

The Life Challenge

"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." John 10:10

Sermon Series: Empowered

Title: Paul, His Ministry, and...oh yeah, the Holy Spirit

Speaker: Jeff Peters

Text: Acts 18:1-17

Date: February 25, 2018



WARM-UP

A quick review: Out loud now, what are South Abbotsford's three key areas we're currently focusing on?

Think of five people you know who are "not-yet-believers." How would you describe their attitude toward Christianity: **scoffer** (nobody buys that stuff), **cynic** (you hypocrites!), **agnostic** (don't know if God actually exists), church is **irrelevant** (don't need that stuff; it's for the weak), **damaged** by their past church experiences, adamantly **opposed to Christianity** (of another faith), **atheist** (a lack of belief in God or gods).

Which one might be the most resistant to faith in Jesus Christ?

DISCUSSION

REVIEW:

- **Key Text: Acts 18:1-17**
- **Paul prioritized "friendly" environments** – Paul went first to the synagogues:
 - ⇒ Thessalonica – Acts 17:1
 - ⇒ Berea – Acts 17:10
 - ⇒ Athens – Acts 17:17
 - ⇒ Corinth – Acts 18:4
 - ⇒ Ephesus – Acts 18:19
- **Paul persevered through resistance: Jews seemed to be at the center of it all:**
 - ⇒ **17:5** – Jewish leaders in Thessalonica rounded up some bad characters and started a riot in the city
 - ⇒ **17:13** – The Jews from Thessalonica agitated the Berean crowds and stirred them up
 - ⇒ **18:12** – The Jews of Corinth made a united attack on Paul and brought him to the place of judgment
 - ⇒ **18:9-10** – Paul never lost his focus – the Lord encouraged him personally
- **Paul perceived the real enemy: Acts 18:12-17**
 - ⇒ The fickleness of the Jewish crowd. When they didn't get their own way, they beat up their own leader, Sosthenes, not Paul!
 - ⇒ **Amazing results:** The power of God overcomes the **real enemy** – Ephesians 6:12 – "*Our struggle is not against flesh and blood (Crispus and Sosthenes) but...against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces...*"
 - * Crispus, the synagogue leader and his family become disciples of Jesus (18:8)
 - * Sosthenes shows up in I Corinthians 1:1 – "our brother Sosthenes"

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DISCUSSION

- ⇒ Jeff's punch line: "Now, persuasion is not only **believing something**, but **joining or belonging to something**. As small groups of believers formed, there was that critical mass of people meeting as "bodies" or "churches," not only inviting a **belief** but also **relationship** and **belonging**."
- **Paul's work was Spirit empowered work:**
 - ⇒ **1 Corinthians 2:4-5** – "A demonstration of the Spirit's power"
 - ⇒ **1 Thessalonians 1:5-6** – "[the] gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction..."
 - ⇒ **1 Thessalonians 2:13** – "...When you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe."
 - ⇒ **1 Corinthians 1:17** – "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power."
 - ⇒ **Foolish, but empowered!**
 - * A foolish message
 - * A foolish recipient
 - * A foolish preacher

APPLICATION/CONCLUSION:

- Do we just blow off this message and simply ignore the implications of these texts? In our minds we say, "Well, that stuff worked for heroes of the faith like Paul. Come and walk in my ordinary shoes!"
- How are we like Paul in his weaknesses? Does that encourage us or discourage us?
- What stops us from moving forward? Compare our thinking to Paul's. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone." Romans 1:16
- **Two of Jeff's questions to ponder:**
 1. "I do wonder what God would like to accomplish through me if I made a little more space for the Spirit to demonstrate his love, mercy, forgiveness, and compassion on those around me."
 2. "I wonder if I would take one or two more steps in directions that are uncomfortable for me, if God would take that and do things unimaginable."
- **Making it Real:**
 - ⇒ How should we be praying about these challenges?
 - ⇒ Where and how are we in need of Holy Spirit empowerment?
 - ⇒ Who might be the people we could reach out to with Good News?