, it implies that fear had gripped his heart. When God encourages Paul to speak and not be silent, it implies that Paul was ready to give up speaking. When God encourages Paul to stay in Corinth, it implies that Paul was getting ready to pack up his bags. And that's exactly the state of mind that Paul says he was in when he came to Corinth. In 1 Corinthians 2:3 Paul said, "**I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.**" And in 1 and 2 Corinthians Paul describes the great discouragement that he had in this chapter.

And this has been the experience of many saints down through history. If you are prone to discouragement, you are not alone. Moses, probably the greatest leader in the Old Testament, complained to God in these words:

**Numbers 11:11 ... "Why have You afflicted Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all these people on me? [Do you sometimes feel like God has neglected you, does not care for you and is not doing anything? Well, Moses felt that way even though he had experienced more miracles than most people will see in a lifetime. Moses went on]**

**Numbers 11:12 Did I conceive all these people? Did I beget them, that You should say to me, "Carry them in your bosom, as a guardian carries a nursing child,' to the land which You swore to their fathers?"**

**Numbers 11:13 Where am I to get meat to give to all these people? For they weep all over me, saying, "Give us meat, that we may eat."**

**Numbers 11:14 I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden is too heavy for me.**

**Numbers 11:15 If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now...**

Wow! He was pretty discouraged! Joshua (also handpicked by God) got so discouraged one time that he said, “**Oh that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan!**” He was basically saying, “Following you into Canaan has not worked Lord. I wish we had just stayed outside.” That was mighty Joshua. Elijah, the man who called down fire from heaven and had an amazing standoff with the prophets of Baal, sat down under a broom tree and prayed that he could die. Job, a man whom God says was blameless and upright, got so discouraged that he wished he had never been born (Job. 3:3). And though there are other lessons that we could learn from this chapter, I believe God wants me to talk to you about discouragement. I know a number of you are discouraged. And it is my prayer that this chapter would motivate you to put your hope once again in God and to keep on keeping on.

## **I. What contributed to Paul’s discouragement**

### **A. *The lack of success from previous months (v. 1)***

#### **1. He’s been kicked out of several cities**

What contributed to Paul’s discouragement? Well, if he has reflected much on the events of the last year, he no doubt had a lot to be discouraged about. He is probably still feeling the pain of John Mark’s betrayal, of Barnabas siding with him and eventually leaving him. His whole team has blown apart. And he doesn’t have huge amounts to show for his enormous sacrifices in (and let me review where he has been on this second trip) Syria, Cilicia, Derbe, Lystra, Phrygia, Galatia, Mysia, Troas, Samothracia, Neapolis, Philippi, Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica, Berea and Athens. That represents an enormous amount of work and travel, yet not nearly the results he had hoped for. How many times has he been run out of town before he’s been able to accomplish much? In hindsight we see that God was raising up churches that would be significant, but at this point, it doesn’t seem like much. He probably feels like a failure.

#### **2. He had little success in Athens**

The last verse of chapter 17 indicates that a few people believed in Athens, but there wasn’t a lot of success. And that could easily discourage a

driven man like Paul. You know, Paul is not alone. Statistics indicate that one out of five pastors in the USA feel like failures and want to quit every Monday morning. I know some of these men, and they are great men. You would never expect them to feel this way. 95% of pastors polled recently said they were majorly discouraged. But I suspect the statistics would be the same if mothers were polled. How discouraging can it get to clean up every day and still find things a mess; to wash the dishes only to find another pile; to discipline a child over and over only to find that you've got to discipline him once again; to cook a good meal only to have it wolfed down with little acknowledgement from an ungrateful family. Many men feel the same way. It sometimes feels like you are spinning your wheels, making two feet forward and three feet back. How many grandparents are discouraged because their children or grandchildren didn't turn out as they hoped? I tell you, this is a common experience. You are not alone.

