

**Acts Series**

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Good news @ Midweek

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Paul's Second Missionary Journey Part V  
*Taking the Gospel to Corinth*  
(Acts 18:1-17)

**Introduction:**

1. Ancient pictures of Corinth:



**Corinth Excavations**

This is the view of the ancient city center looking from the Acrocorinth (with a big telephoto lens). On the left the standing columns of the Temple of Apollo are visible. On the right side the Lechaion Road can be seen. In between the two (and slightly down) is the ancient agora.  
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**Bema**

Paul spent 18 months in the city before the Jews of the city charged him with breaking the law and brought him before Gallio at the city's place of judgment (bema). The mention of Gallio provides an anchor for New Testament chronology as we know from Roman sources that Gallio was proconsul of Achaia from June 51 to May 52. Standing on this platform, the proconsul dismissed the charges against Paul as a dispute of Jewish law and not of a criminal nature.  
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## 2. Background info on Corinth:

- Location



- Ancient Greek records indicate that the city of Corinth had a reputation of “vulgar materialism”.
  - 1) Homer (Greek poet and author) describes the city as wealthy and immoral (Homer *Iliad* 2. 569-570).
  - 2) The Greek philosopher Plato spoke of Corinth as a “prostitute” and used the expression “Corinthian girl” perhaps as a means to describe its immoral behavior.
  - 3) The temple of Aphrodite was the center of their pagan worship and it claimed some 1000 temple prostitutes.
- The city was originally destroyed by the Romans (146 B.C.) because they revolted against Roman occupation.
  - 1) In 46 B.C. Julius Caesar reestablished the city as a Roman colony.
  - 2) In 27 B.C. it became the governmental seat for Achaia

3. Corinth in Paul's day:

- The city had replaced Athens; becoming the leading political and commercial center in Greece (although under Roman occupation).
  - 1) Its unique location brought commerce traffic from the northern and southern parts of Greece as well as from around the world.
  - 2) Due to its strategic location for trade and commerce, it was a very “**cosmopolitan**” city and in many ways it remained as immoral and unstable as it was in its glory days of the Greek Empire.
- The city of Corinth also had its own “Acropolis” (*a fortified location with a cluster of important buildings usually found on high ground*) which is often referred to as Acrocorinth.
  - 1) It (Acrocorinth) was approx. 1500 above the main city of Corinth.
  - 2) One of the main structures sitting on the Corinthian Acropolis was the temple dedicated to Aphrodite (the Greek goddess of love). Another well known temple that existed there was the temple of Apollo.
- Corinth was a city steeped in idol worship and their immorality rivaled that of their early days of the Greek Empire.
  - 1) As Paul arrived it became clear that the people of Corinth were in desperate need of the Gospel and the life transforming power that comes from believing and trusting in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.
  - 2) Paul may have had limited success in Athens, but in Corinth he will spend approximately 1 and a half years and help to establish a church there.

4. Other miscellaneous tidbits and factoids:
- Luke does not tell us the reason why Paul left Athens for Corinth – He just writes; “After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth” (Acts 18:1)
    - 1) Some conclude that Paul may have been discouraged from the lack of response to the Gospel from the people in Athens. (Read II Corinthians 2:1-5, I Thess. 3:7)
    - 2) Paul comes to Corinth (a 53 mile journey) alone and without the initial companionship of Timothy or Silas.
    - 3) While in Corinth; Paul will baptize some of the people in that city (a practice that he usually delegated to others – see I Corinthians 1:14-17), perhaps in the days preceding Silas and Timothy’s arrival (Acts 18:5).
  - The prevailing wickedness that existed in Corinth would become the very thing that Paul would constantly battle as he trained and disciplined those who chose to embrace and follow Christ.
    - 1) Paul will make as many as 2 and possibly even 3 visits to Corinth (Acts 18:1-17, Acts 19, II Cor2:1, Acts 20:1-4)
    - 2) Paul will write at least 3 letters to the Corinthians (one was perhaps lost – I Corinthians 5:9-11) and some conclude he may have written as many as five.
    - 3) Paul’s influence in the Corinthian church really shows through the two letters written by Paul to the Corinthian believers. These letters are considered inspired and a part of the canon: **I Corinthians** (written from Ephesus – probably in 57 AD on Paul’s third missionary journey), and **II Corinthians** (written from Philippi, probably in the fall of 57 AD and also on Paul’s third missionary journey).

