

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Do Not Fear and Speak the Truth

Acts 18:1-17

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PowerPoint Presentation included: none

SermonAudio Blurb: Paul is in Corinth waiting for his companions. As usual, he begins to evangelize the Jews in the city along with Gentiles. This quickly begins to raise up a ruckus and false charges are once again made against him. In the midst of this, Jesus comes in a vision and encourages and strengthen Paul through two commands, do not be afraid and do not withhold speaking truth. Such a good exhortation for times such as Paul's and for us.

I. Introduction.

- A. Read 18:1-17.
- B. Life can be very hard but it is sometimes hard to know when it is hard.
 - 1. Think about back in your youth and consider some of the things you thought were hard. Looking back, do you still think that? Think back to times of suffering or discouragement, are they still seen in the same light?
 - 2. As we grow older, we tend to gain perspective and through experience we see things in the past with different eyes and understanding.
 - 3. Some things that we thought were horrible or unfair are later seen to be good and proper.
 - 4. We also tend to exalt ourselves in our ability to endure and face adversity when we are not actually experiencing it. In our minds we often assume that anything bad or hard is merely temporary. We lie to ourselves and think that God will rescue us from it when no such promise has been given.
- C. God is many things, but one that we can overlook at times is that He encourages His people.
 - 1. So much so that He is called "*the God of perseverance and encouragement*" in Romans 15:5.
 - 2. The writer of Hebrews said, "*In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong*

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encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.” (Hebrews 6:17-18). And as a result he tells us we have an anchor of the soul, this hope.

3. John tells us that *“if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God.”* (1 John 3:21).
4. Jesus, in the midst of telling the disciples that He would leave them said this, *“These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”* (John 16:33).
5. In this age we have tribulation, but Jesus has overcome the world/age. So take courage. This is at the core of the passage today.

D. Review.

1. We have dispensed with the details surrounding this passage already.
2. We have learned about Corinth and the many ways that it functioned as a financial powerhouse due to its location, but also as a place of great sin and debauchery due to the fact that people from all over the world came there with many diverse lifestyles and beliefs.
3. I also think that each of us know how things can pile up on a person. Paul would be no different.
 - a. Jailed, beaten, pursued, mocked, and hated. These are not the typical marks of a successful, typical life of a Christian leader.
 - b. And this is why I love to read the letters of Paul so much. He is not writing from theory, but from real experience. When he writes things such as:
 - (1) *“... do not grow weary of doing good”* (2 Thessalonians 3:13).
 - (2) *“suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus”* (2 Timothy 2:3).
 - (3) *“Let love be without hypocrisy—by abhorring what is evil, clinging to what is good, being devoted to one another in brotherly love, giving preference to one another in honor, not lagging behind in diligence, being fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, rejoicing in hope, persevering in affliction, being devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, pursuing hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless, and do not curse. Rejoice with those*

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who rejoice; weep with those who weep, by being of the same mind toward one another, not being haughty in mind, but associating with the humble. Do not be wise in your own mind. Never paying back evil for evil to anyone, respecting what is good in the sight of all men, if possible, so far as it depends on you, being at peace with all men, never taking your own revenge, beloved—instead leave room for the wrath of God. For it is written, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,” says the Lord. “BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:9-21).

- c. These are not empty words. These are words from a man filled with the Holy Spirit, strengthened in the Word of God, who has had to put every single one of these things into practice multiple times in his life. And many of them during this very missionary journey of which we study.
- E. Today I want us to focus on the words of encouragement that Jesus gave Paul when he was in Corinth.
 - 1. Vs 9, “And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, ‘Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will lay a hand on you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.’”
 - 2. Two commands. Do not be afraid. And, speak, do not be silent.
 - 3. Two reasons given: “for” marks each of them. First, Jesus is with him in this time. And second, Jesus has many people in this city for Paul to reach with the gospel.
 - 4. Paul is weary, worn down, and, apparently, afraid. It appears he is wondering about the value of staying here at Corinth. And so the Lord encourages him through these words. Do not be afraid and do not be silent.

II. Do not be afraid.

- A. Paul had reasons here to be afraid.
 - 1. He is in a strange city that is full of every sort of wickedness on full display.

