

## THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

### AT CORINTH, ACTS 18:1-22

#### A. Paul gets settled in Corinth (1-4)

##### 1. He arrived in Corinth from Athens (1), *After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.*

###### a. *after this*

- 1) Paul completed his time in Athens.
  - a) Some believe he was urged to leave because of possible danger.
  - b) Others believe Paul sensed that he had done all God had called him to do in Athens.
- 2) Timothy was sent back to Thessalonica (Macedonia) from Athens, 1 Thessalonians 3:2, *and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith,*
- 3) Silas went from Athens back to Macedonia, possibly Philippi, Philippians 4:16, *Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.*

###### b. Corinth

- 1) It was the capital of the Roman province of Achaia and was a Roman colony.
- 2) It was located about 50 miles southwest of Athens and was 20 times larger than Athens. The population of Corinth was over 200,000.
- 3) It had two ports, one on each side of a 3.5 mile isthmus. This enabled ships to avoid sailing 200 miles around Cape Mala. at the southern tip of the Peloponnesus.
- 4) Thomas Constable, *Corinth constantly buzzed with commercial activity, and it possessed all the vices that have typically haunted cosmopolitan ports...The city was infamous for its immorality that issued from two sources: its numerous transients and its temple to Aphrodite. Aphrodite was the Greek goddess of love, and here devotees promoted immorality in the name of religion. Her temple, which boasted 1,000 religious prostitutes, stood on the Acrocorinth, a 1,857 foot flat-topped mountain just outside the city.*
- 5) Richard Lenski, *...it commanded the great trade route between Asia and Rome. This accounts for the mixed population, for ships from all ports docked in its harbors...It was not accidental that many in the Corinthian congregation spoke with tongues.*

###### c. Paul's emotions on arriving in Corinth as seen in 1 Corinthians 2:3-5, *And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.*

- 1) He was alone after having ministry companions.
- 2) He had great difficulties in Macedonia and he may have feared that they would continue in Achaia.
- 3) Corinth was one of the worldiest cities with hardened sailors and seekers of sexual pleasure.
- 4) Thomas Constable, *It was as though Paul had left Boston and had landed in Las Vegas.*

##### 2. Paul developed a deep friendship with a couple in Corinth (2-3)

###### a. He met Aquila and Priscilla (2), *And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them,*

- 1) Aquila was a Jew from Pontus on the Black Sea coast, near Bithynia.
- 2) His wife's name was Priscilla or Prisca as noted in other Bible passages.
- 3) They had recently arrived in Corinth from Rome.
  - a) Probably, they left Rome because of the edict by Emperor Claudius at that time, which expelled Jews from Rome.
  - b) Suetonius, *Because the Jews at Rome caused continuous disturbances at the instigation of Crestus, he [Claudius] expelled them from the city.*
  - c) Homer Kent, *It was commonly supposed that Suetonius was referring to riots in the Jewish community over the preaching of Christ, but that he has misspelled the name and has perhaps erroneously thought that Christ was actually a rebel leader in Rome.*

b. He stayed and worked with them (3), ***and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade.***

1) They had the same trade, tentmaking.

a) All types of leather goods were produced and repaired.

b) It was a common trade in Paul's home province of Cilicia where fabric was produced from goat skin called cilicium.

c) Normally, a workman's shop was downstairs and living quarters were upstairs.

2) Paul emphasized the importance of paying his own way.

a) As a Jewish rabbi, Paul had been taught to have a trade.

b) One rabbi said, *He who does not teach his son a trade teaches him robbery.*

c) Paul was careful not to be a burden on those to whom he ministered or appear as one who preached the Gospel for personal gain.

1] 2 Corinthians 11:7, *Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached God's gospel to you free of charge?*

2] 1 Thessalonians 2:9, *For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.*

3) Kenneth Gangel, *A major principle surfaces here: there is no secular duty for a Christian; everything we take on, from changing diapers to governing a state, becomes a form of service to Christ (Col. 3:23–25).*

3. He ministered every Sabbath in the synagogue (4), ***And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.***

a. Paul proclaimed the Gospel every Sabbath in the synagogue.

1) He had a burden for his Jewish brothers and sisters.

2) He had the opportunity to reach God-fearing Greeks.

b. Paul's method of instruction.

1) *reasoned*, discuss with reasonable discourse.

