

25. Paul Stays at Corinth and Finishes His 2nd Journey: Acts 18

The close of Acts 17 found Paul leaving a few disciples at Athens. Acts 18 will open with him arriving at Corinth. Corinth was the seat of Roman government in Achaia, and therefore, a hodge-podge of humanity as the Roman traffic from the East and West combined to pass through. Three good harbors in Corinth connected the eastern and western seas. The Corinth that Paul found was a metropolis nurtured by the wealth of the Caesars. This wealth and commerce were an attraction to the many Jews who settled there. The principal idols were Aphrodite goddess of love and beauty and Athena goddess of wisdom, both of which came from early Phoenician settlers. They reflected the eastern religions, perhaps those even back to Baal, from which western idolatry emanated. The importance of these idols in the Corinthian culture explains, in part, the trouble Paul had in the church at Corinth.



Greece: Corinth, Corinthian columns

Corinthian columns at Corinth in south-central Greece. The remains of the ancient city lie about 50 miles west of Athens, at the eastern end of the Gulf of Corinth.(from Bible Photos of the Holy Land, Photo Copyright © 1993, 1994 Corel Corporation.)

1 Cor 3:5-6 shows Apollos as a co-worker with Paul in Corinth:

5 What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe - as the Lord has assigned to each his task. 6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.

Paul Preaches to the Jews

Acts 18:1-4

18 After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. 2 There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, 3 and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. 4 Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

After Paul arrived in Corinth, he met Aquila and Priscilla who had recently come from Rome where they were under an order to leave given to all Jews from Claudius, the emperor. Since he was a tentmaker, Paul stayed and worked with them. Paul said in 1 Cor 4:12, "12 We work hard with our own hands." Priscilla and Aquila were not only hard workers with their hands but they were hard workers in the church according to 1 Cor 16:19:

19 The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house.

Later, Paul paid them a special note of praise for their work in Rom 16:3-5:

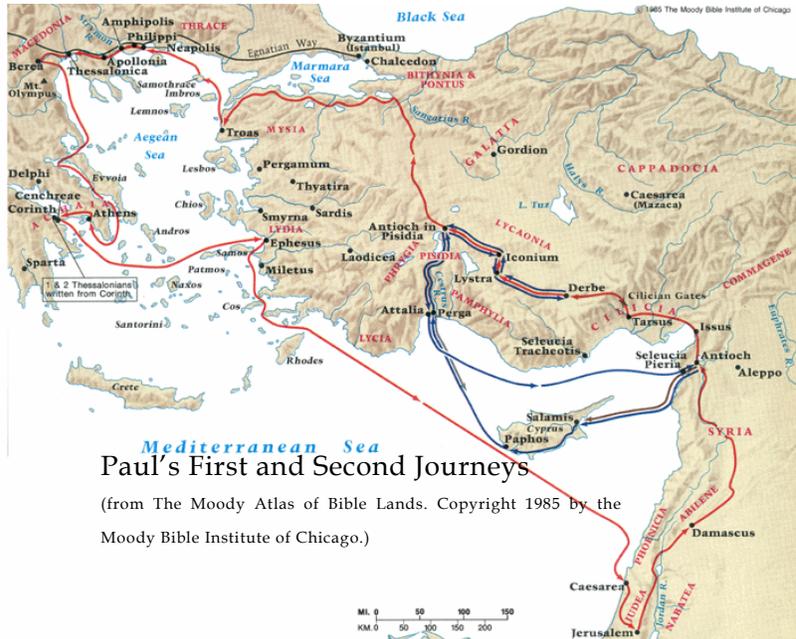
3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. 4 They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. 5 Greet also the church that meets at their house.

As usual, Paul started his preaching in the synagogue Acts 18:5-6

5 When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. 6 But when the Jews opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am clear of my responsibility. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul was able to give up tent making and preach full time, as it were. Perhaps, this would be the time that he took wages from other churches as accounted in 2 Cor 11:7-9:

7 Was it a sin for me to lower myself in order to elevate you by preaching the gospel of God to you free of charge? 8 I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you.



The figure of *speech--he shook*

out his clothes - to protest the abuse of the Jews is the same as the figure - *shaking the dust off ones feet*. Luke uses the alternate expression in Acts 13:51-52: "51 So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium. 52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit." In giving the limited commission to his disciples, the Lord had instructed the disciples on what to do when anyone refused to listen in Matt 10:14: "14 If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town."

Paul uses another figure here that is to occur later in his ministry: "Your blood be on your own heads! I am clear of my responsibility." When he talked to the elders at Ephesus, he said in Acts 20:26-27: "26 Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27 For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God."

Today, we, as Paul, are sowers of the seed, and God gives the increase. At some point, we must leave those who have heard and have rejected the word, and spend our time sowing where the harvest is more promising. We must, as Paul, shake out our garments, understand that we are free from the blood of men who refuse the word of God, and turn to those who have not heard.

Acts 18:7-8

7 Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. 8 Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.

In spite of the ill treatment by the Jews, many Jews and Gentiles alike turned to the gospel, believed, and were baptized. Thus, Paul had planted the church in Corinth.

The Jews Unite against Paul and Bring Him into Court

Acts 18:9-13

9 One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: It Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. 10 For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city. 11 So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.

12 While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him into court. 13 "This man," they charged, "is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law."

