

ACTS 18:1-17 (part 1) – Corinth: Encouraging the Discouraged and 1 Corinthians *The City, DisCouragement, EnCouragement, and 1 Corinthians*

18 After these things **Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth.** ² 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 So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers. ⁴ And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.

⁵ When **Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia**, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews *that Jesus is the Christ.* ⁶ 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.” ⁷ And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named [Titius] Justus,^[a] one who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. ⁸ 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.

⁹ Now the **Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision**, “Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; ¹⁰ for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city.” ¹¹ And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

¹² When **Gallio was proconsul of Achaia**, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat, ¹³ saying, “This *fellow* persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.”

¹⁴ And when Paul was about to open *his* mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, “If it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, O Jews, there would be reason why I should bear with you. ¹⁵ But if it is a question of words and names and your own law, look *to it* yourselves; for I do not want to be a judge of such *matters.*” ¹⁶ And he drove them from the judgment seat. ¹⁷ Then all the Greeks [they all?]^[b] took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. But Gallio took no notice of these things.

Paul Returns to Antioch

¹⁸ **So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him.** He had *his* hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow. ¹⁹ And he came to Ephesus, and left them there; but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. ²⁰ When they asked *him* to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent, ²¹ but took leave of them, saying, “I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem;^[c] but I will return again to you, God willing.” And he sailed from Ephesus.

²² And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch. ²³ After he had spent some time *there*, he departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

Ministry of Apollos

²⁴ Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man *and* mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. ²⁵ This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶ So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. ²⁷ And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; ²⁸ for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

INTRODUCTION:

Last week we looked at Acts 17 and Paul's famous sermon at Mars Hill in Athens

During second Missionary (AD49-52)

Antioch NW through Syria & Cilicia, then W through Galatia

Then NW to Troas and sail across Aegean Sea to Macedonia (Europe)

Now in Macedonia, down coast through Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea.

Then run out of town (again) to sail alone to Athens.

It was there, in Athens that Paul gave the stirring, eloquent sermon on Mars Hill.

Not compromising the message, but starting it where it needed to be

for the crowd of pagan philosopher intellectuals who knew nothing about

a Singular, Sovereign, Sustaining Creator God

and scoffed at the idea of Christ or the final resurrection.

We sense discouragement in Paul at this point....

He was alone

His presentation, though eloquent, was relatively unfruitful

Was even a sense of disappointment that Christ not able to be clearly/fully proclaimed.

And so we begin Acts 18 with Paul, still alone, departing fr/Athens to go to Corinth.

And so today we will look at Paul in Corinth

--a very important city in his day, in which an important church was formed

--we have two (out of four) letters to Corinth Church preserved in Bible.

As we look at Acts 18:1-17

We will look at **both** our text and at 1 Corinthians

As we continue to use Luke's recorded history in Acts

To also review the epistles of Scripture related to the cities mentioned.

Our outline will be as follows:

I. City of Corinth

A. Commercial

B. Cosmopolitan

C. Corruption

II. Concerns (DisCouragements) of Paul (1-6)

A. Lack of Fruit

B. Lack of Funds

C. Lack of Fellowship

III. EnCouragement from God (1-17)

A. Fellowship

B. Funds

C. Fruit

IV. 1 Corinthians

A. Cosmopolitan and Corruption

B. Division, Disunity, and Discipline

C. Begins and Ends with Christ

I. City of Corinth

A. Commercial

Uniquely located on a narrow isthmus

between upper/main part of Greece and area Peloponnese to the south.

Traffic N/S on land; Traffic E/W to connect Adriatic Sea to Aegean Sea

(during times easier to transport cargo or even ship across 4 mile land than sail around)

So situated to be hub of commerce/travel/trade in whole Mediterranean area

Some reported up to 500,000 population.

B. Cosmopolitan

Mixture of all different types of people, races, classes. Much like many American cities

This was unique for Paul's missionary journeys so far.

Antioch—home church—was indeed cosmopolitan city, if you remember.

But, for example: Philippi—Roman; Athens—intellectual

Corinth, though, great mixture of people, as seaport and commercial center

Would attract all different people from all over.

***When look at 1 Corinthians, shouldn't be surprised to see Paul dealing with
Division and Disunity because of Differences!***

C. Corruption

With such a Commercial and Cosmopolitan city, comes Corruption.

In fact, the word "corinthian" came to mean the most perverted of behavior.

