

## Acts 18 – Paul finds success in Sin City

**THEME:** The second missionary journey of Paul continued (Paul in Corinth; Apollos in Ephesus).

We are still on the second missionary journey of Paul. He is in Athens alone waiting for Timothy and Silas to come and join him and to bring reports from the churches in Berea and in Thessalonica. After his missionary thrust in Athens Paul goes on his journey to Corinth. - McGee

Paul in Corinth

***Act 18:1 And after these things Paul departed from Athens and came to Corinth.***

For now, let me say that the city of Corinth was probably the most wicked city of that day. It was the Hollywood and the Las Vegas of the Roman Empire. It was the place where you could go to live it up. Sex and drink and all other sensual pleasures were there. In Corinth today one can see the remains of a great Roman bath. That is where they went to sober up. In the distance is the temple that was dedicated to Aphrodite (or Venus) in which there were a thousand so-called vestal virgins. They were anything but virgins; they were prostitutes—sex was a religion. Corinth was one of the most wicked cities of the day. Also, there were two tremendous theatres there. People came from all over the empire to the city of Corinth.

Paul came to Corinth on his second missionary journey and again on his third journey. I believe it was here where Paul had one of his most effective ministries. It is my judgment that in Corinth and Ephesus Paul had his greatest ministries. Ephesus was a religious center; Corinth was a sin center. Both cities were great commercial centers.

Now notice what Paul does on his first visit to Corinth. - McGee

***Act 18:2-3 And finding a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome) Paul came to them. And because he was of the same trade, he stayed and worked with them; for they were tentmakers by occupation.***

At Corinth, Paul formed a friendship with a couple named Aquila and Priscilla which was to continue through his life. Aquila was a Jew from Pontus, the northeastern province of Asia Minor. He and his wife had been living in Rome, but they had been driven out by an antisemitic decree of Claudius Caesar. Since Corinth was located on the main route from Rome to the East, they had stopped here and set up shop as tentmakers. Paul was also a tentmaker by trade, and he became acquainted with them.

Life's best revelations flash upon us while we abide in the fields of duty. Keep to your daily breadwinning and amid your toils you shall receive great benedictions and see glad visions. ... The shop or office or warehouse may become as the house of God. Do thy work and do it diligently: In it, thou mayest find rare soul fellowships, as did Aquila and Priscilla.

It is not clear from the narrative whether Aquila and Priscilla were already Christians when Paul met them, or whether they were saved through his ministry. Perhaps the burden of evidence is on the side of their being believers when they came to Corinth. – Believers' Bible Commentary

***Act 18:4-5 And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and persuaded both Jews and Greeks. When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.***

Paul reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Gentile proselytes that Jesus was indeed the Christ of God.

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Paul had left Silas and Timothy in Berea when he moved on to Athens. At Athens he had sent word for them to join him. They caught up with him in Corinth.

After their arrival, Paul was compelled by the Spirit. This may mean that the burden of the Lord was upon him to preach the message with great diligence, testifying to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. There might be a suggestion that the apostle no longer spent time making tents here but gave himself entirely to preaching the gospel.

It was at approximately this time in his history that Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians (about a.d. 52). – Believers' Bible Commentary

***Act 18:6 But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."***

The unbelieving Jews opposed Paul and blasphemed or railed. To reject the gospel is ultimately to oppose oneself. The unbeliever harms no one so much as himself.

Paul shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." The shaking of his clothing was an expressive act, signifying his dissociation from them. However, this did not prevent his going to the synagogue in another city, namely, Ephesus (Act\_19:8).

The apostle's words are a solemn reminder to every believer that there is such a thing as blood-guiltiness. The Christian is a debtor to all men. If he fails to discharge that debt by proclaiming the gospel, God will hold him responsible. If, on the other hand, he faithfully witnesses for Christ and meets with stubborn refusal, then he himself is free from guilt, and the responsibility rests with the Christ-rejecter.

