

“The Birth Of A Church”
2 Corinthians 1:1; Acts 18:1-5

Introduction:

1. Several Years Ago:
 - We Went Through The Letter Of 1 Corinthians Together As A Church!
 - Well - This Morning - We Are Going To Begin:
 - A New Series Of Messages:
 - Through The New Testament Book:
 - Of **2 Corinthians!**
 - So - Please Head There With Me This Morning:
 - In Your Bibles:
 - 2 Corinthians 1:1-2 - “**Paul**, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and **Timothy** our brother, unto the church of God which is at **Corinth**, with all the saints which are in all Achaia: / Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ!”
 - This Is The Second Letter In Our Bibles:
 - That **Paul** Wrote To That Young & Developing Church:
 - In The Ancient Greek City Of **Corinth!**
2. But - To Begin This Series:
 - I Think It Would Be Beneficial For Us To:
 - Go Back To The Very Beginning Of The Corinthian Church:
 - When Paul First Visited The City Of Corinth:
 - On His 2nd Missionary Journey!
 - And So - We Are First Going To Go Back:
 - Some 5-6 Years Before Paul Wrote This Letter:
 - Around The Year 50 AD - To Acts 18:1 - “After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth!”
 - The City Of Athens Is Where:
 - Paul Found - Back In 17:23 - “An Altar With This Inscription: To The Unknown God!”
 - He Then Preached The Gospel “In The Midst Of Mars Hill” In That Sophisticated Yet Superstitious City!
 - Remember: Athens Was Home To The Famous Philosophers: Socrates, Plato & Aristotle!
 - But Even There - The Holy Spirit Of God Was At Work!
 - And After A Few “Certain Men & Women” Believed - Paul Moved On To The City Of Corinth:
 - Just About 50 Miles Away!
3. The City Of Corinth In That Day:
 - Was Not Unlike Our Own Prominent Cities Today!
 - Corinth Was A Very Powerful City!
 - It Was One Of The Most Strategically Located Cities In The Ancient World!
 - The City Overlooked The Isthmus Of Corinth!
 - A Thin Strip Of Land Which Joined Two Major Sections Of Greece! To Get From One Part To Another, Had To Go Through Corinth! Very Powerful!
 - Corinth Was A Very Prosperous City!
 - It Was Just A Few Miles From Two Major Ports! Instead Of Taking A Dangerous Route Around Greece, Ships Would Cross The Narrow Strip Of Land Near Corinth! Even Had An Ancient Railway - Now There Is A Canal! A Lot Of Money To Be Had!
 - Corinth Was A Very Prominent City!
 - One Of The Most Amazing Thing About The City - Was Its Mountain! Standing 1,886 Feet High - Could See It For Miles Around! Virtually Indestructible!
 - Corinth Was A Very Proud City!
 - Just 200 Years Before Paul Went To Corinth To Preach The Gospel – The City Rebelled Against The Roman Rulers - And The Entire City Was Completely Demolished & Left In Ruins!
 - Their Pride Led Them To A Great Fall!
 - And They Were Left In Ruins For 100 Years!
 - But After 100 Years, The City Was Completely Rebuilt By Rome – And Became One Of Rome’s Most Successful Colonies!
 - Our Cities & Even Our Own Country Is Similar To Corinth!

- We Are Powerful / Prosperous / Prominent!
- We Are Also Very Proud! Christians Infected Too!
- And We Are In Need Of Being Rebuilt!
- Spiritually! By The Gospel!