Known as the center of the cult of the love goddess Aphrodite—wondrous temple there

At one time 10,000 temple prostitutes, did business with sailors/commercial people

[Boice reported 10,000 at height, while others mentioned 1000 in general]

***When look at 1 Corinthians shouldn't be surprised to see Paul dealing with
Instruction on Immorality both in and outside of the church!***

II. Concerns (DisCouragements) of Paul (1-6)

As we said in the introduction, Paul was coming to Corinth alone, possibly dejected
Think about his ongoing trials in his first and second missionary journeys...

1st: Run out of town in Antioch Pisidia, then run out of town in Iconium,

Only to be caught up with in Lystra—taken out and stoned, left for dead!

2nd: Philippi—flogged and jailed, run out of Thessalonica, then run out of Berea

So taken alone to Athens, where little fruit, not much mention of Christ

And now alone in Corinth.

Most of us would begin to have some doubts? discouragement?

A. Lack of Fruit

Even in Corinth, the immediate response looks grim

V4) Trying to persuade, implies w/o results.

V6) Opposed and blaspheming—shook his garments: Your blood is on own heads
(you are guilty and w/o excuse)—*I will now focus on Gentiles!*

--fairly significant statement!

B. Lack of Funds

vv1-4) Aquila and Priscilla—Jewish couple sent out of Rome by emperor Claudius

They, too, had trade of tentmaking (possibly leatherworking)

Look at them more, later.

But this means Paul is in need of money—is lacking financial means, so must work.

1 Cor 9—has every right to expect to be financially supported

“those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel”

But had times where could not be supported, times when chose not to be.

Assume it to be discouraging at this point, to need to be bi-vocational

--appears all the more isolated and unfruitful.

C. Lack of Fellowship

From being alone in Athens to departing alone to Corinth, to a totally new place

--had to be a discouragement.

We are meant to be in fellowship, with fellow-workers.

The lack of friends/brethren/co-laborers had to be discouragement.

III. Encouragement from God (1-17)

But, as we read the passage, we notice God's continual care/encouragement for own.

He provides Paul with Encouragement in all these areas of Concern

[See sovereign/sustaining caretaking of God as source of all things for His people (Acts 17)]

--let this be an encouragement to us, no matter what our circumstances.

A. Fellowship (1-5)

vv1-4) Aquila and Priscilla from Rome

God uses circumstances of emperor kicking Jews out of Rome

--allows A & P (assume already believers) to meet up with Paul

--not only gives ministry companion for Paul, but work companions

--and is ministry partnership that continues beyond Corinth.

V5) Silas and Timothy are back from Macedonia

Likely Timothy came back from Thessalonica,

and Silas from Philippi (Phil 4:15-16; 2 Cor 11:9)

--what a joy that had to be to have his closest companions back

--to hear from other churches and to stand, strive, struggle together for gospel.

B. Funds (5)

Fr/Phil 4:15-16; 2 Cor 11:9—seems **Silas & Timothy have financial support fr/Macedonia**

There is financial relief—*which is even more sweet when fr/brethren!*

v5) Combination of fellowship & funds seems to invigorate Paul!

Compelled by Spirit to testify that Jesus is the Christ!

--able to preach the simplicity of the Gospel again (rather than “unknown god”)

--almost a response to his inability to preach the simplicity of Christ in Athens

Echoes this same thing in opening of 1 Corinthians

²² For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks^[b] foolishness, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

C. Fruit (6-17)

vv6-8) God Saves!

Gentile [Gaius Titius] Justus and Synagogue ruler Crispus/household saved! --*1 Cor 1*

Many Corinthians heard, believed, baptized!

vv9-11) God Speaks—promises protection and a people

Don't grow weary or fearful—I will protect you—speak up!

“I am with you”—clear reminder of Jesus' Great Commission words.

But: “I have many people in this city”

In Antioch, Acts 13:48—“*as many as had been appointed to eternal life, believed*”

Be persistent. Be patient. Be proclaiming! For many of My people to be saved.

--they will be called, but you are to be the means!

1 Cor 1:1-2--Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,

²To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:

[and word “called” or “calling” used several other times in ch1, referring to election!]

v11) now Paul begins to tarry much longer in cities, teaching/building up church (1.5yrs)

vv12-17) God Shields—protects Paul, as promised

When Sosthenes and Jews try to get proconsul of Achaia to rule Christianity illegal

God faithfully shields Paul (*as he was opening his mouth!*) from harm!

