

The Acts of the Holy Spirit – And so to Corinth! – Chapter 18

Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. Silas and Timothy had still not arrived from Berea, so he went on his way arriving in Corinth.

The Christian Life is not about things and events, it is about people, and it is amazing to follow Paul's contacts as he made them. We have looked at this aspect of his life as we have followed his journey. In many cases there was opposition from the Jews; in other cases there were problems from the City Authorities, but in every case there were those who responded to the Word of God and who decided to make Jesus the Lord

of their lives. It would surely be an exciting thing to be able to look back on our lives and to remember the times when others made a decision to follow Jesus as the result of things we have said.

Acts 18:1- 17

From Athens, Paul went to Corinth. It had a reputation for great wickedness and immorality. A temple to Aphrodite - goddess of love and war - had been built on the large hill behind the city. In this popular religion, people worshipped the goddess by giving money to the temple and taking part in sexual acts with male and female temple prostitutes. Paul found Corinth a challenge and a great ministry opportunity. Later, he would write a series of letters to the Corinthians dealing in part with the problems of immorality. First and Second Corinthians are two of those letters.

Claudius had become the Roman Emperor and he had dictated that all Jews were to be expelled from Rome. Two people who had left Rome under these circumstances were Aquila and his wife Priscilla. They were tentmakers by trade like Paul himself, and so when he went to visit them he stayed with them and worked with them. Tents were used to house soldiers, and so these tents may have been sold to the Roman army. As a tentmaker, Paul was able to go wherever God led him, carrying his livelihood with him.



But when Silas and Timothy caught up with Paul on the way back from Macedonia, **Acts 18:5b**, Paul was adamant that the Jews had the opportunity of hearing the good news about Jesus, so he met with them and spoke to them in the synagogue every Sabbath. The synagogue was the place where the Jews met, but Gentiles also met there, so Paul also spoke to the Greeks in Corinth. To begin with, none were Christian, but as he spoke there was a change. The man next door, Titus Justus became a Believer as did the ruler of the synagogue – Crispus, together with his entire household, **Acts 18:8**

This caused a sharp division amongst those who attended the synagogue; as seemed always to be the case, the opposition became abusive. This kind of action seems to continue today as God moves in power by His Holy Spirit among His people. Those who want to receive the challenge offered by Him and to move on in

their Christian lives are constantly opposed by those who are happy to stick with familiarity, and to remain in their 'fur-lined ruts'!

What about you and me? When God challenges us with new ideas and new plans, what do we do? Do we oppose those who bring them, or do we retreat into our comfort zones and exclaim that we don't want to be touched by 'that', whatever 'that' may be, and perhaps miss out on the most exciting and challenging opportunity of our lives! In this case, they were also in danger of missing out on salvation – the eternal destiny that God had planned for them.

Paul responded to the rejection and abuse by the Jews by simply shaking out his clothes, and reminding them that they could take responsibility for their own eternal future, **Acts 18:6-7**. Others who became Christians in Corinth were Phoebe (**Romans 16:1** - Cenchrea was the port city of Corinth), Tertius (**Romans 16:22**), Erastus (**Romans 16:23**), Quartus (**Romans 16:23**), Chloe (**1 Corinthians 1:11**), Gaius (**1 Corinthians 1:14**), Stephanas and his household (**1 Corinthians 16:15**), Fortunatus (**1 Corinthians 16:17**), and Achaicus (**1 Corinthians 16:17**).

This opposition was not just a 'one-night-stand'. It continued and Paul must have gone through much soul-searching, wondering if he was bringing his faith into disrepute! It was so amazing that the Father had gone before and warned Paul it was coming and how he had to react. We might sometimes feel like that when we seem to be opposing an established direction in which people are moving. They may be friends and they may be sincere, but if they are sincerely wrong, a stand needs to be taken, otherwise error will win because good people have done nothing. Please understand that this is a difficult point and should only be undertaken when we know from the Holy Spirit that He wants us to stand firm. This perhaps was Paul's dilemma here, **Acts 18:9-11; Romans 8:31-32**

Sure enough, one day the Jews made a united attack on Paul, bringing him to court, **Acts 18:12-13**. No doubt the prosecution had stated its case and Paul was about to stand up and defend himself and the Gospel, but just as he was about to open his mouth, the presiding judge spoke instead, **Acts 18:14-16**. This was an important judicial decision for the spread of the gospel in the Roman Empire. Judaism was a recognised religion under Roman law. As long as Christians were seen as part of Judaism, the court refused to hear cases brought against them. If they had claimed to be a new religion, they could easily have been outlawed by the government. In effect Gallio was saying, "I don't understand all your terminology and finer points of theology. Handle the matter yourself and don't bother me".

