

Saturday, January 28, 2023 ▫ Read Acts 18:18–23

Questions from the Scripture text: After Paul completed his year and half in Corinth, where did he go (v18)? With whom? What does he do there, and why? To where does he come in v19? Whom does he leave there? Where does he go? With whom does he dialogue? What do they ask him to do (v20)? How does he respond? What does he want to do (v21)? What does he promise for when that is over? Where does he land (v22)? What does he go up to Jerusalem and do? Then to where does he go down? What does he do in Antioch (v23)? Then where does he go (repeating stops from his first missionary journey)? Doing what?

What is the apostle Paul doing when he's not church planting? Acts 18:18–23 looks forward to the morning sermon on the coming Lord's Day. In these six verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **the apostle Paul set an example of edifying and encouraging all of the known churches at the time, that all might be unified in Christ.**

When the apostle's year and half in Corinth are completed, the apostle bids farewell to the brethren. The mention of Cenchrea probably indicates that he is the founder of that church where Phoebe was a servant (cf. Rom 16:1), and that the ministry at Corinth had borne fruit in the region and not only in that city.

It seems also that Silas and Timothy stay back, with the mention of Priscilla and Aquila going with him (v18) until they part ways upon arrival in Ephesus (v19). The Greek of v18 allows for it to have been Aquila who had taken the vow and had his head shaved, but we will find later that even Paul has not given up so much of the ceremonial law as he should have (cf. 21:23–26).

At any rate, he is on his way back to Syria, and there the city of Antioch (cf. v22), which was his sending church. But he continues to dialogue with Jews at synagogue (v19), perhaps being put in mind of them again by the completion of the Nazirite vow and by his arrival in a new location. Amazingly (for it is amazing, after his general treatment by the Jews on this missionary journey), those in Ephesus actually wish for more of this instruction.

But it is perhaps even their response that has stirred up this one who loves his brethren according to the flesh to wish to have opportunity to minister to a great many of them in Jerusalem, when the population there would swell greatly, and there would be people there from every nation under heaven (v21, cf. 2:5).

Here, the large-hearted apostle is an example of a man full of the Spirit. For, his interest in souls goes in all directions: not only to the throng and church (cf. v22) in Jerusalem, but also to the Ephesians (to whom he promises to return), and to the churches of his second missionary journey. To these, he returns on his way back, that he might further strengthen them, as he had done with the churches at the end of his first missionary journey, v23 (cf. 14:21–22, 16:6).

Here, we may see that one in whom the mind of Christ is being formed will care for all saints in all places, and will do good to however many the Lord will enable and permit him (cf. v21). As the mind of Christ is formed in you, dear Christian, you will care more and more for believers around the world. And, you will be seeking to strengthen those among whom the Lord places you in whatever ways that He permits you.

Among what saints has the Lord placed you? What opportunities do you already have for strengthening them that you are not taking up? What further opportunities might you produce, God enabling you? What place do saints around the world have in your thoughts and prayers? What else might you be able to do for them?

Sample prayer: Lord, we thank You for Your church, which You are building for Your glory. We thank You that Your saints are precious for Your sake, and even in themselves by virtue of their union with You. Grant unto us to love and serve them in every way that we can, we ask through Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP87 "The LORD's Foundation Has Been Set" or TPH405 "I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord"

For more Hopewell @Home devotionals, please visit bit.ly/harpCHAH

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Acts 18, beginning in verse 11. And going through verse 23, these are God's words. And he continued there a year in six months teaching the word of god among them. When gallio was proconsole of Akaya, the Jews was won a quarter, rose up against paul and brought him to the judgment seat saying.

This fellow persuades men to worship. God, contrary to the law. When paul was about to open his mouth galia said to the jews, if it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked, crimes of jews. There would be reason why i should bear with you. But if it is a question of words and names of your own law, Look to it yourselves for.

I do not want to be a judge of the of such matters. And he drove them from the judgment seat. Then all the greeks, took sauce the knees, the ruler of the synagogue and beat him before the judgment seat. But gallio took no notice of these things. So paul, we're still remained a good while.

Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria and priscilla. Quit and Aquila were with him. He had his care all hair cut off at sincrea. For, he had taken a vow and he came to Ephesus and Uh, left them there but he himself entered the synagogue and the reason with the jews When they asked them to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent, but took leave of them saying i must buy all means.

Keep this coming feast in jerusalem. But i would return again to you, god willing. And he sailed from Ephesus and when he had landed, it says Rhea. And gone up and greeted the church. He went down to antioch. After it's been some time. There, he departed. And went over the region of galatia and frigia in order.

Strengthening all the disciples. For the reading of god's inspired. And inherent word.

So we've been hearing for some weeks. Now as we worked slowly through chapter 18 about how Uh, the lord encouraged and stirred. Encouraged to servant and stir him up to zeal for the ministry and sustained him. In the ministry, and The first date versus we have here is actually.

Uh, the last part of that, it's an example of the Lord, keeping his promise. Uh, to paul that. No one would attack him to hurt him. He does end up getting attacked actually. In. In verse 12, the jews have won accord rise up against him. And bring him to the judgment seat, but this time, paul doesn't even need to open his mouth.

Because gallio rejects the juices request. Um, And we see the lord. Uh, deliver poll that he might continue. A good while as verse 18 says, Ministering in Corinth. And as he realizes that, The church is God's plan for the world and the church is Um, what god is doing in history.

The gathering of the saints in the church and the growing of the saints within Um, the churches. His heart, his heart turns. Uh, to To the other churches. Namely, and especially The church that is his sending church, which is Antioch in syria. His home church as it were now, or at least the church, that is sent him on these first two missionary journeys, and then the church in jerusalem, For which there's going to be a prime opportunity to minister to then.

Uh, when there are many more Jews gathered to jerusalem for feast. And so we see him. Uh, triggered to leave corns then by the opportunity for more ministry. And as he leaves Corinth and goes. Uh, towards antioctive Syria which is ascending church. Apparently, Timothy and silos aren't with him because it does specifically mention Priscilla and aquila.

Being with him and that's going to set up. His return to emphasis for the third missionary journey. Because they come to ephesus. And, And he leaves. Them there. In emphasis, but goes into the synagogue and reasons. Uh, with the juice. Oh incidentally, in verse 18. And where it says he had his haircut office in crea.

The grammar allows that for to allows for that to be either paul or aquila. Uh, who had taken the vow and had their Haircut office in Korea. Um, It would not surprise us if it was bald because we do see him. Uh, still holding on to more of the ceremonial law than he should.

He's going to be in connection with another violence. Chapter 21 about to offer. Sacrifices. That are according to the ceremonial law. In connection or the keeping of a vow. And this reminds us that Um, That we are still sinners. And that god is patient and merciful to us and we'll consider that when we get there to Uh, when we get there in chapter 21, But, The lord's does mercifully prevent Paul.

From following through. And, and offering sacrifices after the lord jesus is once for all sacrifice. Uh, so maybe Maybe it's he here or maybe not either way whether it's Aquila. Uh, who had kept the vow and cut off his hair. Uh, nazirite vow, probably. Uh, since he had let his hair grow or whether it's paul.

It does seem to be to have been used of god. Uh, to put him more in mind. Of the jews whom he hopes to see. Uh, converted. That's a good. The lord does this even more for him when he comes to ephesus verse 19. The enters, the synagogue and reasons with the juice.

And gets what in this missionary journey is a very Um, Unusual. Uh response. The only other place you'd had a similar response as berea.

At least until jus from Thessalonica came down and messed up with the marines. Um, But when he reasons with them, they ask him to stay there. For a longer time but now his heart and mind. Have gone to jerusalem. And he takes leave of them. Verse 21. Say, i must By all means, keep the coming feast in jerusalem but i will return to you.

Uh, i will turn again to you, god willing. The visit to jerusalem is very brief. Uh in the description, just a part of verse 22 when he had landed in caesarea.

