

Acts 18

It doesn't matter who you are, whether in ministry, at work, or just dealing with every-day life, we all get tired, discouraged or **even a bit fed-up!**

With perhaps a pun intended, turn to Matthew 14:22-23 where we read about the feeding the 5000 thousand, it appears that there may have been some frustration on Jesus' part because His not-so-faithful companions wanted everyone to go away so that they could feed themselves...

Matthew 14:16-18 But Jesus said to them, "**They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.**" (17) And they said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish." (18) He said, "**Bring them here to Me.**"

I almost hear some exasperation in His voice.

Matthew 14:22-23 Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. (23) And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there.

But Jesus was not alone! He prayed to His Father who always heard the prayers of His Son. He presumably went up before dusk, and stayed there all night until coming down sometime around dawn. I would suspect that much of the time was spent 'abiding' in His presence, delighting in His Presence, being refreshed and encouraged!

SIDE NOTE: Even in His prayer time, He was making a statement. WHY? In the Oral traditions, it was written:

"Let not a man stand "in an high place", and pray, but in a low place and pray; as it is said, "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord", [Psa 130:1](#). It is a tradition, that a man may not stand, neither upon a throne, nor upon a footstool, nor in any high place and pray, because there are no high places before God."

Jesus' trek up the mountain to pray was yet another statement about how man tried to restrict access to God by their man-made traditions!

So, if Jesus could get tired and weary.... certainly, we can **and do**. And certainly, Paul who "suffered for Jesus' Name sake" (Acts 9:16) became weary at times as well.

(Acts 18:1) After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth.

We remember that in Chapter 17, Paul had a difficult time with the gentiles such that his message was not well received, especially from the intellectual, philosophical crowd. He decided to go to Corinth, another large city in Achaia.

(Acts 18:2) 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.

Ancient documents indicate that Claudius, the current ruler, demanded that all the Jews leave because they “stirred up” trouble amongst themselves because Jewish believers were proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah and the non-believing Jews were angered by their blasphemous beliefs...that Jesus was God made flesh and sacrificed on a cross for their sins!

(Acts 18:3) So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.

While Paul did receive gifts and support from the churches he planted, evidently he decided to work for a while; As I read this verse I thought that perhaps Paul was a bit burnt-out. He preached in Thessalonica, Berea and Athens in much persecution and difficult persecution. And prior to this we don't read of Paul working at his trade. So, was Paul taking a break? Was the man who hit the ground running in every city he entered, now hitting a wall?

(Acts 18:4) And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.

Each Sabbath, as was his custom, Paul would go to the local synagogue to present the Gospel. Some were persuaded; how many we are not told;

(Acts 18:5) When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews *that* Jesus *is* the Christ.

Testified

Choose his words carefully to encourage action

(Acts 18:6) 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."

Whatever words were used, whatever scriptures he quoted had a definite affect on the hearts and minds of the congregation; Unfortunately, it caused some to react negatively to the message and to the messenger!

Paul clearly is upset for he shook the dust off his garments in the similar fashion as Jesus told his disciples:

Mark 6:11 And whoever will not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!"

It's a dramatic gesture that was common in the middle east, but his next words were even more dramatic!

"Your blood *be* upon your *own* heads:

This is similar to what the crowds said right before Jesus was hung on the Cross.

Matthew 27:25 And all the people answered and said, "His blood *be* on us and on our children."

So sure that they were complicit in a guilty man's death, so sure that they were serving God by putting this Man to death that they were willing to call down a curse on them and their children...a curse, they believed, would never be fulfilled because of their obedience to the letter of the Law and their man-made traditions.

In Joshua Chapter 2 is the story of Rahab saving the spies and promising that she would not reveal their plans to take the city; They remind her, as they are climbing down the rope:

Joshua 2:19 So it shall be *that* whoever goes outside the doors of your house into the street, **his blood shall be on his own head**, and we *will be* guiltless. And whoever is with you in the house, his blood *shall be* on our head if a hand is laid on him.

Paul wiped his hands of the situation: it would be their own blood that shall testify of their unbelief of the Message of Salvation, forgiveness of sins, and everlasting life with the Eternal God.

The next 2 verses are strangely light on explanation and therefore a bit hard to understand in terms of their flow in the narrative.

(Acts 18:7) 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.

The house he entered was joined to the synagogue. The man was a god-fearing gentile named Justus. Perhaps Paul wanted to show that he went to a gentile instead of returning to Aquilla and Priscilla who were Jews. Interestingly, some manuscripts refer to him as Titus Justus or Titus son of Justus. Most everyone agrees that it's totally uncertain if this is the same Titus to whom Paul wrote.

