

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) You can be just cruising along – enjoying a day – something gets said

B) or a thought comes that suddenly fills your heart with **PANIC**.

C) Suddenly your mind is raising - distracted - perplexed.

D) 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- 60,000

C) Corinth on the other hand was a major Metropolis 500K in population

1) Almost 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) Ships would come in from the East on the Saronic gulf

1) Items would be carted 4 miles across to the Corinthian gulf - and loaded aboard another ship

Plus All north and south traffic in Greece had to pass through Corinth because there was no other way,

A) Men called Corinth "The Bridge of Greece."

B) 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) Type Cast: Where from - Corinth - the 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.

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

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

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 servant the 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 tentmaking, It was a skill which he used to support his ministry at Corinth.

B)Thru it He met this amazing couple –Aquila 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 – Love of sports –

E)Paul worked on Tents in the morning and preached in the afternoons - bi vocational

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. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

A)This was a way of saying- I wash my hands of this

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

C)If you don't want to listen - I will go to the gentiles and see if they want to listen.

Years ago when we were first taking teams to Russia and Eastern Europe - Pastor Chuck Smith

A)Advised us to focus on the youth - the older people who were more set in Orthodoxy - not open

B)Old ladies - Babushkas - stand out in the streets - yell at us - threat

C)Until they started seeing their young people transformed. - Came around

D)That is what Paul is doing - the Jews don't want to listen - lets see if the Gentiles would be open

1)Keep knocking on doors

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.

A)Idea was they shared an adjoining wall- so he goes next door and amazing thing happens

V8 Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, {The head guy-chief rabbi) 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 multinational 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**

³ I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. {Ever talk to someone who is trembling}

⁴ And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom 1 Corinthians 1:3-4

B)Everything about Corinth was intimidating to Paul - the size of the place

1)The immorality that was there

C)And then when God starts moving - and Crispus the ruler of the synagogue gets saved

D)Paul is no don't thinking - oh no here we go again - He knows the pattern

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

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

D)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?"

E)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 –

1)motivate us and inspire us to keep going.

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.

Bb)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

Notice 3 results of the Lord meeting Paul in this way

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

But there was still opposition

A) Just because God is in something doesn't mean that there is going to be smooth sailing

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.

A) The last thing a Proconsul in the Roman empire wants is an uprising

B) You were judged by Nero as a leader based on your ability to keep the peace

C) The Jews come accusing Paul - this guy is a trouble maker - ¹⁴ And when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, (Gallio interrupts) "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."

D) Gallio says "This is not civil matter - this is a religious matter - you deal with it yourselves

¹⁶ And he drove them from the judgment seat. ¹⁷ Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, What happens next is interesting (This is the guy who took Crispus' place - new head rabbi - who was probably the one leading the charge against Paul)

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. {turned a blind eye

E) I wonder if Paul is thinking - wow that is a change of pace- He is usually the guy getting beat up by the Jews

Now the leader of the Jews is getting beat up by the Greeks. - ¹⁸ So Paul still remained a good while.

A) Ok Lord - I am good.

B) So not only did the Lord's encouragement to Paul help him did in and remain faithful

C) It also helped him to move forward in courage as well.

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.

Now most Bible teachers and commentators believe that Paul had taken a Nazirite Vow

A) A special pledge of separation and devotion to God

B)A person taking this Vow - vowed to touch no grapes, drink no wine, touch no dead body,

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

D)Why and when Paul had taken the vow we are not told -

1)It seems this was a special time of devotion in his life to the Lord

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 Pisidian 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!