

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bible with me to Acts 18 –

We are continuing our study through the book of Acts –

We have been seeing how the Holy Spirit worked among the early church –

And we are going to continue finish Paul's second missionary journey through Greece.

Let's pray...

[Act 18:1-28 NKJV] 1 After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. 2 And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. 3 So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.

Now, in order to understand what is happening here in – it is important to have a little historical background of what is taking place.

You might remember in our study last week, you might remember that when Paul and Silas got to Thessalonica, he started preaching in the synagogue there and there were

some Jews that were responding to the gospel but there was a greater amount of Greeks including many prominent women that were responding to the gospel as well.

The unbelieving Jews then gathered a group and went looking for Paul and Barnabas at Jason's house

When they realized Paul wasn't there – they took Jason and a few brothers in front of the city magistrates and accused them of disturbing the peace.

And I had you make a note of one their statements they made before the magistrate.

In Acts 17:16 - These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.

Before Paul and Barnabas arrived in Thessalonica – people had already been hearing about what was happening in Jerusalem, in Antioch, in Lystra and all the other places.

Word had even gotten to the city of Rome –

And just like we have seen the reaction of some of the nonbelieving Jews in the cities that Paul has been up to now, there were Jews in Rome that started rioting because of this movement that was occurring throughout the region.

Remember, I said last week, Paul and Silas were not the ones that were bringing chaos to these cities – it was some of the jealous and envious Jews that were instigating the chaos.

So, in 49 AD, the Roman Emperor at the time – Claudius - he sees the riots and the chaos that they are doing in Rome and in his frustration – he kicks all the Jews out of Rome.

200,000 Jews expelled from Rome – according to Jewish historians

Two of those Jews that were expelled were Aquila and Priscilla, a husband and wife who were believers.

They bring their business and set up shop in Corinth.

They were tentmakers –

Paul meets them and Corinth – and he says, I'm Jewish just like you, I'm a tent maker by trade just like you and more importantly, I love Jesus just like you –

“Let's serve together”

And that is what we see this couple do – they served the Lord

they will go and follow Paul to Ephesus and start a church group there, later on when Paul writes his epistle to the Romans, we find that Aquila and Priscilla have started a home church back in Rome and then just before he is killed – we find out as he writes to Timothy that they have moved to Ephesus

Now, I want you to keep in mind why this is important.

Paul had just left Athens – he was all alone.

Luke was back in Philippi

Silas and Timothy were with the Bereans –

So we see God providing encouragement to Paul here by providing this couple that would serve alongside him.

Now, I asked you to make a note that he was a tent maker.

Because as we read Paul's epistles, one of the things we see that he remarks how he had worked to provide for his own needs in many of the places he went.

Whenever his support in ministry grew thin, he would return to his trade of making tents till he had enough to go full time in ministry once again.

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

Even while Paul was making tents in Corinth, he used the Sabbath day to go to the synagogue and preach the gospel – just like he had done before.

However, when Silas and Timothy rejoin Paul –

It seemed to reenergize Paul. He was greatly encouraged.

It's could be that Timothy brought him the good news that the believers in Thessalonica were remaining steadfast in the faith – I told you last week that Paul writes a letter to the church in Thessalonica during his time in Corinth. (1 Thess)

It could also be that Paul was reenergized because support came from the church in Philippi. He could devote more time to the ministry.

Remember, Paul deeply wanted every single Jew to embrace the gospel –

He had a deep love for his people, he wanted their eyes to be opened. He wanted to see them freed from the bondage of religion.

Paul felt such love that he was willing to relinquish his own salvation and spend eternity in hell if somehow that could bring His fellow Jews to faith in Christ! (Rom 9:3)

But every time Paul spoke to them, they rejected his message and persecuted him.

Paul here, he couldn't take it anymore and spoke a word of harsh judgment on them

By shaking off his garment, it is a sign that he doesn't want even the dust from the synagogue attached to his garment because he doesn't want God's judgment to strike him as well as them.

What Paul is doing here is telling them – you rejected the message, judgment is your fault – not mine.

And we have examples in the Old Testament to show what Paul doing here (Ezekiel 3:17-21)

And we have examples in the gospels – where Jesus taught the disciples that if after proclaiming the truth to people they showed themselves unworthy to hear it, they were to leave and shake the dust off their feet as a sign against them

Church, Paul wasn't having a bad day when he said this - these individuals were standing firm in their opposition to the gospel.

So the Holy Spirit showed Paul it was time to move on because any more work there would be fruitless.

Turn with me to Matthew 7

[Mat 7:6 NKJV] 6 "Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.

When individuals are determined to reject the gospel, we shouldn't keep trying to convince them until God opens the door again.

God is the one who saves – not us.

We are not going to argue anyone to Christ.

We still pray for them and move on.

Our responsibility is to share the gospel, after we share the gospel, the responsibility goes to them – to receive it or reject it.

That is what Paul is doing here as he says, "From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

7 And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain [man] named Justus, [one] who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. 8 Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.

Paul leaves the synagogue and moves his meeting place next door – to the home of Justus

He continued to preach the gospel

And it wasn't long before a notable member of the synagogue, in fact, the leader of the synagogue, came to faith, as well as his entire family and as a result, many people began to show interest in the gospel, and were eventually converted

Later on, Paul tells us that he actually baptized both Justus and Crispus (1 Cor 1:14)

9 Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; 10 "for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city." 11 And he continued [there] a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

I am so thankful for verse 9

Because I think sometimes as believers, we get the idea of Paul as being some type of super hero who wasn't afraid of death or pain.

We saw how earlier he was stoned to death and then he got back up and walked back into the city.

