

Chapter 18: Paul in Corinth

"Fellow Workers in Christ Jesus"

Introduction: Paul continues his 2nd missionary journey through Macedonia and Achaia, arriving in Corinth in Fall of A.D. 51, having left Silus and Timothy behind.

> *"Paul traveled to Corinth in a mood of great dejection,' writes one New Testament scholar. He had not known any violence in Athens as he had in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea, but 'the polite amusement that had greeted his witness there was perhaps more difficult to take than violence… More likely it is the reputation of the city that frightened him. At least in Athens they were interested in debating ideas, and Paul could speak of Jesus and the resurrection and get a hearing. But not in Corinth! The youth in particular were more interested in sex and sport than in talking about religion."* **Derek Thomas,** "Acts", p. 512

We will see in Chapter 18 just how important it is to labor alongside fellow workers in Christ

Paul in Corinth (verses 1-17)

Paul arrives in Corinth (vs. 1-4)

- Paul comes to Corinth from Athens and meets Aquila and Priscilla (much more on them later)
- Emperor Claudius had issued the edict expelling Jews from Rome in A.D. 49
- Paul stays with Aquila and Priscilla and works alongside them as tentmakers
- In the meantime, he addressed Jews and Greeks in the synagogue every Sabbath – part-time ministry!

Help from Macedonia (vs. 5-8)

- Paul had left Timothy and Silas in Berea (17:14)
- Notice that after Silas and Timothy arrive, it seems Paul becomes wholly absorbed with proclaiming the word (vs. 5)
- Paul would later write about this help from Macedonia:

  "*And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. So, I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way*." (2 Cor. 11:9)
- Paul gets nowhere with the Jews in the synagogue so he "shakes out his garments" and again declares he is going to focus his ministry on the Gentiles (vs. 6)
- Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believes in the Lord, and many in Corinth believe and are baptized as a result (vs. 7)
- Paul mentions having personally baptized Crispus in 1 Cor. 1:12

"Do not be afraid." – The Lord appears to Paul in a vision (vs. 9-11)

- Why did Paul need this encouragement? He just baptized the leader of the synagogue!
- Paul would later write to the Corinthians about his dejected state on his arrival:

  "*And I, when I came to you, brothers… I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling*." (1 Cor. 2:1-3)
- So, Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, supported by Priscilla and Aquila and Silas and Timothy
- During this time, he wrote 1 Thessalonians (see 1 Thess. 1:1 and 3:1-6), maybe 2 Thessalonians as well
- Ministry is often hard and lonely. Thank God for fellow workers in the Gospel!

Paul Before the Proconsul Gallio (vs. 12-17)

- Gallio was proconsul of Achaia from A.D. 51-52
- Corinth was the capital of the senatorial province of Achaia (half of modern-day Greece, with Macedonia being the other half), and therefore the seat of the Roman proconsul (similar to a governor)
- As in so many prior instances, unbelieving Jews tried to appeal to Roman law:

  Jerusalem: "*… we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us.*" (Acts 6:13-14)

Phillipi: "*And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, '…They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice.*'" (Acts 16:20-21)

Thessalonica: "*And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, "… they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.*'" (Acts 17:6-7)

Corinth: "*…the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, saying, 'This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law.*'" (Acts 18:12-13)

- But the Proconsul Gallio sees the dispute as an internal matter among Jews and takes no interest (vs. 14)
- It appears that Sosthenes took over as leader of the synagogue. Perhaps Crispus stepped down (or was forced out) after his conversion (vs. 17)
- How fickle is the crowd! They attacked Paul one moment and Sosthenes the next! (vs. 17)
- Perhaps this shocking event played a role in Sosthenes becoming a believer (1 Cor. 1:1). We don't know for sure this is the same Sosthenes in Corinth, but it seems likely

Returning to Syria-Palestine via Ephesus (verses 18-28)

Paul begins the long journey home (vs. 18-23)

- Paul brings Priscilla and Aquila with him as he departs (vs. 18)
- "He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea because he had made a vow." (vs. 18)
    - Probably the Nazarite vow (Num. 6:1-21)
    - Perhaps not the official Nazarite custom, but at least inspired by it
- Paul leaves Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus and again goes to the synagogues to address the Jews (vs. 19)
- He does not stay long at Ephesus, seemingly anxious to get home (vs. 21)
- Sailing from Ephesus to Caesarea probably took place in Spring (probably A.D. 53) when shipping lanes open
- "Going up" to Jerusalem – not because it was at the top of the map, but because it was higher in elevation, not to mention status. "Going up" meant toward Jerusalem and "going down" meant away from Jerusalem
- After a stay at Antioch, Paul again visits the churches in Galatia and Phrygia to strengthen the disciples in those places (vs. 23)



Apollos in Ephesus (vs. 24-28)

- In the meantime, Apollos comes to Ephesus (vs 24)
- Apollos, though learned and a powerfully eloquent speaker, had not learned the fullness of the Gospel of Christ and the Holy Spirit (vs 25)
- Priscilla and Aquila took him aside to explain the way more accurately (vs 26)
- Apollos bursts onto the scene as a highly talented minister. But that talent needed direction from the Holy Spirit
- Apollos goes to back to Achaia and apparently ministers to the church at Corinth (vs 27 – see also 1 Cor. 3:6)

"A Jew named Aquila… with his wife Priscilla" (vs. 2-3, 18-19, 26)

- This devout couple is mentioned six times throughout the scriptures: Acts 18:2-3, 18-19, 26, Rom. 16:3, 1 Cor. 16:19, 2 Tim. 4:19
- Paul uses the more formal "Prisca" in his writings, while Luke always uses the familiar diminutive "Priscilla"
- Paul calls them his "fellow workers in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 16:3)
- The first time we meet them in Acts, Luke introduces them as "Aquila… with his wife Priscilla," and when Paul sends greetings to Corinth on their behalf, he writes, "Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings…" (1 Cor. 16:19)
- In all other mentions, Priscilla is named first, and Aquila is never named without his wife. This is highly unusual in the 1st Century in both Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures
- It is likely that Priscilla was the more prominent of the two, in whatever way
- Their devotion to discipleship produced Apollos, a future pillar of the church
- When you patiently and faithfully disciple others, you never know what the Holy Spirit will do. Who knows? Maybe you will disciple the next Apollos!

Next: *Acts Chapter 19 – Paul in Ephesus*