

# Book of Acts Series - Part 28 | Stay, Go, Come

by Jim Cymbala

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*As Christians, we must be sensitive to God's will and follow up on what He wants us to do, even if it means saying no to people's requests.*

**Duration:** 38:59

**Scripture:** John 3:16, Acts 18:1-3, Acts 18:11, Acts 18:18, Acts 18:21, Acts 19:1-2, Acts 19:8-10

**Topics:** "Book Of Acts"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the preaching of the word of God and the importance of spreading the good news of Jesus Christ. The focus is on the journey of Paul, specifically his time in Corinth and his return to Syria. The preacher emphasizes the need to understand the purpose of the Bible, which is to learn about what happened 2000 years ago and to find lessons for our lives. The sermon encourages believers to follow the example of Christ and behave in a way that reflects his teachings.

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## Transcript

We've been learning a lot about how the Christian church was born and what we're supposed to be trying to replicate because the Lord put the book of Acts in here just like he put the gospels in. How are we supposed to behave? We're supposed to behave like Christ. How did Christ behave? We look in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

And then there's other epistles that talk about him. How did Jesus react when he was insulted? You go to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and you read how Jesus reacted. How is a church supposed to look? What are the emphasis in a Christian church supposed to be? You don't start calling around to pastors in America because they have some different views and some of them are almost anti-biblical views.

You go to the Bible. That's why God gave us the book of Acts. The only Gentile writer in the New Testament by the name of Luke, a physician, he wrote a very historically precise document called the Acts of the Apostle or the Acts of the Holy Spirit.

And now we have the birth and the burgeoning growth of the Christian church. Early on, there was a man named Saul of Tarsus who was a persecutor of the church and he got converted spectacularly. And now Luke starts to pick up his missionary trips as he goes out from Antioch in Syria and he goes spreading the good news of Jesus, the gospel.

He didn't spread join our church, how many we're running, here's the praise and worship songs we want you to do. No, those things are not mentioned. How many times they serve communion, a month or a year, none of that is mentioned.

What is mentioned is he preached the good news that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him would not but have. So he's preaching Jesus so people might put their faith in him and thus they would receive forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life. So the Bible tells us as Paul's going out and doing these journeys and is spreading the good news, we followed him on his second journey now.

We're into Acts 18, 19 in that area and we learned last week that he was in the city of Corinth and because the Lord spoke to him there that no one would harm him in that city, he stayed for 18 months and a lot of good things happened. And now we pick up a strange paragraph because it's just about the transit from Corinth to him returning back to Syria where he had been sent out. Now when you read the Bible, you're trying to find out what happened 2,000 years ago because that's why it was written but you're also trying to figure out what are the lessons in this passage from me? Is there anything that applies to me? In 2nd Timothy, Paul says this, when you come and visit me, bring the cloak that I left in Troas because it's getting cold where he was.

Is that a word to us? No, not at all, it's just to Timothy. No, but it's in the Bible. I know, but it's a personal word.

But later on in that same letter, he says, endure hardship like a good soldier. Is that just to Timothy or to all of us? All of us. So when you read the Bible, you're trying to discern what did it mean to them who it was written to and then what does it mean to us? We're gonna take a passage now that at first glance, you'll say there's no lessons in there.

It's just travel, it's itinerary. It's where he was going. But I think there's valuable lessons in there for us that we can learn something today.

So let's look at it. Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time, including we find out 18 months. Then he left the brothers and sisters that were there and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila.

That's the couple that he met. They were Jews who had become Christians and they were tent makers, they were merchants, they made money. And he met them there in Corinth and actually worked as a tent maker with them for a while until offerings came that freed him up to preach the gospel.

Before he sailed, this is a very strange verse in the New Testament. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Sencriah because of a vow he had taken. This is nowhere else found any place, thing like this in the New Testament.

Paul knew that he wasn't under the law. He was under the grace of Jesus Christ. But for some reason, we don't know why, what was the vow? The commentators think it had something to do with the Nazarite vow of the Old Testament.

There were a group of people, men, that were set aside in the Old Testament. They took on a vow called the Nazarite vow. They didn't drink any wine.