Later on in Ch 21, he is going to be warned about going to Jerusalem – and Paul says, “Hey guys stop crying – I’m going to Jerusalem, whether I get beaten or whether I die – I am going and doing it in His name”

But I think it's unrealistic to think that Paul was never afraid.

You see, God doesn't waste visions – God doesn't tell individuals to put away their fears, if they had no fears.

Jesus tells Paul not to be afraid because Paul was afraid.

Jesus tells Paul not to be silent because I think Paul was thinking about quitting.

Paul feared that the longer he continued to preach the gospel –his enemies would escalate their opposition.

But preaching and teaching were the very things God had called him to do.

So the Lord tells him not to stop

Do not be afraid Paul - but keep doing what you are called to do = proclaim the name of Jesus

I heard it say once that in ministry -

There are times after God has opened doors, that the enemy tries to close them. But there are also times when we close doors because we get discouraged and quit

The Lord tells Paul that the reason He should not be afraid, but to go on and keep speaking, is because the Lord was with him.

God would be with him and no one would hurt him.

Think about how Paul might have responded to those words –

“That’s nice - where were You in Philippi and Thessalonica, and what about Lystra – when they were stoning me?”

but Paul had learned that God was with him in those places and at those times

In fact, it was at those times that God seemed most present

- We look at Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, when did Jesus join them – when they were in the fiery furnace.

Paul knew that sometimes God delivers us from trouble, while at other times He delivers us through trials, but either way, God would be there.

You see church, Paul could stop speaking because God told him - for I have many people in this city.

There are many yet to be won and those that have already been saved needed to be disciple.

Paul had a great work yet to do

12 When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat, 13 saying, "This [fellow] persuades men to worship God contrary to the law." 14 And when Paul was about to open [his] mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, O Jews, there would be reason why I should bear with you. 15 "But if it is a question of words and names and your own law, look [to it] yourselves; for I do not want to be a judge of such [matters]." 16 And he drove them from the judgment seat. 17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat [him] before the judgment seat. But Gallio took no notice of these things.

So what's happening here is that the Jews wanted to once again stop Paul from preaching in the entire region.

So they decided to go to the governor.

If the governor declares that what Paul is doing is illegal – then it was mission accomplished. He would be breaking the law if he continued to preach.

Before Paul could even open up his mouth to defend himself, Gallo says that their charge against Paul was purely theological; it wasn't anything over which he had any authority.

It was religious matter – Rome didn't care about religious matters unless it disrupted the peace in the city.

So he orders them to leave.

The secular Greeks – frustrated at the trouble that the Jews were stirring over the Christians, they grab a hold of the new synagogue ruler – remember Crispus, the old ruler was a believer – so they grab a hold of Sosthenes and they had him beaten.

Turn with me to 1 Cor

Because this story has a happy ending...

[1Co 1:1 NKJV] 1 Paul, called [to be] an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes [our] brother,

Sosthenes ended up becoming a Christian & leader of the church who went to Paul with some issues that were troubling the church in Corinth.

18 So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila [were] with him. He had [his] hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow.

So, after spending a year and a half in Corinth sharing the gospel and discipling new believers, Paul establishes another church on the other side – on the Aegean Sea side.

And it is here that he takes a vow.

Turn to Numbers 6

[Num 6:2-5 NKJV] 2 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When either a man or woman consecrates an offering to take the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to the LORD, 3 'he shall separate himself from wine and [similar] drink; he shall drink neither vinegar made from wine nor vinegar made from [similar] drink; neither shall he drink any grape juice, nor eat fresh grapes or raisins. 4 'All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin. 5 'All the days of the vow of his separation no razor shall come upon his head; until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to the LORD, he shall be holy. [Then] he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow.

The vow that Paul took – was most likely a Nazarite vow.

In the Old Testament – Samuel and Samson are the most notable individuals that took a Nazarite vow and in the gospels – John the Baptist is mentioned as taking this vow.

It was taken by individuals who have voluntarily dedicated themselves to God.

And it could be that after the hard trip that Paul had endured, he felt it necessary to enter into this vow to show demonstrate his consecration to the Lord.

Now, even though it was an Old Testament concept – there is a New Testament parallel to the Nazirite vow.

[Rom 12:1-2 NKJV] 1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, [which is] your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what [is] that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there; but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. 20 When they asked [him] to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent, 21 but took leave of them, saying, "I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing." And he sailed from Ephesus.

Now, a few years earlier, Paul wanted to preach in Ephesus but he was prevented by the Holy Spirit.

But, here we see the Holy Spirit opening the door for Paul and he was given the liberty to preach there and many people responded to the gospel.

In fact, we see that the people wanted him to stay – which was the opposite of everywhere else he went.

Paul is going to return to Ephesus and spend 3 years there – this will be the longest period that he stays at any of the cities that he goes to.

22 And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch. 23 After he had spent some time [there], he departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

Here we have Paul's 3rd missionary journey – he goes back to the same cities that he went during his first and second missionary journeys

24 Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man [and] mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. 25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John.

Apparently Apollos had been exposed at some point to the ministry of John the Baptist.

He understood the need for people to repent from their sins and be baptized. He understood that John was encouraging people to believe in the coming Messiah. It's possible that Apollos might have understood that Jesus was the Messiah, as John became aware of.

But there came a point where Apollos had become disconnected to the things going on in Israel. He was unaware of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. He was unaware of coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Apollos had a ministry, but it was incomplete. He didn't know all he should have known.

26 So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. 27 And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; 28 for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

So Aquila and Priscilla take Apollo under their wings and they filled in the gaps in his understanding of Jesus Christ.

And now armed with the complete message, he immediately began a preaching ministry and was used of God as an effective apologist for the gospel.

And he was able to refute the Jews in public debates by showing them through the Old Testament prophecies that Jesus Christ was the Messiah.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I

accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

