

## The Acts of the Apostles

“A study of the application of theology to the work of the church as a group”

### Continuing the Second Missionary Trip of Paul and Paul Visits Corinth and The Beginning of the Third Missionary Trip of Paul Chapter Eighteen

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One clear principal we can learn from Paul's trips so far and from what happens in the synagogue in Corinth is that people are not brought into the kingdom of God by eloquent preaching. Paul made great presentations both from the vantage point of Old Testament knowledge and in Athens from the vantage point of the knowledge of the learned people there. If becoming a child of God were simply a mental exercise then many people would have come into the Family after hearing Paul give the clear explanations that Jesus was the Messiah. But such was not the case then and it is not the case now. Most of the people reacted violently against Paul and even stoned and flogged him. They were so adamant against him that they followed him into adjoining towns to try to stop him from giving his messages. Paul knew that people will clearly hear and belief the message of God only when God acts first to open peoples' minds and he clearly stated such in his letter to the Romans:

*Rom 9:14 "What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!*

*Rom 9:15 For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."*

*Rom 9:16 So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.”*

So did Paul come into Corinth a bit disappointed about the meager results of all of his hard work and agonizing travels? I think not. He came into Corinth alone but God provided quickly the Christian companionship that he needed and the means to make a living until other resources arrived. Paul trusted his sovereign God and so must we.

**Acts 18:1 After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth.**

**Acts 18:2 And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them,**

**Acts 18:3 and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working; for by trade they were tent-makers.**

**Acts 18:4 And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.**

**Acts 18:5 But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.**

Paul continued in a southwest direction to Corinth. Corinth was located in a very favorable place to be a major port city and indeed it had been such. It had two ports and for a long time it was a rival to Athens. In 146 B.C. Corinth was leveled to the ground by the Roman general Mummius and the site lay desolate for a century. But in 44 B.C. Julius Caesar reestablished the city and gave it the status of a Roman colony. In 27 B.C. it became the seat of administration for the Roman province of Achaia. Soon it reclaimed its past glory and its former reputation for sexual promiscuity. The isthmus was narrow so traffic crosses the city in two perpendicular directions. It crossed from north to south along the road and it crossed from east to west across the isthmus. Since water travel was very dangerous, commercial goods were unloaded on one port, carried by slaves over the isthmus to the other side and then reloaded onto boats to continue the travel. Under Nero there was an unsuccessful attempt to build a canal across the isthmus and it was only in the last century that the canal was completed and it is still there today.

In classical Greek the phrase “act the Corinthian” means to practice fornication and the phrase “Corinthian companions” meant a group of harlots. The temple of Aphrodite (Venus is the Roman name) on the acropolis of Corinth even gave religious sanction to sexual promiscuity. At one time there were ten thousand temple prostitutes there. In the reestablished Corinth under Roman rule the city still had considerable sexual misconduct but not to the level of its previous existence. This background helps us understand why Paul had to keep after the Corinth churches for the difficulty they had in maintaining their sexual conduct that the gospel required.

*1Cor 5:1 “It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife.*

*1Cor 5:2 And you have become arrogant, and have not mourned instead, in order that the one who had done this deed might be removed from your midst.*

*1Cor 5:3 For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present.*

*1Cor 5:4 In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus,*

*1Cor 5:5 I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

*1Cor 5:6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?*

*1Cor 5:7 Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.*

*1Cor 5:8 Let us therefore celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

*1Cor 5:9 I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people;*

*1Cor 5:10 I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters; for then you would have to go out of the world.*

*1Cor 5:11 But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler-- not even to eat with such a one.*

*1Cor 5:12 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church?*

*1Cor 5:13 But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves."*

Here Paul met a couple with whom he established a long friendship. In Judaism it is forbidden to pay a teacher for teaching so they had to have a trade with which to financially support them. Paul was a tentmaker as was this couple so it was fortuitous (!!!!!) that the couple and Paul were together here and Paul would have some digs. It seemed that the spread of Christianity in the Jewish community led to so much dissension that Claudius ordered all of the Jews out of Rome. It is impossible to determine if the couple had become Christians before leaving Rome but it is very likely that they had been converted in Rome.