But, other than the fact that Paul came to his house, nothing else is written. Did Paul tell him about Jesus? Did he come to Jesus? Did Justus invite other gentiles to listen to Paul? Was Paul seeking just a safe-place?

To all of this, the answer is "dunno".

(Acts 18:8) 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.

This is phenomenal news! The ruler of the synagogue, Crispus, came to the LORD with his whole family! It must have caused an uproar in the congregation, but Luke says nothing about it.

How influential was this ruler?

The ruler of the synagogue presided in all the assemblies, he interpreted the law, decided concerning all things lawful and unlawful, he punished and may have excommunicated the

rebellious, and he performed marriage ceremonies, as well as issuing divorce decrees.

Did he seek Paul out like Nicodemus did with Jesus, in the dark of the night? Did he just have an “aha” moment given to him by the Holy Spirit while listening to Paul? Did he invite Paul to his house like Cornelius did with Peter?

Dunno.

However it happened, it brought many Corinthians to the LORD! It has been suggested that these were gentiles not Jews and perhaps the commentators are correct (when the converted were Jews, Luke normally labelled them as such). But were they the God-fearers in the synagogue? Or heathen Corinthians? Dunno. But perhaps by calling them just “Corinthians”, Luke was indicating that they were just plain pagans.

And looking at all the questions I raised, perhaps the point is that it’s all due the work of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps it was, in a way, glorifying the Holy Spirit and teaching us not to venerate Paul, who, although an anointed witness to the truth of Jesus, was just a man like us.

I came to this understanding because of what happened next:

(Acts 18:9) Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; (Acts 18:10) for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."

Jesus came to Paul in a vision, presumably while he slept. He spoke comfort to him as well as instructions. Perhaps we can glean Paul’s state of mind by what Jesus told him:

1. Paul was afraid: He saw the reactions of both the Jews and Gentiles when he proclaimed Jesus as God, Lord and King.
2. In his fear, perhaps Paul was considering stepping away from speaking about Jesus.
3. And, he was certainly afraid of the attacks – both verbal and physical! Verbal attacks can wear down a person and weaken them into inaction, indecision and an inability to perform the tasks they need to accomplish.
4. And the Lord said to Paul during the night through a vision, , but continue to be speaking and do not begin to be silent, because, as for myself, I am with you, and not even one person will assault you to do you harm,

So Jesus speaks to his most crucial need: to not be afraid to continue.

1. Do not be afraid; this is a tough command; fear has such a strong physical manifestation, that it is difficult NOT to be afraid; And, in the Greek, it’s more like “**Stop being afraid**”
2. Keep steadfast in the race; Greek: continue to be speaking and do not begin to be silent!
3. I AM with you Paul, I have always been with you on the mountain tops and in the valleys; And, it’s because I AM with you that you can and will succeed. Remember what I told Zechariah 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the LORD of hosts. (4:6)
4. I AM restraining those who want to attack you!

5. I have many people in this city. Meaning:
 - a. Clarke: In this very city: there are many here who have not resisted my Spirit, and consequently are now under its teachings, and are ready to embrace my Gospel as soon as thou shalt declare it unto them.
6. **Therefore, Paul, don't be afraid and do not doubt!**

This isn't a pep-talk; these are marching orders to a man who was facing a critical moment in his life!

And so...

(Acts 18:11) And he continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Paul spent a lot of time **teaching** the Word of God. There was much to learn; they met Jesus; they came to Jesus and now Paul would solidify their understanding with godly wisdom;

Evidently Paul perceived that these folks needed a lot of attention. We probably need to assume that Silas and Timothy were right along side of Paul doing their part in the building up of the church.

(Acts 18:12) When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat, (13) saying, "This *fellow* persuades men to worship God contrary to the law."

Once again Paul is taken to a local "judge" to have him "taken care of" (a good beating and then an expulsion from the city would do nicely judge).

But the matter before the judge is religion and the worship of the Jew's God.

(Acts 18:14) And when Paul was about to open *his* mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, O Jews, there would be reason why I should bear with you.

Paul was not allowed to speak. He could neither defend himself nor could he proclaim Christ to these gentiles. Perhaps remembering the Mar's Hill Affair, Paul felt it better to just keep quiet and trust the LORD!

(Acts 18:15) But if it is a question of words and names and your own law, look *to it* yourselves; for I do not want to be a judge of such *matters*." (Acts 18:16) And he drove them from the judgment seat.

Don't bother me with these issues....just go away!