The people left the courtroom and turned on Sosthenes who was the ruler of the synagogue in place of Crispus who, with his entire family, had become a Believer. They beat him, and Gallio paid no attention whatever to it. It had become a Jewish matter – far below the level of things to be dealt with by the Romans! The mob could have been Greeks venting their feelings against the Jews for causing turmoil, or the crowd may have included some Jews. In any case, they beat Sosthenes for losing the case and leaving the synagogue worse off than before. A person named Sosthenes is mentioned in **1 Corinthians 1:1** 'From: Paul, chosen by God to be Jesus Christ's missionary, and from brother Sosthenes.', and many believe this was the same man who, in time, became a convert and a companion of Paul.

When you stand firm against Satan, God will often turn him against himself. He is not a very clever spirit – wily, yes, but not clever – and he is certainly not capable of coming up with something new. He takes something that already exists and twists it making it seem as

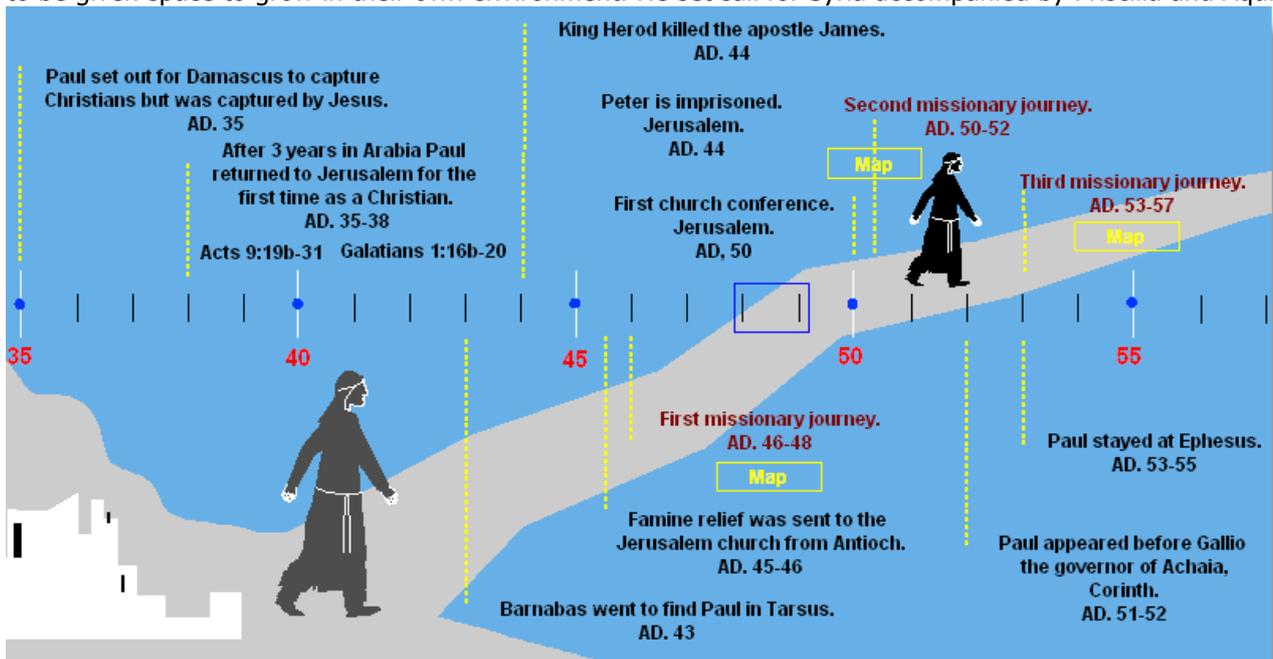


if it is new, but God's Word **always** overcomes.