2) *persuaded*, convince by solid presentation

c. Paul's initial schedule in Corinth

1) He worked his trade with Aquila and Priscilla during the week.

2) He proclaimed the Gospel in the synagogue on the Sabbath.

B. Extended ministry in Corinth (5-11)

1. Paul started his ministry in Corinth to the Jews (5-6)

a. He was proclaiming Christ to the Jews when Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia (5), ***When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus.***

1) Silas and Timothy arrived in Corinth with encouragement for Paul.

a) It appears that Silas returned with a monetary gift for Paul's ministry from Philippi, 2 Corinthians 11:9, *And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way.*

b) Timothy returned from Thessalonica with news of the believers' spiritual growth, 1 Thessalonians 3:6-7, *But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you—for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith.*

2) Paul increased his focus on teaching God's Word.

a) *was occupied*, is better translated as *became fully occupied with the word.*

b) Only after the arrival of Silas and Timothy did Paul devote himself completely to preaching because of the monetary gift from Philippi.

c) A. Robertson, *Paul would need to make fewer tents and could preach more sermons.*

3) The focus of Paul's message to the Jews never changed.

a) He had learned it on the road to Damascus.

b) His proclamation was that Jesus is the Messiah.

- b. The Jews opposed his message and Paul rebuked them for disbelief (6), ***And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.***
    - 1) Jews rejected the Gospel message and made false statements about Paul.
    - 2) Paul declared that he had fulfilled his responsibility to the Corinthian Jews and they were accountable for their unbelief.
    - 3) He turned his attention to ministry to Corinthian Gentiles.
    - 4) Kenneth Gangel, *He turned from Jews to Gentiles in Corinth, but he would repeatedly go back to the Jews and their synagogues in future ministry.*
2. Paul took his message to the Gentiles (7-11)
- a. Paul moved his ministry from the synagogue to the house of Titius Justus (7), ***And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue***
    - 1) The man was a God-fearer who Paul met in the synagogue and his house was next door.
    - 2) Some believe this man is called Gaius elsewhere in Scripture.
      - a) Romans 16:23, *Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you.*
      - b) 1 Corinthians 1:14, *I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,*
  - b. Many Corinthians came to faith (8)
    - 1) The ruler of the synagogue and his family came to faith (8a), ***Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household.***
      - a) Jews must have been upset when the ruler of the synagogue came to faith.
      - b) A. T. Robertson, *The conversion and baptism of Crispus (ruler of the synagogue) and his household would add to the bitterness. It would be like the pastor of a church of one denomination joining another next door.*
    - 2) Many Corinthians were saved and were baptized (8b), ***And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.***
      - a) These Corinthians were non-Jews not connected with the synagogue.
      - b) Romans 16:23 notes another believer in Corinth, Erastus, the city treasurer.
      - c) John Pohill, *An inscription has been excavated in a plaza adjacent to the theater at Corinth. It mentions Erastus as the treasurer of the city who provided the funds for the plaza.*
  - c. A vision from God encouraged Paul to continue proclaiming the Gospel in Corinth (9-10), ***And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.”***
    - 1) God encouraged Paul at the right time with a vision to keep proclaiming the Gospel.
      - a) Kenneth Gangel, *Unlike the Macedonian vision which moved Paul geographically in a different direction, here the Lord simply assured him of his safety and affirmed the mission already underway.*
      - b) Paul obeyed God’s command and stayed in Corinth longer than anywhere else except for Ephesus.
    - 2) Reasons why the Lord encouraged Paul to stay in Corinth.
      - a) *for I am with you*, what more does one need than the sure presence of our risen Lord.
      - b) *for I have many in this city who are my people.*
        - 1] The Lord could see the hearts of those who placed trust in Him.
        - 2] I. Howard Marshall, *The saying indicates divine foreknowledge for the success of the gospel in Corinth.*
  - d. Paul’s ministry in Corinth lasted one year and six months (11), ***And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.***
    - 1) The church Paul planted was a mix of many cultures.
    - 2) It appears that God encouraged Paul to stay long enough to strengthen the church for future spiritual growth.

