

Acts Chapter 18

Acts 18:1 "After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;"

“Corinth” was the leading political and commercial center in Greece. Virtually all traffic between northern and southern Greece had to pass through the city. Because Corinth was a trade center and host to all sorts of travelers, it had an unsettled population that was extremely debauched.

Corinth was the capital of the Roman province of Achaia (southern Greece). It lay on the western end of a four-mile isthmus between the Peloponnesus and central Greece. Good harbors existed on both sides of the isthmus: Cenchrea on the east and Lechaëum on the west. In ancient times ships were dragged across the isthmus on rollers to avoid the stormy seas to the south.

As early as New Testament times men (Nero), sought to build a canal through the isthmus, but it was not accomplished until 1893, after the invention of dynamite. In 146 B.C., the Romans crushed the Achaean League and destroyed Corinth. One hundred years later (46 B.C.), Julius Caesar rebuilt Corinth as a Roman city, and Augustus later made it the capital of Achaia.

At its height, this new city had a population of well over half a million. Corinth was known for its immorality even from ancient times, due partly to the temple of Aphrodite, goddess of love, with its thousand priestesses who engaged in prostitution. In New Testament times Corinth was a place of wealth and indulgence.

Hence, “to live as a Corinthian” meant to live in luxury and immorality. Many of these problems affected the Corinthian church, as Paul’s epistles reveal. Paul spent over 18 months during his second journey (verses 9-11), seeking to establish a strong church.

An inscription found at Delphi in 1908 dates Paul’s stay in Corinth as occurring in the very early fifties, the inscription dating the beginning of Gallio’s term of office as (A.D. 51 or 52). Modern Corinth (population 16,000), is four miles from the ancient site.

Acts 18:2 "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."

“Priscilla” (Prisca) and “Aquila” were Christian workers who moved from place to place, seeking to help establish churches. Aquila was a Jew born in Pontus in northern Asia Minor. He lived in Rome until Emperor Claudius expelled the Jews in about A.D. 49. Paul first encountered them at Corinth where he and they worked together as tentmakers and as church planters.

This husband and wife team were to become Paul’s close friends who even risked their lives for him (Rom. 16:3-4). Priscilla is listed first 4 times in Scripture, which could imply she had a higher social rank than Aquila or that she was the more prominent of the two in the church. They

probably were Christians when Paul met them, having come from Rome where a church already existed (Rom. 1:7-8).

“Claudius” (see note on 11:28).

“Commanded all Jews to depart from Rome”: The decree that forced Priscilla and Aquila to leave Rome ca. A.D. 49 (see note on 16:20).

The couple’s total involvement included opening their home as the meeting place for the church in Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:19; 16:8), in Rome (Romans 16:3-5), and probably again at Ephesus (2 Tim. 4:19). Priscilla and Aquila are also significant for their instruction of Apollos at Ephesus (verses 24-28).

This Claudius is Caesar. When he ordered the Jews to leave Rome, it appears Aquila and Priscilla came to Corinth. We don't know how long Paul waited in Athens for Timothy and Silas. We do know it would have taken about a month for the servant to take back the news that Paul wanted them to come, and then for them to make the trip, because it was a long way.

Corinth was about 40 miles from Athens, so it would have taken two or three days to get there. Most of the Jews run out of Rome, came to Corinth.

Acts 18:3 "And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers."

“Tent-makers”: This could also refer to leatherworkers.

Paul was going to work some as a tentmaker and he stayed with these tentmakers in Corinth. Tentmaking was an honorable profession. Paul was a Pharisee, so he understood Jewish customs, as well. He would fit in well with Aquila and Priscilla.

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

“Synagogue” (see note on 13:5).

“Greeks”: Gentile God-fearers in the synagogue (see note on 10:2).

Notice the different wording here. He reasoned. In the other places, he disputed. We see also, that he persuaded them, the Greeks and Jews.

