

## Acts Series #16 - "Do Not Be Afraid" - Acts 18:1-11

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. Fear

1. This is a scary world in which we live
2. It seems almost a week doesn't pass without some new report of the danger of living in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century
3. Consider what some scientists predict . . . [\[1\]](#)
  - a. If everyone keeps stacking National Geographics in garages and attics instead of throwing them away, the magazines' weight will sink the NA continent 100 feet below sea level
  - b. If the number of microscope specimen slides submitted to The Centers for Disease Control lab continues to increase at its current rate, the state of Georgia will be buried under three feet of glass by the year 2224.
  - c. If beachgoers keep returning home with as much sand clinging to them as they do now, 80% of the country's coastline will disappear in 10 years
  - d. and they've just discovered a new food risk - pickles
    - 1) according to recent studies, pickles are responsible for, among other things:
    - 2) cancer, airline tragedies, auto accidents and crime waves.
    - 3) about 99.9% of cancer victims had eaten pickles
    - 4) so have 99.7% of those involved in car and air accidents
    - 5) moreover, those born in 1839 who ate pickles have suffered a 100% mortality rate.
    - 6) and rats who had been fed 20 pounds of pickles a day for a month ended up with bulging abdomens and loss of appetite
  - e. there you have it—it is indeed a scary world
4. Joking aside, fear really is becoming a more settled part of the modern scene
  - a. when I was growing up, there was a generally optimistic view of the future
  - b. we lived in a free country, surrounded by prosperity and abundance
  - c. science and technology were the modern twins which would solve all our problems and encase us in an invisible shield of protection from any and all harm
5. Recent polls show overwhelmingly that the optimism of those years has been replaced by a growing sense of fear on the part of young people today
6. The top two traits that teens see themselves as exhibiting today are that they are serious and stressed out
  - a. they are serious because they are profoundly concerned about the quality of life ahead of them in the future
    - 1) to put it bluntly, it seems to them that their parents have lived completely for themselves and have left nothing for them - but

- pollution and debt
- 2) they are constantly told that they are the first generation in America's history that will have *less* than their parents
  - 3) they will live in a world of diminished resources and opportunities
  - b. they also describe themselves as stressed out
    - 1) they are deeply anxious over trends they see taking shape in society
    - 2) for instance, one of the primary issues teens mentioned as a daily concern was the fear of violence; neighborhoods and schools
    - 3) they're stressed out by school
      - a) that may seem normal, but for Generation X, it's not; for this reason
      - b) I was stressed by school growing up simply because I wanted to get good grades so I could go to college and get a good job when I became an adult
      - c) that is not kids main objective today
      - d) their pursuit of good grades is the result of their desire for love from mom & dad -
      - e) because they know school is important to *them*
      - f) and for far too many kids, the only attention they get from their parents is when they do well in school
      - g) teens today are highly relational, much more than Baby boomers are
      - h) and the most important relationship they want is with their parents
    - 4) another stress point for kids is a concern over money
      - a) but again, not what you might think
      - b) wanting some bucks to go to the show or out on a date
      - c) kids today are stressed out and anxious over whether or not their parents are mature enough to know how to handle *their* money
  7. Add this all together and it's no wonder suicide is at an all time high among teens
  8. Among teens, suicide is no longer seen as an act of desperation
    - a. again, when we were growing up, suicide was thought to be a cowards way out
    - b. but today, it's viewed as a *legitimate* option for dealing with life
  9. And us boomers who look at these attitudes of today's teens and say they're being *pessimistic*, hear them reply that they aren't being pessimistic
    - a. they're being *realistic*
    - b. and they see no reason for our *optimism*

## **B. Today**

1. Yes, fear is quickly becoming one of the traits of our times
2. But this is where the Gospel of Christ can speak powerfully to our generation
3. For those who are in Christ need never fear