4. But The Rebuilt Community Of Corinth In That Day:
- Was Not Nearly As Refined As The Community Of Athens:
 - Its Closest Neighbor!
 - Corinth Became Known All Over The World For A Few Things!
 - Corinth Was Known For Its Mixture!
 - It Too Was A “Melting Pot” – With Different Kinds:
 - Of People, Fortunes, Trades & Religions!
 - There Was A Mixture Of People:
 - Because The City Was So Close To Two Major Ports - People From All Over The World Would Live & Pass Through The Community! North / South / East / West! Extremely Diverse!
 - There Was A Mixture Of Fortunes!
 - Included Rich / Poor & Freemen / Slaves!
 - In Fact - At The Time Paul Visited - 200K Freemen / 500K Slaves!
 - There Was A Mixture Of Trades!
 - Politics Was Important! So Was Commerce By Ship! Also Known For Its Pottery / Brasswork / Architecture!
 - There Was A Mixture Of Religions!
 - Greek & Roman Gods! A Significant Jewish Population With Their Own Synagogue!
 - Corinth Really Was The “Melting Pot” Of Ancient Rome!
 - Just Like Our Country & Communities!
 - Corinth Was Known For Its Morality!
 - Or - Rather - Its Lack Of Morality!
 - Because Of The Great Mixture Of People:
 - What Happened In Corinth Could Stay In Corinth!
 - It Was The Roman City Of Vice - A City Of Sin!
 - Corinth Was Notorious In Its Immorality Even In That Wicked Culture!
 - They Had A Temple To The Goddess Aphrodite, Where Wicked Immorality Would Take Place Even In Their Acts Of Worship!
 - Corinth Was Known For Its Materialism!
 - When Someone Would Say: “To Live As A Corinthian” – It Meant That You Were Living In Luxury And Immorality!
 - The Romans Made It The Finest City In Greece, And Some 5 Times As Large As Athens, When Paul Arrived There!
 - It Was Known As A Truly Modern City!
 - Our Community Is Similar To Corinth!
 - In Our Own Mixture & Diversity!
 - In Our Own Materialism & Morality – Immorality!
 - And We Are In Need Of The Messages Of Both 1 & 2 Corinthians!
5. But It Was To This City Of Corinth:
- That God Called The Apostle Paul:
 - And A Church Was Born - Through The Preaching Of The Gospel Of Jesus Christ!
 - And As We Go Through The Rest Of Acts 18:
 - We Will See How God Was Able To Use The Apostle Paul:
 - To Begin & Then To Build His Church!
 - And Our Focus This Morning Will Be:
 - 18:1-5 - “After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; / 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. / And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers. / And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. / And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ!”
6. One Truth On Display In These Verses:
- Is That God Uses His Own People:
 - Both To Begin & To Build His Church!

- Of Course - This Is All By His Grace:
 - And Through His Power & Strength:
 - But It Takes Place Through The Ministry & Outreach Of His People!
- And God Can Begin & Build His Church:
 - Anywhere!
 - If He Had “Much People” In The City Of Corinth:
 - He Can Have His People Anywhere!
 - So - What Do We Need In Order To Be Effective In The Building Up Of The Church?
- Three Things This Morning!

* First - Like The Apostle Paul - We Need:

1. To Be Firm In Our Beliefs!

- Because - When Paul Arrived In Corinth - We Read - 18:2-3 - “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. / And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers!”
 - We Need To Remember:
 - That God Has A Plan - Not Only In Mind:
 - But Also In Place - To Both Begin & To Build His Church!
 - As We Just Read - God Had Already Been Making Special Arrangements:
 - For Paul’s Arrival In Corinth!
 - So - Even Before Paul **Got** There - God Already **Was** There - And Was Working!
 - And So - Like Paul - We Need To Believe In & Trust In:
- The Providence Of God!
 - We Are Told In 18:2 - That Paul “Found” A Certain Jew Named Aquila & His Wife, Priscilla, There In Corinth!
 - It Just So Happened - That Paul “Found” Them!
 - Hopefully - Now That We’ve Finished Our Series Through Esther - You Can Identify The Language Of Providence When You See It Or Hear It!
 - When Paul “Found” These Jews:
 - It Wasn’t By Accident!
 - It Wasn’t Mere Coincidence!
 - It Was Divine Providence!
 - God Had Already Placed:
 - Aquila & Priscilla There In Corinth:
 - For Paul To “Find” When He Got There!
 - But Look At The Long Road They Took To Get There!
 - Aquila Was “Born In Pontus, Lately Come From Italy!”
 - In Corinth - Aquila & Priscilla Were Far From Home!
 - Far From Pontus:
 - Far From Israel!
 - Now - We Are Not Sure If This Married Couple:
 - Were Christians At This Point - I Personally Don’t Think They Were!
 - Yet - God In His Grace - Directed Them:
 - To The Right Place, At The Right Time And With The Right Occupation:
 - To Become Companions To Paul!
 - Both For His Benefit & For Theirs!
 - This Shows The Providential Care:
 - That God Had For Paul, His Servant:
 - As Well As For Aquila & Priscilla, Who Would Eventually Come To Know The Lord Themselves, And Even Become Known As Paul’s Own “Helpers In Christ Jesus!” (Romans 16:3)
 - Do You Believe In & Are You Trusting In:
 - The Providence Of God In Your Own Life:
 - And In Your Own Circumstances?
 - Romans 8:28 - “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose!”