God says: 'Behold, I have created the smith who blows on the fire of coals and who produces a weapon for its purpose; and I have created the devastator to destroy. But no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall show to be in the wrong. This [peace, righteousness, security, triumph over opposition] is the heritage of the servants of the Lord [those in whom the ideal Servant of the Lord is reproduced]; this is the righteousness or the vindication which they obtain from Me [this is that which I impart to them as their justification], says the Lord' **Isaiah 54:16-17**
And we are the servants of the Lord, so these verses were intended for us!

Acts 18:18-22

Paul remained in Corinth for some time. The attacks diminished after the court case, but eventually it was time to say goodbye and move on. There is a time in the establishment of every work of the Lord when the person establishing it needs to move on – for the sake of those he or she is leaving behind. They also need to be given space to grow in their own environment. He set sail for Syria accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila



This is an approximate timeline of Paul's ministry life up to his third missionary journey. This vow Paul took was probably a temporary Nazirite vow that ended with shaving of the head and offering the hair as a sacrifice, **Numbers 6:18**.



On the way back to Syria, the ship stopped off at Ephesus. For Aquila and Priscilla, this was their destination. Paul as was his custom went directly to the synagogue where he reasoned with the Jews, and when they asked him back, he promised to return 'if it was God's will'.

It is sometimes important to spend only a short period of time with people who God leads us to. We should never divert from our main course unless we know that God is asking us to do so. Paul left

Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus and we read later in the Chapter that they continued to preach the gospel there. Paul landed at Caesarea, encouraged the Believers there, then returned to Antioch from where he had set out some two years earlier.

Acts 18:23-28 Start of Paul's Third Missionary Journey AD 53-57

Paul was not a man to stand still for long. I am sure that the time he spent in Antioch would have been exhilarating, but he was a man driven by and with a purpose. He was totally focused on ensuring that the Gentiles heard the Word of God for themselves, and he was not a man to sit on his laurels. He was a man who loved people so much that he was prepared to die so that they might have the opportunity to make decisions for themselves. We don't know, but we can presume from his previous return from his first Missionary Journey that when Paul arrived back in Antioch, he reported on what had happened to his home church who had sent him out, prayed for him and encouraged him in the first place. There would have been opportunities to share his experiences and to encourage others, and to hear what had happened in their lives.

Fellowship with other Believers is just as important today. When others hear of how God has used ordinary people for extra-ordinary work, it often challenges us to allow the Holy Spirit to speak to us also and if we are of the mindset to receive from Him, we may be surprised at how far and to what depth we will discover God using us. All that is required is for us to be honestly open to listen to God and to obey Him. So Paul left Antioch on his Third Missionary Journey, **Acts 18:23**.

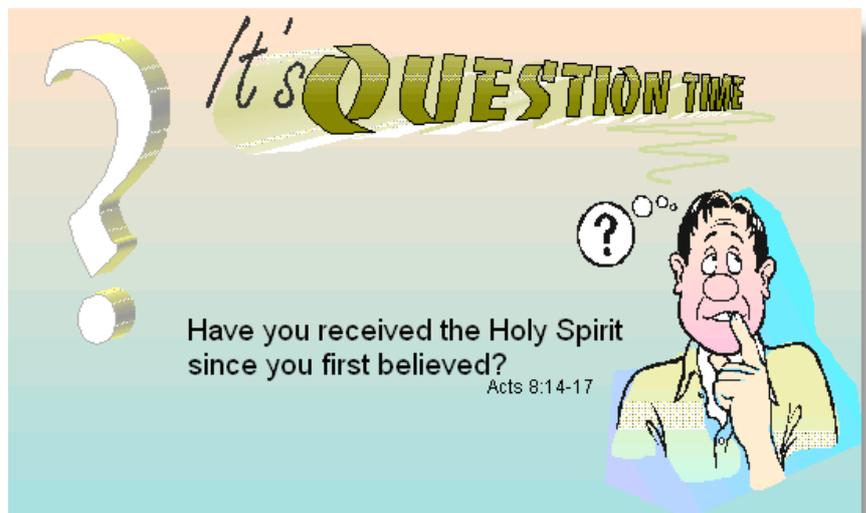
The Ephesian church becomes the focal point for the final section of Acts Chapter 18. We now begin to see the global nature of the Church as while Paul is going from place to place throughout Galatia and Phrygia, Apollos, who is a native of Alexandria in Egypt and has become a Believer arrives in Ephesus. He also went to the synagogue (like Paul, to whom he had probably not yet been introduced), and began to teach the Jews. Aquila and Priscilla (who heard him and probably recognised his authority as similar to that of Paul) asked him back to their home, and when it became apparent that he had not been baptised in the Holy Spirit, they explained to him what he didn't know, and he received what they had to say.

