

8-29-21 Feeling Defeated?

Acts 18:1-17.

Put up Paul's 2nd Missionary trip map.

Let's do our own local survey.

How many of us are mentally exhausted? (Show of hands. What is the total number of people in the auditorium?)

How many are emotionally exhausted?

How many are discouraged more days that they aren't in a week?

How many would really like to just quit? (Could be a job, church, relationship, etc.)

There probably are somethings we would be wise to quit, or at least give some less time and energy to.

Want some good news? You are right where you should be today! You are in perfect company with people of like minds...what bad could happen?

Do you know who else has felt this way? Abraham, Moses, Elijah, David, Peter, Paul and too some extent Jesus. There was times Jesus was discouraged, frustrated, and exhausted.

This is where we find Paul in **Acts 18**.

Read verse 1.

Corinth was a commercial center located on a narrow land bridge that connected the southern part of Greece, with the northern part of Greece. This land bridge is only 4-7 miles wide. All commercial land traffic going between northern and southern Greece had to go through Corinth. In a similar fashion all sea traffic had to pass through Corinth that had a port on the eastern and western sides of the land bridge.

One of the most distinguishing features of the city was the Temple of Aphrodite, located on the hill overlooking the city. Aphrodite (or Venus as she was called by the Romans) was the goddess of love. There were about 1,000 temple prostitutes associated with this temple who entered the city each evening to ply their trade. One worshipped the goddess of love by having sexual relations with one of these prostitutes. There was no city in the Roman Empire that was more corrupt.

I tend to believe that when Paul arrived in Corinth that he depressed and discouraged. When confronted with the depravity of this city he must have felt almost overwhelmed. Not only is Paul overwhelmed with immorality of Corinth; he is very much alone. Paul had left his co-workers, Silas, and Timothy behind. In Corinth he faced the challenge of presenting the gospel to an entire city with a population of around, 250,000 people. He was justifiably overwhelmed.

Read verses 2-3.

Once in Corinth an additional difficult had to be faced, was that he did not have any funds. One of the first things we are told, in **verse two and three** is that Paul teams up with Aquila and Priscilla, in their tent making business to support himself.

Read verse 4.

In **verse 4** we find that Paul, “**reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.**” It would appear the Paul because he worked full time as a tentmaker had to limit his ministry to what he could do on the Sabbath.

Read verse 5.

In **verse five** as Paul testified “**testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.**” That opposition soon began to arise. Paul must have thought to himself, “Oh, no I recognize the pattern. It is starting all over again. First, they will stir up the people against me, then I will be dragged into court. After that I will be beat and thrown into jail. I have had enough of that. I quit!” If Paul had fears like that, he was just reason, because the rest of the story tells us that this is exactly what the people tried to do.

Read verse 6.

In **verse six**, we are told, “**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.”** Paul probably had a lot of good reasons to be discouraged.

We too may have good reasons to be discouraged, to be frustrated and want to quit. But just when Paul was the most discouraged, God intervened in several ways to encourage him.

I. He needed to pause and take inventory of all of God’s provisions.

- Not too long after he entered Corinth, Paul was introduced to a Jewish couple, Aquila, and his wife Priscilla. They just so happened to be trained in the same occupation as Paul, tentmakers, workers of leather. I can only imagine how refreshing it was to find people with something in common.
- We don’t know if they are followers of God, I would lean towards yes.
- When we read **verse 5**, we see that Silas and Timothy are back on the scene.
- Paul was no longer alone. God surrounded him with a strong force of faithful people. The Lord seldom solves the problem of discouragement in the lives of believers without the using His people that we are loved by Him through them.
- These godly friends brought not only brought financial help but an encouraging spirit. The wording, “compelled by the spirit,” can be rendered, “engrossed in his witness.” It totally consumed him. He was after it with a single-minded abandonment. We would say, he was on it like a dog on a bone.
- **Read verses 7&8.** Refocusing, being reminded, rekindling that zeal, opened doors to more of God’s work.
- Although he may have had little initial success in synagogue at Corinth, God began to give him fruit for his efforts. It must have been a record day when Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue came to faith in Christ. It had been a slow start. But now the word of God was beginning to take effect. People were beginning to place their faith in Christ, not large numbers but a few at a time.
- David had a Jonathan, Elijah, God sent a raven to take care of him. And just like Peter and Paul, we have Jesus and His people to help us continue.

