

**Acts 18:1-22 ~ Teacher's Lesson**  
**Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary Journey: Corinth**  
**"Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent"**

**Teacher's Note:** Draw simple map on board of the Mediterranean world before class begins. Show modern Israel, Syria, Cyprus, Turkey and Greece. Explain. Leave room across top of board to also draw part of the Acts chart (below).

**Missions Geography:**

1<sup>st</sup> Missionary Journey—Cyprus and south-central Turkey (Galatia)

2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary Journey—Greece (Macedonia & Achaia): Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth (for at least 18 months!).

**Acts & The Epistles:** Draw the 1<sup>st</sup> part of the chart that is at the end of this lesson, showing the 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary Journeys (Acts 13-18) and when the various epistles were written in relation to what Paul was doing.

**Review:** Today we will conclude Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey as Paul leaves Athens and goes to Corinth. It took place in what is today modern Greece.

**Corinth**

**Corinth:** Located 46 miles west of Athens, Corinth was the most influential city in Achaia (southern Greece).<sup>1</sup> Corinth was famous for its worship of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, and her followers engaged in immorality with temple prostitutes. Throughout the Roman Empire, the expression "to Corinthianize" meant to live immorally.<sup>2</sup> Paul even had to write to the church and tell certain members to stop going to temple prostitutes:

**ESV 1 Corinthians 6:13ff** The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord . . . Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." . . . Flee from sexual immorality . . .

**\*\*\*\*When Paul reached Corinth, why did he stay with a couple named Aquila and Priscilla (18:1-4)?** He stayed with them because, like Paul, they were tentmakers.<sup>3</sup> It does not say that he stayed with them because they were Christians, though this is clearly implied. They may be been saved after hearing the gospel in Rome before they left.

**1. Why were Aquila and Priscilla living in Corinth (17:2)?** They were in Corinth because the Emperor Claudius (ruled A.D. 41 to 54) had forced all Jews to leave Rome.<sup>4</sup> There is evidence

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<sup>1</sup> *ESV Study Bible*, 2123.

<sup>2</sup> Kistemaker, 648.

<sup>3</sup> The Greek word for "tentmaker" could also simply mean "leather worker" (Marshall, 310).

<sup>4</sup> Aquila was originally from Pontus, a region along the southern coast of the Black Sea.

that the Jews in Rome caused riots over the Gospel just as they did when Paul preached the Gospel in Greece. Roman historian Suetonius reported the riots came “at the instigation of Chrestus”.<sup>5</sup> This resulted in Emperor Claudius expelling the Jews in order to keep the peace. This happened around A.D. 49-50.<sup>6</sup> It is unknown who took the Gospel to Rome, but there was already a church there when Paul arrived.

**2. How did Paul support himself while in Corinth (18:3)?** See *Acts 20:33-35*. Paul made tents. This is called bi-vocational ministry (two jobs). In writing later to the church in Corinth, Paul made it clear that missionaries do indeed have the right to be supported by the church. However, he was quite willing to do secular work when there were no funds to support his ministry.

**Application:** Paul used his own example of being bi-vocational to teach that most elders should also be bi-vocational. Speaking to the Ephesian elders, he said:

ESV **Acts 20:33-35** I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

**3. As was his custom, what did Paul do every Sabbath (18:4)?** Paul reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and tried to persuade them.

**Evangelism Lesson:** The words Luke used to describe how Paul evangelized were “reasoned” and “persuade” (18:4). These words should describe our evangelism as well. Observe also that Paul did this “every” Sabbath, meaning it dealt with the same people over and over (prolonged exposure).

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**\*\*\*\*Paul normally left town when persecuted. How did the Lord stop him from leaving this time (18:9-11)?** The Lord appeared to Paul in a vision and told him not to leave! Paul subsequently stayed in Corinth a year and six months, 11:11. It was during this long time in Corinth that Paul wrote 1 & 2 Thessalonians (A.D. 51).

**4. Why did the arrival of Silas and Timothy allow Paul to be occupied with evangelism rather than tent making (18:5)?** See *2 Corinthians 11:8-9*. Silas and Timothy brought an offering from the believers in Macedonia:

ESV **2 Corinthians 11:8-9** I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you . . . when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need.

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<sup>5</sup> Marshall, 310.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 310.

**5. What pregnant meaning is the designation “the Jews” developing (18:5)?** The title, “the Jews”, is more and more associated with hardened opposition to the belief that the Christ is Jesus.

**6. What did it mean for Paul to shake out his garments (18:6)?** *See Matthew 10:14.* It is a sign of condemnation for rejection of the Truth, similar to shaking the dust off one’s feet:

ESV **Matthew 10:14** . . . if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town.

