

We saw last week that having been chased out of Berea, Paul was led to Athens where we gave his well-known sermon in the midst of the Areopagus. We learned from vv32-34 that some mocked, others were indecisive, and others believed. From chapter 18:1 we find that "after these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth."

Corinth was about forty miles to the west of Athens. And we learn from v11, that Paul remained in Corinth for "a year and six months." This was for two reasons: first, a door of ministry had been opened up to him; second, the city of Corinth was rather strategic.

Dennis Johnson—"Corinth was the crossroads of Achaia, both geographically and culturally. Julius Caesar rebuilt a new Corinth a century after the old city had been razed by Roman troops, and by Paul's day Corinth was a flourishing center of political power, commerce, and sexual license."

I. Paul Finds Jews (vv1-3)

II. Paul Confronts Jews (vv4-11)

III. Paul is Persecuted by Jews (vv12-17)

I. Paul Finds Jews (vv1-3)

1. We learn from v2, that no sooner did Paul arrive in Corinth, he comes across a Jewish man and his wife.
2. V2—"And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them."
3. Secular literature tells us, that in the early 50s AD, Emperor Claudius expelled (banished) the Jews from Rome.
4. While we are not told why they were banished, all the Jews, not only Christian Jews, were forced to depart.
5. Now we know from Paul's letter to the Romans (16:3), that Aquila and Priscilla eventually returned to Rome (as Paul says, 'Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus').
6. Luke tells us, that while Aquila was living in Italy, he was originally from Pontus (northern Asia Minor).
7. Seemingly, Aquila and Priscilla were already Christians, which implies Christianity had already reached Rome.
8. The last part of v2, "and he came to them" refers to the fact that Paul came to stay with Aquila and Priscilla.
9. Now, we know from 1Cor.16:19, that eventually Aquila and Priscilla would house the church in Ephesus.
10. 1Cor.16:19—"The churches of Asia greet you, Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house."
11. V3—"So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers."
12. Here we learn that Paul and this couple had many things in common: they were Jewish Christians and tentmakers.
13. Thus, we learn throughout Paul's letters, that he sustained himself by working with his own hands (1Cor.9:12; 2Cor.7:2).

14. Howard Marshall—"Tents were made out of the goat's hair cloth, or else out of leather; hence the word tentmaker could refer more generally to a leather-worker, and this seems to be the meaning here. So Paul was able to reside with Aquila and Priscilla, support himself by sharing in their work, and enjoy Christian fellowship with them. Now began a period of evangelism in which Aquila and Priscilla no doubt assisted Paul."

## II. Paul Confronts Jews (vv4-11)

1. From v4 we learn that Paul—"reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and persuaded both Jews and Greeks."
2. According to v5, with the coming of Silas and Timothy, Paul was compelled to boldly testify that Jesus is the Christ.
3. Luke says he was "compelled by the Spirit"—that is, he was deeply constrained to confront the Jews with the truth.
4. V6—"But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, 'Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.'"
5. The Jews "opposed him and blasphemed"—that is, they sought to refute the things he was teaching in the synagogue.
6. They "blasphemed" as they spoke evil against the message Paul was proclaiming—they spoke against Christ.
7. By "shaking his garments" Paul was symbolizing the utter rejection of God upon them for their blasphemy.
8. Matt.10:14—"And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet."
9. Thus, in "shaking his garments" Paul was symbolizing Christ's rejection of them for their rejection of Him.
10. This is the meaning of the phrase—"Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean"—that is, the guilt was theirs.
11. Paul was free from any guilt as he had told them truth; they themselves were responsible for their unbelief.
12. He was now going to turn to the Gentiles, which means, he would now turn to minister to those outside the synagogue.
13. Because the Jews rejected Christ, Christ rejected the Jews, and now sends His apostle to the many Gentiles.
14. Darrell Bock—"His action depicts a break in fellowship and means that Paul is innocent of anything that takes place, which is why he says that he is clean, a remark suggesting that he is free to share with others since he has fulfilled his call to the nation. He has gone to the Jew first. Paul then affirms that he will turn to the Gentiles. This is not a complete abandonment of the Jews but means that his efforts in Corinth will concentrate elsewhere."
15. V7—"And he departed from there (the synagogue) and entered the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue."
16. Justus was a Greek proselyte who seemingly became a Christian and allowed Paul to move his ministry to his house.
17. V8—"Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized."

