

Strength to Stay (Acts 18)

Are you physically, emotionally or spiritually exhausted? Have you been hoping for something that isn't happening? Do you feel like what you're doing isn't making an impact? Are you afraid of what's next because of the pain or rejection you've experienced in the past? Where do you find the strength to stay? To endure? To continue speaking about Jesus when loneliness, discouragement and weariness is your present experience? Acts 18 is the story of finding strength to stay – right there, in the midst of the craze.

1. Friends to run with (Acts 18:1-8) - encouragement

Corinth = a strategic city for the message of Jesus. The 3rd largest city of the Roman Empire. A city of trade, wealth, power. A melting pot of people, ideas and beliefs; and known for its immorality. The temple to Aphrodite's = Greek goddess of love, passion, procreation. 1k prostitutes. Paul was alone. By this point he's been persecuted, imprisoned, mocked and beaten. There's good reason to conclude he is tired, discouraged and feeling alone. 1 Corinthians 2:3 Part of the way God cares for us is through friendships. Paul moved to a house next door to the synagogue. Things start to take off! It was fruitful ministry but it was difficult ministry.

2. Jesus to fall on (Acts 18:9-17) – comfort

"Don't be afraid. Hold on. Stay where you are. Keep speaking. Don't be quiet. I'm with you...I'm not done yet. I have many in this city, who are my people."

Jesus knew Paul's temptations and fears and met him in the midst of them.

The vision Paul had puts promises given to every follower – front and center.

Matthew 28:19-20 – presence. Matt 6:26-33 – provision. Acts 2:8 – power. John 15:4-11 – love

Will you allow these promises to combat the temptation to be silent, give in, give up, check out, move on?

We get to be a part of what Jesus is doing *in St. Pete*. Things are just getting started.

VV12-17 demonstrates Jesus' faithfulness to keep his promises.

3. Others to join in (Acts 18:18-28) – assistance

VV24-28 we're introduced to Apollos - a really smart, eloquent man who knew the Scriptures and spoke of accurately of Jesus. BUT something was missing.

Aquilla + Priscilla pull Apollos aside and tell him *the rest of the story*. V27

Are you willing to receive from others? Are you willing to invest in others?

Paul invested in Aquilla + Priscilla, who invested in Apollos, who invested in the Corinthians.

QUESTIONS (Pray, read the passage and pick 4-5 questions to discuss. Trust the Holy Spirit to guide.)

1. Loneliness, discouragement and weariness can have a crippling effect. We can all be tempted to bow out of what Jesus is calling us to give ourselves to. Read Acts 18:1-11. What encouragements and what difficulties does Paul experience in Corinth?
2. When has the Lord given you confidence to stay in a situation even though it was difficult?
3. Aquilla and Priscilla shared the same trade as Paul. They became dear friends, business partners and co-laborers for the gospel. How has God used friendships to encourage you in your faith?
4. The vision found in VV9-10 has specific promises for Paul in his situation AND general promises true for every follower of Jesus. What are those promises?
5. When we have no strength to stay or to speak - how do the promises found here combat the temptation to be silent, give in, give up, check out, move on?
6. Read Acts 18-28. What accusations are brought against Paul in VV12-13? What is the reaction of the proconsul Gallio? How is this an expression of God's faithfulness in the midst of the craze?
7. Eventually Aquilla and Priscilla are in the city of Ephesus and meet a man named Apollos who is teaching about Jesus. Apollos only knew about the baptism of John for the forgiveness of sins. What do Aquilla and Priscilla do in response? What are the results?
8. Who have been your mentors in the faith? In what ways did they help you? Who are you mentoring/discipling OR who can you pursue in this way? What might keep you from doing this?