The Lord, appearing to Paul, told him that he would protect him and that he should keep speaking. Paul did as the Lord told him and stayed in Corinth for 18 months, teaching the word of God. After this time, the Jews brought a united attack against Paul. Their charge was directed at Paul's teaching on the worship of the church as contrary to the law. The charge was specifically Jewish in its content and not a charge of violating Roman law.

Acts 18:14-17

14 Just as Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to the Jews, "If you Jews were making a complaint about some misdemeanor or serious crime, it would be reasonable for me to listen to you. 15 But since it involves questions about words and names and your own law - settle the matter yourselves. I will not be a judge of such things." 16 So he had them ejected from the court. 17 Then they all turned on Sosthenes the synagogue ruler and beat him in front of the court. But Gallio showed no concern whatever.

Because the charge was specifically Jewish, Gallio dismissed it, telling them to settle it themselves. Gallio literally threw them out of court. Once outside the court, they beat Sosthenes the ruler of the synagogue - certainly because of his sympathy for Paul and the Way. In 1 Cor 1:1, Paul speaks of Sosthenes as a brother, and as one who is apparently accompanying Paul after he left Corinth: "1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes."

Paul Sails for Syria

Acts 18:18-22

18 Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchrea because of a vow he had taken. 19 They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. 20 When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. 21 But as he left, he promised, "I will come back if it is God's will." Then he set sail from Ephesus. 22 When he landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church and then went down to Antioch.

Paul left Corinth, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila, sailing for Syria and the end of his second missionary journey. Paul cut off his hair at Cenchrea, a place just to the west of

Corinth, because-of a vow. This vow, with its cutting of hair, is most likely the Nazirite Vow of Numbers 6:3 and discussed in these notes on Acts 16 where Paul had Timothy circumcised in order to be of no offense to the Jews. In this case, the vow was, perhaps in preparation for his return to Jerusalem at the conclusion of his second journey. However, Luke does not record any such visit at this time. At the end of his third journey, James and the elders of the church in Jerusalem charge Paul to go through the rites of purification in order to satisfy the requirements of the Jewish Christians. Acts 21:20-24 reads:

Then they said to Paul: "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law. 21 They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs. 22 What shall we do? They will certainly hear that you have come, 23 so do what we tell you. There are four men with us who have made a vow. 24 Take these men, join in their purification rites and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaved. Then everybody will know there is no truth in these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law.

Paul was always willing to accommodate Jew and Gentile alike for the furtherance of the gospel. He summarized his case in 1 Cor 9:19-21:

19 Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. 20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. 21 To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law.

He leaves Priscilla and Aquila at Ephesus and completes his second journey, returning to Antioch via Caesarea.

Paul's Third Missionary Journey

Acts 18:23

23 After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

Paul finished his, second journey back in Antioch. After some time, he went back through the regions of his first and second journeys. In this third journey, Paul proceeds into Asia and visits cities in Phrygia, Lydia, and Mysia-places forbidden when he received the Macedonian call during the second journey. His effort in all these places was to strengthen the disciples.



Conversion of Apollos Acts

18:24-26

24 Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. 25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he

spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

Paul had left Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus where Apollos was coming also. That Apollos was a Jew with a Greek name and that he was a native of Alexandria indicate that he was a Grecian Jew. Alexandria was an island city in the Nile delta created to honor Alexander the Great. As an international city, Alexandria was divided by areas dedicated to each of its nationalities. Thus, the Jews occupied a region of the city for centuries before Christ. Its main contribution to Christianity was its manuscript of the Old Testament:

3. Alexandria's Influence on the Bible: (1) In Dan 11 the Ptolomies of Alexandria and their wives are made a theme of prophecy. Apollos, the "orator," was born in Alexandria (Acts 18:24). Luke twice speaks of himself and Paul sailing in "a ship of . Alexandria" (Acts 27:6; 28:11). Stephen 'disputed' in Jerusalem in the synagogue of the Alexandrians (Acts 6:9). These direct references are few, but the influence of Alexandria on the Bible was inestimable.

(2) The Septuagint, translated in Alexandria (3rd to 2nd centuries B.C.), preserves a Hebrew text 1,000 years older than any now known. This translation, if not used by Jesus, was certainly used by Paul and other New Testament writers, as shown by their quotations ... This Greek Bible not only opened for the first time the "Divine Oracles" to the Gentiles and thus gave to the Old Testament an international influence, but it affected most vitally the Hebrew and Christian development.

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In this context, it is easy to see how Apollos was so learned in the scriptures. A fervent speaker, he had been taught the way of the Lord accurately, but he only knew the baptism of John. Priscilla and Aquila who heard him speak, took him aside, and explained to him more adequately the way of the Lord. The baptism of John could not provide Apollos with the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; Rom 6:3-5), only the baptism of Christ. See the notes on Acts 19 where Paul also confronts those who know only the baptism of John. The examples of Apollos and the men of Ephesus in the next chapter teach that the form of baptism to which one submits is essential to the forgiveness of sins and, therefore, necessary to salvation.

Acts 18:27-28

27 When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. On arriving, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. 28 For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

At this point Apo~ leaves for Achaia the province of Corinth. Paul refers to their common efforts in 1 Cor 3:5-6, where Apollos watered the work that Paul had planted:

5 What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe - as the Lord has assigned to each his task. 6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.

In 1 Cor 4:6, Paul refers to Apollos:

6 Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, "Do not (go beyond what is written." Then you will not take pride in one man over against another.

Because Apollos was Grecian and powerful in the scriptures, some think he wrote *Hebrews*.