

Turning It Around

Acts Chapter 18

Act 18:1

1) Paul in Corinth vs 1-17

After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth.

- Paul travels 50 miles.
- Athens was the intellectual center of the world.
- Corinth was the center of commerce.



- Paul leaving Athens without a sense of success. Yes some believed. Two specifically were saved but as we saw in the last chapter
 - a church was not established,
 - Paul didn't ever revisit the place,
 - He didn't wait for Silas and Timothy before he left town,
 - We do not have a record of him writing an epistle to Athens.
 - Paul left Athens discouraged
 - 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 "when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."
 - This chapter 18:9-10 The Lord needs to encourage Paul
- Corinth:
 - Was an important city for trade and travel
 - Had two shipping ports.
 - Had a temple to Aphrodite (1000 temple prostitutes)
 - The City was known for sexual immorality
 - To be "corinthianized" or to "act like a Corinthian" was to be sexually immoral
 - If you read 1 Corinthians the problems in the church was arguments, lawsuits, and drunkenness.
 - In 146 BC Corinth rebelled against Rome and Rome destroyed it. But a century later Julius Caesar rebuilt the city. The result was a city more indulgent and hedonistic and the Temple to Aphrodite was bigger and housed even more prostitutes.
 - It is interesting that on Paul's third journey, while in Corinth he writes the letter to the Romans. Romans 1:24-32 reads,
"Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one

How to beat discouragement

another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; {they are} gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them."

- Even with all these points of possible discouragement Paul realizes that a Church in Corinth would be a great place to reach many people of the Jesus.

Act 18:2

Get to Work!

- 1) change focus
- 2) accomplish something
- 3) Break the cycle

And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them,

- Paul met a couple Priscilla and Aquila. We know they are Jews exiled from Rome. And Paul meets them and begins working in the same trade as they do.
- The text seems to imply that they were Jews not yet believers. But by the end of this chapter Priscilla and Aquila are traveling with Paul, left in Ephesus to minister in the church and are clarifying the way of God to Apollos.

Act 18:3

and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers.

Act 18:4

And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

- Paul worked as a tentmaker (worked with leather)
- Rabbi's often had a trade in which they could always fall back on and perform in the community.
- Paul also worked as he needed to during his missionary journeys. First to need basic needs and secondly to allow the gospel to be preached unhindered.
 - 1 Corinthians 9:14-18 *"Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the {food} of the temple, {and} those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar? So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel. But I have used none of these things. And I am not writing these things so that it will be done so in my case; for it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one. For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me. What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel."*
- Paul's first missionary outreach is the same as ours. - WHERE WE WORK -
- Paul again reasoned in the synagogue as was his pattern to go to the Jew first.

Act 18:5

Devote yourself to the Word of God!

It is the Word of God that we need to look to. This will work in us encouragement, confidence and faith.

But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul {began} devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

- Silas and Timothy caught up with Paul in Corinth.
- Paul was then able to devote himself completely to the Word and preaching Jesus is the Messiah.
 - KJV is different in that it reads "compelled by the Spirit" speaking of being pushed forward to ministry.
- It seems that Silas and Timothy coming from Philippi in Macedonia brought an offering that supported Paul to completely devote himself
 - 2 Corinthians 11:9 *"when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so."*
 - Philippians 4:15 *"You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;"*