And they had certain prohibitions on their life that were unique. And one of the things was they wouldn't cut their hair. And when they did cut their hair, it was kind of like an offering to God.

Some of the commentators believe for some reason, Paul had some vow that he took, maybe God protect me, God for whatever reason, and he let his hair grow long and then he shaved it or got it cut. And then he was gonna bring, as he did back then, bring it to Jerusalem and make that hair kind of like an offering. It's a very strange verse.

And you gotta remember this when you read the Bible. Everything we need to know, God gives us in the Bible, not everything we want to know. Especially when you read the New Testament, there are many things happening in the churches that Paul is correcting.

But we don't always know what was happening in the church. We don't know about the letters and reports that went to Paul, so we don't know what he's adjusting to. The Bible tells us that the things that are plain are the things we need to know.

The things that are secondary, you don't have to get into a big discussion about what was this vow. We just know when we see him, we'll ask him about it. But it's nowhere else mentioned in the New Testament.

You don't have to take a vow. You don't have to let your hair grow long. Some people would love to let their hair grow long, but they're losing their hair.

They already gave that offering, which is coming out daily. But it's a strange part of the New Testament. Always remember when you read something and it's not clear, it's not clear.

It's just not clear. Don't force an interpretation of it. So what else do we learn? Let's go on.

They arrived at Ephesus. Now this is in Turkey again. He's leaving Greece.

He's on his way back to Syria. He's heading east, but he stops in Ephesus, a huge city, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. So for some reason, he wants Aquila and Priscilla to stay there.

He himself went into the synagogue and he reasoned with the Jews. This is what he typically did. He'd go into their religious meeting place and he'd try to tell them about Jesus being the Messiah, showing it from the Old Testament.

And when they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. But as he left, he promised, I will come back if it is God's will. Then he set sail from Ephesus.

When he landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, that's the church in Jerusalem, and then went down to Antioch, where he had started out from. After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia. That's where he started his first missionary journey, back to Turkey, what we would call Turkey, strengthening all the disciples.

Strengthening all the disciples. Now what in the world, why would Luke give us that? Why would God inspire Luke to tell us that minutia? All right, he's leaving Corinth, he takes Aquila and Priscilla with him. On his way back, he stops in this huge city where the temple of Diana was, one of the seven wonders of the world, called Ephesus.

Does what he does. Then he takes off and he lands back in Palestine. And then he goes to the church of Jerusalem and then he goes back to his home church, the people that sent him out.

Then, after just a little while there, resting up, he goes back to the churches he first started, strengthening the disciples. But every word is important, so let's look at it. The Bible tells us here that Paul was in Corinth and he takes Aquila and Priscilla with him and he says, I'm going back now, I gotta go back to Jerusalem.

I'm gonna go back home after that, to Antioch. So he goes into the synagogue on a kind of stopover and the people are intrigued by what he's saying. And they go, don't leave, don't leave, stay.

Stay, don't travel back home. We're interested in this stuff you're saying about Yeshua, Jesus, the Messiah. Stay, but he doesn't.

He doesn't do what they ask. He says, no, I'm out of here. And then he says, but I'm gonna come back to you, I promise, and then he adds, God willing.

And then he takes off. So what can we learn from that? He's in the synagogue, they're interested, he's teaching. He's got something else on his heart that he should be someplace else now.

So when they ask him, please, don't leave, stay, he says, no, I can't do that for you. I gotta go someplace else. So that tells us, first of all, that just because we're Christians, we can't do everything people ask us to, even if it's not a bad thing.

Just because we're Christians doesn't mean we can do everything people ask of us. Because sometimes God has shown us we're supposed to be doing something else in another place. I used to have trouble with that when I was a young Christian, because doesn't the Bible say somewhere, if someone asks you to go one mile, you should go two? Let's look at that verse for a second.

Let's look at Matthew, let's just look at that. If someone, Jesus said, if someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Well, if you use that principle and don't rightly divide it and understand it, what it means is almost any time someone asks you to do something, you should do it double.

