

¹ After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. Acts 18:1 After successfully planting a church in Athens by himself, Paul went on to Corinth. While Athens was an intellectual center of the province of Achaia, Corinth was its capital and major trade center for every direction. It was located on an isthmus with a port on both sides. Thousands of slaves hauled goods and even small ships across the isthmus from one sea to the other so that ships could avoid the choppy waters at the southern tip of the peninsula thereby shortening their journey by 200 miles.

Behind Corinth was rocky outcrop that rose 2000 feet above sea level. On the flat top was a temple to Aphrodite, aka Venus, the goddess of love. A thousand female slaves served the temple by roaming the streets of Corinth at night as temple prostitutes. Corinth was a such a debauched city that to be called a Corinthian was to be called a sexually deviant person. It was an issue the Corinthian church would struggle with (1 Corinthians 5:1-2ⁱ; 6:15-20ⁱⁱ), just as it is today with the proliferation of pornography.

Paul later wrote to the Corinthian church that he first came to them in fear and trembling (1 Corinthians 2:2-3ⁱⁱⁱ). He was determined to know nothing among them but Jesus and His crucifixion. We might try to put ourselves in his sandals to understand why this was so. Imagine going to one of the largest cities of that day with a population of about 750,000. Wealth abounded. Every kind of good sold in the world was available. Prostitutes roamed the streets at night. The Corinthians were proud of their city which Julius Caesar had rebuilt with all the beauty of the architecture of that day. Here comes humble Paul with a message of repentance from sin and to turn away from all they boasted in to something unseen (2 Corinthians 4:18^{iv}). He was proclaiming a crucified Savior. If he was to be effective he could not rely on wisdom or clever rhetoric. It had to be the truth of the gospel and the power of God that convicted souls of sin and turned them to God (2 Corinthians 6:7^v; John 16:8^{vi}). It had to be God!

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, Acts 18:2 Rome still considered Christians to be Jews and tolerated them, but they could be expelled from areas if the peace was disturbed. They were easily labelled the scapegoats when problems arose. The Roman historian Suetonius told of this eviction in his work *Life of Claudius*. He wrote that Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus. He was probably referring to Christ being the issue that caused disturbances among the Jews. Apparently Aquilla was a preacher in the church of Rome who was having the same persecution from the local synagogue that Paul had on his journeys. The couple had previously come from the southern tip of the Black Sea to live in Rome. They had recently been evicted and moved to Corinth and would later go with Paul to Ephesus. Paul found fellowship with a likeminded believer. If Paul needed fellowship, how much more do we?

³ and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade. Acts 18:3 Rabbis of that time were required to learn a trade. Paul's trade was leather working, which was often used in the making of tents. Aquila and Priscilla were of the same trade as Paul, and being of the same faith and experiences, they labored together. Wouldn't it have been great to listen to them share Scriptures and stories of souls won to Christ and the accounts of new churches that were being planted!

Paul labored to support himself in several cities. Sometimes it may have been out of necessity for financial support. In Corinth, he did so to not be a burden to the churches and to avoid the accusation that he was preaching for financial gain (2 Corinthians 12:13^{vii}; 1Corinthians 9:15-18^{viii}). However, when Silas and Timothy brought a gift from the church of Thessalonica, Paul was able to discontinue his physical labor and solely focus on proclaiming the Word (2 Corinthians 11:8-9^{ix}).

Today we have ministries referred to as tentmaking ministries. I almost entered into such a ministry in Japan, but the Lord closed that door. For several years I received a very small support from a house church while working fulltime and preaching each Sunday. In countries that will not give visas for mission work, missionaries enter as business men and women and work at a trade or business while also teaching and preaching the gospel. (See Dr. J. Christy Wilson, *Today's Tentmakers*)

⁴ And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks. ⁵ When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. Acts 18:4-5 While working during the weekdays, Paul again used reasoning in the synagogue each Sabbath to try to persuade both Jews and Greeks that Jesus was their long-awaited Messiah. We'll have one more class on how you too can do this on Wednesday evening at 6:30. We see the same words that described his ministry in several synagogues, "reason" and "persuade." Paul employed the prophets' predictions of the coming Messiah and explained how they were fulfilled in the life of Jesus while trusting in the Holy Spirit to draw those Jews to Him as Savior (John 6:65^x).

When the support came from the church of Thessalonica, Paul was completely occupied with the Word, testifying to Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. Think about that phrase, "occupied with the Word." "Word" is the Greek word *logos* and occupied is also translated constrained. He was constrained to use the Word to show Jesus as Messiah.