Over here. So the ship would lay in here. It says. Related. It's real. Went up to the church. Uh, that means toward jerus and jerusalem was Uh, fairly high city and elevation, that's always Uh, described as going up to jerusalem. And here in verse 22. It says he had gone up and greeted the church.

And so he goes and He strengthens the church in jerusalem during this feast. And, Uh, once. The church in jerusalem, the strengthened He goes down to antioch antiochusen. In Syria. It's up here. And, We think of north as up, but in this case, south is Um, South to jerusalem is up because of elevation and north to syria is down.

Uh, so he goes. Um,

Where are we? Versus 22. He goes down. To Antioch is home church. And after spending some time, there he departs. And he goes over the region of galatian, forgiia in order. Uh, strengthening Or the disciples. And the the idea is These are the regions. Uh, that he had covered in the second missionary journey.

And we saw this at the end of the first missionary journey, as well. That he went back over the church's, new pointed elders. Uh in in all the, in all the cities. And, He strengthened them telling them how through many tribulations. We must enter the kingdom of god. And so, what we see here, As a man who doesn't just love the lord, but For the lord's sake.

He loves the lord's churches. Know, each of us has The church that is assigned. To us and which Uh, the lord has gathered us that we want. To encourage and strengthen. But this. The apostle paul had all of these churches. And, When there was the opportunity, especially for strengthening The jerusalem church, that's what triggers his His leaving Corinth.

The lord blesses. The initial ministry in ephesus and that's going to determine where he goes on the third missionary journey. As he says that he's going to return. Again to them. He doesn't just strengthen the jerusalem church. He wants to report back to and strengthen his home church antioch and syria.

And then he goes back over the churches of The second missionary journey. And if we love the lord, we're going to love his church. And if what the lord is doing in time is Uh, gathering his His church building his church as he gathers saints. Into it and grows them within it.

Then this needs to be. This needs to be primary on our heart and mind as well. And The more. Uh, that Um, The more that we get conformed to christ as paul here. Is giving us an example of someone who's been conformed to christ by the lord jesus's own appearing to him.

The more the worship evangelism and discipleship of the church. Um, Is going to be the main thing in our life, even brazella and Aquila. Here, who we know? Our vocational tech makers. Um, They actually move their business around. Uh, to stay with the apostle Timothy and silas. Are still back in Corinth.

And, You know, we may have other things. In our life. In this world. But the main thing, In our life, will be the church of our lord jesus christ. Because the main thing in our life is the lord jesus. And this is what he is doing in the world.

This is his This is his priority. And so, when he comes, And he reminds us that we belong to him, your minds us, That he is present to us. He reminds us. That is ruling an overruling all things. For the converting and the Uh, the the gathering in and the growing.

Of his elect. Then we're strengthened by that. Because that gives our life. Purpose and value, and joy. To know that he is with us to know what he is doing. And we want to strengthen others. With the same strength with which he has strengthened us, we want to comfort others.

With the same comfort. Excuse me. Which he has come for us, comforted us. And the apostle. Is an example to us here as the spirit reports. It For our edification. Let's pray.

My father in heaven. We thank you that This has been your will from. All eternity to. Gather. For yourself, a holy people who Or set apart to you. United to your son, and dwelt by your spirit. And whom you not only, Make right with you and forgive us of our sins.

But also then conform us to christ. We thank you for your church. And we thank you for teaching us in your word. But the importance of your church and the congregations of it. Thank you for our own specific congregation. We pray that you would Grant to us to remember that it is you who are doing this.

This is the great reason for everything. And that this must be the great thing in our life. Over everything else. And we pray. Lord that You would help us then. To have minds priorities, arts desires. That are conformed to yours and that this would show up. In our attitudes and our actions.

And the priorities of our time, priorities of our money. Forgive us. Lord for being so easily distracted. By many things. Give us to do excellently. And all of our true callings. And in this, our greatest calling We ask all these things in jesus name, amen.