

## **Facing Discouragement (Acts 18:9-18)**

The evil one loves to tempt people. Not all temptation, however, comes from the devil as it also stems from our rebellious fallen human nature. While the devil and demonic spirits cannot read your thoughts, they observe patterns in your behavior and know your weaknesses. Observing your patterns of behavior, they present temptations.

The devil tempts people to sin in several ways: deception, division, distraction, and discouragement. The goal, as always, is to divert you from God and to entice you to sin. You are called to resist temptations as God always provides sufficient grace to avoid sin.

For the sake of time, let's look at discouragement. Discouragement is a loss of confidence or enthusiasm. It saps your energy as it causes a loss of hope in God's providential care for you in both the present and future.

In looking at Paul's journeys, if anyone has reason to be discouraged, it is certainly him! He suffered tremendously for Christ. In just about every city, he met resistance – sometimes from his own Jewish brothers and sometimes from the Gentiles. On one occasion, he was stoned and dragged out of the city. In Philippi, he was beaten with rods and thrown in prison. In Athens, he was mocked for speaking about the Resurrection of the dead.

Without question, Paul may have been tempted to become discouraged and give up. He likely felt alone in his suffering. In the face of this temptation, our Lord appears to Paul and says, *"Do not be afraid. Go on speaking, and do not be silent, for I am with you."* Imagine how beautiful those words must have been for him!

How can you act against discouragement? First, keep praying! If you aren't praying, then your soul is slowly suffocating spiritually. The challenge is that when you are discouraged, you don't *feel* like praying. Pour out your heart to God and ask him for help.

Second, give thanks often. God gives so many gifts and when you acknowledge his blessings, your heart lifts. Begin your prayer with thanksgiving or in conversations with those who are discouraged, ask others the reasons for which they are most grateful.

Third, reach out to family and friends. Paul had a whole network of friends – Silas, Barnabas, Timothy, Priscilla and Aquilla – who loved the Lord and him and support him. In the end, you are not alone as God is with you and you have people who love you! ~St. Thérèse, pray for us!