**B. The depravity of this city (v. 1 – “Corinth”)**

Verse 1 says, **After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth.** Though Athens was more of a stronghold of Satan in certain ways (especially the intellectual), Corinth had it's own idols and strongholds. The two main gods of this city were Neptune (because of the sea port) and Aphrodite, the goddess of love (called Venus by the Romans). And anybody who writes about Corinth will tell you that this city was the most immoral city in the empire (at least that we have records about). No sexual perversion was hidden from view. If you think the gay pride parades in San Francisco are gross, realize that Corinth didn't need to protest or parade. The whole city was so given over to immorality that throughout the Roman Empire, the word “to corinthianize” meant to engage in sexual perversion. Every imaginable kind of sex-industry was available. And just to give you an idea, the main temple in the city had 1000 temple prostitutes. Some have suggested that Romans 1:26-28 was a description of what Paul saw in that city. It was completely given up to depravity. That would be discouraging. But in hindsight, that is actually very *encouraging*. Even when a society is as far gone as Corinth, God's kingdom can invade and start to take over. There is nothing too hard for the Lord. In 1 Corinthians 6 Paul describes what depraved and perverted people some of those church members were. But he went on to say that they had been completely changed by God's grace.

### **C. The enormity of the task (v. 1)**

The third thing that could have been overwhelming for Paul was the immense size of this city. Where Athens had a maximum of 10,000 people in it, the city of Corinth had over 250,000. That is a huge city for that time. He doesn't have his team with him. As he enters this city as a lone stranger, lost in a sea of humanity, the enormity of the task could have been overwhelming. Any of us can tend to become discouraged when the tasks seem too big to be able to accomplish. Perhaps you children bury your head in your hands when you look at the pile of math equations that you have to do, and you think, "I can't do it." The enormity of the task can sometimes discourage us if our thinking is not straight.

### **D. The loneliness of the work (vv. 1-2)**

Then there was the loneliness of the work. Verse 2 shows that Aquila and Priscilla are the first Christians that he meets in the city. He's all-alone, and loneliness can take over when you are thrust into overwhelming situations with no one to help. Perhaps you are discouraged because you are lonely. Some people are lonely in a crowd. Others are lonely by choice. But loneliness can take its toll. Paul has been alone all the way through Athens, his trip and his initial ministry in Corinth.

### **E. The stress (1 Thes. 3:7)**

Stress can also take its toll. In 1 Thessalonians 3:7, Paul describes this time of his life in these words: "**in all our affliction and distress.**" We don't know what all the afflictions and distresses were just prior to Timothy coming, but Paul told the Thessalonians that news about them from Silas and Timothy comforted Paul, Aquila and Priscilla in all their affliction and distress. That can take its toll on us emotionally.

### **F. Lack of finances (v. 3-4)**

Then lack of finances did not help. Look at verses 3-4. **So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers. And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.** Until Silas and Timothy come in verse 5, Paul did not have the money to be able to engage in pastoral ministry full time. 1 Thessalonians says that he was in great need financially. Verse 4 implies that his primary ministry was only on the Sabbath. Some people have thought that being a tentmaker is the ideal thing to do, but Paul certainly did not think so. He speaks poorly of that arrangement in 2 Corinthians 11. When you are working hard to make ends

meet during the week, there isn't lots of time left over to engage in ministry. Perhaps you have wanted to have more time to disciple your family, but you have to work so many hours to put food on the table that you don't have the time that you desire. That can be discouraging. So, far from being ideal, this tentmaking was another thing that could have added to the discouragement. It really slowed down his progress.

### **G. Opposition from the Jews (v. 5-7)**

And then finally, opposition from the Jews once again was just too much. Verse 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. 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."** And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshipped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. Paul could see the tell-tale signs of persecution coming again, and he was debating whether to continue or not. But even apart from the persecution, it's discouraging to see people obstinate in their rebellion. There does come a time when it becomes impossible to repent and people are rejected by God. No one knows when he has crossed the line into the unpardonable sin, but God at some point does not continue to give light to those who try to snuff it out. And this is a serious point even for the church because there are tares within the church as well. Revelation 2:5 tells the church of Ephesus, **"Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place – unless you repent.** Paul is grieved at their persistence in rebellion, and this opposition seems like the final straw that broke the camel's back.

