

The Book of Acts Chapter 18

SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY (Continued)

Acts 18:9-10

9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:

10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.

- I. Review
1. Last lesson, lesson 17, we began in the city of Thessalonica, with Paul on his 2nd missionary journey, where he had some success among Jews and Gentiles.
2. Some Jewish leaders who rejected the message about Jesus, started a street riot among some lewd fellows who pulled Paul's host, Jason, out of his home and took him to city authorities.

3. They fined Jason and let him go, but the saints felt it needful for Paul's safety, to send Paul off to Berea, where he preached and had a good response with many believers.
 4. But when Jews from Thessalonica came to Berea looking for Paul, the saints sent him by ship to safety in Athens.
 5. Not willing to sit idle, he preached in the synagogue and marketplace, and the court on Mars Hill. A few notable converts were made in Athens.
- II. The Second Missionary Journey, continued
- A. Paul meets Aquilla and Priscilla and gets a job (Verses 1-3)
 1. Paul left Athens soon after his appearance on Mars' Hill before the Areopagus. He traversed the narrow isthmus (about ten miles wide) which connected the mainland of Greece with the Peloponnesus Peninsula.
Acts 18:1 After these things Paul departed

from Athens, and came to Corinth; [map: Corinth]

2. Corinth was about forty miles west of Athens, situated at the west end of the Isthmus, and on the northeast side of the peninsula.
3. **[map: Corinth2]** Because of its position on the isthmus, Corinth was a chief commercial and political metropolis of Greece that had easy access to the Aegean Sea, Italy, and Rome to the east, as well as the Adriatic Sea and Asia to the west, and the larger Mediterranean Sea and Africa to the south. Plus Corinth was the city where the Roman governor of the province of Achaia resided.
4. Being an important international seaport, it attracted much traffic and much wickedness.
5. Paul had been alone in Athens and traveled alone to Corinth, he apparently arrived in need of financial assistance. So by God's

- great providence, Paul met a couple who shared Paul's learned trade of tentmaking.
6. Jewish parents made sure that each son learned a trade, so that wherever he went he would be able to provide for himself in case of necessity.
 7. Paul had been educated as a Rabbi, but had also learned the trade of tentmaking, which he seems to have frequently relied on during his missionary travels (Acts 20:34; 1 Cor. 4:12; 1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8).

Acts 18:2-3

2 And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them.

3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers.

8. We know from history that a disturbance had occurred in Rome around AD 49 over a

- Jew named Chrestus, which quite possibly is a Latin version of Christ, referring to Jesus. And as a result of that disturbance among Jews, Emperor Claudius evicted many Jews from Rome, including these tent makers, Aquila and Priscilla. They settled in Corinth and set up their tent-making shop there.
9. And by God's grace, not long after that, Paul arrived.
 10. It is possible to date Paul's arrival in Corinth to about AD 51 based on Luke's mention of the Roman Proconsul Gallio, being in Corinth (verse 12).¹
 11. So that provided Aquila and Priscilla adequate time to get established in the city, and by God's providence, Paul found both employment and lodging with Aquila and Priscilla.
 12. They were either Christians before they met Paul, or they were among his first converts in Corinth. Either way, they became his

¹ Archeology Study Bible, p. 1641-42

helpers in the ministry of the gospel and life-long friends. Paul would later write:

Rom 16:3-4

3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus:

4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

B. Timothy and Silas rejoin Paul (Verses 4-5)

1. Although Paul found employment to cover his expenses, his purpose in coming to Corinth was for the purpose of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Acts 18:4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

2. While the details are minimal here, Paul had some success among Jews and Greeks in his early preaching at the synagogue.
3. But remember, Paul had fled to Athens from Thessalonica and Berea due to the

threats on his life. And he had left Silas, Timothy, and Luke back in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea to establish the works there.

4. But now since Paul had become safely established in Corinth, Silas and Timothy rejoined him there:

Acts 18:5 And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.

