

THE BOOK OF ACTS

CHAPTER 18

PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

THE CHALLENGE OF CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

There are people all around hungering for the truth, and God will send us to those crying out to know Him. We must always be ready to respond to God in boldness and resist fear of the opinions of others. Our motive for ministry must never be for personal gain but for the gaining of souls into the kingdom of God. We must also determine to continually be renewed in our minds by the Word of God so we can share the truth in love with those God brings across our paths.

PAUL MINISTERS IN CORINTH (1-17)

After Paul leaves Athens, he arrives in Corinth where he meets Aquila and Priscilla who have also recently arrived in Corinth from Rome. Like Paul, they are tent makers by occupation. Although Paul works as a tent maker for a time, he still reasons with those present in the synagogue every Sabbath. When the Jews oppose Paul, he departs to minister to the Gentiles. The Lord then appears to Paul in a night vision, encouraging him not to fear and to continue sharing the gospel message.

PAUL MAKES TENTS

Act 18:1 After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth.

To the natural mind, Athens would be a nice place to stay because of the beauty of the country. But overall, the people are against the message of Paul, and he departs to other areas to evangelize. His next stop is Corinth.

Corinth is a strategic city in the Roman empire, built by Julius Caesar. It is a convention town: a pleasure city. The temple of Aphrodite housed over one thousand prostitutes, priestesses to the Roman goddess of love. It was also a great sports city, and during the writing of the New Testament, the greatest games were the Isthmus games of Corinth, not the Olympic or Pythian games of Greece.

Claudius is the Roman Emperor at this time. His stepson, Nero, will be next in line for the throne. Claudius is a very gracious man but becomes intolerant of the Jews for their religious arguing. He eventually commands all Jews to be cast out of Rome. One of the Jews who had to leave was Aquila, a very prosperous tent maker in Rome who made tents both for individuals and the military. He was married to a Roman aristocrat, Priscilla. Both of them travel to Corinth and continued their tent making business.

Act 18:2 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.

Pontus was a city on the southernmost end of the Black Sea. Both Aquila and Priscilla are believers and have a very successful marriage. They are a monument to God's call on a married couple. They are involved in business, but are also instructors in the Word (verse 26). The church meets in their home (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19). Paul enters Corinth at the perfect time. He will meet Aquila and Priscilla (believers) and Gallio (an unbeliever) in the Corinthian court. All of these greatly impact the history of the church.

Many factors are critical in God's timing for a nation. When a person obeys God's command to go, God knows the state of the government leaders, the attitude of the people toward the gospel, the laws of the land, and the hearts of the believers in the area.

Act 18:3 So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.

And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: (ergozomai: worked) for by their occupation they were tent makers.

Paul had been a tent maker at one time and so helps in the business. First, he works because he is low on money. He has left his team in Macedonia, and Paul is now alone. He spent what money he had to live on and is now forced to work for an income; he preaches whenever he has the opportunity.

He does not send word back to Antioch to ask for more money and does not itinerate to request offerings. He goes to work. In the natural, this looks like a setback, and Paul becomes discouraged (verses 9-10). Discouragement is the great offender in the ministry (Hebrews 12: 1, 3). Paul works during the day and teaches each Sabbath. He continues to do this until a large amount of money arrives from Macedonia (verse 5).

Not only does Paul work because he needs money to live, he also works because he is led to do so. At the moment, he does not understand, but the reason becomes apparent to him. The people at Corinth will accuse Paul of being in the ministry for the money. His willingness to work completely stops the argument (1 Corinthians 9:18-19; 2 Corinthians 8:20-23; 11:7-8).

Act 18:4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.

And he reasoned (dialegomai: say thoroughly) in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded (peitho: influenced over) the Jews and Greeks.

Paul's only free day to minister is Saturday, and he goes to the synagogue. Since Aquila and Priscilla are also Jews, it makes it possible for Paul to minister. He wins many of the Jews and

Greeks over with the teaching of the Word. Many of the converts become established in the Word of God.