If the devil has used any of these things to get you discouraged in this past week, I want you to look at the things that encouraged Paul and gave him a second wind for ministry. There is no reason why you can't have a second wind and dive in just as enthusiastically as you used to.

## II. Encouragements to Paul

### A. *Hang out with Christian encouragers*

#### 1. Aquilla and Priscilla (v. 2)

First of all, he found friends. Verse 2 shows a providential meeting. **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.** No doubt this Roman couple had faced discouragement as they were uprooted from Rome to go who knows where. But God providentially led them to each other. This is not a case where misery loves company, but where the godly can encourage each other in the Lord; they can be for each other. Romans 16:3-4 says that this couple was willing to risk their lives for Paul. That's how much they were for him. If you have a tendency to get discouraged, I strongly exhort you to hang out with godly encouragers. If you keep to yourself, you miss out on one of the means that God uses to keep people from getting bitter or giving up – the mutual edification of the saints.

#### 2. Silas and Timothy (v. 5)

Next, we find Silas and Timothy come to join Paul in verse 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.** I want you to notice how the Spirit stirred up energy within Paul in the context of his friends coming around him. And God frequently does this. Brief talks with the godly can keep you from engaging in self-pity and give you a renewed energy for ministry. In fact, several versions translate it this way. It almost feels as if this fellowship is a kind of fuel that energizes you. Of course, not all time spent with friends is that way. Friends can drag you down too. Basically there are three kinds of people: 1) the joy suckers who have no joy or life of their own but who try to suck the joy out of your life. They drain you; they leave you exhausted. 2) Then there are the neutral people who neither drag you down nor lift you up. 3) Then there are the encouragers that make you come away from a conversation feeling like you have new wind in your sails. Almost all of us have at least some joy-suckers in our lives. I guess God just figures that this is part of our ministry. The majority of people we know would be neutral and neither tear down nor build up. But everyone needs at least one encourager. Avoid spending too much time with people who like to talk about everything that is wrong, and who unduly

sympathize with you of how much you have been done in. It only makes you feel more sorry for yourself. Start hanging out with godly encouragers.

### 3. Justus (v. 7)

The next friend that he comes to is Justus. Verse 7 says, **And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshipped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue.** Here's a man with vision, and it helps to reignite Paul's vision. Here's a man who loved to worship so much that Luke takes note of it. There is nothing like the enthusiasm of new, young believers to reignite the energy in an old warrior. It jazzes me up to see some of you young people taking on projects like political races, or going out witnessing, or debating Biblical topics, or witnessing, or devouring theology books. And don't let us old geezers take that joy and enthusiasm out of you. It is a gift to the body, and I value it very much. Hang out with encouragers. Hang out with people who are growing, walking with God, who love to worship, who have vision for the future, and faith for what God could do. But make sure that you are not a joy-sucker who drags them down.

Let me read a brief section from Ecclesiastes. It's Ecclesiastes 4:9-12.

**Ecclesiastes 4:9 Two are better than one,**

**Because they have a good reward for their labor.**

**Ecclesiastes 4:10 For if they fall, one will lift up his companion.**

**But woe to him *who is* alone when he falls,**

**For *he has* no one to help him up.**

**Ecclesiastes 4:11 Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm;**

**But how can one be warm *alone*?**

**Ecclesiastes 4:12 Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him.**

**And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.**

Brothers and sisters – you need godly friends who are encouragers. And you need to *be* godly friends who can be encouragers. So the first remedy for his discouragement was the fellowship of the saints. Not the misery of the saints or the mutual complaining of the saints. I don't think that's one of the “one-another” passages. The mutual *ministry* of the saints.