5. In chapter 17:16, when Paul arrived in Athens, we read that “his spirit was stirred in him” when he saw the idolatry in the city.
 6. And now in Corinth, especially after Silas and Timothy joined him, Paul was “pressed in the spirit” to preach to these Jews that the Messiah of Old Testament prophecy that they had been very familiar with, was Jesus Christ of Nazareth.
- c. Jews reject Paul and the gospel (Verse 6)

1. But as was the case in other cities, that message was not entirely well-received:
Acts 18:6 And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.
2. To those Jews, they believed the prophecies about a coming Messiah, but they were unwilling to believe those ancient promises had been fulfilled in their day.
3. It is easy to believe God for a far-off event, but to believe Him for today takes great faith.
4. They opposed Paul and blasphemed him, which means they defamed, slandered, or reviled him.
5. Paul got the same response on the first missionary journey when he preached in Asia in Antioch:
Acts 13:45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and

spoke against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

6. But notice Paul's response to what happened when the "social media" of their day took to reviling the ministry:
*Acts 18:6 And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, **he shook his raiment**, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.*
7. When some people revile the ministry of the kingdom, rather than getting our dander up, just shake off their dust.
8. That is what Jesus told the disciples to do when rejected and reviled (Mark 6:11). Shake the dust off your feet for a testimony against them.
9. Paul was saying, "I'm done with you. You will be accountable to God."
10. Your blood be upon your own heads. In other words, Paul was declaring himself

innocent. Their rejection of Jesus was a judgment they would face on their own.

- D. Paul turns to the Gentiles (Verses 7-8)
 - 1. Having discharged his full duty toward the Jew first, he was now free to direct his ministry to the Gentiles.
 - 2. And that is immediately what Paul did, and the result of his proper response:

Acts 18:7-8

7 And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.

8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.

- 3. The phrase, “one that worshipped God,” comes from the Greek word, *sebomenou*, which refers to Gentiles who fear God. God fearers were Gentiles who favored,

believed, or observed the Mosaic law, but had not been circumcised.

4. Another word you will see referring to Gentile believers, is “proselyte,” which refers to one who accepted the law of Moses as well as circumcision.
5. Justus, who lived next door to the synagogue and no doubt had heard the commotion caused by the Jews, invited Paul to preach in his house.
6. And this door which was opened to the gospel of Jesus Christ outside the synagogue probably made the gospel more accessible to both Jews and Gentiles. As you see, Paul’s ministry was not hindered by the words of the opposition.
7. Even Crispus, the chief ruler/president of the synagogue and his family became believers.
8. Later, when Paul was writing to the Corinthian believers, he said:

1 Cor 1:14 I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;

9. That news spread like wildfire and many people in Corinth became believers and were baptized as a result.
10. Do we delight when opposition arises? No. It doesn't feel good to be reviled.
11. But if our response is godly, God will turn the opposition into a kingdom enhancement!

E. I have much people here! (Verses 9-11)

1. The next verses are among my favorite verses in Acts, especially for us today:

Acts 18:9-10

9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:

10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.

2. Many times before this, Paul had men set on him to hurt him. But the Lord promised him protection from those who opposed him.
3. God promised Paul, **“I have much people in this city.”**
4. With that assurance, trouble did not drive him away. He stayed in Corinth longer than he stayed any other missionary city up to this point:

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

- F. Persecution in Corinth (Verses 12-17)
 1. The relative peace lasted the year and a half, but eventually the Jewish leaders finally became so enraged against Paul that they caught him by mob violence and dragged him before the judgment seat of Gallio, the governor of Achaia.

Acts 18:12-13

12 And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat,

13 Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law.

