

Acts 2020 #29
Acts 18:1-22
Facing Discouragement

I. Context: Corinth. Acts 18:1-22

- A. Wealthy and Secure.
 - 1. Situated on the 4-mile isthmus between the Aegean and the Adriatic and between the Peloponnesus on the South and the main part of Achaia in the north.
 - a) It was like a money-funnel in two directions (East/ West and North/ South)
 - 2. With a practically impregnable fortress on the Acrocorinth. 1800 feet tall, with a secure water supply.
- B. Pluralistic and multi-cultural (pop. 200,000)
 - 1. Because of its location it was very cosmopolitan and multi-cultural.
- C. Sophisticated and Arrogant. (or at least thought of itself that way)
 - 1. Very impressed with rhetoric and philosophy. (1 Cor.1-2)
- D. Idolatrous and Pagan. Many gods
 - 1. As with most Roman cities, there were lots of idols. Mystery religions, Roman/ Greek pantheism, polytheism, philosophies of all sorts.
- E. Notoriously Immoral.
 - 1. Because of the Cult (and temple) of Aphrodite (Venus) the Goddess of love and the presence of up to 1000 temple prostitutes in her employ.
 - 2. “Corinthianize” was a word for becoming immoral.

II. Paul’s ministry in Corinth—a rollercoaster. 1-22

- A. Corinth presents a challenge to him (see above). 1-4
 - 1. He is discouraged and feels emotionally weak. **2 Cor.2:1-6**
 - a) *But discouragement is not a sin, and hard times are not punishment. 1 Thess. 3*
 - 2. So, he immediately seeks fellowship. (just two?)
 - a) He found Aquila & Priscilla. Probably Christians from Rome kicked out by Emperor Claudius along with other Jews.
 - 3. And he presses in to his calling. Presenting Jesus as Christ. Sabbaths.
 - a) Reasoning, from dialegeto = to discuss, dispute, argue, contend
 - b) Persuading. From peitho = to persuade, win over, convince
- B. Silas and Timothy join and encourage him. 5-6
 - 1. Good news from Thessalonica. (1 Thess. 3:6-10)
 - 2. Gifts from churches in Macedonia (Philippi). (2 Cor.11:9; Phil.4:14-15)
 - 3. Which enabled Paul to go “full time” in the Word.
 - a) Sunecho = devoted, absorbed, surrounded
 - b) Solemnly testifying = diamarturomai = strongly urge.
 - 4. He wrote 1 Thessalonians, then a few weeks later, 2 Thess.
- C. The Synagogue reviles and rejects him. 6-8
 - 1. Apposing, becoming abusive (blaspheme)
 - 2. Paul re-directs his efforts to those who want to hear.
 - 3. *Why did Paul call himself innocent of the Jews’ blood? 6-7*
 - a) *Because the gospel is life and death message.*
 - b) *Because it is not our job to convert people, but it is our job to try.*
- D. The Lord visits and strengthens him. 9-11. (this didn’t happen often)
 - 1. The Lord knows who he is calling and who will respond.
 - a) Not everybody belongs to God in the covenant way.
 - 2. Paul was is specific instrument. Acts 9:15.
 - a) (so are we) Phil.2:12-13

E. The Proconsul (Gallio) delivers him (!).12-17

1. Gallio legalizes Christianity!! fulfilling the promise of protection.
2. He refuses to hear the case, which means that Christianity is seen by the Roman authorities as a legal subset of Judaism. (for about the next 10 years)
3. Sosthenes (the new Synagogue leader) gets thrashed instead of Paul!

F. Home beckons him. 8-22

1. Traveling with new friends (Aquila and Priscilla).
2. Cutting his hair after keeping a nazirite vow.

III. Spiritual wisdom in the face of emotional discouragement. 9-10.

A. Resist Fear. Do not be afraid... Jn.16:33

1. He is always saying this to us!
2. *How? Not by focusing on the fear, but...*

B. By focusing on the Word of God. (5). Josh.1:8-9

1. There are many other things that freak us out, but the Lord is drawing people to himself, and that must be our focus. Eternal life in Christ.

C. By staying at the task. (whatever your "task" is)

1. Don't doubt in the dark what God has told you in the light,

D. By trusting future grace. I Am With YOU.

1. **Counting on the Lord to help you navigate the unexpected**
2. The Lord did not tell Paul the future, but promised to be with him through whatever. And to use him for good things.
3. *Trust Him. He is working invisibly at all times, calling and drawing people to Christ.*

E. All based on the eternal grace at the Cross. Rom.8:32-39