(Acts 18:17) Then all the Greeks took **Sosthenes**, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat *him* before the judgment seat. But Gallio took no notice of these things.

All agree that these "Greeks" were not the new converts since they would have been taught the Law of Christ! They evidently were infuriated with the ruler of the synagogue for bring such a trivial matter to Gallio.

Sosthenes, the new ruler of the synagogue, appears to have been converted sometime later because

he is mentioned in:

1 Corinthians 1:1 Paul, called *to be* an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, **and Sosthenes our brother,**

This was the second synagogue ruler to come to the LORD!

(Acts 18:18) So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila *were* with him. **He had *his* hair cut off at Cenchrea,** for he had taken a vow.

It's not known how much a "good while" is; He felt a need to take a vow. Strange thing for Paul to do, being that it was prescribed in the Law; Just because we are not under the Law it doesn't mean that you should avoid it like the plague: it's all about attitude and motivations. This vow was known as the Nazarite vow:

Numbers 6:2-8 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: '**When either a man or woman** consecrates an offering to take the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to the LORD, **(3)** he shall separate himself from wine and *similar* drink; he shall drink neither vinegar made from wine nor vinegar made from *similar* drink; neither shall he drink any grape juice, nor eat fresh grapes or raisins. **(4)** All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin. **(5)** 'All the days of the vow of his separation no razor shall come upon his head; until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to the LORD, he shall be holy. *Then* he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow. **(6)** All the days that he separates himself to the LORD he shall not go near a dead body. **(7)** He shall not make himself unclean even for his father or his mother, for his brother or his sister, when they die, because his separation to God *is* on his head. **(8)** All the days of his separation he shall be holy to the LORD.

Numbers 6:13 'Now this *is* the law of the Nazirite: When the days of his separation are fulfilled, he shall be brought to the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

Numbers 6:18 Then the Nazirite shall shave his consecrated head *at* the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and shall take the hair from his consecrated head and put *it* on the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offering.

Some Nazarites were appointed by God, as Samson was; some were devoted by their parents, as Samuel was by Channah; and some by their own free-will. It was thought to be 30 days according to the Rabbi's but one could be a "perpetual" Nazarite.

First, not every commentator thinks that it was Paul that took the vow. Some think that it was Aquilla because he is listed and the next "he" would refer to the last person. One problem was that Aquilla and Priscilla stayed in Ephesus and only Paul continued to Jerusalem and the Temple where it would be offered with the prescribed peace offering:

Why did Paul do this?

Guzik: The purpose of the vow of a Nazirite was to express a unique consecration to God, promising to abstain from all products from the grapevine, to not cut one's hair, and to never come near a dead body.

Why did Paul do this at this time? William Barclay suggests, "No doubt Paul was thinking of all God's goodness to him in Corinth and took this vow to show his gratitude." **But the purpose of a Nazirite vow seems to be more of consecration than thanksgiving. Perhaps the intense worldliness of Corinth made Paul want to express his dedication and separation unto the Lord more than ever.**

It was a voluntary sacrifice given to God in three specific instances.

1. First, a peace offering could be given as a freewill offering, meaning that the worshiper was giving the peace offering as a way to say thank you for God's unsought generosity. It was basically just a way to praise God for His goodness.
2. The second way a peace offering could be given was alongside a fulfilled vow. A good example of this was when Hannah fulfilled her vow to God by bringing Samuel to the temple; on that occasion she also brought a peace offering to express the peace in her heart toward God concerning her sacrifice—it was a way to say, "I have no resentment; I am holding nothing back in the payment of my vow."
3. The third purpose of a peace offering was to give thanksgiving for God's deliverance in an hour of dire need. None of these three reasons to sacrifice had anything to do with propitiation, with appeasing God, or with pacifying Him.

(Acts 18:19) And he came to Ephesus, and left them there; but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.

The outburst in Corinth was local. Paul still went to the Jew first

(Acts 18:20) When they asked *him* to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent, **(Acts 18:21)** but took leave of them, saying, "I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing." And he sailed from Ephesus.

Which of the feasts it was is not known.

"God willing" – a phrase of full submission to the Will of God!

(Acts 18:22) And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch.

Once again, Luke describes something that may have taken a while:

1. He lands in Caesarea
2. He goes up to Jerusalem (southward); again for the feast and the fulfillment of the Vow.
3. He goes down to Antioch (northward)

(Acts 18:23) After he had spent some time *there*, he departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

Antioch, in Syria, seems to be the starting point of Paul's journeys. It is from here that he begins his 3rd missionary journey!