- We Also Can Believe In & Trust In:
- The Provision Of God!
 - After Paul “Found” Aquila & Priscilla - 18:3 - “And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers!”
 - These New Friends Had More In Common Than Just Their Nationality!
 - They Were “Tentmakers!”
 - Was This Just Another Coincidence?
 - Yet - God Used This New Bond & Friendship:
 - To Meet The Practical Needs:
 - Of Paul - So He Could Minister To:
 - The Spiritual Needs Of His New Friends & Others In Corinth!
 - So - God Provided Paul:
 - Who Was Alone & A Complete Stranger In Corinth:
 - A Place To Stay!
 - A Place To Work!
 - So He Could Support Himself & His Physical Needs!
 - A Place To Minister!
 - Paul Could Trust The Lord:
 - To Provide & To Take Care Of His Needs:
 - And So Can We!
 - Matthew 6:21-33 - “Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? / (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. / But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you!”
- As We Seek To Serve The Lord:
 - Right Where God Has Placed Us - We Need To Always:
 - Believe & Trust In:
 - God’s Providence & Provision!
 - Why? Because It Is Easy To Be Afraid & To Get Discouraged!
 - Even Paul Was Not Immune!
 - 1 Corinthians 2:3 - “And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling!”
 - At First, Paul Felt Alone When He Arrived In Corinth!
 - But The Lord Was With Him!
 - And Provided Him Two New Friends - Who Likely Became His First Converts!
 - Will You Believe & Trust In The Lord?
 - No Matter What He Calls You To Do?
 - No Matter Where He Calls You To Go?
 - You Can - He Is Always Faithful To His Promises To His People!
- This Is What We Need In Order To Be Effective In The Building Up Of Our Own Church!
 - A Firm Belief In The Providence, The Provision, The Power Of God To Work!

* Second - Like The Apostle Paul - We Need:

2. **To Be Faithful In Our Business!**

- **IE:** Once, When Walking Down A Certain Street In Chicago, Evangelist D. L. Moody Stepped Up To A Man – A Perfect Stranger – And Asked: “Sir, Are You A Christian?” The Man Replied: “You Mind Your Own Business!” Before The Man Started To Walk On, Moody Replied: “Sir, This Is My Business!”
 - Do We Have The Same Understanding As Christians:
 - That The Ministry Of The Gospel **Is Our Business?**
 - Paul Sure Did!
 - Because - Remember - Even As He Was Working With His Own Hands As A Tentmaker There In Corinth:
 - 18:4 - “And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks!”
 - Paul Was Certainly Very Busy:
 - In His Daily Business As A Tentmaker!
 - And He Could Have Been Quite Successful In That City!
 - But He Never Forgot What:
 - His Main Business Was!

- He “Reasoned In The Synagogue Every Sabbath!”
- And He Was Faithful In:
 - The Pattern Of His Ministry!
 - If You Go Back To Acts 17:2-3 - In Thessalonica - “And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, / Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ!”
 - Everywhere Paul Went - This Was His Pattern:
 - This Was His “Manner!”
 - He Would Go To The Jewish Synagogue Every Saturday - After A Busy Work Week - And Got Down To Business!
 - And He Preached To Them:
 - About Jesus!
 - His Ministry - When He “Suffered” On The Cross To Pay The Penalty For Our Sins!
 - His Power - When He Was “Risen Again From The Dead” - To Forgive & To Save Us From Our Sins!
 - His Identity - As “Christ” - The Promised & Chosen Messiah!
 - Perhaps - Some Told Paul To - Mind His Own Business!
 - But - This *Was* Paul’s Business!
 - And This Is *Our* Business!
 - We Need To Be Faithful - No Matter What Other Occupation We Have!
 - Paul Was Also Faithful In:
 - The Purpose Of His Ministry!
 - His Purpose - 18:4 - Was To “Persuade” The Jews & The Greeks!
 - Just As God Is “No Respector Of Persons” - Neither Was Paul - And We Shouldn’t Be Either!
 - Our Goal Should Be To Win The Hearts & Souls Of All People To The Lord Jesus Christ!
 - And We Do So - As Paul Did:
 - In 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 - “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. / For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. / And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. / And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: / That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God!”
 - Our Business Is To Tell People About Jesus!
 - Paul Reminded The Corinthians Of This - 2 Corinthians 5:20 - “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God!”
 - And Then - And God Himself - Through The Power & Grace Of His Holy Spirit:
 - Will Persuade Them To Saving Faith!
 - Are You Being Faithful:
 - In Going About Your Father’s Business?
 - This Too Is What We Need In Order To Be Effective In The Building Up Of Our Church!