So when they said, would you stay here, please, in Ephesus, he should have said, I'll stay double. However long you want me to stay, I'll go two. Nobody did, and he said, no, I'm outta here.

So what does this passage mean? Because sometimes we feel like we're letting people down when we don't do what they ask us. You know, would you come over to my house for dinner tomorrow? No, I can't. Come on, if you were a Christian.

Haven't you ever dealt with that? People ask you for a favor or do something, and then they'll quote that. You know, that comes right after if someone slaps you on the cheek, what are we supposed to do? Turn the other cheek. Well, the context of that is, Israel was under the control of the Roman Empire.

So the Roman soldiers, which was much to the aggravation of the Jewish people, they were in charge. You had Pontius Pilate, the governor. You had soldiers who controlled everything.

They monitored the tax collecting. So what would happen is these Roman soldiers who were kind of brutish often, they would grab people and say, hey, get those pails and move them over there for me, and you did what you were told. Sometimes I want you to carry this and walk down there and go to that fort over there and carry that, and you didn't say, no, I'm busy.

You had to do it. That's why it says if someone forces you to go one mile in the Greek language, go to. What was the teaching of Jesus? If somebody has that kind of authority over you and tells you to do it, don't walk that one mile cursing and begrudging and just all nasty.

No, Jesus said go to and do it happily. Show people no. The boss on your job asks you to do something.

Don't go, all right. Say, no, I'll do it. You're fine, I'll be happy to do it.

Oh, that didn't get any amens. Let me try that again, wow. You know, when Christianity gets practical is where we all get a little bent out of shape.

When someone who has authority over you tells you to do something, do it with the right spirit. Don't just say, I did it. Is that a good testimony for Jesus? No.

If they ask you to go one mile, say, no, I'm not gonna begrudge. You want me to go the extra? Oh. You know, among Christians, I notice, and especially it can happen in contemporary America, we resent authority.

There's whole political movements that are anti-authority. Whoever's in charge, I'm against them. The president of the White House, Congress, the cop on the corner, the police officer, school teacher, anybody.

You have authority, I'm against you. It's an anti-authoritarian view of life. Jesus said, don't do that.

When someone has authority over you, you do it, and your teacher says to a student, now go then erase that board. No, why me? No. Boy, back when I was growing up, if I would have ever said, why me? How many would have got a beat down from one of your parents? Oh, my goodness.

That does not, though, conflict with the idea that we can't do everything for everybody and make everybody happy. I wanna declare something to everybody today. As a Christian, you can't make everybody happy.

You cannot make everybody happy because sometimes what you feel God wants you to do in your life is gonna conflict with their plans for your life. So you have to be gracious like the apostle Paul and say, you want me to stay? Thank you for the invite, but I can't because I've got this burden. I've gotta go to Jerusalem.

I made a vow, and I gotta get back there. So just remember that. We're not bound.

Don't feel guilty. Don't feel out of sorts that everything somebody asks you to do, that because we're Christians, we just do whatever we want. If someone would have walked up to Jesus and said, I want you to take a trip with me and go to Rome, Jesus would have said, sorry, I can't.

I was sent to the children, the sheep of Israel. I'm supposed to stay right here. No, we'll pay for everything.

No, it doesn't matter what you pay for. I'm supposed to stay where I am right now. But then notice what Paul says also.

But I'm gonna come back to you. Now, why would he say that? Something happened where God put something in his heart. He didn't say this to every place he went, but God put something in his heart where

he said, I'm gonna come back to you.

There are some things in life that you run into where God says, that's something I want you to focus on. If you're here today and God's been dealing with you about something that you just inadvertently ran into, but God is saying to you, no, it's not supposed to end now. You're supposed to keep going with this thing.

I travel around the world over the last 10, 15 years. Every country I go to, I enjoy. And every place I go to, I meet the Christians, I fall in love with them.

In Bangladesh, to Korea, to South America, to Germany, to Holland, to France and England or wherever I am. But there are certain places I've learned that I go where God puts a special something in me and I say to them, God helping me, I wanna come back and help you. There's something, there's a connection in my heart between me and you.