2. Verse 12 is an important verse that allows us to accurately date Paul's time in Corinth.
3. An inscription found in the city of Delphi notes that Gallio's duties here went from AD 51-52², so it is likely that Paul was in Corinth somewhere between July-October AD 51, or 1,970 years ago, about now.
4. The accusation of the Jews was that he was teaching things contrary to the Law of Moses, which things the Roman government cared nothing about.
5. Paul was ready to provide an answer, but Gallio thought it unnecessary:

Acts 18:14-16

14 And when Paul was now about to open

² Archology Study Bible, p. 1641-42/

his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness [the idea of from a prank to a serious crime], O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you:

15 But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters.

16 And he drave them from the judgment seat.

6. Gallio was known as a Jew hater,³ so rather than siding with the Jews on this matter related to their own law “words and names,” likely referring to worship of Jesus, Gallio’s rejection of the Jew’s accusation against Paul, turned against the Greeks in the mob against the Jews.

Acts 18:17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

³ Ibid.

7. In verse 8, Crispus was noted as the chief ruler of the synagogue. But he possibly resigned or was fired after Paul baptized him, and Sosthenes replaced him.
 8. The Gentiles took this as an excuse to vent their anger against the Jews. They beat Sosthenes.
 9. Gallio ignored the whole matter.
 10. I find it interesting that when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, he addressed it to someone named Sosthenes:
1 Cor 1:1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,
 11. Two rulers of the synagogue became believers in Corinth! That is no small matter.
- G. Paul's Return from his Second Missionary Journey (Verses 18-22)
1. After the experience before Gallio and the turning of the tide against the Jews, Paul

remained a little longer in Corinth, but his second missionary journey was about to conclude.

2. It is likely that during this stay in Corinth, he wrote his first epistle, the letter to the Galatians.

Acts 18:18 And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria [his home province-Tarsus and Antioch], and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a VOW.

3. So after spending eighteen months in Corinth, he decided to return to Antioch in Syria.
4. Apparently, he left Silas and Timothy in Corinth and sailed from Cenchrea, accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla.
5. Cenchrea was located a few miles south of Corinth, a sea port which opened into the Aegean Sea. **[Map: Cenchrea]**

6. Before sailing from Cenchrea, Paul had got a head shave. He had obviously taken the a Nazarite vow, a Jewish vow of consecration.
7. When the vow ended, it involved a shave or hair cut (Num. 6:1-21).
8. Paul very likely had taken this vow more for the sake of his influence with the Jews (1 Cor. 9:19-23).
9. Paul, with Aquila and Priscilla, then sailed across the Aegean Sea to Ephesus on the west coast of Asia Minor.
10. If you remember, the Holy Ghost had forbidden them to go into Asia (Ephesus) at the beginning of this journey, but apparently it was ok this time to at least briefly visit there.

Acts 18:19-21

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

20 When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not;

21 But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.

11. This open door in Ephesus [**map: Ephesus**] became the primary focus of his third missionary journey.
12. So after this short stopover in Ephesus, he hurried on to Jerusalem to be present for the fall Jewish feasts.
13. Paul left Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus and sailed to the seaport of Caesarea:
Acts 18:22 And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch.
14. [**map: Caesarea to Antioch**] After arriving, Paul “went up,” which means he went to Jerusalem, and saluted the church. That means he greeted, or perhaps preached and gave report to them.
15. Then he “went down,” which is what one does whenever they leave Jerusalem, and

returned to his headquarters in Antioch of Syria

III. THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

A. Paul's Third Visit to Central Asia Minor (Verse 23)

1. *Acts 18:23 And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.*

2. **[map: Galatia, Phrygia]**

3. At this point in Paul's life, with seeing all the successes for the kingdom of God on the missionary field, he could not sit idle long.

4. So after spending some time (perhaps a few weeks or months) in Antioch, he felt the need to visit the churches in Central Asia Minor, where he had the revival/persecution cycle repeated many times on his first and second missionary journeys.

5. He followed the same route from Antioch over which he had traveled on his second journey. This course would have led first to Derby, then Lystra, Iconium, Antioch in Pisidia, and perhaps other cities where, by this time, there were Christian congregations.

IV. Conclusion

1. Acts 18 ends by introducing another key figure in the early church, and man by the name of Apollos, so we will take up with Apollos next time.