

## **“Paul’s Boast”**

### **Acts 18:1-17; I Corinthians 2:1-5**

#### **Acts 18:1-17**

18:1 After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. <sup>2</sup> And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, <sup>3</sup> and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade. <sup>4</sup> And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.

<sup>5</sup> When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. <sup>6</sup> And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.” <sup>7</sup> And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue. <sup>8</sup> Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized. <sup>9</sup> And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, <sup>10</sup> for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.” <sup>11</sup> And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

<sup>12</sup> But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, <sup>13</sup> saying, “This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law.” <sup>14</sup> But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, “If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. <sup>15</sup> But since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these things.” <sup>16</sup> And he drove them from the tribunal. <sup>17</sup> And they all seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to any of this.

#### **I Corinthians 2:1-5**

<sup>2:1</sup> And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. <sup>2</sup> For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. <sup>3</sup> And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, <sup>4</sup> and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, <sup>5</sup> so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

Have you noticed? Our church is receiving new power. Every week there are new people serving in worship and fellowship and media. Through the music and the message and our community together, God is giving new guidance. This is our chance to grow as disciples of Jesus. What is God doing today? What is God saying to you? Let’s ask for his help.

“Father, where there is concern, give peace. Where there is loneliness, give community. Where there is complacency, give awareness. Where there is no direction, send Your Words and Your Spirit. Where there is no vision, make us aware of your

heart. Where there is sickness and despair, bring healing and hope. I wait in hope for you."

During my college years, I went on a mission trip to Haiti for the summer. After that trip, I took off the Fall semester, and went with a recruiting team from that mission and traveled around the East Coast. I remember giving my testimony in a church in Boston. When I said how I believed in Jesus, they applauded. I was surprised because in the church I grew up in, there was never any applause. Plus my testimony is not that interesting. Also, after the meeting someone came up to me and said, "You should be a pastor." That was a shock to me. So I thought, "If seven more people tell me that, then I'll think about it." Well, nobody did. So, maybe that wasn't God's leading. What was very clear to me was that in my weakness, God was strong.

This is today's message. Paul boasted not in own strength or ability to persuade, but in his weakness. He came to the people in Corinth in fear and trembling. He had to depend on God's power, the power of the Holy Spirit. Without God's power, no one would believe his message about Jesus. Without God's power, they would put their faith in themselves and others. They would expect too much and thus be disappointed. However, faith in Jesus Christ will never be disappointed.

When Paul went to Corinth to preach the gospel, he felt his weakness. Look at I Cor. 2:1-5. "When I came to you brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on man's wisdom, but on God's power."

Paul's experience in Corinth is recorded in Acts 18 that we just read. We see there his demonstration of weakness, power and faith.

He stayed with a fellow Jew and his wife, who were tentmakers. As he worked with them, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath, and tried to persuade the Jews and Greeks that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior, the Son of God.

But wait a minute. Did you notice? Paul just said in I Cor. 2:4 that his preaching was not with wise and persuasive words. So what does it mean in Acts 18 where it says that Paul tried to persuade the Jews and Greeks that Jesus is the Christ? I think it means that his persuasiveness was not in his method, but in his message. He did not immediately say, "I'm going to start a church." Starting a church is not wrong. However, before he did that he worked with believers in their trade, and then on the Sabbath went to an already established Jewish synagogue and talked about Jesus Christ.

His persuasiveness was Jesus Christ, not his past experience. It was Jesus crucified on the cross. Together with the Corinthians, he only wanted to know Jesus.

Isn't this great! Paul was really changed. As a Pharisee, he had persuaded many not to believe in Jesus. But now, here he was declaring, "I only want to know Jesus and him crucified."

I want to ask you today: What are you preaching? Is it your experience? Is it your wisdom? Is it your way? Or, is it Jesus Christ?

Listen to I Cor. 3:21-23. "So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future--all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

Wow! Do you know what this means? We don't need to compete with each other. We don't need to compare ourselves with others. We don't need to worry about the future or sickness or even death. Why? Because all of these things are already ours. We own them. They are ours because we are in Christ, and Christ is of God. Rather than being controlled by these things, we are freed from their control over us.

The crucified Christ changed Paul's life. Knowing Jesus will change our lives too. It will free us from trying to control people and things, because in Christ we already have it all. We don't need to worry about the future. We don't need to solve our current problems because in Jesus they will be resolved.

Because Paul knew that in Christ he had everything, He was able to change his place of ministry. When Paul testified at the Jewish synagogue that Jesus is the Christ, the Jews opposed him and reviled him. In response to this, Paul said to them in verse 6, "Your blood be upon your own heads. I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." He was saying that they had refused life in Jesus. He could do nothing more there.

Actually, Paul didn't go that far away. He went to the house next to the synagogue, where a worshiper of God lived. And then, amazingly, the ruler of the synagogue where Paul had just been rejected believed in Jesus and his whole family. Many of the Corinthians believed and were baptized. So the synagogue ruler, who had obviously heard Paul speak in the synagogue decided to believe. Not only him, but his family also, and many other Corinthians. This is an amazing work of the Spirit and the power of God. Paul could not have known that this would happen.

I think that for us this means that even when we think we are failing, we may well be succeeding, because of the demonstration of the Spirit of God in us. It may seem as if no one is interested in Jesus, but actually, they may be listening from a distance. A guy at the sento asked me, "Are you a pastor?" I said, "I'm not a pastor, but I am a missionary that helps pastors." With that, we were able to talk about the church a little bit. The Spirit of God is working even when I don't notice it.

Paul received another encouragement from the Spirit of God. 18:9,10 "And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, 'Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many people in this city who are my people.'"

Had Paul been discouraged and wanted to give up and leave Corinth? Had he been afraid that he would be harmed for speaking about Jesus? Had he been silenced because of the abuse of the Jews? It doesn't say here, but we do see that Paul stayed another year and a half teaching the word of God in Corinth. He could have left after his experience with the Jews. However, because he stayed, many more were saved.

This likely included Sosthenes, another ruler of the synagogue, who is spoken of in verse 17. "The Jews seized him and beat him in the courtroom when they were accusing Paul of persuading people to worship God contrary to the law."

Look at I Cor. 1:1. "Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes, . . ." Is this the same man? Wow! I had not noticed this till now.

At the beginning of this message, I said that God is giving us new power and guidance. What guidance or awareness has he given you today? Is it that in our weakness, God is strong? Is it that when we feel we are failing that actually through the demonstration of the Spirit's power we may be succeeding? Are you liberated by the realization that in Christ, all things are yours? Or that even Sosthenes was saved? Perhaps it was something else you became aware of today.

Whatever it is, we know that there are still many around us in Tokyo who need to be saved. In our weakness and fear, but yet in the power of the Spirit, let us not give up, but let us keep on speaking about Jesus.

#### Prayer

Dear Father, fill us now with your Spirit. Make us able to hear your voice. Empower us with your strength. Thank you in You, all things are ours. Where there is discouragement and despair, bring hope. Where there is sickness and doubt, bring healing and faith. O Lord, come to us we pray. Amen.

#### Blessing

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone."

Let's go in the power of God this week. We are weak, but he is strong. He went to the cross for us. He rose from the dead. Let's just believe that this week.