Paul was using a very clever argument in his reasoning in the synagogue. He was inserting the name Lord Jesus in the OT texts when they referred to the coming Messiah as he was proving that the coming of Jesus was foretold in the OT prophesies. After a few weeks Silas and Timothy joined him and then he devoted himself totally to preaching about Jesus being the promised Messiah. He received great news and money so that he no longer had to spend any time making tents.

*1Thes 3:6 "But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you,*

*1Thes 3:7 for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith;*

*1Thes 3:8 for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord.*

*1Thes 3:9 For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account,*

*1Thes 3:10 as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith?"*

*2Cor 11:9 "and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia, they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so."*

*Phil 4:16 "for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.*

*Phil 4:17 Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account."*

**Acts 18:6 And when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads! I am clean. From now on I shall go to the Gentiles."**

**Acts 18:7 And he departed from there and went to the house of a certain man**

**named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue.**

**Acts 18:8 And Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized.**

**Acts 18:9 And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent;**

**Acts 18:10 for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city. "**

**Acts 18:11 And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.**

Here Paul was rejected again but he knew what was really happening. God here gives us a great teaching about what happens when we present the gospel faithfully and people horribly reject the truth of the message. The people are not rejecting us they are rejecting God. We then should not feel badly about the situation but react to it as it really is and also in a manner taught by our Lord Jesus Christ.

*Matt 10:14 "And whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake off the dust of your feet."*

*Mark 6:11 "And any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake off the dust from the soles of your feet for a testimony against them."*

*Luke 9:5 "And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them."*

When such an event occurs we are free from blame as also taught in the Old Testament.

*Ezek 33:1 "And the word of the Lord came to me saying,*

*Ezek 33:2 Son of man, speak to the sons of your people, and say to them, 'If I bring a sword upon a land, and the people of the land take one man from among them and make him their watchman;*

*Ezek 33:3 and he sees the sword coming upon the land, and he blows on the trumpet and warns the people,*

*Ezek 33:4 then he who hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, and a sword comes and takes him away, his blood will be on his own head.*

*Ezek 33:5 He heard the sound of the trumpet, but did not take warning; his blood will be on himself. But had he taken warning, he would have delivered his life.*

*Ezek 33:6 But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and a sword comes and takes a person from them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require from the watchman's hand.”*

The above is very frightening because it still applies today to people in the pulpit who are telling people a false gospel and who are not warning the people of the consequences of their sins. This scripture clearly teaches that the people are responsible for their sins but an even worse future is in store for the preacher. The pulpits of America are full of people to whom Ezek 33:6 applies and I ache for them for they have been self-deceived and are not warning people of the coming sword.

Paul only had to go next door to find a welcome place where he could preach the truth. The name Titius Justus is a Roman name so this person was surely a Roman citizen. His other name is probably Gaius and that he is the man mentioned by Paul in the following passage of Paul's writing in Romans. The background to this passage is that Paul is asking people to greet people who have helped him including Prisca and Aquila.

*Rom 16:23 “Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer greets you, and Quartus, the brother.”*

A man having a house big enough to serve the whole church would have to be very well off and a man of distinction in the city. We also see another fascinating event in that the leader of the synagogue, Crispus, left the synagogue and even brought his entire household to join this new church. Paul mentions this man in the following as a person that he even baptized along with the man who owned the house in which the church met.

*1Cor 1:14 “I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,  
1Cor 1:15 that no man should say you were baptized in my name.”*

Paul is always so very careful to make sure that people are following Jesus and not Paul. All teachers need to be very sensitive to anyone seemingly dedicated to the teacher and not to Jesus. Certainly excellent teachers should be respected, but not worshiped. We see here that many people were being added to the family of God as the message of Jesus Christ was spreading throughout the city.