- Paul's primary focus in his writings to the church at Corinth was to emphasize sound doctrine and how the local church was to function. Here are a few topics he dealt with in his two Epistles:
  - 1) He taught on the practical aspects of sanctification
  - 2) He taught on the importance of unity in the church
  - 3) He taught on various marital issues
  - 4) He taught on Christian liberty and the responsibility that comes with that.
  - 5) He taught on spiritual gifts and proper order in the church
  - 6) He reaffirmed the doctrine of the Resurrection
  
- While in Corinth, on this his second missionary journey (Paul's first visit there beginning in the spring of 52 AD); Paul will write two letters to the believers at Thessalonica:
  - 1) The first letter (I Thessalonians) was written in approx. 52 AD (I Thessalonians 3:1-2, 6)
  - 2) The second letter (II Thessalonians) was written sometime prior to Paul's departure to Ephesus (Acts 18:19, 26) and eventual return to Antioch of Syria which occurred in the winter of 53-54 AD.
  
- During his one and a half year stay (second in length to his stay at Ephesus) in Corinth, Paul will forge some very strong bonds of friendship that will remain with him for the remainder of his ministry. These friendships and mentoring relationships will help to establish some healthy churches (although at times they will struggle) in the region of Macedonia. These people are forever in debt to Paul for his answering God's call to go to Macedonia!

## The Importance of Christian Friendship (Acts 18:1-5)

1. Paul's new friends - **Aquila & Priscilla:**
  - A little biographical sketch of their lives:
    - 1) We are told **Aquila** was a Jew and was from Pontus (a province in northeast Asia Minor on the south shore of the Black Sea).
    - 2) **Priscilla** (the wife of Aquila) is also called **Prisca** (Romans 16:3, I Cor. 16:19, II Timothy 4:19) and some conclude (though mere speculation and unconfirmed as fact) she was a Roman woman perhaps even having some sort of "noble" status in her family background.
    - 3) They were living in Rome but forced to leave there under order of the Roman Emperor Claudius who determined the Jews were responsible for the rioting going on in Rome during his reign.
  - We are told by Luke that they are already living in Corinth when Paul arrives.
    - 1) The Bible does not record the conversion of Aquila and Priscilla, but it is highly probable they were already Christians by the time Paul meets them. There was an existing church in Rome (Romans 1:7-8), and although we don't know for sure, it is assumed they may have come to faith in Christ through the ministry of that church. This is based on the fact that there is no record of Paul leading them to faith in Christ and they are not listed among the Corinthian converts.
    - 2) Their trade was tent making (using leather and goat hair) and that was at least one reason that Paul stayed with them.

- The bond of friendship that develops between Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla is seen throughout Paul's ministry.
  - 1) Aquila and Priscilla join Paul when he leaves Corinth and they go to Ephesus with him where they remained and assisted in the ministry there – making their house available as a meeting place. (Romans 16:3-5)
  - 2) At some point (though we are not told when, what or where), they apparently risked their lives for Paul. (Also discussed in Romans 16:3-5)
  - 3) They will later minister to Paul when he returns to Ephesus on his third missionary journey. (I Corinthians 16:19)
  - 4) Their ministry in Ephesus was intricately tied to that of Paul's ministry there. They may well have been responsible for discipling, mentoring or showing hospitality to people such as Apollos, Onesiphorus, and Erastus to name just a few.
  - 5) This relationship between Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla; was a means in which each person could minister to one another and solidify the common bond each one had in the love of Jesus Christ. (I John 3:11, 16, 23, 4:7-21)
  
- Have you ever given thought to the value of friendship and love that you bring to another brother or sister in Christ? Take a moment to think about the various times you have been able to minister to another fellow believer and write down how it impacted your life and theirs:

2. Paul's old friends – **Silas and Timothy**:

- Paul had sent young Timothy from Athens back to Thessalonica (I Thessalonians 3:1-6)
  - 1) One purpose for Timothy's ministry there in Thessalonica was to strengthen and encourage the saints.
  - 2) Another purpose was to help bring balance and stability by teaching sound doctrine as the saints in Thessalonica were being bombarded by false teaching and persecution.
  - 3) Timothy rejoined Paul in Corinth and brought back a favorable report regarding the believers there in Thessalonica. (I Thessalonians 3:6)
- Silas may have been sent to Philippi (sometime after Timothy left for Thessalonica) to encourage the believers there. (Philippians 4:15, II Corinthians 11:9)
- These two companions (Silas and Timothy) were probably a welcome sight to the Apostle Paul. (Acts 18:5)
  - 1) The bond of friendship that already existed between these men had already been forged into a solid brotherhood of loyalty, camaraderie and genuine love for one another.
  - 2) The relationship in Christ that these three shared serves as a model for Paul's writings (especially in his letters to the church at Corinth) on the subject of mutual love and compassion that each of us is to have toward one another.
- Perhaps it is the return of Silas and Timothy that will put a new spark in Paul's step which is seen in the second half of Acts 18:5; ***“But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.”***