Have you ever had that happen in life? Sometimes it's with a person. You meet everyone, you love everyone, but there are certain people you meet where God says, no, follow up with that one. That's one you're supposed to follow up.

And I don't know, it's a strange thing for me to stop on, but I just wanna say to you, if God has put a burden in your heart to go back to something that you were once doing, remember, if the Lord put it in your heart, be sensitive to that, be open to that. You don't go back every place you've ever been, but there are certain things and connections that were made. I remember the first time I ever went to South America.

I went to Argentina, my first time really overseas. The same year I went to Germany. I went to Germany and enjoyed it and it's strange.

I was in Germany in a sophisticated city and it's the sickest I ever got on any missionary trip. There must have been some bacteria in the water in the hotel, a nice hotel. I was sicker than a dog.

I've been other places, you wouldn't even wanna know what I've eaten and what's been handed me and what I've put into my mouth and just said, you know, Lord, please just bless this food because you don't wanna insult anyone. I was in Argentina on this trip and fell in love with Argentina and the pastors I met there. Something that was not normal, something that wasn't there.

I remember weeping and weeping as I got on a plane to leave there. And while I was there, and I didn't get sick, I was at what they call a kiosko and they were serving cafecito and I didn't speak any Spanish back then and I was kinda lost and getting culture shock and they had a facturas and cookies and cake and all these things and served hamburgers and I had been preaching and then I was there with people and the woman behind the counter said to me, que quiere, what do you want? And I didn't understand even that, que quiere and I went, nothing, no, I'm fine. She said, no, no, no, no, por favor.

So I went, so my interpreter who had lived there, he came next to me and he said, eat something or you're gonna insult them, eat something. So I said, I'm not hungry. He said, I said, eat something.

If you knew my interpreter, you would understand how he would say that to me. So I said, whatever. So there was a plate on this, we're out in the camp, we're out in the open grounds and there was a cake with these cookies and I saw the top one was covered with chocolate and I said, I'll have that one.

So I just pointed and she was so happy that she could serve me except it wasn't chocolate. She waved her hand and about 700 flies took off from the cookie. That's the truth before God.

She just went like this and. And she took it and handed it to me. But you gotta go with the flow.

You pray and you eat it. So there are certain things and places that you go and people you meet where God says, it's not over yet. How many wanna be sensitive to those things that God wants us to do and go back to and follow up and people.

Listen, it comes to people, it comes to ministers, it comes to churches, countries. I personally believe that if we were more sensitive to the Holy Spirit that God would give all the churches in America certain countries to be especially burdened for. Like we have this special connection and Pastor Park has maintained it beautifully and expanded it to Haiti, right? We're just very interested and groups are always going to Haiti and now Malawi in Africa.

And we go a lot of other places but not every place is one you focus on. And Pastor Park needs our prayers because he's gotta decipher. Now what is God saying? Where are we supposed to put our resources? And now we have a new one helping plant churches in Ethiopia and there's a whole connection with our church and leadership through the adoption of my grandson through Pastor Petri and his wife Susan how Ethiopia now is coming into that.

So be sensitive all of you to where God wants you to go back and reemphasize something in your life. But notice as we leave this part what he said. I can't stay, I can't do what you ask.

But I'm gonna come back, I will, I promise. God willing. Why God willing? Because that's what we should always say about anything in the future.

Book of James teaches us how do you say next week you're gonna do anything? Say I'm planning to do it, God willing. How many are gonna enjoy Thanksgiving this Thursday? God willing. Come on, hold up your hand, right? We're gonna enjoy, right? Everything should be God willing because that way we place ourselves under his sovereign rule and we recognize that we are small and he is big.

And he controls everything. This is what John Wesley said when people were threatening to kill him when he was preaching. Wesley said, I am immortal until God wills for me to die.

I can't die one day before God says that's your day. Before then, I'm immortal, nobody can kill me. After that day, I can't live for a half hour because when God says we're going home, how many believe it, know it, we're going home that day.

So what we're to say is any plans we have, we should say it or infer it. It used to be that Christians would say that more. They would make plans and say, you know what, let's, you know what, I'm gonna visit you next month.

