

Acts 18:1-23

Fear Not

Two men were on an African Safari when all of a sudden a ferocious looking lion jumped in front of them. One of the men whispered to his friend "Keep calm" "Remember what we read in that book on wild animals?"

If you stand perfectly still and look the lion in the eye, he will turn and run." "Sure," replied his friend.

"You've read the book, and I've read the book. But has the lion read the book?"

Fear like the lion can seemingly come out of no where and stop you in your tracks

A)Ever wake up in a panic – no reason why?

B)Heart is racing – maybe sweating – heart is filled with fear.

C)Or maybe it happens in the middle of the day – no reason to be afraid – but suddenly you are

D)If you have ever experienced that type of thing you know that it can be debilitating

1)You don't want to do anything!

E)Alan Redpath – Fear is the greatest enemy of our faith –

1)Satan loves to fill our hearts and minds with fear!

Here in Acts 18 – Paul finds himself in a place where his heart is filled with Fear!

A)And it was in this place that the Lord appeared to him in a vision. – NOT WITH A REBUKE

B)But with a word of encouragement

V.1 After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. 50 mile journey

A)It is Important that we understand what kind of city Paul was coming to

B)CONTRAST: - Athens had a Population 10K Roman citizens 50K slaves

C)Corinth on the other hand was a major Metropolis – 200k Roman citizens – 500k slaves – 1)More than 10 times the population – Favorite retirement spot for Roman soldiers

D)For many 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,

1) and on the other the Corinthian Gulf with its port of Lechaem.

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, 1)Men called Corinth "The Bridge of Greece."

E)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 { Fantasy sports

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.

D)The Greeks had a verb to "Corinthianize" which meant to live a life of lustful debauchery.

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.

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

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

A) Something that we need to remember – when we see the wickedness of this day and age.

B) Where sin abounds – grace abounds all the more!

C) Some see the wickedness of our culture and they want God to just destroy it all.

1) Pour out your judgment and wrath!

D) But the Bible tells us that **God is longsuffering and doesn't want anyone to perish.**

E) So to this very wicked city – Corinth God sends his trusted and effective Apostle Paul

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 tent making, It was a skill which he used to support his ministry at Corinth.

B) Thru it He met this amazing couple – Aquilla and Priscilla 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 –

E) Love of sports – FCA at Rancho – football team

1) Began a new work of God

F) Paul worked on Tents in the morning and preached in the afternoons

V.4

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."

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.

B) Idea was they shared an adjoining wall

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 – always too soon to quit! – Persistent – don't say CAN'T

B) Closed door – keep knocking – that is what Paul did!

C) Jews are not interested – I will go to the gentiles

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.

Amazing: Paul goes to the gentiles and the Lord ends up drawing the head guy in the synagogue – out

A) Crispus wanders next door – hears Paul and gets saved!

B) Seen this happen many times over with missionaries in Europe.

1) They go to Italy – reach the Italians – but the Italians aren't interested.

C) The brings refugees or immigrants that are there from other countries – saved

1) They end up having this multi national church – then the Lord starts drawing the nationals

The Lord works in mysterious ways!

A) We think he is going to do this and work in a certain way – He does something else!

B) 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

C) 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.

1) Soon there would be a riot, and he would be beaten

2) 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/ with words of refreshment

A) 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.

1) 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.

So the Lord comes to him with this word of encouragement

#1 The Reminder of His Presence. – I am with you

#2 The Reassurance of a Promise – No one will harm you

#3 The Right Perspective about the city. – I am working in this city already

RESULT Acts 18:11

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

**HIS 2nd longest stay- Dug in – not running
KEEP PREACHING!**

**PAUL Took Comfort in GOD’S Presence
Received Strength from God’s Promise
Put His Vision in God’s Perspective –**

A)I have many in this city!

B)I think the Lord would say the same thing to us here about our city – even your neighborhood

C)I have many here: I AM WORKING

Let’s see how this played out!

¹² When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat, ¹³ saying, “This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.”

Gallio was the brother of Seneca, a philosopher in Rome and the tutor of Caesar Nero.

When he was appointed governor, the Jews thought, *Aha! A change of leadership! Here’s our chance to get rid of Paul.*

¹⁴ And when Paul was about to open *his* mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, “If it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, O Jews, there would be reason why I should bear with you. ¹⁵ But if it is a question of words and names and your own law, look *to it* yourselves; for I do not want to be a judge of such *matters*.”

Gallio says “This is not a question of civil judgment,” Gallio said. “It’s a religious matter for you Jews to figure out among yourselves.”

¹⁶ And he drove them from the judgment seat. ¹⁷ Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat *him* before the judgment seat. But Gallio took no notice of these things.

The Greeks seem to be fed up with this whole ordeal – the Jews causing problems in their city

A)Take Sosthenes who seems to have replaced Crispus after Crispus turned to Christ – BEAT HIM

B)Later on, in 1 Corinthians 1:1, Paul greets Sosthenes. Therefore, guess who got converted!

C)Like Sosthenes, people are often brought to salvation when they get beat up.

D)The difficult times are often the door way to salvation.

Hosea: The Valley of Achor – troubling will be a door of hope.

A)It is in the Valley –where we are being beat up that we come to the end of ourselves

B)End of ourselves we get to the beginning of God

C)So when you see someone you love getting beat up by life – don’t necessarily run to the rescue

1)God might be using that to bring them to himself

¹⁸ **So Paul still remained a good while.** Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila *were* with him. He had *his* hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow.

When Paul left Corinth on his way to Jerusalem, Paul got a haircut. Why?

A)He had taken a Nazarite vow!

B)He vowed to touch no grapes, drink no wine, touch no dead body,

1)and to allow his hair to grow before cutting it off as a sign of purification (Numbers 6).

C)Now “Why would Paul, the champion of grace, put himself under such bondage?”

D) Consider the mentality of Paul, this one who said, “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22).

Heading toward Jerusalem, the capital of Judaism.

A) Paul was willing to go with the flow and to fit in with the Jews not because he was under the law,

B) But because he was filled with love for his people.

C) If this helps reach some of them – worth it!

D) Great heart to have: Sacrifice for the good of someone else.

¹⁹ And he came to Ephesus, and left them there; but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. ²⁰ When they asked *him* to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent, ²¹ but took leave of them, saying, “I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing.” And he sailed from Ephesus.

Paul wanted to preach in Ephesus some two years earlier, but was prevented by the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:6).

Now, the Holy Spirit gave him the liberty to preach in this important city, and great results were seen.

A) God has a special timing for everything in our lives.

B) If Paul could have discerned it, the Holy Spirit was really saying, “wait” when he wanted to go to Ephesus, instead of “no.”

C) Sometimes God says, “wait” and He always knows what He’s doing when He says it.

1) His timing is perfect

²² And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch. ²³ After he had spent some time *there*, he departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

After he had spent some time there:

A) We don’t know exactly how much time Paul spent back at his home congregation in Syrian Antioch.

B) Luke wrote the account to give the sense of an immediate move on to Paul’s next missionary journey.

1) This would be his 3rd missionary journey.

Went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order:

A) Since Paul’s first focus on this trip was strengthening all the disciples,

B) he went back to the churches already founded on previous missionary works.

C) This would include congregations in Tarsus, Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidia Antioch.

Strengthening all the disciples: Paul’s passion for building disciples, not merely making converts, was again evident.

This work was important to Paul.

And us – The focus of our trip to Austria – strengthening encouraging

NZ – Outreach – There is a place for both!