This verse represents another step in the setting aside of the nation of Israel, and the proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles. God had decreed that the good news should go to the Jews first, but throughout Acts, as the nation of Israel rejects the message, the Spirit of God sorrowfully turns aside from that people. – Believers' Bible Commentary

***Act 18:7-8 And he departed from there and entered into the house of one named Justus, one worshiping God, whose house was next to the synagogue. And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house. And hearing this, many of the Corinthians believed and were baptized.***

Following the outburst of the Jews, the apostle went to the home of Justus, a Gentile convert to Judaism who lived next door to the synagogue. As he carried on his ministry from this base, the Apostle Paul had the joy of seeing Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, ... with all his household come to the Lord. Many other Corinthians trusted in the Savior and were baptized. Paul baptized Crispus and a few others (1Co\_1:14-16), but his usual practice was to have some other believers do the baptizing. Paul feared that people would form a party around himself, instead of being undistracted in their love and loyalty to the Lord Jesus. – Believers' Bible Commentary

**Note: Paul delegated ministry which equipped the saints and kept the ministry focused on Jesus not who you were baptized by.**

***Act 18:9-10 And the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, Do not be afraid, but speak, and be not silent. For I am with you, and no one shall set on you to hurt you, for I have many people in this city.***

Corinth was about the last place that you would expect the Lord to "have much people." I have been through Las Vegas quite a few times. I'll be honest with you—when I look at that crowd, I wouldn't get the impression that the Lord might have people there. If the Lord were to say to me, "I have much people in this city," I wouldn't question the Lord, but it surely would be the opposite from my own impression.

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Paul had already been in Corinth for quite a while, and I am sure that he was wondering about that city. I'm of the opinion that when he received this opposition, he was ready to leave and go somewhere else. However, the Lord Himself steps in and detains Paul. He tells him, "I have much people in this city." - McGee

***Act 18:11-13 And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the Word of God among them. But Gallio being pro-consul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rushed against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat, saying, This one persuades men to worship God contrary to the Law.***

After Paul has had several months of ministry in Corinth, again opposition will arise. This "judgment seat" is the Bema seat. It is the Bema that Paul talks about in the Epistle to the Corinthians. They brought Paul to the Bema seat, the judgment seat, and there they brought the charge against him. They didn't mean contrary to the law of the Roman Empire or contrary to the law of Corinth. They meant contrary to the law of the Mosaic system. – McGee

***Act 18:14-17 And Paul being about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, If indeed then, it was anything wrong or wicked criminality, O Jews, according to reason I would endure you. But if it is a question of a word and names, and of your law, you look to it. For I do not wish to be a judge of such things. And he drove them from the judgment seat. And all the Greeks seized Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio did not care for any of these things.***

I have read and heard Bible expositors condemn this man Gallio in no uncertain terms. He is pictured as an unfeeling typical judge of that day. I want to say something for the defense of Gallio. I thank God for him, and I personally think that he took the right position. I'll tell you what I mean by that. He is probably the first person who made a decision between church and state. Gallio said that if the matter was concerning religion or about some religious thing, then they should take it and handle it themselves. He was a Roman magistrate, and he was concerned with enforcing Roman law. But when the case did not involve Roman law, he would not interfere. He told them to handle religious matters themselves. He adopted a "hands off" policy. I like Gallio. He separated church and state. He would not interfere with Paul preaching in the city of Corinth. Corinth was a city of freedom, including religious freedom. Since the issue had to do with religion, he asked them to settle it themselves.

Now I want to say this: I wish the Supreme Court of the United States would adopt the same policy. I wish they would adopt a "hands off" policy when it comes to matters of religion. What right does a group of secular men have to come along and make a decision that you can't have prayer in the schools? If a community wants prayer in their school, then they should have prayer in their school. If they are not having prayer in school, then the state should not force prayer in school. We claim to have freedom of speech and freedom of religion in our land. The unfortunate thing is that our freedoms are often curtailed. They are abused and misdirected. Under the guise of separating church and state, the freedom of religion is actually curtailed. If we are going to separate church and state, then the state should keep its nose out of that which refers to the church.

If this man Gallio were running for office, I would vote for him. I think we need men with this kind of vision. It says Gallio cared for none of those things. Of course not! He is a secular magistrate. He is not going to try to settle an argument about differences in doctrine. That's not his business, and he'll stay out of it. I would vote for him. – McGee

**Note: God ordained Government. The very thought of Government working without God is preposterous. Separation of Church and State began with the Danbury Baptist church. Thomas Jefferson and the founding fathers were intent on this separation, but it was a one-way separation. Government was not supposed to be involved in mandating or restricting the church or religion, but it in no way meant Government was to be free of religion. The nation itself was founded on the God-given rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence. Satan again has twisted this in the minds of many in our nation.**

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### *Paul Returns to Antioch*

***Act 18:18 And Paul having remained many days more, taking leave of the brothers, he sailed from there into Syria. And Priscilla and Aquila were with him. And Paul had shorn his head in Cenchrea, for he had a vow.***

There are a great many folks who find fault with Paul because he made a vow. They say that this is a 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.