God willing. God willing because my life is in his hands. So the Bible tells us that he then sailed from Ephesus, went to Syria, went to Jerusalem, visited the church, and then he went back to the place that sent him out.

And I want to just say something. Here's the mighty apostle, Paul, but he reports back to the people who sent him out. That's the problem is a lot of Christians today, especially in New York City, they're not

connected to anybody and they want to keep it that way.

That's right, some of you in the balcony, some of you watching on that webcast. You don't connect with anyone because you want that ability not to be under connected. Under the authority and in connection with any group, you want to be able to move on your own and that's a bad sign.

If the apostle Paul went back to the people who sent him back, who are you and I to say, no, I don't go connected to churches. There's a lot of cliques in churches. I don't like to go there.

Some of the meetings are too long, some of them are too short and then I went to this other place. So I just want to just stay like, I like to move like at a mall. You just go in when you want and then you leave.

Did you know that's the current trend now? Oh, I was just somewhere, membership is down. People are not gonna join a church and commit themselves to it. Why? Because, man, that's like old school.

I like to just go with the flow. But the Bible says obey them that are over you in the Lord. So who's over you in the Lord? Who can ask the right questions? Who can encourage you when you're in trouble? Who can counsel you? People come to me and say, could I set up a counseling appointment? The first question I ask is, what church are you a member of? Oh, I'm not a member.

If they say another church, I say, I can't counsel you. If your pastor calls me and says I can counsel you, I'll counsel you. But I'm doing a bad job pastoring my own church and now I'm gonna talk to people who don't even have a connection with our church? That doesn't make any sense.

But a lot of people say, no, I don't go to any church. I say, isn't that sad? Here I don't even know you and you want me to talk to you. No one knows you.

No one knows your spiritual roots. No one knows your gifting. No one knows your heartache.

No one knows about your family. No one knows about that wayward son because you've isolated yourself. So I wanna say to everybody here, no advertisement for this church.

This church is nothing special. But find someplace that you can go to and grow in and worship and go out from and get involved in a ministry and help somebody hand out turkeys. Do something.

Be connected with somebody because there is this trait in a lot of people. I just go. You know, I knew this girl.

She came from Trinidad and she's just visiting different West Indian churches. So I one time said to her, what do you have something against white people? Why were you just in West Indian churches? We should just ask the Lord where to lead us and then when we find the right spot, boom, this is where God wants me. I'm gonna plant myself here.

Is it perfect? No, you just joined it. How could it be perfect, right? How could it be perfect? There's no perfect church. How many say amen to that? If you're looking for faults, then I remind you of that saying they have in Argentina in Spanish that certain people are always looking for the hair on the egg because there's tiny microscopic hairs on an egg and people who are super critical, they have that saying in Spanish.

They're looking for the microscopic hairs on the egg. Don't look at that. Just say these people love God.

The word of God is being preached. This is where God wants me planted. My goodness, what are you gonna roam the rest of your life? And now there's a new trend.

I was preaching to some pastors or into some of these contemporary church growth things and someone corrected me and said, pastor, you know, committed Christian now has a new meaning here in our state. I said, what are you talking about? It used to be that if you came every other week to church, you could be counted committed. But now it's one out of every three weeks.

If you come one out of every three weeks, that means like, hey, everything is cool. You're involved. This is not involved.

This is just sitting in a seat. One Sunday out of three. Think of what we're talking about here.

No, let's not live that way. Let's find out where God wants us and then let's work. Come on, do I get an amen? Let's work.

Jesus said the fields are ripe unto harvest, but what's few? The laborers are few. How do you think these turkeys are going out to these people? You think these folks are just whistling Dixie out there? Somebody worked to get that all done. Someone drove across the country to get these turkeys to someone.

Nothing happens unless someone works. So sad. See people not involved anywhere, not connected, and yet the Apostle Paul says, no, I gotta go back to the church in Antioch because I gotta tell them all that God has done so they can refresh me and bless me and I can talk to them, they can encourage me.