**Where did Paul set up headquarters after he left the synagogue (18:7)?** He started a house church right next to the synagogue, in the home of Titius Justus. This can hardly have made for good relations with “the Jews”, but was an excellent location for recruitment!<sup>7</sup>

**7. According to 18:8, what fruit came of Paul’s time in Corinth?** *See 1 Corinthians 1:14.* Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed along with his household as did many of the Corinthians who heard Paul (either in the synagogue or in Titius’ home).

ESV **1 Corinthians 1:14** . . . I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius . . .

**8. Why do you suppose Luke recorded that these Corinthians not only believed, but were also baptized (18:8)?** Their baptisms showed their earnestness. Baptism is not necessary for salvation, but has been called the first step of obedience in a new Christian’s life.

**9. Based on 18:9, what emotions had Paul been feeling?** *See 1 Corinthians 2:3.* That the Lord told Paul not be afraid suggests that Paul had been feeling some anxiety over the situation. He had good reason to fear. The pattern of opposition he experienced was becoming familiar: teach the Gospel in the synagogue, get some initial response, then next followed strong opposition from unbelieving Jews who grew jealous and then incited a riot, causing Paul to run for his life.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Paul later wrote to the Corinthian church:

ESV **1 Corinthians 2:3** I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling . . .

**Conquer Fear:** We think of Paul as this fearless gospel pioneer. Paul was not made of asbestos, he was not the iron man, and he was not Stoic! The reality is that he was as fearful as we would be, but he overcame his fear. Despite fear and unpleasant circumstances, Paul was able to rejoice in the Lord. **Example:** He sang while imprisoned in Philippi.

God’s word to us:

ESV **Philippians 4:6-7** do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of

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<sup>7</sup> Marshall, 312.

<sup>8</sup> Steven Cole, “Lesson 45: Our Faithful Lord (Acts 18:1-17), Bible.org. Accessed March 28, 2018.

God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

**10. What was the first reason God gave Paul for not leaving (18:10a)?** God promised to be with Paul and not let anyone attack or harm him. This promise implies that there would indeed be trouble ahead, the type of which would have normally caused Paul to leave town.

**11. What was the second reason God gave Paul for not leaving Corinth (18:10b)?** See *2 Timothy 2:10*. God had many people in Corinth who needed to hear the Gospel so they could be saved and who needed to be taught.

ESV **2 Timothy 2:10** . . . I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ . . .

Some people say that the doctrine of Calvinism is damnable to evangelism. On the contrary the doctrine of predestination ought to motivate us to evangelism, as it did Paul.

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**\*\*\*\*True to His promise, how did God protect Paul from a united attack by “the Jews” (18:12-17)?** When the Jews brought legal charges against Paul, the Roman official dismissed the case as a Jewish squabble outside his jurisdiction and drove them away.

ESV **1 Corinthians 10:13** God is faithful . . .

**Historical Info:**

- a) A **proconsul** was the chief judicial officer of a Roman province.
- b) A **tribunal** (Greek *béma*) was the proconsul’s judgment seat. This seat has been excavated in Corinth and was located in the open air of the marketplace.
- c) **Gallio** served as proconsul in Corinth from A.D. 51-52, which helps date Paul’s missionary journey. His brother was the famous Seneca, who served as Nero’s advisor. Gallio died as a result of Nero’s paranoid suspicions of Gallio’s prominent family.<sup>9</sup>

**12. What exactly what were the charges brought against Paul (18:13)?** Judaism was a legal religion. They accused Paul of teaching an new, illegal religion.

**13. What was Gallio’s reason for not accepting their complaint (18:14-15)?** He made no distinction between Judaism and Christianity. As such, he saw it as a Jewish religious squabble that was of no concern to him.

**Legal Precedence:** Judaism was a legal religion in the Roman Empire. Gallio’s ruling lumped Christianity in as a sect of Judaism, which meant it would receive religious protection by the Sate, at least in Corinth as long as Gallio was proconsul.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Marshall, 314.

<sup>10</sup> Kistemaker, 660.

**Insight:** The main source of trouble for the early church was not the Romans, it was the Jews.

**14. Why is it noteworthy had Gallio “drove” them from the tribunal (18:16)?** It shows that either Gallio was impatient with them (remember, Claudius had commanded the Jews to leave Rome), or that they refused to take “no” for an answer, so he forcibly drove them out.

**15. In 18:17, what did Luke tell us about Sosthenes’ role in the synagogue?** *See back to 18:8.* He was the ruler of the synagogue, evidently replacing Crispus, 18:8.