18. Crispus, a Jewish man, who either heard Paul in the synagogue or Justus' house, believed along with his household.
19. And then Luke tells us, many of the Corinthians, hearing the gospel of God, believed and were baptized.
20. Verses 9-10 describe a vision Paul received from Christ, that provided him encouragement for his ministry.
21. V9—"Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."
22. Our Savior provides a twofold encouragement: (a) Christ was with him to protect him from physical harm.
23. This doesn't deny the possibility of persecution (as we shall see under our third heading), but our Savior simply promises Paul safety from physical harm.
24. Furthermore, as we know Paul would eventually be martyred, our Savior is speaking about his stay in Corinth.
25. (b) Christ had many people in the city—this is why He promises to protect Paul from physical harm and death—He had many elect people in this city and He was going to use Paul to bring them to himself.
26. Christ in essence is saying—"As I have work for you to complete in this city, I will protect you from harm. I will give you strength and success as I will use you to bring My people to Myself. Yes, you will face opposition, but I will be with you."
27. V11—"And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them"—he worked as a tentmaker and preached the gospel (he was bi-vocational).
28. Thus, Paul remained at Corinth for 18 months, preaching the gospel throughout that city, and Christ was gathering His people to Himself.

### III. Paul is Persecuted by Jews (vv12-17)

1. V12—"When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat."
2. Though we are not expressly told this, it appears that verses 12 and following happen after some time.
3. The Jews eventually rise up with one accord and bring Paul to the judgment seat to bring formal charges.
4. V13—"This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law"—that is, the law of the Old Testament.
5. They claimed Paul was violating the OT as he was ascribing deity to Christ and salvation by faith and not works.
6. To the Jews who placed all of their hope in keeping the law (and especially the positive laws that separated them from the Gentiles), this was blasphemous.
7. Within vv14-17, you have the response of Gallio, who expresses little sympathy or patience with the Jews.
8. He basically says—"If this had to do with violations of Roman law I would be concerned, but I have no concern for Jewish law."
9. V16—"And he drove them from the judgment seat"—that is, he had them removed from his presence.

10. V17—"Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat."
11. By "the Greeks" is likely meant a mob who dragged him back before the judgment seat and beat him.
12. It appears the Greeks were emboldened by the actions of Gallio, in removing them from his presence.
13. Luke describes Sosthenes as "the ruler of the synagogue" which means, he replaced Crispus after he converted.
14. It's possible that Sosthenes became a Christian, as Paul mentions someone by the name in his first letter to the Corinthians.
15. 1Cor.1:1—"Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother."
16. That is, Paul was writing the letter as an apostle Jesus Christ, and he had with him Sosthenes our brother (obviously he assumes they know who this is – he was 'their' brother – his and the Corinthians).
17. Luke ends v17 by describing Gallio's response to this beating—"But Gallio took no notice of these things."
18. This underscores his utter disdain for the Jews, as he had zero concern for the well-being of this Jew.

#### IV. Five Lessons

1. Here I want to summarize Paul's stay in Corinth with five practical lessons suggested from this passage.
2. (1) Christians have need of fellowship—this is seen in both Aquila and Pricilla and Silas and Timothy.
3. The apostle Paul no doubt welcomed such fellowship (having been the object of such consistent mistreatment).
4. But Paul is far from being unique in this, for all Christians have need of fellowship with other believers.
5. Now, while there are a number of reasons for fellowship, I want to focus on the need for encouragement.
6. Thus, Paul was compelled by the Spirit to testify in connection with the coming of his friends (Silas and Timothy).
7. V5—"When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ."
8. While Paul labored by himself in Athens, as it was a necessity, he usually labored alongside other men.
9. If you remember, Paul took Barnabas with him for his first missionary journey and Silas for his last two missionary journeys.
10. Thus, within the gospels, we find our Savior sending His beloved disciplines out to minister in twos.
11. Mk.6:7—"And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits" (Ecc.4:9 – "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up')."