## Opposition to the Gospel Has Its Consequences: (Acts 18:4-6)

1. Luke tells us that Paul was “reasoning” (probably dialoguing, debating or answering questions) with the Jews, along with the Greeks in the synagogue.
  - This was Paul’s normal custom and he (like other past instances in other cities) was probably welcomed initially.
  - Apparently he was meeting with these Jews and Greeks each Sabbath up until the initial arrival of Silas and Timothy.
  - What message did Paul proclaim to the Jews at Corinth? (Acts 18:5)
  
2. At some point the Jews began to oppose Paul by mounting a significant resistance to his message. (Acts 18:6)
  - The Greek word (*antitasso* – translated into English “**resisted**”) in its most literal sense means to “**arrange in battle array**”.
  - Luke also tells us that they “blasphemed” and we can probably draw the conclusion that it was Jesus Christ of whom they spoke evil of.
  
3. Paul then shakes out his garments in what would be an outward demonstration of his dissatisfaction with their response of blasphemy.
  - This was similar to what he and Barnabas did in Acts 13:51 and is in complete obedience to what Jesus told them to do to those who reject their message. (Matthew 10:1-15)
  - The remark; “**your blood be on your own heads**” was Paul’s way of saying that they were responsible for their rejection of Christ and their rebellion towards God. (See Ezekiel 33:1-6)

## Perseverance Brings God's Blessing (Acts 18:7-11)

1. If the Apostles stopped preaching the Gospel every time they faced opposition – one would have to wonder if the church would have grown beyond the borders of Jerusalem.
  - Take a moment to look back at Acts 1-17 and see if you can list the number of times that the Apostles faced opposition to their preaching of the Gospel and how they responded to it? Also note the results of their perseverance? Use a separate page if needed.
  - Sometimes when we face opposition it is hard to know what to do and the Apostles themselves did not always respond the same. One consistent pattern they did show us was they never gave up and **they persevered (they pressed through)** – knowing that God would lead and guide them. (Matthew 6:25-34, 7-12, 10:16-23)
2. Paul's willingness to remain faithful to the preaching of the Word resulted in several significant occurrences while in Corinth:
  - Paul ministered to a man named **Titius Justus**
    - 1) Most commentators conclude that he was a Roman
    - 2) We are told that he was a \_\_\_\_\_ of God which means he probably had some attachment to the synagogue perhaps as a Jewish convert, or at least a strong interest in God.
    - 3) Luke does not record his conversion but some speculate the person called "**Gaius**" in *Rom. 16:23, and I Cor. 1:14*, may be one and the same – **Gaius Titius Justus**. It is believed that Paul led him to faith in Christ and baptized him as well.

- Paul ministered to Crispus (the leader of the synagogue) and his entire family.
  - 1) We are told by Luke that he \_\_\_\_\_ in the Lord
  - 2) Luke also mentions his status as \_\_\_\_\_ of the synagogue, which meant his conversion to faith in Christ would have sent a significant ripple throughout the Jewish community there in Corinth.
  - 3) Not only did Crispus believe in Christ but so did his entire family/household. It is not uncommon for family members to be fully impacted by God’s grace and as such they follow through in the same manner by believing and trusting on Christ as Savior.
  
- In addition to the two men mentioned (Titius and Crispus – see also I Corinthians 1:14), a number of Corinthian people responded to the preaching of the Gospel and by faith they believed and were baptized.
  - 1) It is highly probable that the conversion of Crispus had a significant impact and it may well have caused other Jews from the synagogue to also believe (by faith) in Christ and follow that decision by being baptized.
  - 2) The fact that Corinth was also a melting pot of “Gentiles”, the Gospel would have had just as significant a response in the Gentile community as well. (See all of I & II Corinthians)
  
- 3. The fact that so many people embraced Christ by believing in Him and follow in believers baptism, will at some point cause the Jewish religious leaders to bring charges against Paul that he is violating Roman law. Before that happens though, God will reassure Paul of His faithfulness to protect him and to see the ministry in Corinth take hold.