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

“Silas and Timothy were come from Macedonia”: As Paul desired, Silas and Timothy joined him in Athens (17:15). From there he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3:1-6). Paul

evidently sent Silas somewhere in Macedonia, possibly Philippi (2 Cor. 11:9; Phil. 4:15), since he returned to Corinth from that province.

Pressed in the spirit here means compelled of the Spirit. Paul had been working part time as a tentmaker, now the Holy Spirit has set him on fire to preach the gospel message. Whether Silas and Timothy being there had strengthened him or not, we cannot say. He boldly proclaims Jesus as the Christ (these Jew's Messiah).

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."

“Your blood be upon your own heads”: Paul held his opponents completely responsible for blaspheming Christ and rejecting his message (Jos. 2:19; 2 Sam. 1:16; 1 Kings 2:37; Ezek. 18:13; 33:4; Matt. 27:25).

Paul could take no more opposition to the name of Jesus Christ. His people, the Jews, had rejected Jesus. The shaking of his garments was an act of saying; I am through trying to convince you. He was obligated to try to tell them, but they didn't listen.

His obligation is over. He was called to the Gentiles, as well as the Jews. (In Acts 9:15), God tells Ananias of this call.

Acts 18:7 "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."

“House ... Justus”: A Gentile who showed interest in the God of Israel and was associated with the synagogue next door His name indicates he was a Roman, and since Romans usually had 3 names, his may have been Gaius Titus Justus, meaning he was the same Gaius mentioned (in Rom. 16:23 and 1 Cor. 1:14).

“That worshipped God”: See note on 16:14.

This man named Justus lived just next door to the synagogue. This probably does not mean that Paul lived with Justus, but that he preached at Justus' house. The voice of Paul would have carried, so that those attending synagogue would have heard the message also. Justus was a believer.

Acts 18:8 "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."

“Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue”: The conversion of this respected leader must have sent shock waves throughout the Jewish community (see note on 6:9).

“With all his house” (see note on 11:14; also, see the notes on 8:37 and 16:32-34).

Crispus was one of the few people that Paul himself baptized. He was chief ruler of the synagogue, and it would have been proper for Paul to baptize him.

1 Corinthians 1:14 "I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius."

These Corinthians were probably many of them Jews; because this house where Paul preached was next to the synagogue and they could hear Paul preaching.

Verses 9-10: This was the third of 6 visions given to Paul (9:3-6; 16:9-10; 22:17-18; 23:11; 27:23-24).

Acts 18:9 "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:"

Paul has run into trouble nearly everywhere he has ministered. In every instance, he had not been able to settle down and really preach for any length of time, because the Jews would come in and force him to leave. We see here, that God is telling Paul to settle down and preach boldly, that God Himself will protect him from any harm. What a promise!

Acts 18:10 "For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city."

God had appointed a number of people in Corinth for salvation, who had not yet heard the gospel (13:48; Rom. 10:13-15). The effect of Paul's preaching would be to bring the elect to faith (Titus 1:1).

The Lord tells Paul that there are many people here who will receive Jesus into their hearts. This will really be the forming and early years of the Corinthian church.

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

"A year and six months": Paul's longest stay in any city, except Ephesus (20:31), and Rome (28:30).

This is a time of peaceful ministry for Paul. These 18 months was time to form a sound base for this church. Paul will later write 1 and 2 Corinthians to this very church he started here.

Acts 18:12 "And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat,"

"When Gallio was the deputy of Achaia": From July, A.D. 51 to June, A.D. 52.

“Judgment seat”: A large, raised stone platform in the marketplace, situated in front of the residence of the proconsul, where he would try public cases.

Like Sergius Paulus of Cyprus, “Gallio” was the proconsul of the Roman province of “Achaia” (see the note on 13:7).

“Achaia” was the Roman province that included southern (the Peloponnesus), and central Greece. The name was used by Homer to designate the people of this region and by others to designate all Greeks. Caesar Augustus (in 27 B.C.), divided Greece into two provinces: Macedonia and Achaia. Achaia was organized as a senatorial province with Corinth as its capital.