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2. He is seeing people come to faith, so there are hopeful indications that he is not wasting his time..
 3. But Paul is not dumb, he knows that he is playing with fire. Every time he sees Jews convert to faith in Jesus Christ, problems start up. And this time, it is the leader of the synagogue who has converted, so this will certainly create trouble.
- B. It is in the midst of success that Jesus tells him to not be afraid (9).
1. In the verses that follow we see the resistance rise up to a much more dangerous level.
 2. Eventually the Jews rise up as a group to seek to have him jailed, punished or sent out of the city (12)
 3. He is beaten by the crowds (17).
 4. But these things have not happened yet. So what is happening? I think Paul knows it is coming and I think that in the midst of all of this he is weary and things are taking a toll on him.
- C. But notice how the **basis** of the command to not fear is not based upon Paul's faithfulness or Paul's success in bringing the gospel to this wicked city. The basis is that Jesus is with him.
1. This is very similar to what Moses said to Joshua in Deuteronomy 31:1-6.
 2. Notice how God speaks again to Joshua in Joshua 1:9. (Vs 2, 6, 9).
 3. A couple of thoughts:
 - a. If we do not fear in our labors as Christians because we are confident in our own skills, knowledge, abilities or power, we are acting foolishly.
 - b. Or, we are not actually pushing very hard. We are keeping this very safe. And so we do not need to cast ourselves upon the sufficiency of God alone to move forward.
 4. But this is not the way it works with God. In our service He will often press us beyond our comfort and strength. He will invite us to take part in a work that is beyond our knowledge, but the need is there.

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5. And this is where it is critical to know that you are not alone, but your Lord is with you. And that may not make it less scary, but it does change your fear, especially the better you know who your Lord is.

III. Do not be silent.

- A. Fear often silences our lips.
 1. Paul is likely seeing the tensions growing as the gospel is taking root in Corinth. Lives are changing and people don't like change. It has a way of unbalancing things.
 2. The resistance was showing already in vs 6. He is talking to the Jews and showing them that the Old Testament was clear on who would be the true Messiah and Savior.
 3. In other words, the Jews did not want to hear Paul, but that did not mean that Paul stopped talking.
 4. And yet, because of the vision in vs 9, we can surmise that Paul was wondering how much longer he should stay there.
- B. However, Paul takes the Lord at His word and he keeps speaking, preaching and teaching (11-17).
 1. For the next 1.5 years Paul stays in this city. A city full of sin.
 2. And in the midst of it all, there was Paul. But notice the message in vs 11.
 - a. **Teaching the Word of God.**
 - b. Back in Acts 18 notice where Paul did this teaching in vs 11 (“among them”). Who are the “them?”
 - c. Vs 10, where we see the other reason Jesus gave to him to not be afraid and to not be silent: “. . . for I have many people in this city.”
 - d. This is a simple and phenomenal passage to understand evangelism. This is not speaking of those who had already heard

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and believed the gospel. It is speaking of the many who have not yet heard and believed.

- e. It is a simple statement of God's knowledge and sovereign work of drawing men and women to saving faith through the preaching of the Word.
3. Jesus did not ask Paul to come up with a strategy to reach a people group. He did not ask Paul to try to figure out the people who were likely to listen to him and respond to the gospel.
- a. He just told Paul to keep speaking and not be silent. And the reason is that among the thousands in this city, there were those who had been chosen before the foundation of the earth to be saved.
 - b. So Paul's strategy was simple. Go out among the people in whatever way he could. Speak to them about Jesus Christ. And see what God would do in the process.
- C. Paul was also not silent through his pen.
- 1. Paul wrote three of the New Testament letters during this 1.5 years in Corinth.
 - 2. Romans, 1 and 2 Thessalonians were all written during this time.
 - 3. If you have not read these letters recently, I commend them to you.

IV. Conclusion.

- A. And this is where we find ourselves today. We are not Paul, but we are beneficiaries of Paul's labors 2,000 years ago. And we face the same challenges as he did.
- B. So shall you fear? Shall you be silent? Or will you take the same words to heart that Jesus gave this man, and obey the call to bring the gospel to those who do not know?
 - 1. What might you be afraid of right now that is affecting your life before God?

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- a. What are you afraid of happening to you or not getting that has you frozen?
 - b. Is there something that is preventing you from obeying and honoring the Lord right now? Is it loss of reputation? Loss of money or business? Loss of freedom or comfort? Loss of safety?
 - c. The reasons are many for each of us to not act. But the command is still the same. Do not be afraid, for I am with you, says the Lord.
2. What might be keeping you silent? What is holding you back from speaking?
- a. You may have friend who you have enjoyed his or her company for years, but you have withheld the gospel.
 - b. You may have a loved one who you know needs to hear the gospel, but for whatever reason you have hidden it.
 - c. Perhaps there is a person, a friend or family member who needs to hear you challenge them with biblical doctrine that is sound. Where you need to correct them and show them how their beliefs are wrong.
 - d. Shall you remain silent today? Or shall you speak?
 - e. It may be the simplest of things. Just the sitting down with your children and reading to them the bible rather than watching a game. It may be going for a walk and bringing God's word into the conversations that flow out naturally.
- C. My charge to each of you here today is simply this, Do not fear and go speak the truth.

Benediction

May the Lord answer you in your day of trouble. May the name of YHWH set you in a secure place on high. May He remember your faithfulness and prayers and may He grant you the true desires of your heart. Amen