JEWS OPPOSE PAUL

Act 18:5 When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.

And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit (by the Word), and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.

Silas and Timothy had been left in Berea when Paul went to Athens. Paul waits for them in Athens (17: 15-16), but is only there a short time before going on to Corinth alone (1 Thessalonians 3:1). Silas and Timothy must have known in their spirits of Paul's financial need and received an offering for him from the believers of Macedonia. They bring this large offering to Paul in Corinth (2 Corinthians 11:9; Philippians 4:15; 1 Thessalonians 3:6) so he can quit tent making and preach full-time.

When Paul receives the offering, it relieves his affliction (tribulation) and distress (necessity) (1 Thessalonians 3:7). Paul then writes 1 Thessalonians to thank them for the gift and to correct some mistakes about the rapture, he had learned of through Silas and Timothy. Now Paul has money, and he can be pressed by the Word alone and not the need for money or the necessity to work.

Act 18:6 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."

And when they opposed themselves (set themselves in opposition), and blasphemed (maligned Paul), he shook his raiment (Matthew 10:14: shook off the dust), and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth (now on) I will go unto the Gentiles.

Paul is declaring that he has done all he can do. He has given them the Word, and now their blood is on their own heads. Paul stands clean. These men will now stand accountable before God.

SALVATIONS

Act 18:7 And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue.

Titus Justus, "a man of the potters," is well-known. His house was built on the same property as the synagogue. Paul has just moved next door to the church and typically would not have done this, but God allows him to. Paul does not do this for any vindictive reason.

Act 18:8 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.

Paul took the chief ruler with him. Crispus is one of the two most influential people to be born again in Corinth. The other is Sosthenes (verse 17). The Corinthians "hearing, believed." You must hear to believe (Romans 10:13-15). Paul baptized Crispus and Gaius, but the rest of the converts are baptized by others (1 Corinthians 1:14).

PAUL'S VISION

Act 18:9 Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent;

This verse emphasizes the tremendous pressure Paul faces in court. He is being criticized by the Jewish leaders, and the people are being told that Paul is only there for money, which they believe. Even though there are great victories each day, Paul has become discouraged.

Often during or after a great victory, times of discouragement come. It is an occupational hazard in the ministry. But the word of the Lord is always there to deliver us. Usually God will minister to us through someone (maybe receiving a nice letter from a congregational member or from someone outside the church). In this particular instance, the Lord Himself comforts Paul. The ministry of the Holy Spirit comes to Paul by a vision of Jesus and assures him he is not alone. Jesus is with him and so are many believers in Corinth. Paul is apparently disturbed and upset with his recent time of discouragement and cannot sleep. The Lord comes to him by night in a vision to tell him of the great victories he will see in the next eighteen months.

Paul has also become fearful (Isaiah 41:10). Apparently some of the converts are accusing Paul of being in the ministry for money, and he becomes hesitant to speak about money or to receive an offering for fear of the opinions of people. He is probably overly cautious because of fear. God assures Paul the Word would go forth without fear of man. The book of 2 Corinthians becomes a defense for the arguments made against Paul.

ACCUSATIONS AGAINST PAUL

1. Walks according to the flesh (2 Corinthians 10:2).
2. Writes powerful letters, but is a coward in person (2 Corinthians 10:2).
3. In the ministry for money (2 Corinthians 8:20-23; 11:7-8).
4. Not one of the original apostles, no credentials (2 Corinthians 3:1; 11:5; 12:11-12).
5. Is boastful (2 Corinthians 10:8, 15).
6. Is deceitful (2 Corinthians 12:16).

Act 18:10 for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."

Paul thinks no one appreciates him. He is probably discouraged because of poor results (in numbers) and opposition in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens. When he arrives in Corinth, he has to make tents because support runs low and he is rejected by the Jews.

But the Lord confirms Paul is in His will and will not be forsaken. God also promises no one will assault him (threats had already been made against his life). The Lord also knows that many will be born again and Spirit-filled. Satan does not know the future but can predict with great accuracy. When he knows a city is ripe for the gospel because the people are hungry, he will oppose God's man through criticism and discouragement.