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." Acts 18:6 Here is that same turning point we saw Paul make in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:46^{xi}, 51^{xii}). He reasoned with the Jews using the Scriptures until they believed or completely rejected his message and refused to hear him any longer. Then he felt free to take the message to the Gentiles. He will still go to other synagogues, but if they are hardhearted and refuse to listen and search the Scriptures like the

Bereans did, he will turn his focus on the Gentiles. This time he used the dramatic expression of shaking off the dust of his clothes. That meant he did not want to be affected by the judgment of God that would come upon them.

Then Paul employed a quote from Ezekiel (Ezekiel 33:4^{xiii}). "Your blood be on your own heads!" He also used a promise from Ezekiel to declare his innocence (Ezekiel 3:19^{xiv}). If you warn the wicked and he does not turn, you have delivered your soul. It was a powerful warning. When people who should know better and have been shown the evidence still reject Jesus as Lord, a warning may be the best way to leave them to think about their decision (Ezekiel 3:18-19^{xv}). We have been given that serious a task!

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. ⁸ Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized. Acts 18:7-8 Paul did not mind active confrontational competition with the synagogue. Meeting next door was provocative. The Jews were so set on works based salvation that Paul saw them as leading people astray and willingly sought to recruit those who were influenced by them. Titius Justus was a Gentile believer who apparently had a home large enough to house the new church. The loss of this wealthy Gentile was a blow to the synagogue, but an even worse blow was the conversion of the synagogue ruler, Crispus, and his entire household. He was the one in charge of the of the synagogue services. He was one of the few people Paul personally baptized (1 Corinthians 1:14^{xvi}) This is the third record we have of entire households converting (Acts 16:15^{xvii}; 16:33^{xviii}). Along with them, many Corinthians became believers in Jesus and were baptized. This certainly must have encouraged Paul that he made the right decision in leaving the synagogue and turning to Gentiles.

⁹ And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, ¹⁰ 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." ¹¹ And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. Acts 18:9-11 With this contentious beginning, Paul may have feared that the town would react the way Lystra had (Acts 14:19^{xix}). But Jesus came to Paul in a night vision and encouraged him to keep up the work as He would be with him. He promised Paul that he wouldn't be harmed and that many in the city belonged to Jesus. The message of not fearing and the promise of being with a person or people were frequently applied in the Old Testament by YHWH to His people (Genesis 26:3^{xx}, 26:24^{xxi}, 15:1^{xxii}; Exodus 3:12^{xxiii}). Jesus knows those who are His and who will come to Him (John 10:14^{xxiv}). I have found that when my soul is grieving over a situation, the only relief is to hear from the Holy Spirit. Learn to hear His voice! It will usually come to you though the Word of God and you will know He has spoken.

Have you considered the trauma Paul has experienced so far? I wonder if he had post-traumatic stress from being chased out of towns and barely escaping with his life, beaten and imprisoned, and even stoned. **The grace of God can give us a word that**

helps us rise above the limitations of our minds and bodies (Isaiah 30:21^{xv}). Paul would have been reminded by this word from the Lord of the saints of old who endured because the Lord promised to be with them. Knowing God promised that he would not be attacked must have also calmed his nerves. It gave him the courage to remain and teach the word of God for a year and a half. God knew the strategic location of this city and how a strong church there would help to spread the gospel to the world.

¹² But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, ¹³ saying, "This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law." Acts 18:12-13 Here we go again. The Jews just couldn't stand to see their fellow Jews or God fearers follow the way of the Messiah. God promised no attack would come upon Paul, which must have meant a physical attack, the thing Paul may have been concerned about. The word Luke used in verse twelve was actually "rose up against." They brought Paul to the large raised platform in the market where legal verdicts were decided. The proconsul resided in the home behind this platform.

The year was AD 51-52. Gallio was the younger brother of Seneca, a Stoic philosopher who tutored young Nero. Seneca wrote of his brother Gallio's tolerant kindness which we see expressed in his verdict. The charge against Paul was that he persuaded people to worship God in ways contrary to the law. Which law were they referring to? Gallio referred to it as their own law meaning the Jewish laws which were beyond his jurisdiction. The Jews may have been implying that Christianity was not part of Judaism and therefore not accepted by Rome. We saw before how this could be an area where accusations of breaking certain Roman laws might stick. However, the Jews did not express their accusation in that manner.

¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ 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." Acts 18:14-15 Paul was about to defend himself as was the custom in Roman courts, but Gallio perceived this was not some criminal act. It was only a difference in Jewish interpretation, perhaps even jealousy over Paul's success. Gallio rightly refused to be a judge over the issue of religious differences that were still accepted as legal by Rome. The proconsul's words make me wonder if the Christian assembly had a good reputation of which the proconsul was aware. Sometimes God uses public officials in our favor so that we can continue to share the gospel in an area.

¹⁶ And he drove them from the tribunal. 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. ^{18a} After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. Acts 18:16-18a Gallio didn't just dismiss them; he drove them from the tribunal, which showed his disgust that they had bothered him with the issue. There must have been some of the same anti-Semitism we have seen in other Roman cities, for the they (presumably the Roman on-lookers) took

the new synagogue ruler, Sosthenes and beat him. Apparently Gallio considered it judicious to ignore this act of violence.

