



Acts Chapter 18

Theme of Acts: The Holy Spirit and the Birth of the Church

Personal Reflection

Complete this section in one sitting or little by little during the week. Begin with prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit into your time. Spending time in the Bible, studying the original intent, meaning and cultural context helps you to understand how it applies to you now.

Further Study

Complete on your own or with your small group.

Personal Reflection

Song for the week: King of My Heart

Song links: <https://youtu.be/pomqj7acJc4?si=yhKmh0nmzgnThsH0>

Read Acts 18 Click on any Bible verse in the study to read it or use your own Bible.

Paul next went to Corinth and spent about 18 months there. Corinth was a center for commerce, wealth and corruption. There they worshiped other gods including Aphrodite (the goddess of love, beauty, pleasure and procreation), Isis (the goddess who brought the dead to life and who magically healed) and Sarapis (also known as Zeus, the god of the underworld and of the sun who healed and was the god of fertility).

Also in Corinth was the Isthmian Games, “a festival of athletic and musical competitions in honor of the sea god Poseidon, held in the spring of the second and fourth years of each Olympiad (Brittanica.com).”

Paul continued to bring the gospel of Jesus to both Jews and the Greeks, many of whom believed in the false gods. The Jews “opposed Paul and became abusive” so he went instead to the Gentiles.

Read John 5:23 and John 14:6. What do these verses tell you about why faith in God is not enough without faith in Jesus?

Who do you find it hardest to witness to, those who believe in God (but not Jesus as their Savior) or to those who do not believe in God at all? Why do you think that is?

Luke did not mention any others with Paul so he may have been alone, seeking friends. Aquila and Priscilla, Jews driven from Rome, were also new to the area. As Luke does not say that they were fellow believers, it is probable that what they had in common was their Jewish heritage and their trade. It could be assumed that it was through their connection to Paul that they learned about Jesus as the Messiah and became Christians.

They became important in the early church. In Romans, Paul wrote, “Greet Prisca and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. Greet also the church that meets at their house.” *Optional, read Romans 16:1-5, 1 Corinthians 16:19, 2 Timothy 4:19*

When Silas and Timothy eventually joined Paul in Corinth, they “brought a gift from Macedonian churches (Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible).” They also “brought something still more gladdening namely, good accounts of the steadfastness of the Thessalonian converts (MacLaren's Expositions).” *Optional, read Philippians 4:15, 1 Thessalonians 3:6-7*

Because of Paul’s preaching, one of the synagogue leaders, Crispus, and his entire household believed in Jesus. Rarely did Paul baptize others; he did not want anyone thinking they were baptized in his name, but he did baptize Crispus. *Optional, read 1 Corinthians 1:13-16*

Paul and the believers began meeting in the house of Titus Justus. “Scholars estimate that many of these large homes in Corinth could fit 40 to 50 persons (Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible).”

“Especially when Christian work is demanding, we need the support of other believers (Life with God Bible).” Paul had many supporting him including Priscilla, Aquila, Silas, Timothy and Titus Justus. Who are you supporting and who is supporting you? List some of the ways you are supporting one another.

Paul’s missionary journey into Europe began with a vision; this is his second recorded vision in Acts. “God does not waste visions ... This vision enables us to conceive Paul’s state of mind ... He was for some reason cast down. Though now he had his friends and many converts, some mood of sadness crept over him ... The consequence of Christ’s presence is not exemption from attacks, but preservation in them (MacLaren's Expositions).” *Optional, read Acts 16:9, Acts 18:9-10*

When your state of mind is cast down, or you are afraid, you can go to Jesus. Who else can you go to for encouragement and prayer?

Luke wrote in his first letter to Theophilus that he “carefully investigated everything” and wrote “an orderly account” so that he “would know the certainty of the things you have been taught (Luke 1:1-4).”

How is studying Acts helping you “know the certainty of the things you have been taught”?

The Bible aligns with what is known about Gallio from outside sources. In Acts 18:12 Luke wrote, “While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews of Corinth made a united attack on Paul and brought him to the place of judgment.” Gallio was born in Spain and named Lucius Annaeus Novatus. He was adopted by the Roman senator, Junius Gallio and changed his name to Lucius Junius Gallio Annaeanus. He was proconsul of Achaia in Greece in 51 AD. His brother was the Stoic philosopher Seneca who was tutor of the future Emperor Nero.

Between 1905 and 1910 a French excavation team in Greece found fragments with Greek inscriptions. It was a copy of a letter from the Emperor Claudius to the city. Part of it reads, “ ... *as my friend and proconsul L. Junius Gallio recently reported to me* ... The Gallio Inscription is a fixed marker by which we can date most of Paul’s ministry and much of the history of the early church (biblearcheologyreport.com).”

