

Introduction. After Paul had left Berea, because of the opposition of the Jews, he had travelled on to Athens in the company of faithful men, and had preached the gospel there, with some small success. He had sent word to Timothy and Silas to come to him as soon as possible, but because of the tumults and riots in Athens, he left there before Timothy and Silas had come. He then then came to Corinth where the gospel had great success. Timothy and Silas rejoined him at Corinth, and Paul was there for a year and a half and there were many converts.

The church at Corinth was not without problems, for when they became Christians not all of the old ways of thinking were dispelled immediately. Paul wrote two letters to them later and reproved them for their lack of discipline, divisions, and pride. But the early days of the Gospel there must have been a great joy to him and to his associates. We find several things here.

I. The apostasy and rejection of Israel

- A. This had been predicted by the Lord Jesus, that the kingdom would be taken from Israel and given to the Church.
- B. This rejection by Paul of the Jews was at least the third stage in their turning away from the Gospel: First Jesus' rejection by the priests and chief rulers temple and His crucifixion, along with His prophecies about the destruction of the temple; Second, the persecution of the church by Israel and the dispersion of the church from Jerusalem; now the rejection of the Jews by the great apostle, Paul. Finally, would come the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem and the dispersal of the Jews from Canaan.
- C. Warnings were given to the church by Jesus and the Apostle that this rejection was not necessarily final; neither was the standing of the Gentiles necessarily final, for only those who believe are settled in the kingdom. The Jews can be reinstated if they turn to faith, and the Gentile can be rejected if they abandon the faith. We all stand by faith, or fall by unbelief.

II. Helpers to the Ministry. There is always a sufficient supply of workers in the kingdom. The Lord from Heaven fully furnishes the church with gifts and people. Aquila and Priscilla. They, in turn, persuaded Apollos

- A. Eph. 4: 9-12: "God does not leave the world without witness: 10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might

fill all things.) 11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

- B. God may send a famine for a period or a time and shut the mouths of his prophets as a judgment; but this is only with regard to the reprobate; He will fully enlighten His elect and send His servant to them. Paul had been alone in Athens, because Silas and Timothy had been left in Berea and did not rejoin Paul until he left Athens and came to Corinth.
- C. But Paul was given qualified and worthy helpers, until Silas and Timothy could join him.
- D. Although the Jews of Corinth turned away from the missionaries, Paul was strengthened in his soul by a message from Jesus Himself in a vision. Vs. 9, 10
 - 1. Do not be afraid.
 - 2. Speak
 - 3. No one will attack you, or hurt you. [God ruled even the enemies of the Gospel.]
 - a. Ps 118:6 The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?
 - b. Heb 13:6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.
 - 4. Reason: "I have many people in this city."

III. Everything is for the Elect's sake.

- A. The work of the ministry is to call and nourish the elect in the faith of Jesus Christ. Nothing could stand in the way of that.
- B. God used the magistrate to restrain the Jews and protect Paul and his friends from the hatred of the Jews.
- C. Who are those who belong to Christ.
 - 1. They are the elect from the foundation of the world; elect to believe in Christ and be cleansed from idolatry and rebellion. God has appointed them to eternal life. This is the work of the Father from before the world began.
 - 2. They are the ones for whom Christ came and died some two thousand years ago. His coming was predicted from the beginning of the world and witnessed to by the prophets and the nation of Israel, descended from Abraham, the friend of God.

3. They are the ones to whom the Holy Spirit is sent throughout all the days of history, to work repentance and sorrow for sin, a turning away from idolatry to faith and obedience to the Gospel.
 - a. As we read in 1 Thessalonians 1:9 “how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;”
 - b. The work of the Holy Ghost is two fold:
 - (1). He moves the servant of Christ to proclaim the message. This message goes to all the world, for the minister and servant of Christ does not know who the elect are, but is commanded to call everyone, that whosoever will may come to the water of life and drink freely of forgiveness and mercy. This is the general call of the Gospel, the net that is cast into the sea.
 - (2). The Holy Spirit also moves the heart of the elect. They hear the voice of Christ in the message and are transformed. From rebellion to service; from wrath to peace; from unbelief to faith; from misery to joy. They are the sheep of the Lord who hear his voice and follow him. It is these people of whom Jesus speaks in this vision ‘My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me. I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.
 - c. It cannot be that Jesus the Lord, reigning from heaven would have no worshippers to love Him and serve Him. This was appointed from the foundation of the world. And nothing would be able to keep Paul and his associates from fulfilling the ministry that God had given them.

Application. I will make them from Psalm 110, of which the book of Acts is the fulfillment.

1. The Lord had promised to send the rod of His strength from Mt. Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem. This is the Gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes.
2. His people: would be willing in the day of this sending forth of power. By the Holy Spirit they would come willingly and gladly to worship the true and living God through the beauty and power of Christ the savior, who is priest forever.

3. Not even the kings of the earth would be able to stand before the power of the Gospel. Vs.5. The Son at the right hand of the Father would put down every enemy to the Gospel, for none would be able to stand before the irresistible power of the Gospel in the hearts and lives of the people of God.
4. This is the message to you and to me. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Do not harden your hearts and fight against Him, for you will not prevail."
5. We also are not to fear to witness faithfully according to our opportunity and measure of the Spirit. You and I cannot do what Paul did; but we can be faithful and God will not forget our labor and love for Him. We must not be afraid.

May God bless you. Amen and Amen