* Third - Like The Apostle Paul - We Need:

3. To Be Fervent With Our Burden!

- When Paul First Arrived In Corinth - He Was Alone:
 - When It Came To The Gospel Ministry!
 - But Then - His Brothers In Christ Arrived!
- 18:5 - “And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ!”
 - It Seems - That The Arrival Of Silas & Timothy:
 - Re-Inspired & Re-Invigorated Paul In His Ministry Of The Gospel!
 - Albert Barnes - “The Presence Of Silas & Timothy Animated Him; And the Certainty Of Aid In His Work Urged Him to Zeal In Making Known The Savior!”
 - The Same Can Happen Today!
 - Your Presence & Your Co-Laboring Can Bring Life To The Ministry!
 - And So It Was For Paul!
 - And He Became More Zealous & Fervent With His Burden!

- We Are Told That Paul:
 - “Was Pressed In The Spirit!”
 - Some Translations - Pressed - “Occupied By The Word!”
 - There Is A Difference In The Underlying Greek - But The Best & Most Preserved Greek Texts Say - “Spirit!”
 - And This Reminds Us Of His Burden:
 - Back When He Was In Athens:
 - Acts 17:16 - “Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry!”
 - This Also Reminds Us Of His Burden:
 - When He Wrote To The Corinthians In:
 - 2 Corinthians 5:14 - “For the love of Christ constraineth us!”
 - When Paul Was:
 - “Pressed In The Spirit!”
 - He Had:
- A Great Burden For The Savior!
 - The Love Of Christ:
 - Did “Constrain” Him!”
 - The Words “Press” & “Constrain” Mean To Be Compressed / Squeezed!
 - **IE:** Like You Would Squeeze A Catsup Bottle!
 - Something Was Compressing Paul’s Spirit:
 - To Preach More Fervently & Zealously:
 - That “Jesus Was Christ!”
 - It Was His Burden:
 - For The Lord & His Burden:
 - From The Lord & His Great Love!
 - He Also Had:
- A Great Burden For Their Souls!
 - In 1 Corinthians 9:16 - He Told Them - “For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”
 - The Corinthians Had A Great Problem:
 - A Great Sin Problem!
 - Just Like The Rest Of Us!
 - And So - The Corinthians Needed The Gospel!
 - The Corinthians Needed Christ:
 - Just Like The Rest Of Us!
- And So - With These Great Burdens:
 - And Encouraged By His Companions In Ministry:
 - Paul “Was Pressed In The Spirit!”
 - And “Testified To The Jews That Jesus Was Christ!”
- ***This Is Our Burden!***
 - “Jesus Is The Answer, For The World Today, Above Him There’s No Other, Jesus Is The Way!” (Andrae Crouch)
 - May We Be “Pressed In” Our Own Spirits:
 - With This Great Burden!

Conclusion:

1. We Need To Remember:
 - That The Way God ***Begins*** A Church:
 - Is The Same Way God ***Builds*** His Church!
 - It Is Through The Power Of His Gospel!
 - But It Is Also:
 - Through The Instruments Of:
 - His People!
 - Through You & Through Me!
2. This Is Why:
 - We Need To Be – Firm In Our Belief & Trust:
 - In The Lord!

- His Providence! His Provision! His Power!
- We Need To Be – Faithful In Our Business!
 - And We Need To Mind **Our** Business!
 - Souls Are Our Business!
 - God Has Made It Our Business!
- We Need To Be – Fervent With Our Burden!
 - A Burden For Our Savior:
 - And A Burden For Souls!
 - And This Burden Should Grow!
 - And Will Grow - As We Pray Together:
 - And Worship Together & Serve Together!

3. And Testify That:

- “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name!” (John 20:31)

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