The Jews of Corinth brought Paul to the judgment seat, bēma in Greek. “The bema was a speaker’s platform on which the judge sat or stood for the trial of one against whom an accusation had been made ...

The *bema* of ancient Corinth was discovered in the Market during excavations in the early 20th century (biblearcheologyreport.com).”

How does outside proof of the Bible's accuracy impact your faith?

“Gallio’s positive response to Paul was a key building block in the church’s case for a strong legal standing in the empire (Archaeological Study Bible).”

When Paul left Corinth, he sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. “That Priscilla’s name is mentioned first may indicate her prominent role or her higher social position (Archaeological Study Bible).”

Luke does not tell us why Paul cut his hair but it is probable “Paul may have taken a vow (probably a temporary Nazarite vow) in connection with the vision he received. If so, cutting his hair may have been an act of thanksgiving for his protection and for the positive response of the Corinthians to the gospel (Archaeological Study Bible).” *Optional, read Numbers 6:1-21*

In Acts 18:23 Paul started his third missionary journey. Much of the time on this trip he spent in Ephesian imprisonment where he wrote letters to the Greek churches. His imprisonment became an opportunity.

What “imprisonments” have you experienced that became an opportunity?

How might reframing hard times as opportunities help you seek God in the future?

Putting it into practice:

Paul later wrote that believers will stand before God’s judgment seat (*bema*) and give an account to Jesus for what we have done, good or bad. The *bema* judgment is not about salvation as it is by faith in Jesus that we are saved, not by works. Jesus Himself said we would not be judged after salvation. But He did teach that we are accountable for what we are entrusted with. *Optional, read Romans 14:10-12, John 5:22, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Ephesians 2:8-9, John 5:22-24, Matthew 10:41-42, Revelation 22:12*

Consider how you are using what God has entrusted to you. How are you using His gifts?

What new works would you like to be doing for Jesus this week?

When Paul encountered hostility he didn’t double down, he didn’t become distracted and he didn’t allow himself to become consumed by others’ stoic unbelief. He was able to see those who God was speaking to and who were responding to the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we focus too much on the people who say no, who reject Christianity, that we miss or don’t focus on those who are willing to hear more.

Ask God to identify someone in your life who might be willing to hear the Gospel. Then ask Him for the opportunity and the wisdom to share Jesus with them in your own words and personal experiences.

Further Study

Paul taught and mentored but he also developed friendships with other believers like Aquila and his wife Priscilla. No matter if they were physically together or not, Paul continued to remain close to them.

Listen to Michael W Smith's song "Friends Are Friends Forever" together (click the underlined link).

Think back on friendships you have had with other believers in years' past. Often when we reunite, it's like no time has passed and there is much to share. What is it about faith in Jesus that creates bonds within friendship?

What are you doing as a small group - or with others at One Hope - to create friendships that will unite you no matter what distance may one day come between you?

In Ephesus, Paul again went to the synagogue to preach and when he moved on, he left Priscilla and Aquila there. When he left, he said, "I will come back if it is God's will."

"Both Jews and more often Gentiles said 'if it is God's will' ... Sometimes Gentiles use the plural (e.g. 'if the gods are favorable' or 'if the gods will'), but Stoics and others often spoke in this way of 'god,' usually referring to fate or the chief deity Zeus (Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible)."

Today we still use this phrase. Paul was again using language common to people to speak truth. What common language today might you use that could point others to God?

Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He knew the scripture - which at that time would have been the Old Testament. "He is characterized positively for knowledge of scripture, eloquence, and spirit, but he is not too proud to learn from tentmakers Priscilla and Aquila. A wise Christian is always ready to learn, knowing the ministry of Christ is never exhausted (Life with God Bible)."

What helps you be ready to learn?

Prayer

Consider praying together:

God I thank You so much that You love me in spite of my mess, in spite of my failures and weaknesses. Thank you Father that I can come to You and tell You that I have fear and hesitation. I don't have the words to evangelize your Good News to those who don't know You. So I pray that You, the God of all gods, will take away my fear of speaking to others and the fear they won't accept You but reject You.

I pray Father that you would give me the grace, confidence and faith, asking that You work through me, that I may have the courage to boldly meet people where they are and share salvation through Jesus Christ alone. Help me to embrace and recognize what Your Spirit is doing in my life. Allow me to rest in Your arms, in the peace and knowledge of Your faithfulness and omnipotence.

Thank You Lord for Your love, grace, mercy and forgiveness. You are a Father who loves me unconditionally. So I ask, help others to see who You are through me. I desire to please You and fulfill Your will for me in my life. In Your Holy name I ask these things and believe beyond all doubt You will answer my prayer.