Shortly after Paul left the synagogue he was blessed with a vision from His Lord that encouraged him and gave him courage knowing that the Lord was not going to allow him

to be harmed so that he could preach with boldness and without any fear. God also told him that He had many people in that city. God is omniscient and He alone is able to bring people into a believing position to Him. He looked ahead into the city in this time frame and told Paul that He had chosen many people in this city to come into the Family of God. Paul then preached in Corinth for one and a half years probably from the fall of A.D. 50 to the spring of A.D. 52. The next five years were spent spreading the gospel message in Corinth and then in Ephesus.

**Acts 18:12 But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat,  
Acts 18:13 saying, "This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law."  
Acts 18:14 But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to put up with you;  
Acts 18:15 but if there are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters. "  
Acts 18:16 And he drove them away from the judgment seat.  
Acts 18:17 And they all took hold of Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and began beating him in front of the judgment seat. And Gallio was not concerned about any of these things.**

God promised Paul that no harm would come to him but He did not promise him that people would not try to harm him and here we have a very unsuccessful attempt by some Jews to cause him harm. The result of this failed attempt actually led to a period of 10-12 years of the gospel message being proclaimed successfully throughout the region.

The Jews thought that they had a great plan for any decision by a Roman governor would be effective in his own province and as a precedent that governors in other provinces could follow. So if they had been successful the efforts of the missionaries would have been greatly curtailed in this entire region. But God had plan "A" going strongly and effectively. Gallio was the brother of Seneca who was a much respected Stoic philosopher and so any decision by Gallio would be respected also. His relationship to Seneca also meant that Gallio was familiar with philosophy and religious teachings. The Jewish community and synagogue in Corinth and throughout the empire were under a special legal protection of Rome. But the accusers said that Paul was teaching a religion that was not in accord with their ancient faith and therefore was not under any Roman protection. Paul was about to speak in his defense when Gallio interrupted him. Listening carefully to the accusation Gallio determined that the matter involved a dispute about various interpretations of the Jewish faith for Paul was obviously a Jew of some reputation. Many people thought that Christianity was just some sort of subset of the Jewish religion. He was not about to become involved in some internal arguments about the Jewish faith and told them to work it out themselves. He then drove them away from the judgment seat and their case against Paul fell into the dust!

As they were leaving we have some insight into how prone the city was to become strongly anti-Jewish in their actions. They took Sosthenes, who was probably the

successor to Crispus as the ruler of the synagogue and beat him severely even before the proconsul. The non-reaction by Gallio showed also how little he respected the Jewish community and their religion revealing a reason why he was not about to become involved in a Jewish skirmish. Gallio's ruling meant that the Christian missionaries were free to promote their religion in the empire for the next 10-12 years until the actions of Nero completely reversed this verdict.

**Acts 18:18 And Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila. In Cenchrea he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow.**

**Acts 18:19 And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there. Now he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.**

**Acts 18:20 And when they asked him to stay for a longer time, he did not consent, Acts 18:21 but taking leave of them and saying, "I will return to you again if God wills," he set sail from Ephesus.**

It is interesting that God told us that Paul had a haircut. The reason for the haircut was to end a time allocated for keeping a vow. We are not told the nature of the vow. We do know that it was not a Nazirite vow for such had to be taken within the Holy Land or, if it was taken outside of the Holy Land, the fulfillment required a residence of at least 30 days in Judaea and at the end of that time the hair would have been cut and offered in the temple (Num 6:18). So this vow was probably a private vow and the completion of the vow by the haircut was a sign of thanksgiving. We can safely infer that the vow and its completion were in regard to the vision to Paul by Jesus in verse ten. Remember that the Holy Spirit had initially forbidden Paul from going into Asia but now the journey into that area was open so Paul went into Ephesus. As I discussed earlier, Ephesus was a major city at this time being the seat of administration of the province of Asia. Here also was the great temple of Ephesian Artemis that was determined to be one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was also a free Greek city, having been given special privileges in 44 B.C. by a partisan of Julius Caesar. He left his two friends, went into the synagogue to do his usually "thing" and the people were willing to listen to him some more. Priscilla and Aquila stayed there several years, setting up a branch of their business there. But Paul knew that this trip was ending and it was time for him to leave Ephesus and he promised to return if the Lord so willed. God indeed will let Paul come back and he will spend two years there with his longest stay in any city.