- Sometimes things aren't as bad as they seem, sometimes they are, but we have a God that said, He will never leave us or forsake us. No matter what is going on around us, He is there.
- Not only is He there for us, but His people are there for us too! He came in alone, but as we survey it Paul has Aquila, Priscilla, Silas, Timothy, Justus and Crispus.
- As brothers and sister in Christ, we need to be ready to be used of God to encourage, to lift a brother or sister up.

II. He needed to hear from God.

- **Read verses 9-11.**
- Jesus had some things he wanted to establish in Paul's heart. Paul not only had godly friends but God's comforting words.
- **First, do not be afraid.** Paul later wrote about this time of fear as he came to Corinth in **1 Corinthians 2:3, "I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling." 2 Corinthians 1:8, "For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life."** I think that we can come up with at least two things that Paul was afraid of, he was afraid of his message being rejected and he was afraid of further physical harm.
- **Second, you are not alone. "For I am with you..."** This wonderful phrase by Jesus, "I am" in the Greek is the same (eg-O Ei-mi) that resounds throughout the New Testament. It is a powerful phrase that Jesus uttered each time he issued one of the "I AM" statements. Jesus said, "I AM the way the truth and the life," "I AM the bread of life," "I AM the light of the world." When we understand that, "I AM with you" is marvelous reassurance.
- It is the same thing that God told Joshua in **Deut. 31:6, "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you."**
- We need to be reminded from time to time to keep our eyes riveted on the Lord and not on the perplexities of life. We cannot accurately analyze our problems without a sense of His presence.
- **Third, I have a plan. "I have many people in this city."** Paul is told, **"Don't give up there are people who have not yet heard."** These words of course are spoken to Paul, but they have application to us today. We cannot quit. There is too much at stake. There are still those who have not heard. There are people whom will be a support.
- Jesus was telling Paul that the work, any work done in the name of the Lord will not be in vain.
- It was the fulfilled promises of the he received in Corinth that allowed him to later write in **1 Corinthians 15:58 "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."**
- We see the promise from Jesus, **"no one will attack you to hurt you;"** be proven true in **verses 12-17.**
- **Read verse 12-17.**

- The proconsul quickly saw through all the verbal smoke screen this was not an issue of an application of Roman law, but the interpretation of Jewish religion and he refused to hear it and dismissed the case.
- Crispus became a Christian, so he was no longer ruler of the synagogue. Sosthenes took his place and led in the attack against Paul. This went so badly that the whole thing was thrown out of court, when this happens his own people beat him up. By the way Sosthenes becomes a follower of Christ too.
- **1 Cor. 1:1, “Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,”** Apparently Sosthenes became a believer himself, although I have never considered beating as a method of evangelism, it apparently worked in this case.
- Because of the encouragement that he had received he remained in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching the word of God and discipling the new converts. **(Verse 11).**
- When we are frustrated, disappointed, overwhelmed and or feel like quitting, we need to hear from God. We do that by getting in His word and getting about His work.
- Over the years I have learned to look for God in the little things. Its all the little things that are the kindling to the bigger things.

Conclusion

Somehow it helps me to know that a great apostle like the Apostle Paul could be discouraged and even afraid. There may be hope me then. Even the Apostle Paul needed to be reassured that he was in the protective grace of God. But whatever this world may do to us, there is nothing that can change our eternal destiny.

Even the Apostle Paul needed to know that he was not alone. As great a man as he was he still needed other people. He needed to know that he was not in the fight alone. In the future you may need the encouragement of other believers or you may be a position to be an encouragement to someone who needs it.