You and I need to understand that the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is an equipping for God's service. Without it we shall be the poorer and unable to use the Gifts of the Spirit that we shall so clearly need as we move forward under the Holy Spirit – the very Giver of those Gifts. Without that Baptism in the Holy Spirit, Apollos would have been unable to adequately deal with the Jews in Achaia

²⁷ Apollos had been thinking about going to Greece, and the believers encouraged him in this. They wrote to their fellow-believers there, telling them to welcome him. Upon his arrival in Greece, he was greatly used of God to strengthen the church, ²⁸ for he powerfully refuted all the Jewish arguments in public debate, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus is indeed the Messiah.

Acts 8:27-28

Many people are desperate to discover Jesus. But they will never find the way to Him unless someone tells them the Truth. Lies such as 'There is more than one way to God' need to be exposed as not what Jesus said, then those who are seeking will find a clear and direct way to put their lives in order and to receive Salvation from Jesus. Apollos is a great example to us as we step out boldly to honestly and truthfully serve Jesus.



The Acts of the Holy Spirit 21 – And so to Corinth! - Challenge Questions

Please complete all questions marked with * and then complete the rest of the study. The more you look in the Word the more you will get out of it. Read the chapter at the beginning of the week then you have time to meditate on it, rather than rushing! Make the Word your number one priority.

1. ***Read the Notes and the Bible Verses** referred to in them. Highlight the points that 'speak' to you and share with the group.
2. *How would you describe the Christian life from your experience?
3. What stands out for you in Paul's second missionary journey? Approximately how long did it take? What part do you think had the biggest effect on the early Church?

Read Acts 19:1 -22

4. *Paul's Third Missionary Journey took him through what is now Turkey to Ephesus in what was then the Province of Asia. What did he find when he arrived? The Bible relates two questions that Paul asked of the Believers he found in Ephesus. What were they? What were the individual responses to those questions?
5. What did the Believers do when they understood the shortcomings of the teaching they had so far received? What would your response be if you discovered that what you had learned was not the whole story? You will never hear the whole story until you see Jesus face to face, will you obey what He tells you in the meantime?
6. *These men were baptised in water into the Name of the Lord Jesus, Paul laid hands on them and they spoke in tongues, and they prophesied. This is part of the Normal Christian Life. What about you? Have you been baptised in water? Do you operate in the Gifts of the Holy Spirit? If the answer to either of these questions is 'No' or 'I don't know' will you discuss this with your Group leader as soon as possible
7. Paul went to the synagogue. How long did he keep going there? Why did he stop going? What did he do when he stopped going to the synagogue. What was the result of his move? Can you apply this situation to your life? **Acts 19:8-10**

- 8. *God did some extraordinary miracles through Paul in Ephesus. What does the Bible say they were? Does He still do similar things in the earth today?**
- 9. The seven sons of Sceva tried to copy some of the things that Paul did. What did they try to do? What words did they use to try to do this? Did they have the authority to use those words? Who has that authority today? Name two results of their being unauthorised to operate in this way.**
- 10. *The beating of the seven sons of Sceva, and the miracles that God did through Paul had a profound effect on the inhabitants of that area. Identify four of these effects. Could those happen as a result of what God is doing through your life and through the lives of your fellow Believers. Give reasons.**

Read Acts 19:23-41

- 11. *Although Paul intended to go back to Jerusalem and then on to Rome, he stayed a little longer in Ephesus. What occurred while he was there? Why did that event occur? Was it only with the Believers (and particularly with Paul) that the Ephesians were upset?**
- 12. Do you think that the opposition to Paul and his friends was rational? Would it be possible for people in this Country in these days to get upset with Christians in the same way as the Ephesians? Identify a couple of potential scenarios.**
- 13. Who quietened the crowd down? He used some worldly wisdom, what was it? What did this man have to fear from the occupation forces in his own city?**
- 14. *Has this Chapter challenged you in your walk with God? How do you think that you would face the problems that the Believers mentioned during Paul's Missionary journeys faced? Do you believe that God would support and uphold you in difficult situations that you face? Give examples and reasons.**