C. Legal proceedings against Paul (12-18a)

1. Jews brought Paul before the Roman governor, Gallio (12), ***But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal,***
  - a. Gallio
    - 1) He was a Roman citizen from Spain and the brother of Seneca, a Stoic philosopher and Emperor Nero's tutor.
    - 2) He was the governor of the Roman province of Achaia.
    - 3) Any judgment made by a proconsul would establish legal precedent.
  - b. *tribunal*
    - 1) It is the Greek word *bema*, judgment seat.
    - 2) Richard Longenecker, ... *a large, raised platform that stood in the agora (marketplace) in front of the residence of the proconsul and served as a forum where he tried cases.*
    - 3) This is the word Paul used for judgment seat of Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:10, *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.*
2. Paul was accused of breaking Roman law (13), ***saying, "This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law."***
  - a. He was accused of proselytizing Romans which was unlawful.
  - b. Christianity was not an accepted religion of Rome according to the Jews because they said it was a cult distinct from Judaism.
3. Gallio rejected the Jewish charges against Paul (14-15), ***But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. But since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these things."***
  - a. Paul was not permitted to make a defense.
  - b. Gallio had already made a decision.
    - 1) He determined that the issue was not one concerning Roman law.
    - 2) It was a matter of Jewish religious questions which they needed to deal with themselves.
    - 3) His verdict made Christianity legitimate in the Roman Empire.
    - 4) Thomas Constable, *Officially hereafter for many years the Romans regarded Christianity as a sect within Judaism even though the Jews were coming to see that it was a separate faith.*

D. Responses to the proceedings (16-18a)

1. Gallio drove the accusers from the court (16), ***And he drove them from the tribunal.***
  - a. It appears they did not leave Gallio's court until they were removed by force.
  - b. Gallio intended to maintain order in his court since Jewish disruptions in Rome were upsetting the Pax Romana.
2. Corinthians beat the ruler of the synagogue (17), ***And they all seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to any of this.***
  - a. *they all*
    - 1) Some believe this refers to the Gentile audience at the trial beating the Jews who had started the disturbance.
    - 2) Others believe they were the Roman court officials who intended to maintain order by removing Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue.
  - b. Why was Gallio unconcerned by this disruption?
    - 1) Possibly, it was his men carrying out his orders to disperse the Jewish group.
    - 2) It may have been to discourage the Jews from bothering him again with their religious issues.

- c. Sosthenes
  - 1) Some believe he was beaten by the Corinthians to express their anti-Semitism.
  - 2) Others believe Sosthenes had become a Christian and the Jews beat him in frustration over Gallio's judgment.
  - 3) Note 1 Corinthians 1:1, *Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes,*
- 3. Paul remained in Corinth for some time after the Jewish attack (18a), *After this, Paul stayed many days longer...*
  - a. Paul's ministry in Corinth was the completion of his second missionary journey.
  - b. He would soon return to Antioch in anticipation of his third missionary journey.
- A. The completion of Paul's Second Missionary Journey (18b-22)
  - 1. Paul's departure for Antioch (18b), *...and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had cut his hair, for he was under a vow.*
    - a. Paul *took leave of the brothers*
      - 1) This refers to those who came to faith in Corinth.
      - 2) Stanley Toussaint, *Evidently, Silas and Timothy remained in Macedonia and Achaia to oversee the churches there.*
    - b. Paul took Priscilla and Aquila with him as he headed for Syria.
      - 1) Priscilla and Aquila worked with and housed Paul while he was in Corinth.
      - 2) Paul's destination was Antioch in Syria.
        - a) It was the location of his sending church.
        - b) He planned to complete his second missionary journey by giving a report to those who had sent him.
    - c. Paul had made a vow and cut his hair off at Cenchreae.
      - 1) Cenchreae
        - a) It was the eastern seaport of Corinth on the Aegean Sea.
        - b) There was a church there at some point, Romans 16:1, *I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae.*
      - 2) *He*
        - a) Some believe *he* refers to Aquila because of the grammatical construction.
        - b) Most believe it refers to Paul because the context requires it to be him.
      - 3) *a vow*
        - a) Paul had his hair cut off at Cenchreae because of a vow he had taken.
        - b) It is not known when Paul made the vow but it was possibly after one of his visions, when he left Troas for Macedonia, or at the beginning of his ministry at Corinth.
        - c) John Stott, *...The reference to his hair makes it almost certain that it was a Nazirite vow, which involved abstinence from drinking wine and from cutting one's hair for a period, at the end of which the hair was first cut and then burned, along with other sacrifices, as a symbol of self-offering to God. If the vow was completed away from Jerusalem, the hair could still be brought there to be burned.*
        - d) Thomas Constable, *This vow, which was optional for Jews, involved, among other things, leaving one's hair uncut. Jews took vows either to get something from God or because God had given them something (cf. Lev. 27).*
        - e) J. Vernon McGee, *There are a great many folk who find fault with Paul because he made a vow. They say that this is the man who preached that we are not under Law but we are under grace, and so he should not have made a vow. Anyone who says this about Paul is actually making a little law for Paul. Such folk are saying that Paul is to do things their way. Under grace, friend, if you want to make a vow, you can make it. And if you do not want to make a vow, you don't have to. Paul didn't force anyone else to make a vow. In fact, he said emphatically that no one has to do that. But if Paul wants to make a vow, that is his business. That is the marvelous freedom that we have in the grace of God today.*

