

**Acts 18; Nehemiah 4**

Two frogs fell into a deep cream bowl,  
One was an optimistic soul;  
But the other took the gloomy view,  
“We shall drown”, he cried, without more ado.  
So with a last despairing cry,  
He flung up his legs and said, “Good bye”

Quoth the other frog with a merry grin,  
“I can’t get out, but I won’t give in!  
I’ll just swim round ‘til my strength is spent,  
Then I will die the more content.”

Bravely he swam ‘til it would seem  
His struggles began to churn the cream.  
On the top of the butter at last he stopped,  
And out of the bowl he gaily hopped.  
What of the moral? ‘Tis easily found:  
“If you can’t hop out, keep swimming round!”

**1. Today I am going to speak to you on the subject of discouragement**

--Discouragement is no respecter of persons...in fact what makes it such horrible problem is that it attacks everyone...nobody is immune to it.

--Individuals of the highest caliber in the Scriptures have been plagued with it at times:

Moses : **Num. 11:15.**

Joshua: **Josh 7:7**

Elijah: **1 Kngs. 19:4**

Paul: **Acts 18** Which is where we are in our study of Acts

--Paul no doubt had some very discouraging times that we mostly only assume since the Scriptures don’t enlighten us, but his circumstances paint a good enough picture to educate our imaginations.

--Here in Acts 18 we get a glimpse into his emotional state at a difficult time and see that this great man was just like us.

Paul was jailed at Phillipi, driven out of both Thessalonica and Berea, laughed out of Athens, then he arrives in Corinth which is practically the capital of immorality of the ancient world. The Temple to Aphrodite on the acropolis had 1000 prostitutes who would walk the streets at dusk with sandals that had hobnails in the soles that spelled out the word “follow me” in the dusty streets.

--Not exactly the most encouraging place for ministry I can assure you.

--Additionally, he had his old nemesis, the Jews, breathing down his neck.

--All of which was a recipe for discouragement.

--We’re not guessing here, because in two places in Scripture we are given clear indication as to emotional state during this time:

**1 Cor. 2:3** – Not quite the picture you had of Paul is it? We get the idea that he was unflappable and was always able to see through even the worst of circumstances. We stand corrected.

**Acts 18:9-10** – The word discouragement doesn’t show up here, but we have the clear indicators of its presence, not the least of which is his **need for encouragement** from the Lord.

## **2. We are studying Acts but I've had you turn to Nehemiah simply because the subject of discouragement is best dealt with there.**

- Here we'll find not only the causes but also the cures for discouragement. **Neh. 4**
- First of all, the causes, and we'll take them as they come here understanding that they may come in any order.
- Any one of these can hammer you, but the combination is almost certain to drag you down.

### **1. Ridicule -- 4:1-3**

- Maybe the toughest thing to endure (Paul had it from the Jews)
- Being ridiculed for your faith can easily equal growing discouraged in your faith.
- Maybe its not a verbal assault but its like you're foolish or ignorant for your faith and that can be tough.
- Someone has said that ridicule, "Is the language of the devil" Certainly, he is a liar and an accuser.
- Most will stand bravely when shot at but will cower meekly when laughed at.

### **2. Threats -- VV. 7-8**

- Hard to say whether its real or a bluff, but that's not the point---the point is: does it have an effect?
- Paul had threats from the Jews.
- Is someone threatening you? Maybe its just the threat of failure?

### **3. Fatigue -- V.10a**

- Watch yourself when you get tired (also sick or in pain) discouragement is never far away.
- Interesting when the fatigue sets in for these Jews. V. 6---that's when it gets you...forgotten is the vision and energy that you started with and finish line is out of sight.
- When God clearly speaks, write it down and don't go back on it no matter how things look.

### **4. Frustration -- V.10b** "There is much rubble; and we ourselves are unable to rebuild the wall."

- They're digging out the rubble and as soon as they pull away some there seems to be just as much left.
- Is a project frustrating you? Fix one thing and there seems to be just as much left to fix.
- Maybe it's the rubble in your life: Old habits, pet sins, frustrating character traits.
- Don't let frustration get you discouraged.
- Don't let it make you keep from fighting; keep digging; keep working.

### **5. Fear -- V. 14**

- Fear is paralyzing
- Paul knew fear and it threatened to discourage him from his mission
- Fear is dominating
- It keeps people from doing what they want and what they should.

--When fear comes, discouragement is not far behind.

**3. So what do we do about discouragement---how do we fight it?**

**1. Return to your knees – V. 9**

- Go back to place where God spoke to you
- Rely on Him.

**2. Reorganize – V. 13**

- Nehemiah's first plans were enough to get half the wall built, but they weren't enough to get it all built.
- When you hit a snag, reorganize.
- So often we lose our momentum and become targets for the enemy because our priorities are out-of-wack.

**3. Remember – V. 14**

- The Lord is sufficient to accomplish absolutely anything through us...do you believe that...do you remember that?
- Not if you're discouraged! You've forgotten that.
- Remind yourself of who the Lord is and His attributes.
- Read the great stories of the men and women who believed God could do the impossible.  
David and Goliath, Joseph and his mistreatment by his brothers, Daniel and his friends.

**4. Resist – V. 14b**

- Discouragement is nothing more than allowing circumstances whether real or imagined to make your decisions for you.
  
- "Submit yourself to the Lord, Resist the devil and he will flee from you" – Return to your knees and then get back to what you were supposed to be doing --- keep pushing, fighting, moving.