**16. Why did Gallio pay no attention to the beating given to Sosthenes (18:17)?** He had evidently lost all patience with the Jews and simply didn’t care.

**17. Paul later wrote 1 & 2 Corinthians to the church that was planted there. What can we learn about Sosthenes from 1 Corinthians 1:1-2?** Sosthenes may have at some point become a believer and even traveled with Paul.

ESV **1 Corinthians 1:1-2** Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes, to the church of God that is in Corinth . . .

**18. Who is the “they” who seized and beat Sosthenes (18:17)?** It is not clear who beat him. It may have been “the Jews” who beat him. Based on 1 Corinthians 1:1-2, Sosthenes was either a Christian sympathizer or had already been converted to Christianity. If so, perhaps the Jews took out their frustration on Sosthenes, who was now the second ruler of the synagogue to convert. On the other hand, this may have been a case of police brutality.

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**\*\*\*\*Finally leaving Corinth, where did Paul head (18:18-22)?** He set sail for his home base: Antioch in Syria (18:18, 22).

**Why did Aquila and Priscilla go along with Paul (18:18)?** He took Priscilla and Aquila as far as Ephesus (a city in modern Turkey). Why there went there is not stated; perhaps Paul had such confidence in them that he stationed them there as evangelists and disciple makers.

**What odd bit of personal grooming did Paul do in Cenchrea (18:18)?** He got a haircut. No ordinary hair cut, this was related to a vow he had taken (unexplained by Luke).

**19. In Judaism, what was the hair cutting, vow thing about (18:18)?** *See Numbers 6:1-5, 13-18.* Evidently Paul had taken a Nazirite vow, in which one’s hair was not cut until after the vow was completed. Perhaps Paul took the vow as an act of thankfulness when the Lord appeared

to him and promised to protect him in Corinth. Upon leaving Corinth, it was time to cut his hair.<sup>11</sup>

**Cenchrea:** A woman named Phoebe later became a deaconess of the church that was in Cenchrea (a lot went on that Luke did not record):

ESV **Romans 16:1-2** I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae . . .

**What did Paul do in Ephesus (18:19-21)?** As was his custom, he went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.

**20. Paul had an open door in Ephesus to explain the Gospel, yet he declined to stay longer (18:20-21). Why would he do such a thing?** See 18:18. As is stated in 18:18, he felt that the Lord wanted him back in Syria. Perhaps it was because with the Nazerite vow, one had to make an offering at the Temple within one year.<sup>12</sup> He did, however, express the possibility of returning to Ephesus (which he in fact did do).

**What did Paul do when he landed at Caesarea (18:22)?** Since it says Paul went “up” to greet the church, the church he greeted was probably the Jerusalem church, not the church in Caesarea (which was a sea level). Jerusalem was “the” famous church of that region and was geographically higher than the port city of Caesarea.<sup>13</sup> Part of a Nazerite vow included making an offering in Jerusalem, another indicator that “the church” he went to was Jerusalem. Then, from Jerusalem he went on to Antioch. This concluded Paul’s 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey.

**Overview:**

1<sup>st</sup> Missionary Journey: 2 years, Cyprus and Central Turkey

2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary Journey: 3 years, Greece

3<sup>rd</sup> Missionary Journey: 4 years, Central Turkey (Galatia), Western Turkey, Greece.

**So What?**

**21. What lessons in evangelism can be derived from this passage?** As we see in Paul’s life, God is faithful to sustain us in our service to Him. However, this does not mean God exempts us from difficulty. All God’s people go through difficult times. We should expect both as we witness.

Also, we should expect to see people converted from all backgrounds. Look at the composition of the church in Corinth:

ESV **1 Corinthians 6:9-11** Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor

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<sup>11</sup> Marshall, 318.

<sup>12</sup> Kistemaker, 664.

<sup>13</sup> *ESV Study Bible*, 2124.

swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

**22. What was Luke's purpose in recording all the things that happened in this passage?** It was probably to show the forward progress of the Gospel despite all the opposition. It is an overall picture of Acts 1:8 being fulfilled. In Acts, the infant church is born, begins to walk, stands up against incredible pressure, and becomes a force to be reckoned with. The success against all odds can encourage us to turn our world upside down for Jesus. Read it and reap!

\*\*\*\* = ask this question before reading the text aloud. Doing so will cause focus.

- These lessons are designed for a 45 minute session and are based on the text of the ESV.
- You can hear this lesson being taught at [SermonAudio.Com/NTRF](http://SermonAudio.Com/NTRF).

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