And, did you notice “Sosthenes” in the first two verses of 1 Cor 1!! More fruit!

IV. 1 Corinthians

Be encouraged that God will provide for you as you serve Him in time of discouragement

Be encouraged to read 1 Corinthians in context of biblical/historical background

1st Corinthians is actually the second of four letters we think Paul wrote to Corinth

After he left Corinth, heard report of immorality and wrote “Corrective Letter” (1 Cor 5:9)

Corinthians wrote Paul a letter w/questions (1 Cor 7:1) while in Ephesus, 3rd Journey (1 Cor 16:8)

Paul writes what we call 1 Corinthians from Ephesus in AD55. (Acts 18=AD52).

Writes “Severe Letter” later. Followed by 2 Corinthians.

A. Cosmopolitan and Corruption

Since the surrounding culture in Corinth was Cosmo and Corrupt

--should not be a surprise that the Church would be effected by it

--or that Paul’s writing to Corinthian church deal with related issues.

We are affected by corruption of our culture

—bad sinful habits we have learned before Christ

--constant pressure of world enticing us or numbing us to sin.

But we are to strive to have purity w/in church as represent Christ

And be means to see those outside church brought into purity in Christ.

We are affected by diversity of our culture

--differences of opinions and liberties and convictions

--differences of personalities and practices

But we are to strive to avoid division and disunity (*w/o avoiding differences!*)

But rather be united and undivided in Christ, considering others more important.

B. Division, Disunity and Discipline

Chapter 1: Warning about divisions and need for unity

10) I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you,
that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Continues with warnings of “I am of Paul”, “I am of Cephas”, etc.

Chapter 3: After emphasizing simplicity of Cross and total depravity of man (ch2)

Back to dealing with Division within church, warns Church is Temple.

Warning: ¹⁶ Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you? ¹⁷ If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him.

For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. [See importance of Church!?!]

Chapter 5-7—Dealing with immorality/corruptions in and outside the church

Man with father’s wife being tolerated, yet not trying to reach immoral lost

Lengthy discussion about sexual purity in church and in marriage

6:⁹ 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,^[a] nor sodomites,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ 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.

Just like Christ tears down walls of division, He sanctifies lives of sin

And here physical body of believer is called Temple to be cared for.

[Key way to overcome division/corruptions: find identity in Christ & Church]

Chapter 8-10—Dealing with liberty/conscience—caused by cosmo AND corruption

Differences of opinion and practice lead to diff liberties. So does corruption!

Chapter 11-14—Dealing with proper Church Conduct and Worship

Still affected by Cosmo/Corrup. Answer is proper spiritual gifts (ch12) and love (ch13)

C. Key is Start and End with Christ!

Key to conquer Division is unite with and in Christ, identify with, put hope in Christ.

Key to conquer Corruption is unite with and in Christ, identify with, put hope in Christ.

So it is no surprise 1 Corinthians begins and ends with Christ

--salvation in Him, sanctification in Him, looking forward to second coming.

Chapter 1:

⁴ I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, ⁵ that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, ⁶ even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, ⁷ so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸ who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ *God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

And then goes on to proclaim that it is Christ and Christ Crucified that preach and trust.

Chapter 15:

States simple Gospel of Christ's death, burial, resurrection, w/emphasis on resurrect'n

Throughout chapter, Christ's resurrection clearly is example for His people's res.

Meaning that if Christ is risen physically, bodily from dead

Then we will be raised, as well, like Him—final victory over death, sin, hell.

--only then will death no longer have any sting or victory!

²⁰ But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ...

⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

⁵⁵ "O Death, where *is* your sting? O Hades, where *is* your victory?"

⁵⁶ The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

We, too, should see all of life through the filter of the Cross and Resurrection of Christ.

We are united with Him in His death, and we live with Him in His resurrection.

This gives us all the identity and focus we need to then live together in unity/purpose.

This gives us all the identity and hope we need to live for Christ in purity, *till He comes.*

If you are outside of Christ, you have no focus, no hope,

but an identity with Satan and the world

and only the assurance of resurrection to judgment with Christ returns.

There is no salvation, life, hope outside of Christ.

Won't you come in repentance and faith in the One

Who can only cleanse you from corruption

And place you into the wonderfully cosmopolitan Church!

