

Acts 18:1-11 I Have many People in this city

Have you ever noticed that feelings of ANXIETY can seemingly come out of nowhere ?

A) You can be just cruising along – enjoying a day – something gets said or a thought comes that suddenly fills your heart with **PANIC**.

B) I had a day like this – this week – The situation was one that I had **no power to control or change**. –

1) **So why worry?** – Easier said than done – I laid there that night unable to sleep – frustrated – praying – Heart filled with Fear!

C) And when a person is going thru something like that – the worst thing you can do **is make light of it** – *“not that big of a deal”* – quote scripture.

D) I know that God is in Control – just don't like it – this is one situation where I would like to be in control. -

1) **I know how to fix this.**

Now I am sure that I am not the only one who dealt with that this week – Many of you wrestled with fear and Anxiety over a situation – out of your hands.

A) In our text today Acts 18 – we find Paul wrestling in a similar way with Fear – at a very interesting time in his ministry.

B) It was in that moment that the Lord came to him in a special vision –

1) not to rebuke Paul for lack of faith or acting human.

C) Instead the Lord brings a word of encouragement – that has application to each of us who might find ourselves wrestling **with fear and Anxiety**

V.1 After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. {Setting of the story - Corinth

A) Recall – Paul's ministry in Athens didn't go very well – preached an amazing message at the Aeropagus – **3 reactions Ridicule – Later – received**

B) Paul left Athens and headed to Corinth - about a 50 mile journey.

1) Important that we understand what kind of city Paul was coming to

Bb) Athens had a Population 10K Roman citizens 50K slaves

C) Corinth was a major Metropolis – 200k Roman citizens – 500k slaves –

1) More than 10 times the population – Favorite retirement spot for Roman soldiers

D) The size alone would be intimidating

Its very position made Corinth a key city of Greece.

A) Greece is almost cut in two by the sea.

B) On one side was what was known as the Saronic Gulf with its port of Cenchrea, and on the other the Corinthian Gulf with its port of Lecheum.

C) Between the two there is a neck of land less than five miles across and on that isthmus stood Corinth.

D) **NOTE:** All north and south traffic in Greece had to pass through Corinth because there was no other way, Men called Corinth "The Bridge of Greece."

D) Thus Corinth was "**the market place of Greece.**"

1) Corinth was more than a great commercial center.

Corinth was also a Sports town – they hosted the Isthmus Games which were 2nd only to the Olympic Games.

A) They had their favorite events – favorite athletes – they were into this

B) Like a lot of sports towns – Corinth also had a reputation for being a Party place.

C) The name Corinthian was synonymous with Party Animal.

1) in any kind of play in the theater – when a Character was from Corinth they were always **portrayed as a Drunk.**

Corinth was also a city given over to Idolatry – the most popular was the goddess Aphrodite.

A) In the center of the city was a temple dedicated to Aphrodite,

B) Every evening one thousand prostitutes would emerge to offer themselves to men as an act of worship to the goddess of sensuality.

Bb) There was a saying, "**Not every man can afford a journey to Corinth.**"

C) Today they might have said – **What happens in Corinth stays in Corinth.**

1) Today we have our struggles with Porn – they were dealing with the real thing.

It was to this city that Paul had come and God would do some amazing things there.

A) Something that we need to remember – we who are living in the wickedness of this day and age.

B) God is still working – God is still on the move – the book of Acts is still being written

1) Acts of the HS thru the church is still being written

REVOLUTION

C) So Paul arrived in Corinth

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

It was customary for Jewish fathers to teach their sons a trade, even if the sons were going to be rabbis.

A) Paul's trade was tentmaking, It was a skill which he used to support his ministry at Corinth.

B) Thru it He met this amazing couple – worked with them and stayed with them.

C) They would end up partnering with Paul in the ministry of the Gospel.

D) I love how the Lord **will use similarities** in things to bring people together.

1) Surfing – Profession- love of Music or Art -

4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, {Pattern} and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.

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. 6 But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean.

This was a way of saying – you are responsible for your own judgment.

A) Paul was clean because he preached Jesus to them but they rejected him. **They would be judged for that**

From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

Jews riled up

7 And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue.

Idea is they shared an adjoining wall – Paul goes next door

I love this heart in Paul – this is not working – I am going to fish somewhere else. –

A) But I am going to keep fishing

B)And an amazing thing happened V8 Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, {The head guy believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.

C)So here we see that God was working in a mighty way – people were getting saved – the word was going out –

1)Great helpers in Aquilla and Priscilla – Timothy and Silas were there

**D)Paul’s heart was suddenly filled with Fear – Anxiety ridden – How do we know that?
V.9**

The Lord appeared to him in a vision saying – Don’t be afraid. FEAR NOT! –

A)Why did the Lord say that ? – Paul was afraid

Aa)Why would Paul get fearful at this point?

