

Thoughts on Acts Eighteen

After the events of chapter 17, Paul left Athens, and some believe it was because few received the gospel. But as noted, the Holy Spirit leads him to where his preaching will do good at that time. It is the same with Corinth. The first two verses of Acts 18 tell more than first glance would indicate. Luke introduces us to Aquila and Priscilla, who were expelled from Rome by Claudius. That statement tells us that the year is 49 or 50 CE depending on how long they have been in Corinth (Acts 18:1-2). The historian Suetonius, writing about Claudius, said it was *because* "the Jews were in a state of constant tumult at the instigation of one Christus," probably the Jews arguing with the followers of Christ. This dating sets the calendar for Paul's travels from this time to his imprisonment around 68 CE.

Paul tells us, in 1 Corinthians 2:1-4, that he entered Corinth with fear and trembling and made no effort to attract listeners by human wisdom or eloquence but preached "Christ and Him crucified." With Silas and Timothy in Macedonia, Paul was alone as he traveled the 50 miles to Corinth and then looked for a place to stay. Corinth was the center for the most sinful and evil people in the Roman empire at the time. The trades craft workers collected in their respective guilds and stayed together for support and protection. Therefore, as a tentmaker, Paul found the local guild and joined with two godly people. It is not clear when they became Christians, but they were devout teachers of the gospel by the time Paul wrote the Roman letter and were back in Rome when he wrote 1 Corinthians (Romans 16:3); (1 Corinthians 16:19). We can understand Paul's concerns as we travel through strange lands and then the joy we have when we find friends we did not know before.

The association with the guild provided the opportunity to preach. Therefore, Paul stayed and taught until Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia. It seems that Paul had split his time between earning a living making tents and preaching. But with his companions again, he started preaching full-time. He moved from the company of the Jewish trade guild and "*went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue*" (Acts 18:7). When he moved Christ gave Paul a message which reminds us that no matter what the world and its people place before us, our savior is with us if we faithfully follow him. "*The Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, 'Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city'*" (Acts 18:9-10). One of my teachers told me, "The lesson for us is to work where you are planted, and The Lord will reward you when the time comes."

When Paul wrote to the church in Corinth sometime later, Paul said, "*I planted*" (1 Corinthians 3:6-7). He referred to the initial message about the Christ and Him crucified but raised. As an apostle, Paul could testify, as an eyewitness, that Jesus was alive and residing on the throne in heaven. By the gifts of the Spirit, he provided Corinthian brethren with evidence and the means of continued edification in the gospel. But as the planter of the Word, it was but a beginning. Verses 24 to 28 of Acts 18 introduce us to Apollos; a man schooled in Old Testament scripture. Aquila and Priscilla taught him about Christ, and he went to Achaia to continue the teaching of Christ in Corinth. Over the years, several men, Timothy and Titus were two of them, worked with and taught the brethren in Corinth.

After 18 months in Corinth, Paul needed to return and give an account of his accomplishments to those who sent him out from Antioch of Syria. Paul left Corinth by its seaport Cenchrea, across the peninsula, on the Aegean Sea, probably in the autumn of 51 CE. Traveling by ship with Priscilla and Aquila, their first stop was at Ephesus. Remember that he was not allowed to preach in this territory

earlier (Acts 16:6). He spoke to the brethren briefly and told them he would return if God permitted. The next stop was the port at Caesarea, then overland for his fourth visit to Jerusalem. Paul probably told the brethren about the acceptance of the letter he carried to the gentiles (Acts 15:22-35) and the success of the gospel. Apparently, he did not tarry long but returned to Antioch to make a report of his second tour as he had done at the close of the first when he and Barnabas came back (Acts 14:26-28). He started this tour with Silas and picked up Timothy and Luke along the way. But he came back alone with a marvelous story to tell.

After a brief stay in Antioch, Paul departs on his third tour, visiting and strengthening the churches in Galatia (Acts 18:23). The introduction to Apollos at Ephesus (Acts 18:24-28) might better be discussed with Paul's visit to Ephesus in chapter 19 as Paul completes the story of Jesus for Apollos' disciples.

Is our learning ever complete?