## II. TEXT

### A. Vs. 1-3

**{1} After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth.**

**{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.**

1. The Roman Emperor Claudius expelled all Jews from Rome in 49 AD
2. Apparently the Jews who opposed Christ had staged several riots in the city and in frustration and anger, he simply commanded them all to leave
3. Two of them to be expelled were Aquila and Priscilla, a husband and wife who were believers
4. They arrived in the prosperous Greek city of Corinth and set up shop in their trade as tent-makers
5. After Paul left Athens, he went to Corinth and soon came in contact with Aquila and Priscilla since he too was a tent maker by trade
6. As you read Paul's letters in the NT, you see that he remarks how he had worked to provide for his own needs in many of the places he went
7. Being a Jew, he would have followed the Jewish tradition of learning a trade as an apprentice when he was a young man
8. And whenever his support in ministry grew thin, he would return to his trade of making tents till he had enough to go full time in ministry once again

### B. Vs. 4-6

**{4} And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, 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."**

1. Even while Paul was making tents, he used the Sabbath day to go to the synagogue and preach the gospel
2. Then, once Silas & Timothy rejoined him, he was able to devote himself full time to teaching
3. It seems that Timothy and Silas brought a gift of support from the Philippians and this freed Paul to spend more time in the ministry of the word [\[2\]](#)
4. The initial reaction of the Jews in the synagogue was fierce and discouraging . . .
  - a. they opposed and blasphemed
  - b. Luke uses loaded words here

- c. their opposition wasn't passive - it was aggressive and fierce
- d. and they went so far as to blaspheme the name and holiness of God, probably by demeaning the name and mission of Jesus
- 5. Finally, Paul could take no more - and spoke a word of harsh judgment on them
- 6. Following the example of the OT prophets and the instruction of Jesus,
  - a. Paul took off his outer garment and shook it in front of them
  - b. it was a sign to them of the seriousness of their error and their responsibility before God
  - c. what he was doing was shaking his robe to rid it of any of even the dust of their synagogue
  - d. lest when the judgment of God come it might strike him as well as them
  - e. then Paul tells them his duty of warning them had been discharged
  - f. if they would not heed the message, then their judgment was their own fault and none of his
  - g. Paul is echoing the words of God to Ezekiel [Ch. 3]

**{17} "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me:**

**{18} "When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand.**

**{19} "Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.**

**{20} "Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand.**

**{21} "Nevertheless if you warn the righteous man that the righteous should not sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; also you will have delivered your soul."**

- 7. Jesus taught the disciples that if after proclaiming the truth to people they showed themselves unworthy to hear it, they were to leave and shake the dust off their feet as a sign against them
- 8. Paul does that now
- 9. But make no mistake - this wasn't something done in a whim, or because Paul was in a bad mood one day
  - a. these people had shown a settled opposition to the gospel
  - b. The Spirit showed Paul it was time to move on because continued work there would be fruitless

### **C. Vs. 7-11**

**{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.**

**{8} Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.**

**{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."**

**{11} And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.**

1. There was at least some fruit though
2. One of the God-fearing Greeks, named Justus, who lived next door to the synagogue, became a believer
3. So Paul moved his base of operations there
4. It wasn't long before a notable member of the synagogue, in fact, the leader of the synagogue, came to faith, as well as his entire family
5. This was a notable conversion, and as a result, many people began to show interest in the gospel, and were eventually converted
6. Paul ended up spending a 1½ in Corinth
  - a. and when you understand something of the nature and reputation of the city, it's no wonder why
  - b. we won't go into it now, but let it suffice to say that Corinth was the sin-capital of the ancient world
  - c. it was Hollywood, San Francisco, Las Vegas, and Amsterdam all rolled up into one
  - d. if you wanted to call someone a derogatory name that would mark them as being an utter wretch, you'd call them a Corinthian
  - e. so the church in Corinth needs some extra work on Paul's part to establish it firmly before he could leave

#### ***D. Do Not Be Afraid***

1. It's Jesus' words in vs. 9 & 10 that I want to focus on today . . .
2. For certainly it is Jesus who appeared to Paul in the vision that night

