

## **Part 45 Paul in Corinth**

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney Wednesday, August 08, 2016

### **† Acts 18:1-11**

In our last study from the Book of Acts we finished up Chapter 17 which dealt with Paul's time in Athens. We studied about their pagan Greek god and goddess worship they engaged in and Paul's stirring over the altar made unto the "Unknown God." We looked at his defense of the Gospel in front of the judges at Aeropagus and saw that a few people actually believed but most did not.

So we pick up the story in Chapter 18 with Paul now in Corinth where he will meet some new ministry partners, a husband and wife team by the name of Aquila and Priscilla and he will also be rejected by the Jews.

#### **1 After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;**

The distance from Athens to Corinth is just about 80 miles. Corinth was filled with idolatry and Roman and Greek god worship. It was known as one the most wicked cities in the world. It is here that Paul will establish a Church which he later writes two epistles to; 1 and 2 Corinthians.

Listen to what Paul says concerning how he arrived in Corinth:

#### **1 Corinthians 2:1-4**

**1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. 3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. 4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:**

So, Paul didn't come into town like some big shot know it all, he says that he came in weakness, fear and much trembling. Paul was worn out by the time he got to Corinth. This 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey had been hard on him. He enters Corinth almost shell shocked.

He also says that he didn't come there speaking enticing words filled with the wisdom of man, but he came in the Spirit and power of the Lord.

**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.**

Now Paul meets up with the husband and wife team of Aquila and Priscilla. This is just what Paul needed. He needed some faithful helpers in the ministry.

The husband, Aquila's name means "the eagle," and the wife, Priscilla's name means "ancient, or primitive," The Bible says that they had recently come from Italy, where they lived until the Roman Emperor, Claudius, banned all Jews from Rome. The persecution of the Jews was getting more intense during those days.

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

According to this verse Paul lived with them there in Corinth. Whether the owned or rented a house of some kind or lived in one of their tents, we don't know for sure. But he stayed with them.

They were tent makers by trade and that's how they made their living. It just so happened that Paul also was a tent maker and this is most likely the reason they met. There was a large need for tents in those days because there were not many inns and everywhere you went you had to travel for days either on foot or camel or horseback, so people would pitch a tent wherever they were traveling. Many also lived in tents that were not able to have permanent housing.

Paul was taught tent making as a young boy. His father would teach him that trade so that he would have an occupation to sustain his living. He wouldn't be a burden on anyone else. Even though Paul was sent by a sending Church, Antioch, he didn't have a time of deputation before he went into the field. He didn't visit a hundred Churches to try and get sponsors for his mission trips. And Paul didn't take money from the Churches, therefore he continued working while preaching.

**4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.**

When Paul wasn't making tents he was preaching the Gospel. He went to the Jewish synagogue on the Sabbath and used their Scriptures to prove to them that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Notice that it says that he "reasoned and persuaded them." It did not say he argued and got belligerent with them.

It does you no good to argue the Gospel with unbelievers. If they do not want to hear it or accept it, arguing only makes them dig in deeper and does more harm than good. But if you can reason with them and persuade them that what you are saying is true then you can do some good.

This past Saturday I went with the Houston's to some subdivisions to knock on doors and there was one man that came out who looked to be in his late 30's maybe early 40's that said he didn't go to Church, didn't know where he would go when he died, never thought about it, and didn't care. Now we could have looked at that man, pointed our finger in his face and said "now look here buddy, you are on your way to Hell unless you change your ways." But we didn't argue with him, we simply explained why we were there and our concern for people's souls and how important it was and we left him with some Gospel tracts and information about the Church. He may have thrown it in the garbage or he may have read it when we left. But, either way he was confronted with the Gospel and it is up to him and the Holy Spirit to work that out. We can't save people or convict people but we can reason with them and hopefully persuade them of the truth.

We do know that there were a few of these Jews and Greeks that believed because Paul mentions them when writing to the Corinthians: **1 Corinthians 1:14-18: 14 I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; 15 Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. 16 And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. 17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. 18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.**

**5 And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.**

I love this verse. Do you notice what happens when Paul's help arrives? It gives him strength. It gives him encouragement. It helps him spiritually because when they get there Paul suddenly gets overwhelmed by the Spirit to testify about Jesus.