4. The Lord's encouragement to Paul (Acts 18:9-11)
  - The Lord speaks to Paul in a vision (Acts 18:9-10)
    - 1) This vision is one of six visions that Paul receives that is mentioned by Luke in the Book of Acts. The other five (which all came during crucial and difficult times for Paul) are described in Acts 9:12, 16:9-10, 22:17-18, 23:11, 27:23-24.
    - 2) Most conclude that at the time Paul received this vision that there was some sort of threatening circumstances that drove Paul to be concerned and cry out to the Lord. As such the Lord Jesus encourages Paul to persevere.
  - John MacArthur cites this “supernatural vision provided four reasons for him (Paul) not to give up proclaiming the Gospel in that city” (*John MacArthur's Commentary on Acts, Vol. 2, page 150-151*):
    - 1) God \_\_\_\_\_ it – by saying “go on speaking”
    - 2) God \_\_\_\_\_ him – that “He was with him”
    - 3) God \_\_\_\_\_ him – that “no man will attack you in order to harm you”.
    - 4) God's \_\_\_\_\_ needed to be accomplished in Corinth – as He declared; “I have many people in this city”. This leads us to believe that God had plans to use Paul to declare the salvation message to those at Corinth and draw them to Himself.
  - How long did Paul remain in Corinth, what did he do during that time, and what were the results of his ministry?

## **Perseverance does not exempt us from opposition (Acts 18:12-17)**

1. The Jews at Corinth were not pleased at the preaching of Paul, nor were they pleased that many from the synagogue were converting to Christianity (following Christ).
  - Luke tells us that; “the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat”. (Acts 18:12)
    - 1) They apparently muster a large enough group to be heard by the Roman Proconsul (governor) of Achaia.
    - 2) They were united in their opposition against Paul and his teaching which means they stood in complete opposition to God!
    - 3) Can a person truly follow God and deny that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God?
  - The charge leveled by the Jews against Paul was that he was violating Roman law which did not permit the teaching or promotion of new religions.
    - 1) Those in the Roman Empire worshipped multiple deities (much like the Greeks) and as such they more or less tolerated those religious beliefs already established by the inhabitants of the territories they conquered and occupied. This was however, subject to change and often its enforcement was open to whoever was in charge as we see from later Roman Emperors.
    - 2) One thing the Roman government was against was the establishment of “new religions” as they saw this as a platform for insurrection and rebellion against the Roman Empire. This seems to be the charge the Jews made against Paul to Gallio the Roman governor.

2. There is some real significance to Luke recording this account of the trial that Paul faced: (Acts 18:12-17)

- Gallio was a real figure in history
  - 1) He actually governed as proconsul of Achaia (the region of southern Greece) during the time this event happened.
  - 2) His brother (Seneca) was a very influential Roman philosopher and also a tutor to a future emperor named Nero.
- The reference to the judgment seat (bema) would place the location of the trial near the agora (marketplace) and probably in front of the residence of the proconsul (in this case Gallio). This “judgment seat” would often be a raised stone platform that served as the place where cases would be heard in a public setting. This serves as further confirmation of Luke’s historical accuracy.
- The decision by Gallio was consistent with Roman law:
  - 1) The Romans basically tolerated Judaism at least in some “official” capacity.
  - 2) As far as Gallio was concerned; he saw Christianity as a “sect” of Judaism and therefore deemed that Paul’s actions were not in violation of Roman law.
  - 3) His decision had enormous implications and allowed for Christianity to be legal and even flourish throughout the Roman Empire. What would have happened had he decided otherwise?

3. The decision by Gallio was not fully embraced by those who brought charges against Paul:
  - Luke tells us; “And they all took hold of Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and began beating him in front of the judgment seat. But Gallio was not concerned about any of these things” (Acts 18:17)
    - 1) The “they” in this account were probably the “angry Jews” who continued to reject the teachings of Paul that Jesus was the Christ.
    - 2) Why did they treat Sosthenes (one of their own leaders) this way?
    - 3) We are not told in this account by Luke that Sosthenes was a follower of Christ, but perhaps these events led to him embracing Christ as Lord and Savior. We know from reading I Corinthians 1:1 that Paul identifies Sosthenes as a brother in Christ.
  - In spite of all of the commotion this created; one additional confirmation that Gallio did not consider this a Roman problem was his unwillingness to meddle in the religious affairs between the Jews and Christians. He apparently saw them as one and the same and therefore did nothing to stop the beating of Sosthenes.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

1. Was God true to His promises to Paul (Acts 18:9-11)
2. Paul will now depart **Corinth** with the plan to return to **Antioch of Syria** to report to the church what has transpired in **Macedonia**. He will first make a brief stop at **Ephesus** – stay tuned!!