**"Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."**

3. God does not waste visions, nor bid men put away their fears which are no haunting them
4. These words gives us a picture of Paul's state of mind
5. He was in turmoil - he was tempted to fear
6. And the cause of his turmoil is not difficult to discern
7. You see, he had just made a formal break with the synagogue and with his people
8. Imagine how incredibly traumatic that would be for Paul
  - a. for Jews, the synagogue was the center of Jewish social and religious life
  - b. to be cast out of the synagogue was the greatest of all calamities, because it conveyed the idea that not only was a person being rejected by his own people, he or she was also being rejected and cast out by God
  - c. and while Paul knew that in this case it was they who were in error, still

the sense of being cut off from one's people and heritage would be a mighty difficult thing to endure

9. Furthermore, now that the break had been made, and knowing the anger and hatred of his opponents, he realized violence and persecution wouldn't be far behind
10. Don't forget that he had already been beaten in Philippi and only narrowly escaped with his life in Jerusalem and at Damascus
11. In Lystra he hadn't been so lucky and was stoned to death
12. Now, Paul was at an extremely vulnerable time in his life
  - a. he had made a formal break with the Jews and with the synagogue
  - b. and was about to embark on a new direction in ministry
  - c. from now on, rather than concentrating on the Jews, he would focus primarily on the Gentiles
12. A corner had been turned in his life, and as with anything new, he experienced a moment of hesitation and fear
13. So God comes to him in the night, when fears tend to be their greatest, and brings him a word of comfort and direction

**"Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent;"**

14. Paul's fear was that if he continued preaching, his enemies would escalate their opposition
15. But preaching and teaching were the very things God had called him to do
16. So the Lord tells him to not stop
17. You know, ultimately, Satan tempts us to fear because it paralyzes us and stops our movement forward in faith
  - a. it arrests our spiritual growth
  - b. and effectiveness
18. Notice that God didn't just tell Paul to *stop* being afraid
19. He also told him *what to do* – He gave him a task, a mission = to speak
20. Really, the only way to overcome fear is to move forward in spite of the fear
21. When facing fear, the best thing to do is just to put our heads down and press on
22. We see the truth of this principle in raising kids
  - a. teaching to ride a bike
  - b. or learning how to swim
  - c. fear - tell to just go for it
  - d. the proverbial count to three is an attempt to conquer fear by facing it
23. In effect, that is what God is telling Paul to do here
24. Do not be afraid Paul - but keep doing what you are called to do = proclaim the name of Jesus
25. But then Jesus goes on to give a *reason* why he need not fear . . .

**"Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."**

26. While the remedy for fear is to move forward by faith, the reason to be confident rather than fearful is because God is with us

27. God came with the same words of encouragement to others at crucial moments of challenge
- a. Joshua about to lead Israel into the Promised land
- (Josh 1:9) "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."**
- b. Jeremiah as he began his prophetic ministry, though only a young man
- (Jer 1:8) Do not be afraid of their faces, For I am with you to deliver you," says the LORD.**
- (Jer 1:19) They will fight against you, But they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you," says the LORD, "to deliver you."**
- c. there were others who received like words of comfort from the Lord [\[3\]](#)
28. God told Paul he would be with him and no one would hurt him
- a. Paul's response might have been
  - b. "That's nice - where were You in Philippi and Thessalonica, and what about Lystra?"
  - c. but Paul had learned that God *was* with him in those places and at those times
  - d. in fact, it was at those times that God seemed *most* present
  - e. just as with Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, it was in the fiery furnace that the forth man, one like unto the son of God joined them and shared their trial
  - f. Paul knew that sometimes God delivers us from trouble, while at other times He delivers us through trial
  - g. but either way, God would be there
29. Finally, God renews Paul's vision by telling him that there are many of God's own I the city
30. Paul cannot stop speaking because there are many yet to be won and those that have already been saved needed to be taught
31. Paul had a great work yet to do