### **B. Take care of your body**

The second remedy dealt with the physical. We'll see in a moment that Silas and Timothy bring a huge financial gift with them that enables Paul to stop tentmaking and to engage in his calling full time. It enabled Paul

to get a little rest. Dividing up the work enabled Paul to not be so stressed. This point is only hinted at here, but we can see the fuller picture in 1 and 2 Corinthians and in 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Paul was getting worn out. 1 Corinthians 2:3 says, **I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.** He was having a hard time standing up. He needed to take care of his body. Tentmaking was the last thing that he needed.

And many people get discouraged simply because they are pushing their bodies too much. One of the first questions I ask is, “How much sleep have you gotten this week?” Frequently it is not very much. Often, a good night's rest makes everything look rosier. Others are abusing their bodies by not eating properly. Healthy eating, a bit of exercise and a balanced schedule can be a big help. But take care of your body.

### **C. Finances (v. 5 with 2 Cor. 11:8; Phil. 4:5)**

The third encouragement to Paul was the huge gift of finances that Silas and Timothy brought with them from Macedonia. We can come to that conclusion by comparing this passage with two in his epistles. 2 Corinthians 11:9 says, **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...** That verse indicates that his financial deficit was covered when Silas and Timothy came. The Macedonian church gave generously. Philippians tells us, **Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities... Indeed I have all and abound...** (Phil. 4:14-18) Paul told the people at Philippi what an encouragement they had been to him. Financial assistance to a brother in need can be an incredible lifter of spirits. We emphasize industry and self-sufficiency in this church, but don't let it stop you from spontaneously giving \$50 or \$500 to a brother in need. Galatians says that each person needs to bear his own burdens. The next verse says that we need to bear each other's burdens. Both need to be in balance.

### **D. Good news from Thessalonica (v. 5)**

The other thing that Silas and Timothy brought out of Macedonia was good news about the Thessalonian church. According to 1 Thessalonians 3, Paul was terribly concerned about the faith of those new believers. Let me go ahead and read the first 10 verses of that chapter so that you can get a



little bit of a feel for the stress Paul was feeling over their condition, and what a relief it was to hear about them from Timothy.

**1Thessalonians 3:1** Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone,

**1Thessalonians 3:2** and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith,

**1Thessalonians 3:3** that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. **1Thessalonians 3:4** For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know.

**1Thessalonians 3:5** For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.

**1Thessalonians 3:6** ¶ But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also *to see* you—

**1Thessalonians 3:7** therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith.

**1Thessalonians 3:8** For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.

**1Thessalonians 3:9** ¶ For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God,

**1Thessalonians 3:10** night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?

You can see that it was a tremendous relief to Paul to get good news of their growth. And there is nothing more encouraging to elders and deacons than to see God's Word triumphing in the lives of the saints. It energizes us. There is nothing that so encourages parents as to see children who submit, grow and rejoice in God's grace. It energizes them. If you want to encourage your parents, be holy and zealous for Christ.

### ***E. The positive results (vv.7-8)***

The fifth thing that God used to revive Paul's lagging spirits were some positive results in Corinth itself. The home of Justus was just the place that was needed for ministry to thrive. How encouraging would that be! – to get kicked out of the synagogue and to have the guy right next door say, “no problem. You can use my home to teach.” And verse 8 says, **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.** The synagogue as a whole wanted nothing to do with Paul, but God gave Paul the pastor of that synagogue. And as a result, many came to Christ. God threw in some successes to encourage Paul. We try to do that with counseling. When counseling a person with a huge problem (like cocaine addiction), we know it will take a while, so we also work on some related issues that the person can conquer more quickly. These little successes give encouragement and build hope.

