

# “Do Not be Silent, God is With You”

Acts 18:1-17

When we look at a different section in Acts we often disconnect it from what has preceded it. As if each narrative is a separate story that nothing prior affects it. But is that how we live life? No. Everything that has happened to us in the past affects who and what we are today. The good things and the bad things that have happened to us; the positive ways we've been treated and the negative ways we've been treated all affect how we live and act each day. So as we come to Acts 18, lets retrace what Luke has already told us what Paul has experienced so far and we're going to add a few of Paul's own comments about what he was feeling emotionally up until this time.

**(Acts 15:36-18:1) [yellow are negative things while red are positive things that happened]**

**(15:36-41)** Paul & Barnabas sense need to go back and revisit Galatian churches to “see how they are doing”

- **Sharp disagreement over Mark**; separate. Paul & Silas go north to Syria & Cilicia while Barnabas takes Mark east to Cyprus

**(16:1-6)** Paul & team revisit Derbe, Lystra & invite Timothy

- **Churches strengthened in faith; increase in number**

**(16:7-10)** Pass through Phrygia & Galatia; prevented by Holy Spirit to enter Asia. Redirected to Mysia, then Troas where Paul receives a vision to go to Macedonia [west] [16:7-10]

- **Luke joins them; head to Philippi**

**(16:11-40)** Shares gospel with Jewish women on Sabbath, Lydia saved; has a house, invites team to stay there. Paul heals a demonized slave girl [16:11-18]; arrested; miraculously freed

- Slave girls masters angered, cause riot, **Paul & Silas charged, attacked & beaten by mob, jailed, put in stocks**
- Miraculously freed by earthquake, saves jailer; **leads jailer & his family to Christ & baptizes them (vv.31-34)**
- Released from jail and asked to leave quietly (vv.35-40)

**(17:1-9)** Preaches gospel in Thessalonica

- **A few Jews, many Gentiles, prominent women respond to gospel**
- **Jews cause an uproar, mob causes riot, Paul escapes**

**(17:10-15)** Preaches in Berea

- **Received the Word with great eagerness; many believe (v.11-12)**
- **Thessalonians track Paul down, cause riot, Paul is forced to flee to Athens**

**(17:16-34)** Engages the philosophers in Athens

- **Some scoffed; some believed**

**(18:1-17)** Paul preaches in Corinth, ends up staying 1 ½ years

- Arrived in Corinth “in weakness and fear, and with much trembling” (1 Cor. 2:3)
- Stressed about the Thessalonian believers whom he had to leave abruptly (1 Thes. 2:17-3:5)
- Had been beaten to (almost) death in Lystra (14:19-23)
- Suffered physical persecution numerous times plus “Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches” (2 Cor. 11:23-28)
- **“they opposed Paul and became abusive” (18:6)**

So that gives us a little more insight into Paul's mental health as he arrives in Corinth. He's physically and emotionally stressed. There have been successes a long the way but Athens must have been a let down because the general response was indifference. But is God sovereign over the events in our life? Is Rom. 8:28 really true that "In all things God works for the good of those who love Him who have been called according to His purpose"? Yes, but its not always easy to believe when we're experiencing negativity – spiritual negativity. Surely Paul must have thought during this time, 'Lord, why did you redirect me to Macedonia where I was arrested and beaten in Philippi, was chased out of Thessalonica and then out of Berea and saw very little success amongst the philosophers in Athens who are totally clueless of your very existence? Will Corinth be any different?

*After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. <sup>2</sup> There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, <sup>3</sup> and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them.*

God orchestrates the direction of Paul even through suffering to get him to Corinth shortly after he orchestrated through suffering in Italy for Paul to meet Priscilla and Aquila, who just happen to be Jewish believers and tent makers and have a passion to see people saved.

So here's something we must never doubt in our life and ministry:

## **Believe God Can Use our Difficulties for His Good in Us** **(18:1-3)**

Paul's in need of some encouragement at this point in his life and ministry and God is going to do it in some really amazing ways. And He does the same for us when we're down and hurting and discouraged. In the midst of our difficulties God

### ***Encourages us with other believers (vv.1-2)***

We need each other, badly. Aquila and Priscilla probably needed Paul's encouragement as much as Paul needed theirs. Now, we never read about them past Acts 18, but Paul mentions them 3 other times in his letters: Rom. 16, 1 Cor. 16 and 2 Tim. 4:19. This last reference tells us how special they were to Paul because these are his final recorded words. He has very few greetings in 2 Timothy because so many had left him.