1)He is anticipating the pattern – here we go again

B)People are really going to get mad Crispus got saved

1)Paul was beginning to realize that wherever he saw external gain, it was followed by personal pain.

C)From Paul’s perspective, the immediate future was perfectly predictable. Soon there would be a riot, and he would be beaten

1)He was like a boxer who knows what is coming when he answers the bell.

But Paul was worrying about troubles he was not facing yet, a terrible habit in which we all engage.

A)One commentator referred to it as Borrowing trouble –

Aa)playing the what if game – what if that happens – what if this doesn’t come thru. What if Goes wrong!

B)Half the time we are worrying about things we have no control over to begin with.

C)Anyone here ever do that? It can crush you!

In the midst of Paul’s despondency, God ministered to him through a vision bearing words of refreshment

A)Great words for those who are beginning to wonder if they should give up the battle.

B)When we feel the unrelenting persistence of evil, 1)when we sense that the forces of darkness are sending troops to defeat us,

C)when we feel that our finest hour is about to give way to our lowest,

1)there is an antidote for our hopelessness.

What did God tell Paul?

9 Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; 10 for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."

The Lord gave Paul in this moment 3 words of encouragement

#1 The Reminder of His Presence.

#2 The Reassurance of a Promise

#3 The Right Perspective about the city.

God wants us to have those same three words of encouragement today.

#1 The reminder of His Presence. – the Lord said to Paul *“Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you*

A) In times of fear and discouragement it is easy to feel all alone { Fear attacks intimacy.

B) it is easy to feel abandoned by God.

Bb) So the first thing the Lord wants to reassure us of in our darkest trial – He is there.

1) God reminded Paul – I am with you

C) God meets fear with the Reality of His Presence.

Isaiah 41:10

“Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”

Psalm 23:4

*“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, **for you are with me;** your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” NIV*

C) Jesus said: Hebrews 13:5-6 For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." 6 So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

D) 1 John 4:18 declares *“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear.”*

We are loved with a perfect love

A) The love that led the father to send the son – in order to save us – give us life.

B) God doesn't then abandon us

C) The Lord reminds us of His presence in those times – because if I am aware and walking in that reality –

1) That God is with me – for me behind me – bought me – loves me – Trust He will see me through

The reality of God's presence with Paul was not just meant to cast out fear, but it was also to be his strength to keep Sharing. – Stay active.

A) The Lord said to Paul keep on speaking do not be silent.

B) Fear has a way of Paralyzing us – cripples us – we want to run – hide – isolate ourselves.

1) Play it safe – not make ourselves vulnerable – That is what fear does

Bb) Fear robs us of our strength – discourages you – weakens your resolve

C) But the Reality of the Lord's presence is meant to do just the opposite – motivate us and inspire us to keep going.

1) Paul's case – Keep preaching

D) Your Case keep reaching out – keep showing love – keep doing whatever it is that God has called you to be doing in your sphere of influence.

E) Here is what is amazing in those moments –

1) Your weakened condition prepares you to be a vessel where the perfection of God's power can be manifested.

I have learned this repeatedly in my own life. When my strength is depleted, when I am weary, when I just feel empty – “Lord I got nothing”

A) When I know I can do nothing by myself, **my poverty becomes a channel of his power.**

B) The result is God gets the glory. – There is no way I could have done that on my own.

C) That is why it is so important that we stay busy – we keep moving – keep working – keep pressing - -

1) Time to stay busy

D) So the first word of encouragement for Paul and us is The Reminder of the Lord's Presence.

#2 The Reassurance of His Promise.

No one is going to attack you or hurt you!

A) This must have been huge for Paul considering what was the norm –

B) He would receive this promise – no one is going to bring you down.

B) Promise to Paul – 3,000 promises to us

1) 2 Corinthians 1:20

“For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.”

C)We are in Christ – Promises apply to us.

D)Promises of grace/ promises of provision/ promises of safety/ promises for death/ promises for life.

#3 The Right Perspective about the city!

A)Fear puts our focus on ourselves – very myopic

B)God wants our focus to be first on Him – 2nd on His mission.

C)This was the perspective God wanted Paul to have – I have many people in this city.

1)Idea is they weren't saved yet. – But it was coming.

D)Paul might have been intimidated by that city – and it's wickedness

1)God saw it as a field – ready to be Harvested

E)If Paul was distracted or crippled by fear he was going to miss out on the blessing of what God wanted to do.

God's perspective about this city – North county

I have many pp – here

A)Many Churches – still far more unsaved. – Step up our efforts at making an impact -

RESULT Acts 18:11

And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Fixed himself in that city – Planted himself there – he wasn't going to run – cower

Took Comfort in the Presence

Received Strength in the Promise

Put His Vision in perspective –

Two ways to go thru life – alone – on your own

Or with the One who died to give you life

Set you free from sin