

Acts Lesson 36

*Never quit until
God makes it
clear it is time.*

*They never
did.*

*It's always too
soon to quit.*

*Never quit
on a bad day.*

*That doesn't
mean you
get to quit.*

*You get to
move to a new
place.*

*Life is really
hard.*

Acts 13

13 Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.

*He stopped the
race.*

Acts 15:36–40

36 Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing."

37 Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark.

38 But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work.

39 Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus;

40 but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God.

*You can always
be restored.*

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT
THERE IS HOPE EVEN
IN FAILURE.

2 Timothy 4:9–16

9 Be diligent to come to me quickly;

10 for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.

11 Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.

Failure is
not forever.



Imagine for a moment that some men decided to break into the museum during a night of drunken revelry in order to deface various pieces of 'boring' art, in their estimation.

Completely oblivious to the value of Rembrandt's painting, they rip it off the wall, slash the painting diagonally from frame corner to frame corner, pour cheap beer over it, and stomp on the painting itself leaving muddy boot prints ground into the canvas.

When the curators discover this they are distraught, in their eyes

What was once priceless
has been reduced to
nothing more than trash.

a dishonor to the masterpiece that communicated deep truths about the world and its artist to many.

Deemed to no longer be worthy to be on display, the tarnished and vandalized painting was put on auction, and people from all over came to bid on this once masterpiece for either bragging rights or sentimental value.

Imagine for a moment that Rembrandt were still living.

Seeing and hearing about what had happened to his masterpiece, he was furious and aghast at the complete disregard for what is esteemed to have been the pinnacle of his life's work.

He sent his representative to the auction to reclaim the painting and when he arrived he encountered men and women who could only see the painting in its present form, bedraggled and disheveled, limply hanging from a frame that it once proudly filled out.

As such, they were bidding a pittance on the work, outdoing one another by a few dollars here and a few dollars there.

Rembrandt's representative, however, had clear instructions from the artist and the room grew silent as he boldly bid the full value of the painting from before it had been vandalized, an astronomical sum.

The silence was broken by the auctioneer's gavel and Rembrandt's representative walked out of the room with the painting and returned it to the artist.

As Rembrandt gazed at his once masterpiece, his heart was full of fury and sorrow, his life's work reduced to trash by the callous and dispassionate actions of those who could not see its value.

And yet, although he was not blind to the slashed canvas, ground in mud, and the odor of stale beer, in his mind's eye he could still see the painting in its original glory.

And so he began to painstakingly restore the painting, weaving together the painting along the slash line with almost imperceptible thread, although a faint crease like a scar now traversed what had once been immaculate.

He painstakingly cleansed the mud from the canvas and where the paint had been distorted by spilt beer he matched the hues from memory and touched it up.

After many long hours of laborious work he stood back, sweat pouring from his brow, and simply smiled.

His representative came in and stood shoulder to shoulder with him and admired the restored masterpiece and declared

"Although I believed in the vision you shared with me and was willing to pay the full price to restore this painting to you, I can see it now, the painting restored is even more beautiful now than when you first painted it. The crease through the painting only seems to bring out the motif of restoration and reconciliation from scarcity and separation even more."

Putting his hand on Rembrandt's shoulder he said, "You are the greatest artist I have ever known. All well known artists have left masterpieces for the world to appreciate, but you are the only one who I have ever seen

"..restore a masterpiece defaced and destroyed to more sublime beauty than its original form."

My friends, this is the story of the gospel. This is the story about you and me.

Like the painting, our lives have been defaced and vandalized by the callous and indifferent actions of people, whether others or ourselves, that betray a complete lack of understanding of our intrinsic value.

As is the way with people in general, all that most others and even we can see are the slashes, stains, and disfigurement that mar and obscure what was always intended to be a masterpiece.

However, those who are closest to us catch glimpses of what the artist always intended and comment on the subtlety of a brush stroke here or the masterful blending of colors there.

Unfortunately, we often do not have ears to hear those that elevate words of affirmation and suggest anything remotely resembling beauty or quality within us and so we auction ourselves off to the highest bidder. We are desperate to be affirmed and assessed as valuable, even if the prices that others offer are an insulting pittance in light of what we were always intended to be.

Thankfully, God sent his representative Jesus, who walked into the world's auction house and observed God's defaced and tarnished masterpiece being auctioned off for pennies. Informed by a vision of what the painting was intended to be and guided by the desires of the artist he boldly paid

the full price for the original painting, silencing every other competing voice. Humanity was the pinnacle of God's life work, thus Jesus laid down his life in order to restore us to God.

When God looks at us, he is not unaware of the slashes, disfigurement, stains, and odors, and his heart is full of both fury and sorrow at what has befallen his masterpiece. And yet, this is not all he sees. In his mind's eye, he sees its original form and he begins the work of painstakingly restoring it to its original glory.

Those slashes that we thought would leave us hanging limp for the rest of our lives are mended with almost imperceptible thread, although there will always be a scar. He cleanses the stains and disfigurement with tender gentleness, replacing mottled hues with those in his original design. Rather than diminishing the beauty of the masterpiece, these touch-ups and mending work communicate the original message proclaimed by the painting with greater force and beauty.

Although any master artist, whether Rembrandt, Van Gogh, Monet, or Da Vinci, can leave us with a masterpiece to delight in—it is only the Master Artist who can take a masterpiece once defaced and destroyed and restore it to more sublime beauty than its original form.

This is the gospel. This is good news.

Don't buy into the lie that all of the ways your life is marred by pain or suffering, whether by your own hands or those of others, have left you as nothing more than a cheap piece of trash.

There is a master artist who sees both what has befallen you, but also sees what you were always intended to be.

Allow him to restore your life so that all might once again marvel at what his hands have made.

Don't be disheartened or discouraged if it seems like the restoration is taking time. The degree to which the painting was vandalized will be reflected in the time the artist painstakingly takes to restore it. Each slash, distorted color, and disfigurement is one that the artist feels intimately and nothing less than perfect restoration will do. If you are aware that he has begun his work, you can rest in the confidence that he will complete it with tenderness, single-minded focus, and attention to detail.

14 But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down.

15 And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, "Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on."

16 Then Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen:

17 The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He brought them out of it.

18 Now for a time of about forty years He put up with their ways in the wilderness.

19 And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land to them by allotment.

20 "After that He gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.

21 And afterward they asked for a king; so God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years.

22 And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.'

23 From this man's seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior—Jesus—

24 after John had first preached, before His coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

25 And as John was finishing his course, he said, 'Who do you think I am? I am not He. But behold, there comes One after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to loose.'

26 "Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent.

27 For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning Him.

28 And though they found no cause for death in Him, they asked Pilate that He should be put to death.

29 Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb.

30 But God raised Him from the dead.

31 He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people.

32 And we declare to you glad tidings—that promise which was made to the fathers.

33 God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.'

34 And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: 'I will give you the sure mercies of David.'

35 Therefore He also says in another Psalm: 'You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.'

36 "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption;

37 but He whom God raised up saw no corruption.

38 Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins;

39 and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.

40 Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you:

41 'Behold, you despisers, Marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, A work which you will by no means believe, Though one were to declare it to you.' "

42 So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.

43 Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.



44 On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God.

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul.

46 Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.

47 For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.' "

48 Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

49 And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region.

50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.

51 But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium.

52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

**Never
quit.**

**Encourage
others.**

**Be joyful
no matter
what.**

**It's not about
you anymore.**