After staying there for a little while, the Bible tells us he went back to these places that he visited on his first trip. You know why he went? Even though he had been thrown in prison, given a beat down, back opened up 39 lashes, half killed, stoned in Lystra on his first journey, he's heading right back to those places. Why would you do that? Are you out of your mind? If you almost die in a place, do you go back to that place? Does that make any logic? If you're gonna be hassled and persecuted, why would you do it? Because he has a different agenda.

He's not interested in creature comfort. He's wanting to do the will of God. But here's the other thing.

The Bible says he went back so that he could strengthen the churches. Now think about that. He's going back into harm's way, why? Because the believers there need strengthening.

And he believed that God could use him to strengthen them. How important it was to the early Christians that there would be edification and strengthening every time they interacted with one another. A lot of times we don't even think about that.

We don't think about who needs strengthening. We're not interested who's hanging on by a thread. The person two seats away from you could be between in a really hard place, a rock and a hard place.

Two seats away from you, and you don't know it, I don't know it, but God knows it, and God is looking for people who will go and be a strengthener. Paul said he went back there to strengthen the people. The purpose of this service is you're to be strengthened.

The reason I'm in the ministry and preaching is I'm supposed to strengthen you, not tear you down. Look at this verse. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good to build him up. For even if I boast somewhat freely about the authority, Paul says, that the Lord has given us for building you up rather than

pulling you down, I will not be ashamed of it.

My authority that I have from God is to build you up. Anybody can tear someone down. If you can pull someone down, that ain't nothing.

That ain't no big thing. You go out on Fulton Street, you'll meet 10,000 people who will tear someone down, but what God is looking for someone who's selfless enough, who says, who can I build up today because people are fighting battles that you and I are not aware of because when we went through our battles, nobody knew about those, did they? Strengthen what? Strengthen their faith. Strengthen their courage.

Say, no, come on, you're not gonna go down. I'm gonna strengthen you. I'm gonna give you a verse now.

He that has begun a good work in you is gonna complete it. Don't you believe those lies from the devil. He's a liar.

You believe this word of God. I will never leave you nor forsake you. Now, come on, be strengthened.

Let me pray for you in Jesus' name. What's the greatest need in the church today for the church to be strengthened? Look at another verse. Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? We have been speaking in the sight of God as those in Christ and everything we do, dear friends, is for your strengthening.

Everything we do. Do I preach? Make you stronger. Do I pray? It's to make you stronger.

Do I correct you? Do I rebuke you? It's that you'll be stronger because that thing inside of you is gonna hurt you. Everything we do is for your strengthening. Shows that Christians are not always strong in the Lord.

Our strength can fluctuate. Our faith can fluctuate. How many have had times in your life where your faith was really strong? Lift up your hand.

How many have had times in your life when you went through a valley and you were hanging by a thread? Honest, lift up your hand. See, and now God is looking for people like Paul who will strengthen other believers. Not criticize.

Criticize. People are criticized all day long. We had a keyboard player once here.

Till the time he was 17, every day of his life that he could remember, his father said, you're stupid and will never amount to anything. You think he needs any discouragement, that person? No, he had enough for a life. He needs strengthening.

When Pastor JC has a youth meeting, it better strengthen those young people or let's not have it. Same thing with Pastor Todd. If they're gonna have a transitions meeting, this meeting that we're gonna have here at three o'clock, the whole purpose is to make us stronger in the Lord because the devil's attacking us, trying to make us weak.

And finally, do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs that it may benefit those who listen. The rule in the early church was, if I'm gonna open mi boca, if I'm gonna open my mouth, let me say something to encourage the people who

hear me. Think how less we would talk if that was the rule.

Anything that's gonna just discourage anyone or distract them away from God's love for them, just don't talk. Don't talk. Don't text it.

You'll save a lot on your bill. Just don't text it. If you're gonna text something, if you're gonna say something, make it something that will build somebody up because they're fighting battles.

Don't you get it? People are fighting battles. They're fighting battles. You and I are not aware of attacks of the enemy, young people being attacked at school.