There are some super saints who form little cliques and make laws for the Christian. They say we can't do this, and we can't do that. May I say to you very candidly that our relationship is to the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is a love affair. If we love Him, of course we will not do anything that will break our fellowship with Him. Don't insist that I go through your little wicket gate; I am to follow Him. He shows me what I can and cannot do in order to maintain fellowship with Him.

If one wishes to eat meat, there is freedom to eat meat. If one wishes to observe a certain day, there is freedom to observe it. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1Co\_10:31). The important thing is to do all to the glory of God. Eating meat will not commend you to God and neither will abstaining from meat commend you to God.

Let's not find fault with Paul here. Poor Gallio and Paul surely do get in trouble with their critics right in this particular passage. I want to defend both of them.

Paul is now returning from his second missionary journey and now he is going back to Antioch. He sails from Cenchrea, which is the seaport over on the east side. There is a canal through the Corinthian peninsula today, but there was none in that day. They would actually pull the boats overland. I have a picture taken to show the rocks that are worn by the boats which were pulled over the isthmus to the other side. Cenchrea was the port of Corinth on the eastward side. Paul goes there with Aquila and Priscilla, and they take a ship there. He is not going westward any farther; he is sailing for home. – McGee

***Act 18:19-21 And he came to Ephesus and left them there. But he himself entered into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. And they asking him to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent but took leave of them, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that is coming in Jerusalem, but I will return again to you, God willing. And he sailed from Ephesus.***

You remember that when he came out on this second journey, the Spirit of God would not allow him to come down to Ephesus. Now, on his way back, he stops at Ephesus, but he does not stay there very long.

Again, someone may ask what business Paul has in keeping feasts. Remember his background. He is a Jew like Simon Peter. He has the background of the Mosaic system. He knows a lot of his friends will be in Jerusalem for the feast. He wants to go up to witness to them. He feels that he must by all means keep this feast that is coming in Jerusalem. He is under grace. If he wants to do that, that is his business.

However, he did see that there was a great door open in Ephesus. He has the heart of a missionary, and he wants to return to them. Ephesus was one of the great cities of the Roman Empire.

***Act 18:22-23 And when he had landed at Caesarea and had gone up to greet the church, he went down to Antioch. And after he had spent some time there, he departed and went over the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.***

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The ship's next stop was CAESAREA. From there, the apostle went up and greeted the church in Jerusalem. Then he went down to ANTIOCH for what was to be his final visit.

Thus ends Paul's Second Missionary Journey.

G. Paul's Third Missionary Journey: Asia Minor and Greece (18:23-21:26) After a fairly lengthy visit at Antioch, Paul was ready to set out on another extended missionary itinerary. The record of this journey extends from verse 23 through 21:16.

The first regions to be visited were GALATIA and PHRYGIA. The apostle went to the churches there, one by one, strengthening all the disciples.

### ***Apollos Speaks Boldly in Ephesus***

***Act 18:24-26 And a certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in the spirit, he spoke and taught the things of the Lord diligently, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. And Aquila and Priscilla heard him, and they took him and expounded to him the way of God more perfectly.***

The scene now shifts back to Ephesus where we left Aquila and Priscilla. An eloquent preacher named Apollos arrived there, one who was mighty in the OT Scriptures. He was a Jew by birth, and came from Alexandria, the capital of northern Egypt. Although his preaching was accompanied by much power, and although he was very zealous, yet he was somewhat deficient in his knowledge of the Christian faith. He had apparently been well schooled in the ministry of John the Baptist and knew how John had called the nation of Israel to repentance in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. Apparently, he did not know about Christian baptism or some other matters of Christian doctrine. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him speak ... in the synagogue, they recognized that he needed further instruction, so they lovingly took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. It is to the credit of this eloquent preacher that he was willing to be taught by a tentmaker and his wife. – Believers' Bible Commentary

***Act 18:27-28 And intending to pass into Achaia, being encouraged, the brothers wrote to the disciples to welcome him; who, having arrived, very much helped those who had believed through grace. For he mightily confuted the Jews publicly, proving by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.***

As a result of his teachable spirit, the brethren at Ephesus encouraged him in his desire to go to Corinth in order to preach the word. In fact, they wrote a letter of commendation for him. As a result, he was a great help to the believers in Corinth and vigorously refuted the Jews there publicly, showing that Jesus is indeed the Christ of God. – Believers' Bible Commentary

**Note: Humility and a teachable spirit are highly valued by the Lord. Pride always comes before the fall, and naturally is one of those things that needs to die in our old nature. However, if you are like me, it is a constant battle, and I have to be purposefully or I will naturally bend that way and seek the applause of men and not that of the Lord.**