

PAUL'S MINISTRY AMONG THE CORINTHIANS

BIBLE TEXT : Acts 18:1-22.

LESSON 336 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 3:11).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Acts 18:1-22

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

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.

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

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I The Corinthian Church

1. Arriving at Corinth, Paul found Aquila and Priscilla, with whom he lived and laboured, Acts 18:1-3;

Romans 16:3

³ Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus:

Romans 16:4

⁴ Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

2. Paul reasoned with the Jews and Greeks in the synagogue on the Sabbath Days, Acts 18:4;

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:

3. Silas and Timotheus came to help Paul in Corinth, Acts 18:5;

1 Thessalonians 3:6-9

⁶ But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also *to see* you:

⁷ Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith:

⁸ For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

⁹ For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

4. The Jews received not the testimony, so Paul preached to the Gentiles, Acts 18:6, 7;

Acts 13:50-52

⁵⁰ But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.

⁵¹ But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.

⁵² And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

Matthew 10:14

¹⁴ And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.

Matthew 10:15

¹⁵ Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.

5. The chief ruler of the synagogue believed on the Lord, Acts 18:8.

6. Encouraged by the Lord in a vision, Paul remained in Corinth for eighteen months, Acts 18:9-11.

II In Gallio's Court

1. The Jews made insurrection against Paul, Acts 18:12, 13.

shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.

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

¹² And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat,

¹³ Saying, This *fellow* persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law.

¹⁴ And when Paul was now about to open *his* mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O *ye* Jews, reason would that I should bear with you:

¹⁵ But if it be a question of words and names, and *of your* law, look ye *to it*; for I will be no judge of such *matters*.

¹⁶ And he drave them from the judgment seat.

¹⁷ Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat *him* before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

¹⁸ And Paul *after this* tarried *there* yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn *his* head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.

¹⁹ And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.

²⁰ When they desired *him* to tarry longer time with them, he consented not;

²¹ But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.

²² And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down

2. Gallio threw the case out of court, Acts 18:14-16.

3. The Greeks administered a beating to Sosthenes before the judgment seat, Acts 18:17.

III Return to Jerusalem

1. Leaving Corinth, Paul with Aquila and Priscilla travelled into Syria and then to Ephesus, Acts 18:18-20.

2. Paul journeyed on to Caesarea and Jerusalem, Acts 18:21, 22.

NOTES:

Constantly Labouring

Departing from Athens, Paul came to Corinth, apparently travelling without his usual companions. Timotheus had come to Athens from Berea, but Paul had sent him back to Thessalonica: "When we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; and sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow-labourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith" (I Thessalonians 3:1, 2). While Paul waited in Corinth for the other members of his company, he abode with Aquila and Priscilla and laboured with them in their trade of tent making. He reasoned in the synagogue on the Sabbath Days and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

Manual labour was certainly not beneath Paul's dignity. Jesus said, "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8) — the admonition that Paul believed and practised. Paul would not be chargeable to any man. Much modern religion has lost its respect among men because, among other things, it has become so burdensome to men. The practice of begging for money in the name of Christianity is certainly alien to the plan of God. He has ordained the plan of tithing to finance His Church, and God expects His people to follow that rule, even today. God honours and supplies the needs of any group of people who trust Him fully. (For reference, see Bible Studies, Lesson 264; or, "Tithing - God's Plan of Financing." Apostolic Faith tract, Number 31.)

Opportunities

This is the first mention of Aquila and Priscilla in the Scriptures. We are not told whether they were Christians when Paul went to live with them, but they became true soldiers of the Gospel. No doubt Paul's zealous life and example had a great influence toward the building of the outstanding Christian character that these people later displayed. Though Paul found it necessary to labour with his hands, yet he improved every possible opportunity — even at the workbench — to declare the Gospel that he loved so well.

Aquila and Priscilla learned thoroughly the lessons from Paul, and before long they were qualified instructors of the Word of God. When Paul was removed to other fields of labour, Aquila and Priscilla were able to carry on the Gospel work where they were.

In like manner, the lessons taught today by Spirit-filled ministers should be learned and practised. When new fields of labour and opportunity open, and when the older ministers are called to their reward, someone must be in a spiritual condition to fill the place. Let us ask ourselves the question: "Why cannot that someone be I?" All depends on how well the Gospel lessons taught through the years have been learned and practised.

