

ACTS: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORK OF DISCIPLING

XLV. Gaining God's Support Amid Overwhelming Intimidation

(Acts 18:1-11)

I. Introduction

- A. The book of Acts explains "the orderly and sovereignly directed progress of the kingdom message from Jews to Gentiles, and from Jerusalem to Rome," Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 351. We can thus learn much about aligning our ministry efforts with God's sovereign work from studying the book of Acts.
- B. Acts 18:1-11 records how Paul faced such intimidating hardships in ministry that he felt nervous and fearful, and what he did that gained God's support so he could still minister. We view the passage for our application:

II. Gaining God's Support Amid Overwhelming Intimidation, Acts 18:1-11.

- A. In starting to evangelize at Corinth, Paul faced humanly crushing pressures to be intimidated, Acts 17:32-18:8:
 - 1. The formidable Areopagus in Athens had given a rather cool response to Paul's address: some mocked his teaching on the resurrection and others wanted to hear him again, Acts 17:32. A few people joined him and believed (Acts 17:34), but with the council's muted response, Paul left them, Acts 17:33.
 - 2. He then went to Corinth (Acts 18:1), a city so steeped in sin "that the Greek term *Korinthiazomai* (*literally*, to act the Corinthian) came to mean 'to practice fornication.'" (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, p. 1619, "Introduction to the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians: The City of Corinth")
 - 3. Having been raised as a religiously conservative Pharisee (Philippians 3:4-5) and following the cool response he had received from the formidable Areopagus in Athens, when Paul faced the very immoral people of Corinth, he was left trembling and fearful as he began to minister, 1 Corinthians 2:1-3.
 - 4. In spite of his nervousness and fear, Paul did his best to continue to minister there for Christ, Acts 18:2-4:
 - a. He found a fellow Hebrew couple in Aquila and Priscilla who had recently moved to Corinth from Italy due to Emperor Claudius' expulsion of Hebrews from Rome, and since they were of the same tentmaking trade, Paul stayed with them and worked with them in earning his livelihood, Acts 18:2-3.
 - b. With this helpful friendship of fellow Hebrews, Paul ministered in the synagogue each Sabbath, Acts 18:4.
 - 5. However, he then faced strong opposition from unbelieving Hebrews, Acts 18:5-6a: When Silas and Timothy joined him after coming to him from Thessalonica, and he ministered to try to persuade fellow Hebrews to trust in Jesus as the Messiah, those Hebrews opposed and reviled Paul, Acts 18:5-6a.
 - 6. Regardless of this added pressure, Paul still kept trying to minister the Gospel in that city, Acts 18:6b-8:
 - a. He shook out his garments before his Hebrew opponents, signifying that he was innocent of their blood since they rejected Christ and would face judgment, adding that he would minister to Gentiles, Acts 18:6b.
 - b. Paul then entered the home of Justus, a worshipper of God whose house was next to the synagogue, and Crispus, ruler of the synagogue with his house and many Corinthians were converted and baptized, v. 7-8.
- B. In response to Paul's efforts to continue trying to serve God regardless of ongoing struggles with nervousness and fear, the Lord graciously communicated an edifying message to Paul in a night vision, Acts 18:9-10:
 - 1. The Lord told Paul, "**Stop being afraid for your own benefit**": the verb *phobou* is the present middle imperative of *phobeo*, "to be afraid," U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 489; The Analy. Grk. Lex. (Zon.), 1972, p. 428. The present tense in the imperative mood with the negative particle *me* here gives a command to cease a current activity, and the middle voice means the action is for the subject's own benefit. (Acts 18:9a; Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; J. Gresham Machan, N. T. Grk. For Beginners, 1966, p. 180, 57)
 - 2. God told Paul to "**keep on speaking**" (*lalei*, present imperative of *laleo*, "speak," Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., The Analy. Grk. Lex., p. 245) and "**do not start to be silent**" (*siopeses*, aorist subjunctive of *siopao*, "be silent," Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., The Analy. Grk. Lex., p. 367; Acts 18:9b. The aorist subjunctive with *me* here prohibits the start of an action. (Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., Machan, p. 180)
 - 3. The Lord added that He Himself ("I Myself," *ego eimi*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.) was with Paul and that no one would attack to harm him, for God had many in the city who were His people, Acts 18:10 ESV.
- C. Encouraged, Paul thus stayed in Corinth for 18 months, teaching the Word of God there, Acts 18:11.

Lesson: When Paul faced overwhelming pressure to be intimidated so that he suffered nervousness and fear, when he kept on trying to minister, God provided the encouragement and protection Paul needed to support his effort.

Application: If God leads us into a ministry like He led Paul, and we face humanly overwhelming pressures to feel intimidated, may we keep trying our best to minister, and God will guide, protect and encourage us in our effort.