

Acts of the Apostles

Week 21 – Acts 18:1-28

In Corinth (18:1-17)

- Paul left Athens and went to Corinth (v 1).
 - o Rome destroyed Corinth in 146 BC, but Julius Caesar rebuilt it as a Roman Colony in 46 BC.
 - o Corinth sits on a narrow isthmus between the northern and southern parts of Greece making it a natural hub between land and sea trade routes.
- In Corinth, Paul met Aquila and Priscilla, Christian leaders who had been expelled from Rome with other Jews by Claudius (v 2).
 - o Records indicate that Claudius expelled the Jews because of disturbances over a man named “Chrestus.” Chrestus was a common name and may refer to a rebel rouser, or it may also be a Roman misinterpretation of a Jewish fight over “the Christ.”
 - o Their ministry indicates that the gospel had already reached Rome.
 - o Priscilla's name usually precedes her husbands, indicating either a higher status in the culture (freeborn vs freedman) or a higher status in the church.
 - o Like Paul, they were tentmakers (v 3). They returned to Rome (Rom 16:3-5) after Nero permitted Jews to return to the city.
- In Corinth, Paul continued his ministry of preaching Christ in the synagogue to both Jews and Greeks (v 4).
 - o Prior to Silas and Timothy's arrival, Paul worked with Priscilla and Aquila to have money for his daily needs. Paul was proud of his ability to work as an artisan (1 Cor 4:12; 9:6; 1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:6-8).
 - o His ministry partners likely brought funds from the Macedonian church allowing Paul to move to a full-time preaching ministry (v 5).
- The Jews in the synagogue eventually turn on Paul by becoming verbally abusive. Paul responds by shaking out his clothes in protest, an act similar to shaking the dust from one's feet (v 6).
 - o Paul quotes from Ezekiel 33:5 in a strong denunciation of those who heap abuse on him.
 - o Paul will continue to attempt to bring Jews to faith in Christ, and his words are meant to provoke repentance.
- Paul establishes a house church next door to the synagogue at the house of Titius Justus (v 7).
 - o Titius Justice may be Gaius who is mentioned in Romans 16:23 (see also 1 Cor 1:14).
 - o Many Corinthians are baptized and saved, including Crispus the synagogue leader (v 8).
 - o Paul's success and his nearness to the synagogue probably incited even more opposition from unbelieving Jews.
- God spoke to Paul in a vision encouraging him to continue preaching in Corinth despite the opposition (v 9-10).
 - o God promises his presence, “I am with you,” and his protection.

- Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, longer than anywhere else up to this point.
- The Jews in Corinth bring formal charges against Paul with Gallio, the Roman proconsul (vv 12-13).
 - Gallio was Seneca's older brother, a later advisor of Nero, and likely proconsul in AD 51-52.
 - Their charge is ambiguous and is meant to convince Gallio that Paul is breaking Roman law and not just Jewish religious laws.
 - The Jews in Corinth may fear that what happened in Rome may happen in Corinth – that a fight over the Christ may get all the Jews in trouble and not just those believing in Jesus as the Christ.
 - Before Paul can even defend himself, Gallio dismisses the fight as an inter-Jewish fight, giving Christianity kind of temporary protection since Jews had a kind of religious liberty other religions did not enjoy. Jews did not have to pray to Caesar as long as they agreed to pray for Caesar.
- The crowd, either Jews frustrated with the handling of the case or more likely Gentiles with anti-Jewish feelings, turned on Sosthenes the synagogue leader, beating him in front of Gallio who did nothing to stop them (v 17).

Priscilla, Aquila and Apollos (18:18-28)

- After his time in Corinth, Paul heads back to Syria with Priscilla and Aquila (v 18).
- The mention of the vow helps us to understand Paul's short stay in Ephesus and his return to Jerusalem (v 18).
 - This is likely a Nazirite vow, which would have lasted for a minimum of 30 days.
 - Paul would carry the cut off hair with him and present it in the Temple as a burnt offering.
- Paul leaves Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus, likely because he trusts them to do good ministry there (v 19).
 - Paul preaches in the synagogue there with some success but moves on to Jerusalem to fulfill his vow (v 19).
 - Ephesus will become the center of Paul's ministry during his third missionary journey.
- After spending time in Jerusalem, Paul travels to Antioch and then back to Galatia and Phrygia to strengthen the churches he founded (v 23).
- During their Ephesus ministry, Priscilla and Aquila encountered Apollos, a Jew from Alexandria who had "been instructed in the way of the Lord" (v 25).
 - Apollos was well educated, spoke with fervor and accuracy about Jesus in the synagogue.
 - He had a misunderstanding about baptism since he "knew only the baptism of John" (v 25).
 - Priscilla and Aquila brought him into their home and disciplined him in the faith (v 26).
- Apollos then travelled to Achaia (Corinth), with the church's blessing, and proclaimed the good news of Jesus as the Messiah even in the face of opposition from other Jews (vv 27-28).
- Paul and Apollos's ministries overlap but are mostly independent of one another.

Sources

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