And why did Paul and Aquila and Priscilla meet? Because they kept serving God even though things were difficult. This is one of Satan's favourite lies that we all fall for when we're discouraged. 'Oh you might as well quit serving. No one appreciates you. You're too busy. "Nobody" really cares or is being encouraged by what you do. Just stop serving and yeah, take some Sundays off. Stay away from Christians for awhile. You need a break.' Every heard those lies? We all have. Sometimes we've even listened. If you want to remain discouraged and adopt a martyr-complex of 'woe is me, no one is really serving but me', quit. Quit serving. Quit worshipping. Stay away from believers. Guaranteed result to stay discouraged.

Paul met Aquila and Priscilla because he kept serving God. Aquila and Priscilla found other believers in Corinth because they sought to worship, fellowship and serve with God's people. That's how they met Paul. And they were both tent-makers. Why is that important? Probably to spell each other off so the other could share Christ or at the very least just cement their relationship more. Paul stayed and worked with them. Possibly as tent-makers but more importantly to

### ***Partner together in ministry (v.3)***

And of course Paul used the synagogues each Sabbath as his reference point to teach that Jesus was the Messiah. And having Aquila and Priscilla now with him would have encouraged him even more. God did this.

God brought these people together who were suffering persecution so they could be encouraged in their faith but also partner together in ministry. That's why you're here and I'm here. God by His sovereign grace orchestrated our lives in such a way to bring us together for mutual encouragement and partnering in ministry. Your presence encourages us and your willingness to serve glorifies God and encourages all of us. If we purposely choose to be absent from each other for worship and ministry, then we can't encourage each other. That's when discouragement and the lies of Satan sneak into our minds. 'No one misses me. I need a break. My family aren't there today. The pastor's on holidays ...' We've all been there and sadly listened to the lies of Satan that says 'you're not needed'. But the Word of God command us,

*Heb. 10:24* And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup> not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. [*Heb. 10:25*]

I love how this is written. "Consider how we may spur one another" is the main statement. "Not giving up meeting together" is how or the occasion for when that happens. It's not 'go meet together and hopefully you'll encourage someone'. It's 'think about who you can spur on/encourage as you go to meet together'. If we don't meet together we miss out on being encouraged. If we meet together and make no effort to interact and encourage others, we miss the point of coming together.

So the encouragement of Aquila and Priscilla's partnership in ministry and the return of Silas and Timothy who Paul left in Berea had also returned to partner in ministry freeing Paul up to devote himself fulltime to teaching God's Word. And surely that emboldened him to

## **Keep Doing the Not-so-Easy Will of God** **(18:4-11)**

The will of God is not some obscure vision of God for your life that you're supposed to see signs for. The will of God is revealed in the Word of God; they are called commands. And one of them is

### ***Share your faith with those who don't share your faith (vv.4-8)***

I stole that line from M W two weeks ago when he was here. So far we have read where Paul has gone into synagogues because that is where Jewish people are who are familiar with God's Word. Paul goes there praying that his own people will actually believe the Word that says Jesus is the Messiah. Paul has seen some success but also a lot of anger resulting in persecution. So doing God's will is not easy; but doing God's will is obedience. So Paul goes back into another synagogue. And guess what happens,

*But when the Jews opposed Paul and became abusive*

Again? Again. Lord, why do I keep sharing my faith with those who don't want to listen? Because 1) we're supposed to, and 2) we know God will change someone's heart. If Jesus hasn't returned then that means there are more people who are yet to be saved according to Rom. 11:25. And look who gets saved here? Crispus the synagogue ruler and his entire family accept Christ!

*and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.*

Crispus' salvation was huge. I'm sure it rocked the Jewish community. He shared his testimony around and that resulted in more people saved. And then they meet next door at another believer's home, Titius Justus. That must have really annoyed the Jewish community still in the synagogue!!

And there was opposition to Paul. They became abusive and Paul, refers to Jesus' words in Matt. 10 to shake the dust off your feet when you leave a place that won't welcome the gospel. At this point Paul may have been worried about more persecution. Yet God rewards Paul's faithfulness by speaking to him (or Jesus speaks to him) in a vision saying,

*Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. <sup>10</sup> For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city."*

The NIV makes it sound like no will attack Paul but that is not exactly what it says. It literally reads 'no one will attack you in order to harm you'. So, yes Paul will experience opposition but Jesus encourages him by telling him you will not be harmed this time. These are God's words to us too. We need to keep doing God's will of sharing His word and

### ***Let the same word strengthen us in our faith (vv.9-11)***

How many times have we read in the Bible verses like this?

*Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. <sup>10</sup> For I am with you,*

When we're reluctant to share our faith, God says don't be silent. When we feel alone, God says, I am with you. When we are afraid God says 'Do not fear'. God is sovereign over our lives. God will equip us and sustain us when we obey His Word. Nothing we do for God is wasted. Be in the Word every day and gain strength from His Word every day. Stay connected with His people; that also encourages us greatly. Be an encourager to each other. Pray for each other and tell them.

This was a crucial moment for Paul because the Jews are going to get upset at Paul. V. 12 tells us they united an attack on Paul and bring a legal charge against him with the proconsul Gallio. Yet when we believe by faith God can use our difficulties for His good in us and we continue to obey His Word and will, God is going to do something. So

## **Watch for How and Where God Will Work** **(18:12-17)**

God has just assured Paul of His presence and safety and now he's taken to court. Not just a local court but to Gallio the proconsul. The proconsul is equivalent to our premier. He oversees the entire province. History tells us that Gallio was a very fair minded and no-nonsense leader. His term was only two years so we know this is either 51 or 52 AD.

So the official charge is

*This man," they charged, "is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law."*

Notice Paul was about to speak and Gallio speaks up and says, this is a religious matter not a

political one. *“Settle the matter yourselves!”* And he ejects them from his court. They made a huge mistake by making this a political issue because Gallio said this isn't political, its religious. Figure out yourselves. Then they beat the current synagogue ruler (who replaced Crispus) and they beat him. Why? Maybe it was Sosthenes idea to take it to Gallio. But here's the main point:

### **God can use unbelievers for His purposes (vv.12-17)**

Paul didn't even defend himself – God did – and He used an unsaved man for His purposes!! Gallio was there in God's sovereign timing 'for such a time as this'. God has and will use unbelievers in order to accomplish His will in our lives. He does it do give us jobs, homes and when we have needs. They are not aware of these things yet God answers our prayers for our needs through unbelievers many times. In Acts 17 we just read

*<sup>26</sup>From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.*

God uses every nation of people who live around us to accomplish His purposes for us. And, as Paul also said in Acts 17:27, He does it so that

*perhaps [He might] reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us*

God's purpose for them in our life is to sometimes meet our needs, while our purpose in their life is that they would hear the gospel and perhaps be saved.

There's something else we need to see through the anger of the Jews towards Paul and their attempt to charge him.

### **Negative reactions can also mean conviction (vv.12-17)**

A negative reaction to the gospel means we struck a nerve. People get angry because we have just told them this is the true way to God and now they are offended because 1) they think their way is right or 2) they don't want to hear about God because they don't want their sins exposed.

While a negative reaction to the gospel is never pleasant, its better than an indifferent response because those people don't care one way or the other.

As we have looked at this passage through the broader context of Paul's ministry, we can see that Paul was most likely discouraged by the ongoing strong opposition to the gospel as he came to Corinth. God knew that and God arranged for Aquila and Priscilla (also suffering for Christ) to meet Paul and partner in ministry. And then to also arrange for Timothy and Silas' return. And for a rightly timed Word from God to remind him that God is with him. Don't be silent, I am with you.

And if that wasn't enough, God protected him from physical harm by first causing the Jews to take Paul to a legal court and arranging for Gallio to be the proconsul for this specific period of his short two year term. AND God opened the heart of the synagogue ruler Crispus and his family, whose testimony cause many others to come to Christ. AND if we read 1 Cor. 1:1 we see that Sosthenes also eventually came to know Christ (after getting beat up by his religious Jewish brothers!)

None of this wouldn't have happened if Paul had quit; if Paul had decided to take a break for a while. If Paul had a pity party and said 'No one appreciates me.' If Paul had stopped meeting with

other believers. The easiest thing to do is quit, or stay uninvolved or don't meet with believers. We fall for that lie a lot, if we're honest.

Paul said this at the end of 1 Cor. 15

*<sup>58</sup> Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*

“Therefore” means he’s making a final point based on a previous argument. What was the argument? That Jesus Christ is risen and because He has risen we will also rise from the dead. Therefore ...

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us at [olivet@rideau.net](mailto:olivet@rideau.net)