And they cover it up because they don't wanna be vulnerable and let everyone know but we're all going through battles. I used to come into this church years ago hanging by a little tiny thread, crying the whole way. My daughter away from God.

My wife had surgery, talking about not wanting to live anymore. How do you think I felt every Sunday? How do you think I felt every Sunday? I'm not gonna just stop everything and tell you but because I was here to try to strengthen you but people go through battles. Come on, brothers and sisters.

Do we not go through battles? I don't care they're deacon, deaconess all dressed up in a suit and all of that. That doesn't mean anything. You can be having a \$1,000 suit on and be hanging by a thread.

And we need someone who will come and strengthen us. We have weakeners all over the place pointing us away from the Bible, away from Christ, away from prayer, away from faith. Saying negative things.

Oh my goodness. I know someone who's married to a negative woman in another state, married to a negative woman. His whole day is nothing but negativity.

He can say anything. Isn't it a beautiful day? Yeah, but it's gonna be bad tomorrow. I saw it in the forecast.

Doesn't matter what you say. She's gonna put a spin on it. You know how much that drains you when you live around negativity and unbelief, criticism, backbiting? Oh, he needs strengthening.

I tried to do my best. If we're gonna talk, let's strengthen people. If God calls you to see someone tomorrow, just think of this.

God, how can I strengthen this person? Well, they're not a Christian. Still try to strengthen them. Say something good.

Say something kind. It might open their heart for the gospel. Tell them God loves them.

Tell them they got a future that God wants to make beautiful. Just say something positive that will strengthen them. Because Paul went back into harm's way where he might be killed.

Why? One reason. Yes, he felt it was God's will, but God has strengthened them. God has strengthened them.

God has strengthened them. Devil's attacking. God has strengthened them.

Oh, God, give us that love. Let's pray. God, give us that love for one another where we won't be thinking just about me, myself, my wife, my family, my job, my family, my island, my city, my Polish this, my

Ukrainian that.

God, break us out of that and help us to see people the way you see them so that we can strengthen them. If we have a service, let it be a strengthening service for all people who come. If the choir's gonna sing, let them strengthen the people who listen.

If we're gonna have praise and worship, let it strengthen the people who are praising and worshiping. If someone's gonna preach the word, oh, God, help me with my sermons, my preaching, that I will strengthen the people. If we're gonna have fellowship after the service, let it strengthen the people.

We're gonna hand out turkeys. Let something be said to strengthen the people because everywhere around us, there are things to weaken us, discourage us. Every eye closed, if you're here today and you're battling with discouragement, I will not pray for you.

Someone's gonna pray for you right next to you. If you're here today going through a tough piece of life, just difficult right now, hey, we've been there, we've done that. We know exactly what that's about.

If you're going through a tough thing right now where you just need extra faith, if you're going through a period of discouragement, we're gonna pray for you. But here in the auditorium and across the street, if you're going through something like that, just stand up right where you're sitting. Don't walk out of your seat.

Just stand up. Just stand up right now. Pastor, I need strengthening right now.

Devil's attacking on the left and on the right. Just stand right up. Don't be embarrassed.

I've been vulnerable, told you about my own battles. Come on, just stand up and say, right now I need strengthening from God. I need strengthening from God.

I love God. I love Jesus. I believe in Jesus.

But I need strengthening right now. If someone's standing next to you or in front of you, reach out your hand right now. Put it on their arm and shoulder.

Do it gently and respectfully. Come on, just reach out and touch them. So everybody who's standing will feel the touch of another believer.

Father God, in the name of Jesus. Come on, everybody, let's pray. Father God, in the name of Jesus, I ask you to strengthen my brothers and sisters who are under attack.

Father God, in the name of your son Jesus, in the name of Christ, strengthen them with power in the inner person. Build up their faith. Strengthen their hope.

Fill them with love. Take away fear. For you have not given us a spirit of fear, but you've given us a spirit of boldness and love, power and a sound mind.

Strengthen my brothers and my sisters today, Lord. We're so happy that we can depend on your Holy Spirit to lead us and guide us. We want your agenda for our lives, not our own.

For we pray this in Jesus' name. And everybody said.

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