

ACTS CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Read vs. 1-11

1. Why were Aquila and Priscilla living in Corinth? (vs. 2)

This happened around AD 49. Paul came to Corinth with weakness, fear and trembling. (see I Cor. 2:1-3. Corinth was a city that noted for drunkenness, dishonesty, and immorality. Their religion involved much prostitution. Paul is alone, he's broke and he's discouraged. Even someone as strong and courageous as Paul can be discouraged.

Some history on Corinth:

It was a city of about 600,000 people and located about 45 miles from Athens.

In 750 B.C. it was considered the wealthiest city in Greece.

In 146 B.C. the Romans destroyed and looted the city. The people were killed or sold as slaves.

In 45 B.C. Julius Caesar rebuilt the city and populated it with veterans and freed slaves. It flourished once again.

2. What did Paul have in common with Aquila and Priscilla? (vs. 3)

Paul and Aquila and Priscilla developed a close bond. Read his note in Romans 16:3 & 4. They were just the encouragement that Paul needed. God is faithful to provide what we need when we need it. What strength we can receive through Christian fellowship. Proverbs 25:11 tells us that "a word aptly spoken is like apples of silver in settings of gold." A friend in Christ is a great treasure and that is what Paul found in Aquila and Priscilla.

3. When he wasn't making tents, Paul spent his time (vs. 4 and 5)

Paul was having financial problems at this time. He took no money from the Corinthians. (See I Cor. 9:11 & 12 and II Cor. 11:7-9 and Phil 4:15 & 16) Fortunately, God sent Silas and Timothy with a gift from a church to supply his needs. This gave him the freedom to preach full time instead of making tents to sell. This is the same reason that churches need to support their pastor and missionaries today, so that they can work full time doing the work that God has called them to do.

4. What is common between vs. 6 and Acts 13:50 and 51?

Notice that they even swore at him. (vs. 6) At what point do we "shake off the dust?" How long should we continue with people who reject? Compare Matt. 10:14 & Mark 6:11. It is always pleasing to the Lord when we can share the gospel with another person. There comes a time, however, that more words and more sharing only cause more hardness of heart. Sometimes our best witness is the life that we lead and the love that we manifest.

5. Review these verses and tell why Paul may have needed this special encouragement found in vs. 9 and 10 at this time. (Acts 14:19-20, Acts 16:22-24, Acts 17:5 and 17:13 and 14)

Paul had been stoned, beaten, imprisoned, run out of town, involved in a riot and narrowly escaped harm by secretly leaving town. Now he is living in a city full of immorality. He may have been in ill health, too. Even a person as strong and committed as Paul may have needed some direct encouragement from the Lord. God tells him that he won't be harmed. He instructs him to be bold and to keep on preaching.

Notice also that God assures him that He has many people in this city. These people might not have been believers yet, but they were chosen by God and they were His people. God was going to use Paul to give the gospel to these chosen ones. What joy for Paul to know that he was protected and that there was hidden treasure to be found in this city in the form of God's people just waiting to hear the gospel. Paul stayed for 18 months doing the work that he loved to do.

Read vs. 12-17

6. What was the accusation made against Paul and why wouldn't Gallio listen to the case? (vs. 12-17)

God used this to protect Paul. Gallio set a precedent for other Roman leaders. Rome protected its citizens and tolerated Christianity as a legal religion. It was considered to be part of Judaism. God intervened for His church. If Gallio had gotten involved and considered this a legal problem, it could have been used as a precedent all over the region. With his dismissal of the case, the believers gained some freedom. They still had persecution from the Jews, but they were at least freed of legal problems with the Romans.

Sosthenes was the synagogue ruler and was probably the one who had spoken for the Jews. Possibly he was beaten because he botched the case against Paul. We don't know if he was a believer at this time, but in I Cor. 1:1, he is with Paul and Paul refers to him as a brother in Christ. Maybe he became a believer around the time of this court hearing and that's why he didn't present a very good case against Paul!

Read v. 18-28

7. Why had Paul shaved his head? (vs 18)

We need to remember again that the book of Acts is a bridge. First century believing Jews did not automatically give up all of their Jewish culture. Being a Jew was much more than just a religion; it was a culture full of traditions, celebrations and ceremonies. Although they were now free in Christ and not commanded to continue with their Jewish life-style, it was not forbidden either.

Numbers 6:1-21 describes a ceremony called the vow of a Nazirite. It was a sign of dedication or thanksgiving. During the time of the vow, a man's hair was allowed to grow,

which was humiliating for a man. At the end of the vow, the man would shave his hair at the door of the temple and then the hair would be burned. If he wasn't able to be in Jerusalem at the right time to do this, he could shave his head and take the hair to the temple for the offering within 30 days.

Notice in Acts 18:20 that the Ephesians asked Paul to stay with them for awhile. Normally, Paul would have rejoiced at that offer. He would have loved to stay and teach them and help them to get established. Instead, he chose to leave Priscilla and Aquilla to do the job. No doubt the reason he couldn't stay was because he was under this time constraint of getting back to Jerusalem to complete his Nazirite vow. Although it doesn't specifically mention that Paul went to Jerusalem, Caesarea was the port of landing for anyone heading for Jerusalem. Someone traveling from Jerusalem to Antioch would be described as going "down" to Antioch, so it is logical to think that Paul did complete his vow during this time.

8. *Describe the gift of speaking that Apollos had. (vs. 24-28)*

See I Cor. 3:3-7 also. Apollos was popular with the people. He was from Alexandria, a major city in Egypt.

9. *Why wasn't his ministry as effective as it could have been in vs. 24 and 25?*

Here is another situation that was unique to this time period. People today hear the whole gospel presented, but it was possible at this time to have heard only part one. That's what had happened with Apollos. He was a God-worshipper and had a tremendous gift of speaking, but he simply hadn't heard the rest of the story. He had heard of John's preaching and probably had heard about some of Jesus' ministry, but he hadn't heard about the death and resurrection. He was preaching accurately about what he knew, but he needed to hear how it ended!

God, of course, was going to send him the people that he needed. Aquila and Priscilla graciously took him under wing and instructed him. What an exciting evening that must have been for all three of them! Can you imagine his thrill of hearing about Christ's substitutionary death and how Christ Himself was the lamb of God? Now all of the puzzle pieces fit together for him and he could see and understand how Christ fulfilled the old testament prophecies. How anxious he must have been to preach the whole story.

10. *What was his apparent response to the instruction that Aquila and Priscilla gave to him? (vs. 26-28)*

This was a very commendable response. He might have been defensive and argumentative. Instead he chose to take instruction and to learn from it. He was fully equipped now to do the work that God had gifted him to do. Notice in verses 27 & 28 that he was anxious to be about the work. Verse 28 says that he vigorously refuted the Jews and used the scriptures to show that Jesus was the Christ. He was energized by the truth and ready to share it!