2. Paul's ministry at Ephesus (19-22)
  - a. Priscilla and Aquila remained there (19a), *And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there,*
    - 1) Ephesus was the most important city in Asia Minor and was the location of the temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.
    - 2) They went with Paul as far as Ephesus.
    - 3) Richard Lenski, *Did this couple move to Ephesus in order that, after the apostle returned to Ephesus from Syria, he might again live with them and work in their shop? And was it Paul's aim already when he left Corinth to continue his missionary work in Ephesus? These may have been his plans.*
  - b. Paul proclaimed the Gospel in the synagogue (19b), *but he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.*
    - 1) Paul had attempted to minister in the province of Asia but was directed to Macedonia by the Lord.
    - 2) Now, he had an initial ministry here for a few weeks but would later spend several years in Ephesus, note chapter 19.
    - 3) As was his custom, Paul went first to the synagogue to proclaim Christ.
      - a) As in Acts 18:4, he *reasoned*, discussed, interacted with those at the synagogue.
      - b) Certainly, Paul was taking them to Old Testament passages that dealt with Messiah.
  - c. He was asked to stay longer but graciously declined and left Ephesus (20-21), *When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined. But on taking leave of them he said, "I will return to you if God wills," and he set sail from Ephesus.*
    - 1) Paul was asked to stay longer but declined.
      - a) Stanley Toussaint, *Unlike the obstinate refusal of the Jews in other synagogues to believe, those in Ephesus desired further interchange with Paul. However, he was more inclined to press on homeward.*
      - b) Reasons proposed for Paul's haste.
        - 1] The impending close of sea traffic because it was the season for bad weather.
        - 2] It probably involved his vow in which he wanted to arrive at Jerusalem in time for Passover.
        - 3] Also, Paul was anxious to give his ministry report to his sending church at Antioch.
    - 2) Paul promised to return, *if God wills.*
      - a) It appears he was already making plans for a return with Priscilla and Aquila in place.
      - b) He realized that all plans are to be placed under the will of God.
      - c) Richard Lenski, *God willing is certainly not a mere phrase in the mouth of the apostle, nor should it ever be in ours whose goings and comings are equally subject to God's will.*
      - d) Paul made good his word to return to Ephesus on the third missionary journey.
3. Paul's return to Antioch (22), *When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch.*
  - a. He landed at Caesarea and greeted the church at Jerusalem.
    - 1) Caesarea was the port city for Jerusalem.
    - 2) *He went up* refers to the higher elevation of Jerusalem.
    - 3) He updated the church at Jerusalem on his ministry activity.
    - 4) He probably wanted to see if the Judaizers were still causing trouble.
    - 5) A. T. Robertson, *Did Paul meet the Judaizers again? Probably their leaders were in Galatia or on the way to Corinth to regulate Paul's Gentile converts. They will soon begin to give Paul serious trouble all along the line of his great tour.*
  - b. He went to Antioch.
    - 1) That was his sending church.
    - 2) They were probably as excited to see him as he was to see them.
    - 3) A. T. Robertson, *That (Antioch) was his real objective point. Here he was sure of a great welcome. He could now rest awhile and take his bearings.*
    - 4) This was the completion of his second missionary journey (15:40-18:22).

## *CONCLUSION*

- A. There is great value in team ministry.
- B. God encourages and directs those who serve Him.
- C. God can make good out of seemingly bad situations.