### ***F. The promises of God (vv. 9-10)***

The last thing that encouraged Paul is probably the most important thing – it was the promises of God given in verses 9-10. **Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, “Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city.”**

The reality of God’s presence in Paul’s life was a constant source of encouragement for him. That probably should have been a separate point. God was really at work in his life. Knowing God’s power and present as a regular reality is indeed encouraging. But even when that is true, we are sometimes blind to His presence because of discouragement. And that is where we need to rest our faith on God’s promises.

#### **1. God’s presence**

There are three promises God gives here. First, God promises to continue to be present with him – **for I am with you.** Those are great words – “for I am with you.” In times of loneliness Hebrews 13:5 tells us, **I will never leave you nor forsake you.** When we are tempted to think that nobody loves us, we can make the affirmation of faith from Jeremiah 31:3, **“Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love.”** When we are so confused that we can’t figure things out, we can bank on Proverbs 3:5-6 – **“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.”** When we realize, “I am just not able to do this,” we can bank on Paul’s statement, **“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.”** (2 Cor. 9:8) That’s Christ with us, the hope of glory. When we don’t have the resources, we can quote Philippians 4:19 - **“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”** When we are tempted to think it is impossible,

we can lay claim to Luke 1:37, “**For with God nothing will be impossible.**” *With* God. When we are feeling weak, Christ says to us, “**My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.**” (2 Cor. 12:9)

David Livingston was greatly encouraged by the promise of the Great Commission. Here’s an entry in his diary.

January 14, 1856:

Felt much turmoil of spirit in prospect of having all my plans for the welfare of this great region and this teeming population knocked on the head by savages tomorrow. But I read that Jesus said: “All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” It is the word of a gentleman of the most strict and sacred honour, so there’s an end to it! I will not cross furtively tonight as I intended. Should such a man as I flee? Nay, verily, I shall take observations for latitude and longitude tonight, though they may be the last. I feel quite calm now, thank God!

What was it that sustained him? It was the promise of a Gentleman who cannot lie. Jesus had promised to be with him. He has promised to be with you in the valley of the shadow of death. He has promised to be with you when everybody else is against you. He has promised to be with you whether times are great or times are bad. Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us. And meditating upon that can revive our spirits and give us a second wind.

## 2. God’s protection

Second, Jesus had promised His protection. **For I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you...** It is an encouraging thing to know that nothing can happen to us that Christ does not allow. When Christ called Paul, he told Paul that there would be times of suffering for His name’s sake. But now, no one could raise a hand against him. And next week Lord willing we will see how God makes all the Jewish plans to destroy Paul backfire. No one can kill Paul until he is able to say toward the end of his life, “**I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race** (2 Tim. 4:7). The Pharisees tried to kill Jesus numerous times, but they could not kill Him until he was able to say, “**It is finished!**” God has a purpose for your life, and no one can do anything to stop that purpose until God is ready. There was a t-shirt that I doubt was authorized by Bill Watterson, but it is a Calvin and Hobbes t-shirt that says, “God put me on Earth to accomplish a certain number of things. Right now I am so far behind I will never die.” Not quite what Paul or Jesus had in mind. But God is our protection. One writer said, “Ahead of us He’s our guide, behind us He’s our guard, under us are His everlasting arms, and

above us, if we'll look up, He's ever-present w/ us in a cloud of glory!" (Paul Kaiwi, Jr. MD).