Act 18:11 And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

This verse is the introduction to the rest of the chapter. During the eighteen months Paul is in Corinth, a religious mob rises up against him and tries to use violence and Roman law to get rid of Paul.

PAUL BROUGHT BEFORE GALLIO

Act 18:12 When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat,

And when Gallio was the deputy (procounsel) of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection (withstood, assaulted) with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat,

A deputy is the same as the governor. Pontius Pilate was a governor. Gallio was an excellent administrator and one of the greatest proponents of Roman law of his day, along with his brother, Seneca. Because of his strong stand for Roman law, he will later be executed by Nero who defies Roman law. (Gallio and Paul die within two years of each other.) Gallio is a man of excellent manners, and these Jews think it will be easy to intimidate him and use him against Paul.

Act 18:13 saying, "This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law."

They try to stir up Gallio by accusing Paul of persuading people to go against Roman law. Paul is about to defend himself, but Gallio beats him to the point.

Act 18:14 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.

And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong (civil indictment) or wicked lewdness (criminal acts), O ye Jews, reason would (it would be right) that I should bear (put up) with you:

Gallio immediately recognizes that Roman law is being practiced by the Jews. Even though there was a state religion in Rome, people are allowed to worship as they please. Gallio observed a man being wronged by a religious group trying to use Roman law to settle a religious argument. Because of Gallio's excellent interpretation and use of Roman law, Paul is free to teach the Word of God in Corinth for the next eighteen months.

Act 18:15 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."

But if it be a question of words (teachings) and names (of gods), and of your law (Jewish religion), look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters.

Gallio is saying, "If it is a religious question, you handle it. If it is a criminal act, I'll handle it." The state has no right to solve a religious controversy, only to protect the people involved.

Act 18:16 And he drove them from the judgment seat.

And he drove them (threw them out) from the judgment seat.

Act 18:17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. But Gallio took no notice of these things.

Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before (in front of) the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none (was not concerned) of those things.

Apparently Sosthenes is with the religious mob who has tried to get rid of Paul. The Greeks in the courtroom are impressed and ecstatic over the way Gallio handled the case, so after Gallio leaves the bench, the mob apprehends Sosthenes and beats him before leaving the courtroom. They are determined there will be no more religious mobs in Corinth.

Somehow, in spite of what happens, Sosthenes receives the Lord. In 1 Corinthians 1:1, Paul refers to him as a brother in the Lord. Gallio knew what occurred after he left, but did not become involved. It was still a religious matter, the Christian religion against the Jewish.

PAUL'S RETURN TO ANTIOCH (18-23)

Paul is released and remains in Corinth for an extended time. He eventually travels with Aquila and Priscilla to Syria and then departs to Ephesus leaving his traveling companions behind. Upon arriving in Ephesus, Paul reasons with the Jews in the synagogue and finally returns to Antioch, then to the regions of Galatia and Phrygia to encourage the disciples.

PAUL STOPS IN EPHESUS

Verses 18-28 are transitional versus ("meanwhile, back at the ranch"). They actually lead up to the Ephesus revival of chapter 19. Paul will spend more time in Ephesus than any other place in his ministry: three years.

Chapter 18 describes Paul as just passing through Ephesus because it was not the time to remain in Ephesus, but to prepare. Paul leaves Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus and travels alone to Jerusalem. He will then travel to Antioch and begin his third missionary journey.

While in Ephesus, Aquila and Priscilla meet Apollos and train him in the New Testament doctrine. Apollos then travels to Corinth. These few verses demonstrate how far God goes to prepare a city for the Word. God takes time for every small detail!

Act 18:18 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.

And Paul after this (trial) tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of (departed from) the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.

