

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Acts: The Continuing Earthly Ministry Of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Part VI: The Ministry Of The Universal Church In Its Spread To The Ends Of The Earth, Acts 8:26-28:31

E. Christ's Use Of The Apostle Paul To Spearhead Worldwide Outreach, Acts 14:4-28:31

16. Christ's Encouragement For Paul To Minister Courageously In Intimidating Circumstances (Acts 18:1-18a)

I. Introduction

- A. Doing God's will in humanly intimidating circumstances not only requires faith in God, but often the believer's weakness of faith leaves him needing God's special encouragement.
- B. Such was the case for the Apostle Paul's ministry at Corinth in Acts 18:1-18a, and we view it for insight:

II. Christ's Encouragement For Paul To Minister Courageously In Intimidating Circumstances.

- A. We know from Paul's testimony of the occasion in 1 Corinthians 2:3-5 that when he first evangelized the people of Corinth in Acts 18:1-4, he evangelized them in a state of weakness, fear and much trembling.
- B. The intimidating circumstances surrounding Paul's entrance at Corinth had led to such a troubling state:
 - 1. Paul was still concerned about the welfare of the new converts he had left at Thessalonica when he had fled persecutors there. Though he had sent Timothy from Athens back to that town to encourage them and to report back to Paul on their welfare, Timothy did not arrive back with news about them until after Paul was at Corinth, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978 ed., p. 1697, "The Work at Thessalonica."
 - 2. Corinth was a very wicked city, for it had 1,000 temple prostitutes of the goddess Aphrodite, and the Greek word, *korinthiazomai* (to act the Corinthian) had been coined by the Romans to mean "to practice fornication," Ibid., p. 1619. For Paul, a conservative Pharisee in background to minister in such a city would have been a nerve-wracking experience by itself! (Ibid., fn. to 1 Corinthians 2:3)
 - 3. Paul's past traumatic experience of being stoned and left for dead by fickle pagans at Lystra (Acts 14:18-20) would have made his work at openly sinful Corinth humanly intimidating as well!
 - 4. Also, Roman Emperor Claudius had just commanded all Jews like Paul to leave Rome (A. D. 49 or 50), an added pressure of anti-Semitism that Paul as a Hebrew had to face.
- C. Accordingly, Paul joined a certain Jew named Aquila with his wife Priscilla, fellow tent-makers, in working at their trade to earn a living as they as fellow Jews also sought encouragement, Acts 18:2-3.
- D. With this set of circumstances, Paul began to testify the Gospel in the Jewish synagogue at Corinth with understandable weakness, fear and much trembling. When enough hearers reacted abusively toward him, Paul shook out his clothing at them, a sign of rejection, and claimed their blood was upon their own heads as he then was turning from them as Jews to minister to Gentiles, Acts 18:4-6.
- E. Paul moved to the home of Justus, a worshipper of God whose house was next to the synagogue, and in that location he led Crispus, the synagogue's chief ruler and many other Corinthians to Christ, Acts 18:7-8.
- F. At this point, the Lord intervened to give Paul a special encouragement, Acts 18:9-10:
 - 1. In a night vision, God told Paul to **stop** (present tense) **being afraid for his benefit** (middle voice [*jobou*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966 ed., p. 489; Zond. Anal. Grk. Lex., 1972, p. 428]), but **not start to be silent** (aorist tense, *siopeses*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., Anal. Grk. Lex., p. 367), Acts 18:9.
 - 2. Christ revealed that He was with Paul so that He would not allow anyone to hurt him, for the Lord had many people in that city who would believe, and the Lord wanted Paul to have the liberty and strength to evangelize them all, Acts 18:10!
- G. Paul thus stayed there safely ministering in Christ's protection for another 18 months regardless of dramatic upheavals created by his opponents to harm him and to stop his work, Acts 18:11, 12-18a.

Lesson: *When Paul faced humanly intimidating circumstances in ministering at Corinth, the Lord gave him the encouragement and protection he needed to complete his assignment from God.*

Application: *If we face humanly intimidating circumstances in performing an assignment from God, may we like Paul (1) ASSOCIATE with EDIFYING FOLK God allows us to contact (Acts 18:2-3) and (2) START to OBEY the Lord (Acts 18:4-5). (3) The LORD will then encourage, direct and protect us after THAT (Acts 18:9-18a) so that we might complete His assignment in His power!*