This set a precedent for the near future that enabled the gospel to continue to spread in the region. Unlike what had happened in Thessalonica of Macedonia, the legal ruling in Achaia determined Christianity to be a part of Judaism and therefore a legal religion. Jesus kept his promise to protect Paul that he would not be physically attacked (Hebrews 10:23^{xxvi}), and now with even the protection of the legal system. God worked all things together for good (Romans 8:28^{xxvii}). He always does, whether the courts rule for or against us.

While it is not an obvious part of our text, I think we can relate to Paul's trepidation at proclaiming the gospel in such a city. It might be like us going to the Las Vegas strip and proclaiming the gospel. It had to be unnerving. But God is faithful. He gives us the encouragement we need for the task He calls us to do. He reminds us of His promises. Some of the greatest encouragement is the fruit we see when we persevere.

I was recently encouraged when the Lord reminded me of a prayer I frequently prayed from Isaiah 62:1. *¹ For (Zion's) Sedona's sake I will not keep silent, and for (Jerusalem's) the Verde Valley's sake I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch.* You'll notice I changed a few words. I was thinking of all the tracts that have gone out during Halloween for the last ten years, and all the gospels of John in English and Japanese for a dozen years or more, of all the sermons that go out on-line every Sunday, the devotions that go out daily, and now how the city parking has directed foot traffic from all over the world by our front door. Now the city is look at making a new road to 89a that runs right behind the church. God has given us a strategic location and His light is going out from here like it did in Corinth, like a blazing torch. God answers prayer. It's all His work. We are just His servants available to Him to use as He wills. Corinth or Athens or Sedona, it is all because He loves the world and wants everyone to know of what the love of Jesus has done for us.

Questions

- 1 Describe Corinth.
- 2 Why were Aquila and Priscilla there?
- 3 What did Paul do when financial support came?
- 4 What did shaking off his garment mean?
- 5 What was the fruit of that decision?
- 6 Where was the new church planted?
- 7 How did God encourage Paul?
- 8 Why might he have needed this encouragement?
- 9 How did the legal attack backfire?
- 10 Does God always keep His promises?
- 11 In what ways has God answered the Isaiah 62:1 prayer?

ⁱ 1 Corinthians 5:1-2 (ESV)

¹ It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife.

² And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

ⁱⁱ 1 Corinthians 6:15-20 (ESV)

¹⁵ Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!

¹⁶ Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh."

¹⁷ But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

¹⁸ Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,

²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

ⁱⁱⁱ 1 Corinthians 2:2-3 (ESV)

² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

³ And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling,

^{iv} 2 Corinthians 4:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

^v 2 Corinthians 6:7 (ESV)

⁷ by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left;

^{vi} John 16:8 (ESV)

⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:

^{vii} 2 Corinthians 12:13 (ESV)

¹³ For in what were you less favored than the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not burden you? Forgive me this wrong!

^{viii} 1 Corinthians 9:15-18 (ESV)

¹⁵ But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing these things to secure any such provision. For I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting.

¹⁶ For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!

¹⁷ For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but if not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship.

¹⁸ What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.

^{ix} 2 Corinthians 11:8-9 (ESV)

⁸ I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you.

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.

^x John 6:65 (ESV)

⁶⁵ And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."

^{xi} Acts 13:46 (ESV)

⁴⁶ And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles."

^{xii} **Acts 13:51 (ESV)**

⁵¹ But they shook off the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium.

^{xiii} **Ezekiel 33:4 (ESV)**

⁴ then if anyone who hears the sound of the trumpet does not take warning, and the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be upon his own head.

^{xiv} **Ezekiel 3:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die for his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.

^{xv} **Ezekiel 3:18-19 (ESV)**

¹⁸ If I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.

¹⁹ But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die for his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.

^{xvi} **1 Corinthians 1:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,

^{xvii} **Acts 16:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

^{xviii} **Acts 16:33 (ESV)**

³³ And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family.

^{xix} **Acts 14:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.

^{xx} **Genesis 26:3 (ESV)**

³ Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father.

^{xxi} **Genesis 26:24 (ESV)**

²⁴ And the LORD appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of Abraham your father. Fear not, for I am with you and will bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham's sake."

^{xxii} **Genesis 15:1 (ESV)**

¹ After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great."

^{xxiii} **Exodus 3:12 (ESV)**

¹² He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

^{xxiv} **John 10:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,

^{xxv} **Isaiah 30:21 (ESV)**

²¹ And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.

^{xxvi} **Hebrews 10:23 (ESV)**

²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

^{xxvii} **Romans 8:28 (ESV)**

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.