The “good while” Paul stays in Corinth is eighteen months (verse 11). When he departs, he stops in Ephesus first, but Syria is the final destination. Aquila and Priscilla laid down their lives for Paul, and Aquila takes a vow to save Paul’s life (Romans 16:3-4). This is a carryover of Jewish tradition. This is not legalistic, but a personal vow Aquila makes to God on Paul’s behalf. Paul later does the same in Jerusalem (21:22-26) but with the wrong motive. He is pressured by legalistic Jews to keep a religious vow in order to preach the gospel. We do not have the details of Aquila’s vow, but they all face a great danger when he takes this memorial vow to save Paul.

Act 18:19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there; but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.

And he came to Ephesus, and left them (Aquila and Priscilla) there: but he himself (alone) entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.

Ephesus is the capital of the Roman province of Asia. The population is around three hundred thousand and has a large temple for the worship of Diana.

Act 18:20 When they asked him to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent,

Paul had a good response, and many are born again, but Paul is only there to plant seeds for the new church. He will return later for an excellent ministry, a good harvest.

Act 18:21 but took leave of them, saying, "I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing." And he sailed from Ephesus.

The “feast that cometh in Jerusalem” is the feast of Pentecost. Paul wants to be in Jerusalem during the feast to see many of his friends and visit the church at Jerusalem. This will be the last time he will be able to visit the church in the Lord’s will. The next time he visits, he will be out of God’s will. He tells the saints at Ephesus he will return if it is the Lord’s will. It will be the

Lord's will, and he will return after a number of months to witness the harvest which has been sown and watered for quite a while.

PAUL STRENGTHENS THE DISCIPLES

Act 18:22 And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch.

Paul docks at Caesarea and goes to Jerusalem. He visits the church and the many saints who were his friends. When the feast of Pentecost concludes, Paul returns to his home church of Antioch and rests for an extended time.

Act 18:23 After he had spent some time there, he departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

Beginning his third missionary journey, Paul visits the same churches he has established on his first and second trips. He goes to encourage the pastors and saints in Galatia. Since they have a tendency toward legalism, he reminds them of their position in Christ and the walk of faith which remains throughout the Christian life.

MINISTRY OF APOLLOS (24-28)

Apollos is strong in the scriptures and fervent in spirit but knows nothing beyond the baptism of John. Aquila and Priscilla hear him speak boldly in the synagogue and afterward take him aside to teach him "more accurately" about following the way of God in Jesus Christ.

Act 18:24 Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.

The plan of God does not stop when the main minister leaves a city. God always has a plan and never leaves a group of hungry people without a minister. Alexandria was a university city and apparently Apollos is a language or speech major. He is eloquent in speech but an unbeliever until some of John the Baptist's followers come to the city and lead him to the Lord. He grew in the Scriptures, which he had known since childhood, and became powerful in revealing salvation in the Old Testament to his listeners.

He is now called by the Holy Spirit to go to Ephesus to instruct the believers and sinners in the plans of God. He not only leads many to the Lord, but is also instructed himself by Aquila and Priscilla.

Act 18:25 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.

Since he has been led to the Lord by the disciples of John the Baptist, he only knows of the plan of God up to the baptism of John. He knows nothing of New Testament doctrine, his position in

Christ, the new birth, the indwelling Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, the body of Christ, the church, the bride of Christ, and many other areas of the age of grace.

18:25 fervent, *zeo* (dzeh-oh); Compare “zeal,” “zeolite,” or “seethe.” Living fervor, fiery hot, full of burning zeal. It is the opposite of dignified, cold, and unemotional. In a Christian context it signifies a high spiritual temperature, inflamed by the Holy Spirit. Apollos was a complete man, articulate in Scripture and full of spiritual fervency.

Act 18:26 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.

Aquila and Priscilla hear Apollos speak in the temple and know immediately he has no knowledge of the new covenant. After having spent much time with Paul, they are capable to lead him into the deeper truths of the dispensation of the church.

Act 18:27 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;

Achaia is southern Greece. He goes there with letters of recommendation and is able to help the new believers who have recently been saved by grace.

Act 18:28 for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

The strength of Apollos is leading Jews to the Lord Jesus through Old Testament scriptures.