This status was lost from A.D. 15 until A.D. 44 at which time Claudius restored it as a senatorial province. Therefore, when Paul arrived in Corinth about A.D. 50, Achaia was a province, with the Roman Gallio wielding power.

After 18 months of peace for Paul, suddenly the Jews came against him and brought him before the judgment seat.

Verses 13-15: Judaism was a “legitimate religion” under Roman “law”. Christianity was afforded that same advantage as long as it was identified with Judaism. These Jews are seeking to sever that identification, but “Gallio” does not agree.

Acts 18:13 "Saying, This [fellow] persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law."

“Contrary to the law”: While Judaism was not an official religion, it was officially tolerated in the Roman world, and Christianity was viewed as a sect of Judaism. The Jews in Corinth claimed that Paul’s teaching was external to Judaism, and therefore should be banned. Had Gallio ruled in the Jews’ favor, Christianity could have been outlawed throughout the Empire.

Notice, they are not accusing Paul of worshipping a false god. They say he persuades men to worship God. They are complaining about the way he worships, not who he worships.

Verses 14-16: Gallio was no fool and saw through the Jews’ plan. He refused to get caught up in what he viewed as an internal squabble within Judaism. In essence, he rendered what would be called a summary judgment, he officially ruled that no crime had been committed, that the dispute was over semantics, and threw the case out.

Acts 18:14 "And when Paul was now about to open [his] mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O [ye] Jews, reason would that I should bear with you:"

Paul does not have to defend himself. Gallio does it for him. It appears that Gallio is a little annoyed that they would bring any accusation against Paul. He says, in a sense, he has done no wrong, why do you accuse him? He also says, he would listen to their grievance, but they really don't have one.

Acts 18:15 "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]."

He says again here; this is not for a court to judge. It would be like asking a court today to decide between two denominations of churches. This is not a civil matter.

Verses 16-17: The "judgment seat" (Greek bema), from which "Gallio" judges the affairs of Achaia and before which Paul stood was located in the market area. The Corinthians no doubt passed it often. Paul uses this to teach graphically that all those who know Christ will stand before His judgment seat, His bema judgment.

Paul's two references to Christ's bema are:

- (1) To the church at Corinth (2 Cor. 5:10), and;
- (2) In a letter he wrote from Corinth (Rom. 14:10; see also 1 Cor. 3:12-15).

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

They had wasted his time, and he was very annoyed with them.

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."

"Sosthenes ... beat him": The Greeks had reasons for being hostile to Sosthenes; they were venting general hostility toward Jews on him, or they may have been angry with his unsuccessful attempt, as leader of the Jews, at prosecuting the case against Paul. Since he was the ruler of the synagogue, he would have presented the case to Gallio. Later, he converted to Christ (1 Cor. 1:1).

These people, who caught the ruler of the synagogue up and beat him, must have been sympathetic to Paul. Gallio would not stop them, because this too was a matter of church concern, and not a civil matter. These Greeks were probably a mixture of people who disliked the Jews.

Acts Chapter 18 Questions

1. When Paul left Athens, where did he go?

2. What husband and wife did Paul meet?
3. Why was this couple in Corinth?
4. Why did Paul choose to live with them?
5. Where did Paul reason every Sabbath?
6. Who was Paul teaching?
7. Who came from Macedonia to help Paul?
8. What was Paul pressed in the spirit to do?
9. When the Jews blasphemed, what did Paul do?
10. Where would Paul go not to minister?
11. Whose house did Paul go to?
12. Where did Justus live?
13. Who was chief ruler of the Synagogue?
14. Who with him received the Lord?
15. Who were two men mentioned in 1 Corinthians that Paul baptized?
16. In verse 9, God spoke to Paul how?
17. What did He tell Paul to do?
18. Why was Paul not to fear?
19. How long did Paul preach here?
20. Who was deputy of Achaia when the Jews made insurrection against Paul?
21. What did they accuse Paul of?
22. What did Gallio say to them?
23. Why would he not judge in this?
24. What did Gallio do to the Jews?

25. What did the Greeks do to Sosthenes?

26. What did Gallio do about this?