12. No doubt our Savior sent out His disciples "two by two" for a number of reasons, but I suggest one evident reason was to embolden each other to fulfill their ministry.
13. As He sent them out as sheep in the midst of wolves, He sent them two by two to encourage each other.
14. Now, I think at times we can have a faulty view of the apostle Paul—we can envision him as a fearless and unafraid.
15. But this is far from the truth, Paul was similar to all of us—fearful, timid, and weak and no doubt needed encouragement.
16. I know this for two reasons: first, the words of our Savior in v9—"Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent"; second, his words to the Corinthians, 2:3—"I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling."
17. Here Paul is reflecting upon the disposition he had when he ministered among them (as found in Acts 18).
18. Even though he had the company of Silas and Timothy, he nevertheless came in fear and much trembling.
19. (2) God rejects those who reject His word—here I'm thinking of what Paul said to the hostile and obstinate Jews.
20. V6—"But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, 'Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.'"
21. Now, while this statement has an important historical context, I want to suggest it affords a basic principle.
22. There may come a time when God leaves a person to themselves as a judicial act of judgment against them.
23. Now, this principle must be handled with great care and wisdom—God doesn't reject someone after they reject the gospel.
24. For example, I rejected the gospel for several years prior to hearing it—I ignored and even despised it.
25. But the Jews in Corinth had the truth for generations, and they rejected that truth in the most hostile ways.
26. They blasphemed, which means, they spoke against God—they raised up their voice against God's voice (1Thess.2:15-16).
27. Thus, I am not suggesting that we stop sharing the gospel with people who have rejected it in the past.
28. But I am saying—we are not to continually share the gospel with those who respond in blasphemous ways.
29. This means, we simply warn those who openly oppose us and speak wickedly against God and His truth.
30. (3) God has an elect people in the world—our Savior uses the doctrine of election as a means to encourage Paul.
31. Perhaps you've heard it said before that the doctrines of grace (Calvinism) removes all motive for missions.
32. But this is contrary to Scripture and it's also contrary to history in that the majority of missionaries believed in election.
33. 2Tim.2:10—"Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."

34. And thus, there are three facts about the elect that combine to create a Spirit given motivation for missions.
35. (a) They belong to Christ—"I have many people"—that is, they already belong to Christ by way of election.
36. From eternity, the Father has given them to His Son as a love-gift; that they may comprise His bride.
37. Jn.10:27—"And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish" v29—"My Father who has given them to Me."
38. Thus, while Christ has yet to convert them, there was a real sense in which they already belonged to Him (Christ doesn't convert them to make them His, but He converts them because they were already His).
39. (b) They are lost by nature—"I have many people in this city"—that is, in the immoral and godless city of Corinth.
40. Now, I've already point out how immoral the city of Corinth was—it would make the USA look like a paradise.
41. Immorality, sexual perversion, greed, materialism, and idolatry were rampant on every single corner.
42. And yet, within this wicked and godless city, Christ had a beloved people who needed to be converted.
43. 1Cor.6:9-11—"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."
44. Here Paul reminds the Corinthians what many of them were prior to conversion—this is what they were.
45. This is what they were while living in the city of Corinth, all the while, they were Christ's special possession.
46. (c) They are many in number—"I have many people"—O brethren, Christ has many people in this world.
47. Christ hasn't been given a few people, but has many people in every nation, tribe, kindred, and tongue.
48. Christ was given a multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues (Rev.7:9).
49. What an encouragement for evangelism! God has many people in this city, and He's going to use to bring them to Himself.
50. (4) Christians must expect persecution—this is really a lesson we learn throughout the book of Acts.
51. In every city Paul ministers to, he faces opposition—either from the Jews or from the Gentiles, or both.
52. (5) God's enemies will in the end be punished—I take this lesson from what especially happened to Sosthenes.
53. While he intended for Paul to be beaten and/or imprisoned, it was he in the end who was publicly beaten (I suggest this is a picture of what will happen on the Day of Judgment, when ever troubler of the church will be troubled).