

## **Acts 18:1-17**

Athens had been the major center of Greece, but it was surpassed by Corinth. After little success in Athens, Paul took the 53-mile walk to Corinth, the current commercial and political capital. All traffic from northern to southern Greece went through Corinth. Since it was 200 miles by ship to the other side of the peninsula, many ships opted to be put on rollers and pulled the 4 miles across by land. Nero started a canal in 67AD but it would be until 1893 before one was completed.

Much of the population was made up of traveling people, sailors, merchants, government officials and the like. Because it was not their permanent home, they tended to do things they would not have done while around their families. Thus Corinth was known as a city of sin. The word Corinthian became synonymous with a profligate. Another word in that day, "Corinthianize" meant to practice whoredom. The temple of Aphrodite had 1000 temple ritual prostitutes. Each evening they would come into the town to seduce the travelers and residents.

1-3 Paul was still alone, and possibly discouraged from little success in Athens. The debauchery of the city had to be depressing. But then God encouraged him with the fellowship of Aquila and Priscilla. When we are down and depressed there is nothing like fellowship of sincere and dedicated believers. (2Corinthians 7:6) This couple became such good friends that they would eventually risk their lives for Paul. (Romans 16:3-4)

70 years later, the Roman historian, Seutonius, would write that the Jews were banished by Claudius because of frequent riots incited by one called Chrestus. It is quite possible that being so separated by time, the historian did not understand that that Christus (Latin for Christ and just one letter different from what he wrote) was not personally there but believed on by many Jews in Rome, including Aquila and Prisca. The Jews rioted as we saw on Paul's missionary journeys, causing the emperor to banish all Jews.

Paul joined them in their trade of tent-making, a word which could also be translated leather working. All Jewish boys learned their father's trade. Paul's father must have been a leather worker. Rabbis were required to learn a trade.

4 While working during the week, Paul took the Sabbath to reason (dialogue) in the synagogue with both Jews and Greeks. The goal of his reasoning is always to show that Jesus is the Messiah and Savior of all men.

5 His traveling companions caught up with him in Athens. (1Thessalonians 3:1-2) When they did, Paul sent Timothy back to help in Thessalonica. Silas was sent to one of the churches in Macedonia. I thought that this period of bi-vocational work was out of discouragement and out of God's will and that when the brothers came Paul got serious. That is how I interpreted it for years. The other

letters show this wasn't the case. (2Corinthians 11:9) Macedonian converts sent support for Paul's work, which may be why he could quit working and focus on preaching.

6 To the Jew first. Paul is still following faithfully his belief that God wants the Jews to hear before he goes to the Gentiles. (Romans 1:16) "opposed" antitasso – arrange in battle array - "abusive"= blasphemeo They must have blasphemed Jesus. To shake off the dust is what Jews did when leaving Gentile lands implying that when judgment fell on the heathen the righteous do not want any connection with them. (Nehemiah 5:13; Matthew 10:14) To have one of their own do it would have infuriated them. Paul delivered his soul. They were responsible for their rejection of Jesus. (Ezekiel 33:5)

7 Some believe this is Gaius (first name) of Romans 16:23 Was Paul next door so that he could continue to reach out to potential Jewish converts? It must have irritated them.

8 The synagogue ruler converted with his whole family. That would have been devastating to the Jewish community. Imagine if our local rabbi converted! (1Corinthians 1:14)

9-11 Preparing Paul for what was to come, the Lord gave him an encouraging vision and told him to stay. In the past, heavy opposition was the sign to leave. God was doing something different here and about to cause a breakthrough for the church. The message was a common message to Old Testament saints – (Joshua 1:9; Jeremiah 1:17) Don't fear. Speak God's message! Paul would be there for 18 months. Much longer than he had been in any missionary site previously. God can show us when we need to change tactics.

"I am with you." Could we get a more encouraging message? (Isaiah 41:10) Paul may have psychologically been in need of that message after having been stoned in the past. God gave him the assurance that He had many people in the city. That was another motivation to endure.

12-16 The Jews tried to claim that Paul was teaching a religion not recognized by Rome (contrary to the law meant not Jewish) and therefore illegal. Gallio was written about by Roman historians. His proclamation that Christians would be considered Jews is a historical fact. It happened sometime between January 25<sup>th</sup> and July 31 in 52 A.D. It gave Christians a decade of peace which ended midway through Nero's reign.

17 This time persecution backfired on the Jews. The man who took Crispus' place as synagogue ruler, Sosthenes, was attacked by the Corinthian Gentile crowd for wasting the time of the court. It was a good excuse to let their anti-Semitism be expressed. The turn of events may have even opened more hearts to consider Paul's message.