While Paul is traveling, Luke turns our attention to Apollos

(Acts 18:24) Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man *and* mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.

There were a lot of Jews in Alexandria because of the various dispersions of the Jews from Israel.

He had a command of the language, a gifted orator as the word "eloquent" implies.

and a depth of knowledge of the Scriptures.

Matthew Henry says of his command of the Scriptures:

He understood the sense and meaning of them, he knew how to make use of them and to apply them, how to reason out of the scriptures, and to reason strongly; a convincing, commanding, confirming power went along with all his expositions and applications of the scripture. It is probable he had given proof of his knowledge of the scriptures, and his abilities in them, in many synagogues of the Jews.

He came to preach the word of God.

(Acts 18:25) This man had been instructed **in the way of the Lord**; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John.

He knew the LORD and was a passionate teacher who taught the things of the LORD with diligence and accuracy but his complete understanding was lacking.

But, he was unaware of the Baptism of the Spirit! Since he knew of the baptism of John, some believe that his parents were believers in Judea during the time of John the Baptist.

GILL: which must be understood, not of the ordinance of baptism singly, as administered by John, but of the whole ministry of John; as of that ordinance, so of his doctrine concerning repentance and remission of sins; and concerning Christ that was to come, and concerning his being come, and who he was, whom John pointed at, and taught the people to believe in: but perhaps he might know very little, if anything, of the miracles of Christ, or of his death and resurrection from the dead, and the benefits and effects thereof; and of the pouring out of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles, and the light and knowledge which were communicated thereby.

GUZIK: Because Apollos knew of the work of John the Baptist, it is likely that he preached that the Messiah had come, and we must respond to him, but he probably had little knowledge of the *full* person and work of Jesus Christ.

It seems Apollos (like many in his day) was a missionary called by God alone, because we have no indication that he was sent or commissioned by any specific apostle. He simply **came to Ephesus**.

(Acts 18:26) So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When **Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.**

They obviously did this in a loving way as too not discourage him or rebuke him!

This may also have started with the fullness of Christ, his death and resurrection! And then the coming of the Promised Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost so that the apostles were truly transformed by the anointing and empowering Spirit of God.

We can assume that their instruction, like so many before him, ended them praying for the Holy Spirit to come upon this man of God.

(Acts 18:27) And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; (28) for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

Having earned trust among those in Ephesus, the Holy Spirit seems to have impressed upon him the need to travel to Corinth (as indicated in Acts 19:1). Like Paul before him, he, with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, “downright” proved to the Jews that Jesus was their long awaited Messiah!

There are many lessons here.

First, we see a man who history has deemed to be the greatest apostle, who wrote half of the NT books and from whom we get nearly all our great doctrinal truths, this exceedingly anointed man, this man of faith and love grew tired and weary at times. With all o his “credentials”, we must remember that he was just a man. He was a man who made mistakes. He was a man who, near the end of his life would declare to Timothy:

1 Timothy 1:15 This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

And, in Acts chapter 18, we see a man who needed some time-off. Listen to his own words:

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. (2) For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. (3) **I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.** (4) And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, (5) that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

This is not false humility; Paul was beat-up, tired and weary!

But Paul would not give up! So, near the end of his life, he would say to Timothy:

2 Timothy 4:6-8 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. (7) I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. (8) Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me

on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Reading Paul's letters, it is clear that his sole desire was to be conformed into the image of his Savior so that in all he taught, with all of the countless salvations, the man, Paul, is forgotten and only Jesus is seen.

Second, we see the value of good, godly friends who come along side us, encouraging us, urging us on, bearing our burdens with us. Aquilla and Priscilla were such friends of Paul's. At the end of the book of Romans, Paul wrote of them:

Romans 16:3-4 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, (4) who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

They were also credited with having counselled Apollos in his ministry so that he taught the Gospel message accurately. For, it is not enough just to be enthusiastic...the message must be grounded in the Truth otherwise it can not be of much value.

This leads to the third and final point, as great of a man Paul was, he couldn't do it alone!

1 Corinthians 3:6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.

Paul planted churches; He laid the foundations, the chief cornerstone being Christ Jesus. Apollos followed up with edification, exhortation, building up the church in faith and holiness.

Through it all, God gives the increase, God the Holy Spirit produces the fruit which we are to offer to hungry, weary and perishing souls!

So, are we planters? Are we waterers? Are we offering the life-giving fruit of the Spirit? Think about it! And then continue the race. Let us imitate Paul, in that, even though he wearied, he grew tired, he feared and despaired, he was able to say:

Philippians 3:12-14 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. (13) Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, (14) I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.