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. *Let's Apply It*

1. As I mentioned at the outset, we live in a scary world
2. The troubles that now beset the human race seem both unavoidable and unsolvable
3. The tendency to fear is at an all time high
4. People are dealing with their fears in all kinds of ways
  - a. drink, drugs
  - b. therapy
  - c. different religions and cults
5. It's only Christians who have a real hope and who have the capacity to live confidently
6. And we can live confidently, free from fear for the very reasons Gad gave Paul

## **B. First - God Is With Us**

1. What God told Paul he tells you and I
2. He is with us!

**(Psa 27:1) The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?**

3. A little girl who was often afraid of the dark would cry out to her father in the middle of the night that she was afraid
  - a. he would get out of bed and come into her room
  - b. then he would kneel by her bedside and take her little outstretched hand in his own
  - c. he would rub her head with his other hand and quietly whisper into her ear how much he loved her and would protect her
  - d. and soon she would fall back to sleep
4. God is there friend - He will protect you
  - a. now that doesn't mean you will never experience trouble or loss
  - b. but just as God said to Paul, you will suffer no *hurt*
  - c. you see, no hurt can come to us if Christ is with us, and whatever does come is not really hurt
5. God is there - Give Him your hand and let Him speak to you of His great love
  - a. for once you are convinced of His love, then fear will vanish like the night vanishes before the dawn
  - b. John says it this way,

**(1 John 4:18) There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.**

## **C. Second - Remember Our Calling**

1. As A Christian, you are an Ambassador for Christ
2. Therefore, "Speak, and do not be silent"
3. For many of you, one of your greatest fears is sharing the Lord with others
  - a. the thought of talking to them about Jesus and about the faith is terrifying
  - b. you'd rather hike Death Valley in August than try to share the Lord with the lost
4. Back in the days of the Roman Empire during a circus in the Colosseum, a Christian was thrown to a hungry lion. As the spectators cheered, the wild beast pounced. But the Christian quickly whispered something in the lion's ear and the beast backed away in terror. After this happened several times, the emperor sent a centurion to find out what magic spell could make a ferocious lion cower in fear. A few minutes later the guard returned and said, "The Christian whispered in the lion's ear, 'After dinner you'll be required to say a few words.'"
5. The only way to get over the fear of speaking is to do it
6. But realize that it is not the power or eloquence you bring to what you say
7. You must simply share the truths you have come to know and love
8. It's the Holy Spirit's task to take what you say and apply it to the ones you



- share with
9. Recent movie - Outbreak
    - a. a mysterious plague broke out in a small coastal town
    - b. turns out the military had the vaccine for it but refused to give it out because they wanted to use the plague as a biological weapon
  10. Sad, but that movie is a fitting metaphor for many Christians today
    - a. the world is dying of a plague of fear and meaninglessness
    - b. and while there are many trying this and that cure to stem the tide
    - c. the ones who have the real vaccine stand quietly on the sidelines for fear that they will not be liked when they stick the needle in the dying's arm
  11. Satan has used fear as an effective weapon against the one and *only* thing that can completely destroy his kingdom
  12. THE GOSPEL!!!

**(Heb 13:5-6) He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"**

#### ***D. Third - Recapture The Vision***

1. Jesus told Paul, "I have many people in this city."
2. Paul was not alone; there were others there to encourage him and be encouraged by him
3. Have you noticed how fear tends to cut you off and isolate you
  - a. just like a wolf that sneaks up to a flock of sheep and tries to cut one of them out of the flock
  - b. so fear sneaks up and tries to cut you off from the body of Christ
4. But you are not alone - God has many of whom you are a part
5. When fears come cleave to the Body
6. Recapture the vision that God has set before His whole Church
7. There is a whole world out there filled with people whom He desires to save
8. We cannot let fear keep us from our mission of sharing His love and grace with them
9. Jesus said, Lift up your eyes and look on the harvest - it is white and ready!

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[1] Barry Siegel, "World May End With a Splash,"  
Los Angeles Times, October 9, 1982

[2] Phil 4:15 2 Cor. 11:9

[3] Eze. 2:6-9 Isa. 43:1-2 58:1 Psa 27:1-2