Hey, it gives the man of God encouragement when others help. We don't know what exactly Silas and Timothy did when they got there but I can guarantee they were praying and helping Paul. You would be amazed at how knowing there are others with you and interested in the same thing will lift up your spirits. Sometimes I get to feeling like old Elijah crying out to God. "Lord, I even I only am left." Preachers can get the Elijah complex fairly easily when they start feeling like nobody else cares.

But, when you know others are fighting the same fight and are working toward the same goal then it lifts you up and stirs your spirit. You would be surprised how much just hearing a good "AMEN," can lift up your Pastor's spirits.

Paul was "pressed in the spirit." That means that he had the overwhelming urge to tell these Jews about Jesus.

**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.**

These particular Jews were unwilling to listen. The Bible says that they "opposed themselves." They had already made up their mind that they were going to oppose anything that Paul said. They were determined that they were not going to believe in Jesus being their Christ, and even went as far as to blaspheme. That word "**blaspheme**," means to "**speak evil of**." Who were they speaking evil of? The Lord Jesus. No doubt they were mocking him and the thought of Him being their Messiah.

"**he shook his raiment**." While you and I may not quite understand just what a statement this was from Paul, these Jews fully understood what he was doing when he did that. It was his way of showing that he had utter disdain for them. It was similar to the Jews custom of shaking the dust of their feet off at the gentiles in disgust. Paul pulls his outer cloak off and starts shaking the dust of it out in the faces of these Jews showing them that he wanted nothing to do with them, he was disgusted.

**...Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles**

Talk about a slap in the face. Paul is more or less telling these Jews that he considered the Gentiles more honorable and worthy than them. You know this had to really upset these Jews.

Look, it is our job to share the Gospel with people. But when you have someone that is outwardly opposing the Gospel, and blaspheming against the Lord Jesus, you have done all you can do. From there on out all you can do is pray that the Lord convicts their heart. But you have done your part. Paul wanted to see his fellow Jews saved so bad, in fact, if you turn over to Romans 9 we read how badly Paul wanted them to be saved:

**Romans 9:1-3: 1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, 2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. 3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:**

**Romans 10:1-4: 1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the**

**righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.**

But even though it was Paul's "heart's desire" to see the Jews accept Jesus, in this case here in Corinth, when they just out and out oppose the Gospel and even blaspheme, then he had to move on.

**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.**

So Paul stops witnessing in the Synagogue to the Jews and instead starts teaching in a man's house named Justus, who just so happened to live by the Synagogue. Justus is a Roman name so he was not a Jew. It says that Justus was "**one that worshipped God**." That means that he was a Jewish Proselyte, not a Jew by birth. His house would be better suited for other Proselytes and Greeks to come to hear Paul's teaching and preaching than they would have if he had kept going to the Jewish Synagogue.

**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.**

Here is the Crispus that Paul mentioned to the Corinthians that he had baptized. This man was a Jew because he was the chief ruler of the synagogue. So he held a very important position and would hold great influence on other Jews and the Gentiles as well. Not only did he trust Jesus as his Savior but so did his entire household. There were also many other Corinthians that trusted Jesus as Savior and they all got baptized and thus the beginning of the Church of Corinth.

**9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: 10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.**

We don't know exactly what was going on at this time but something had happened that caused Paul to be troubled. It could have been the unbelieving Jews stirring up trouble, especially after their chief ruler converted over to Christianity. Perhaps they had threatened Paul's life in some way. We just don't know. But I can tell you this. When you are trying to reach the world with the Gospel, you are going to run into confrontation. Everybody isn't going to be accepting of it. Sharing the Gospel can be intimidating. Walking up to a door and knocking on it not knowing what's on the other side can cause you to fear. But we have to remember that Jesus is with us. No matter what man may do or say the Lord is still with us.

The Lord personally comes to Paul in a vision to help him with whatever was bothering him. He can do the same thing for you and for me as well. We only have to trust Him and listen to that still small voice.

**11 And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.**

Obviously this relieved Paul's fears and he continued on teaching out the house of Justus for a year and a half. All in all Paul spent about 2-years in Corinth establishing the Church. You would think it would be the best Church in the entire world but if you know anything about 1 and 2 Corinthians then you know it wasn't.