It is a bit confusing as to exactly what happened here but this is the end of the second missionary journey of Paul. Some of the early texts indicate that Paul wanted to reach Jerusalem in time for one of the Jewish festivals perhaps Passover, which would have been in early April in A.D. 52. The seas had been closed to navigation until March 10 of this year and a boat was now ready to set sail from the Ephesian harbor that would have arrived in Judaea in time for his appointment.

**Acts 18:22 And when he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and went down to Antioch.**

**Acts 18:23 And having spent some time there, he departed and passed successively through the Galatian region and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.**

Although Jerusalem is not mentioned, it surely is implied. It is only from Jerusalem and not from Caesarea that he could have “gone down” to Antioch. Luke gives us very little detail in these two verses but about 1500 miles is covered by Paul! It is likely that Luke had very little data himself since he was not on this trip. But it seems that with verse 23 we have the start of the third missionary journey and Paul travels through Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch again where he was not doing strictly evangelism but rather he was offering help and encouragement to his friends and converts.

**Acts 18:24 Now a certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures.**

**Acts 18:25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John;**

**Acts 18:26 and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.**

**Acts 18:27 And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he helped greatly those who had believed through grace;**

**Acts 18:28 for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.**

We now understand why God left Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus! God is so awesome in His Sovereignty over everything! Priscilla and Aquila were a wonderful couple. They were successful business people who now probably had branches of their business in Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus. But more importantly they were devoted to Jesus Christ. Apollos was a man who had great academic credentials from one of the most advanced cities of this era. Philo also lived in Alexandria and he was a master of Old Testament scripture and had translated much of it into the Greek language. Probably Apollos had studied under Philo and hence when Luke tells us that Apollos was mighty in the Scriptures he certainly means the Old Testament. The New Testament books were just being circulated and certainly had not made their way into Egypt at this time.

When Luke tells us that Apollos had been instructed in the way of the Lord he probably means Jehovah and not Jesus as the second person of the Trinity. Luke tells us that he was only knowledgeable of the baptism of John, who was teaching baptism for repentance so he seemed to not be acquainted with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. So when Luke tells us that Apollos was accurately teaching the things concerning Jesus it seems clear that he was teaching about the coming of the Messiah and that He would be coming soon since John was now baptizing for repentance. Apollos had obviously been touched by God since he was fervent in his spirit and he was teaching boldly in the synagogue. But since Priscilla and Aquila had to take Apollos aside to teach him the full meaning of the Gospel, Apollos had an incomplete



understanding of the fact that the Messiah had come and He was Jesus of Nazareth. Isn't all of this timing by God magnificent! I am just overwhelmed by this entire account of how God brought Priscilla and Aquila into contact with Paul who taught them and then how God brought the couple to Ephesus where they would be able to teach Apollos so that he could become a great advocate for Christianity! Now Apollos had the entire story correctly understand and his great oratory skills allowed him to clearly demonstrate that Jesus was indeed the Messiah for he had been educated similarly to Paul in a great understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures and now he had been born again and had a magnificent understanding of the completeness of the Scripture.

Now the missionaries had another worker probably of similar abilities and knowledge as Paul. When Apollos stated that he was ready to go to another area he was sent and welcomed. He then was able to witness to the Jews in a remarkable manner but he still depended upon God to open the hearts of the people so that they could really believe.

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