Universal Duty

When Silas and Timotheus arrived from Macedonia to labour with Paul in Corinth, Paul was pressed in the spirit and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. Paul's testimony of the risen Saviour was sure and stirring. The Jews soon arose in opposition

to Paul and went so far as to speak blasphemy; so Paul shook his raiment and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles."

God has made His ministers and witnesses responsible in a large measure to the people with whom they live and labour. God said to the prophet: "O Son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me" (Ezekiel 33:7). God is saying much the same to Christians today: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (I Timothy 4:16). If the Christian is faithful to declare God's message of salvation and hope, he will deliver his soul. Are we, as Christians, doing our full duty in witnessing to the people of the world? Can we truly say with Paul, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean"? God help every Christian to fulfil this duty!

To further help Paul in his Corinthians ministry, the Lord spoke to him in a vision at night: "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city." Paul may have felt that his enemies were numerous and strong, but the Lord gave assurance that He would deliver Paul from all these. This assurance was all that Paul needed. He and his company remained in Corinth for a year and six months, teaching the Word of God to the people of that city.

Strong Sermons

Men and women are sometimes inclined to criticise the minister of God who preaches forcefully, with much power and fervency. Can anyone imagine Paul speaking in a low voice or monotone when he said to the Jews of Corinth, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles"? We are sure this proclamation had the unction of the Holy Spirit, for Paul was doing what Jesus had commanded His disciples: "Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet" (Matthew 10:14). The Jews of Corinth did not appreciate this strong sermon of Paul's but it had its effect, nonetheless. Paul separated himself from the synagogue and began to preach in the house of Justus, whose house was located next door to the synagogue. Before long, Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, became a believer and follower of the Lord. Thus started the Corinthian revival; for many people, hearing of Crispus' conversion, believed also and were baptised.

Ministers who tickle the ears of the people often gain a greater following than those ministers who preach the unadulterated Word of God, but tickled ears may not be conducive to exemplary Christianity. The true Christian is the man who is a **doer** of the whole Word of God; and, in order to be a doer of the Word, most men need someone to encourage them to that activity. A strong sermon, delivered with the power and unction of the Holy Ghost, is a wonderful instrument to encourage Christians onward to greater endeavour for the Lord. Christendom today needs more men like Paul and fewer of these modern pulpit-enthroned philosophers.

Paul's Protection

Paul's preaching of the Word of God must not have diminished as he preached through the months to the people of Corinth. If it had, the Jews would have forgotten Paul, but at length they tried again to silence this forceful Apostle of the Gentiles. They made insurrection against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat of

Gallio. True to His promise to Paul that no harm should come to him in Corinth, God caused Gallio to dismiss the charges and throw the case out of court. The charges were false to begin with, and the Jews were unable to move a hand against Paul. He remained "yet a good while" before taking his leave of the Corinthians brethren and sailing into Syria.

To Jerusalem

Aquila and Priscilla accompanied Paul as far as Ephesus. Paul entered into the synagogue of this city and reasoned with the Jews. No doubt some of these people were converted, for they desired Paul to remain with them for a longer period. Aquila and Priscilla tarried in Ephesus, probably to teach and instruct these new Christians, but Paul travelled on with the promise to the Ephesians that he would return to them if God willed. Paul sailed to Caesarea, from whence he went to Jerusalem and saluted the church. He later returned to Antioch.

Thus ended Paul's second missionary journey. Though he faced hard trials at every city and place where he preached, Paul gained lasting victories. At least four churches were established during this short space of time; and the letter of instruction that Paul wrote to these churches, through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, have been instructions used to the utmost spiritual profit by Christians of all ages. When the Lord leads, everything is certain to end well.

QUESTIONS

1. Name two Jews whom Paul found in Corinth who were later to become Christian helpers.
2. What was Paul's secular occupation?
3. Why did Paul separate himself from the synagogue?
4. Who was Crispus? What did he do?
5. How was Paul encouraged to go forward in his preaching at Corinth?
6. How long did the Christian party remain in Corinth?
7. In what way did Gallio help Paul?
8. Where did Paul go after he left Corinth?