I've told you stories of God's protection of friends in China and in Ethiopia. Let me tell you a story of Fredrick Nolan.<sup>1</sup> Frederick Nolan was a Christian fleeing from Muslim persecution in North Africa. They had already murdered thousands of Christians, and Frederick fled from his home to escape the country. After days of running and hiding through difficult terrain he was nearing the point of total exhaustion. He could hear the soldiers closing in, and he prayed for God's protection. At that moment he fell into a narrow ditch or crevice that was sort of like a cave. It was six feet deep, and he crawled as much into the cave portion as he was able. Immediately after entering the cave, a spider began speedily spinning a web that in a matter of minutes completely covered the opening. When the soldiers arrived, the leader of the group peered intently into the opening. He could see their faces in the bright sunlight, but apparently they could not see him. Finally the leader said that he couldn't be in there because the spider web would have been disturbed. So they went on. After resting awhile, Nolan emerged from his hiding spot and said, *"Where God is, a spider's web is like a wall; where God is not, a wall is like a spider's web."* If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, the first part of this statement is true. But if you are not a believer, the second part of that statement is true. You have no protection from Satan or even from God and will spend an eternity in hell. All your defenses will be brushed away like a spider's web. Scripture calls you to embrace the good news of forgiveness of sins and receive Jesus as your Lord, Savior and protector. And when you do, even a spider web will be like a wall – a protection.

### 3. God's potential

The last facet of God's promise that brought encouragement and enabled Paul to speak up and continue in Corinth was a promise of potential. If you don't see potential, it is easy to give up. Scripture helps us to see the potential in humans. Jesus said, **"for I have many people in this city."** The elect were in that city and must be reached. Paul saw the horrible state of that city, but God was able to see His people. God saw potential there. He can see things that we cannot. But God often gives us the eyes of faith to see potential.

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<sup>1</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Mark, volume two: Jesus, Servant and Savior* (Crossway Books, 1989), p. 158.

God saw potential converts, and converts they became. God saw potential saints, and saints they became. Even though all that was visible to Paul's eyes were perverts, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 speaks of what God would do with those perverts. It speaks of the remarkable grace of Jesus Christ to change, empower and transform sinners. It says,

**1Corinthians 6:9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,**

**1Corinthians 6:10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.**

**1Corinthians 6:11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God**

What a wonderful promise! "Such *were* some of you." It implies that they were no longer that. They had been addicted to sexual sins and could not get out. The demonic strongholds in their lives had gained a strong foothold. But by God's grace they were so thoroughly transformed that they escaped the judgment of hell, the snare of the devil, and found themselves restored to a life of purity.

Perhaps your discouragement is not with all of the Corinthianizing that is out there. Perhaps your discouragement is that you are fornicating and cannot seem to escape. Call upon the Lord for help, submit yourself to his remedies for discouragement.

One of his remedies is to understand the blueprints for overcoming the abominations of Corinth. Trying harder is not going to do it. You need God's blueprints. God has specific steps that He has laid out to escape from every sin and pitfall. Part of my job is to counsel people through those blueprints.

Second, seeing the victories that others have had over porn, fornication, sodomy, drunkenness and the other vices Paul listed can give you hope that you can conquer as well. Paul assured the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 10 that you aren't alone and that your problem is not greater than can be handled.

Third, God has given the body for accountability, support and encouragement. God did not intend us to fight these battles against sin alone. *Pride* wants us to fight on our own. Pride doesn't want anyone else to know that we are in sin. But God did not intend us to fight that way. God intended us to be part of a body. He calls us **consider one another in order to stir**

**up love and good works.** (Heb. 10:24) He calls us to hang out with godly encouragers.

Finally, God promises those who are serious all the strength and help they need for victory. He promised in Romans 5:20 that **where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.** God's grace was sufficient for Paul because verse 11 speaks of Paul's enthusiastic return to ministry. It says, "**And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.**" He got his second wind.

Paul promised the same success to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 10:13. He said, **No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man** [we might be tempted to think, "I don't dare admit to this sin. No one could be as evil as me." But Paul says, "That's not true. The Corinthians were facing temptations common to man." He goes on:]; **but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape that you may be able to bear it.** Part of my job is to help you see the ways of escape.

Whether your discouragement is with yourself, with your circumstances, or with others, I urge you to cast your cares on Jesus, knowing that He cares for you. Look to the promises of a Savior who has promised to never leave you nor forsake you, and who will be a strong tower in your time of need. Amen.

I charge you to not give up because of discouragement. By God's grace and through His resources, keep on keeping on.