- Act 18:6** But when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood {be} on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."
- Let go of unfruitful tasks!
 1) These drain your energy.
 2) You need to see it is time to let go.
- Paul extended the effort to the Jews first. But they rejected the message. It was time to move on. The gospel was given. The Jews have taken their judgment on their own head.
 - Jesus said in **Matthew 7:6** "*Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.*"
- Act 18:7** Then he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue.
- Act 18:8** Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized.
- Paul leaves and goes next door to a Greek's house. The message and the jealousy was too great for Crispus the leader of the synagogue. He believed.
 - A good question is "How much did leaving the Jews play in Crispus' conversion?"
 - Remember Jesus with the rich young ruler gave him a convicting message and the young man went away sad. Jesus didn't run after him. Jesus knew that the man had to be left with conviction and let that conviction do the work it needs to.
- Act 18:9** And 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;
- Continue in Good Work!
 Keep obeying the Lord!
- The Lord comes to Paul and encourages him.
 - The Lord tells him to don't be afraid no more. (This means Paul was afraid)
 - The Lord tells him to keep speaking. (Possibly Paul was holding back a little)
- Act 18:10** for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city."
- Lean on people around you!
 When discouragement comes upon you find the people near you. You need them, if for anything for prayer. Knowing that someone is with you is a huge lift.
- The Lord tells him that He is with him (*If God be for you who can be against you - Romans 8:31*)
 - The Lord tells him that He has many in this city. A few that we see listed are:
 - Priscilla & Aquila
 - Silas and Timothy
 - Titius Justus
 - Crispus
 - This is different than when Paul was in Athens. I believe the Lord is telling Paul that he needs these people
- Act 18:11** And he settled {there} a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.
- Paul stays there a year and a half
 - Paul knew what the people needed the most. The Word of God.
- Act 18:12** But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat,
- Let others do what they are called to do!
 You do not have to do everything yourself.
- Remember the Lord said to Paul "be afraid no longer" and "no man will attack you to harm you." Jesus didn't say there would not be any attempts. Indeed the Jews rose up against Paul.
- Act 18:13** saying, "This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law."
- Act 18:14** But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to put up with you;
- Paul was about to defend himself. But Gallio dismissed the charge seeing that it was frivolous.
 - It is better to have someone else defend and affirm you than for you to do it yourself.
 - Chuck Smith tells of the Lord speaking to him when he was in a jam, "You know Chuck, I'll let you defend yourself, ...but if you let me I'll do a better job."
- Act 18:15** but if there are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I

am unwilling to be a judge of these matters."

Act 18:16 And he drove them away from the judgment seat.

Act 18:17 And they all took hold of Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and {began} beating him in front of the judgment seat. But Gallio was not concerned about any of these things.

- Gallio had this group of angry Jews driven away from the court.
- The attendants / officers (see KJV) grabbed Sosthenes and beat him with rods to teach him a lesson not to waste the proconsul's time.
- That beating had an effect on Sosthenes. According to 1 Corinthians 1:1 This New leader of the synagogue also became a believer and was a companion of Paul's.
- If you listen to people's testimony of how they became believers many reach a very low point in their life before they surrender to Christ. I hope and pray that you do not have to be beaten down before you surrender you will to Him.

Act 18:18 **2) Sailing Home** vs 18-23

VOWS:
Strength gained
from personal
devotions

Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila. In Cenchrea he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow.

- Paul was not run out of town His time there had simply run out. He "remained many days" then he 'took leave"
- Priscilla and Aquila left with Paul
 - Priscilla listed first indicates that she became a leader in their ministry.
- Paul had cut his hair to end a Nazirite vow. (Numbers 6) (Judges 13)
- The Nazirite vow is a vow of consecration where a man would abstain from
 - Cutting his hair
 - Drinking wine
 - Or touching or being near a dead body
- Paul didn't teach that Gentiles had to participate in Jewish tradition but he also felt that as a Jew it was quite acceptable and proper for a Jew to participate in Jewish traditions, festivals and rituals.
- There may have been the sense of discouragement from Athens and the strong pagan practices in Corinth that Paul felt a need to dedicate himself to the Lord through a consecration vow.
- Paul was ending his vow. The Nazirite Vow was completed by burning the hair shaved with an offering in Jerusalem. Paul desired to leave Corinth and head toward Jerusalem.
- James 5:12 "But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment."
- Matthew 33:37 "Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD.' "But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING. Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' {or} 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil."
- James and Jesus were simplifying these oaths or vows. They are saying "Just do it" or in the case of abstinence, "Just don't do it"

Act 18:19 They came to Ephesus, and he left them there. Now he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.

- Paul sails back and comes to Ephesus.
- Remember God did not allow Paul to travel to Asia(Acts 16:6) With hindsight we can see God was preparing Corinth with it's temple to Aphrodite.
- Ephesus had it's temple also. A temple to Diana (More about this in Chapter 19)

Act 18:20 When they asked him to stay for a longer time, he did not consent,

Act 18:21 but taking leave of them and saying, "I will return to you again if God wills," he set sail from Ephesus.

- Paul again preaches first in the synagogue. The hearers there asked for him to stay longer. They were receiving his teachings.
- Paul wanted to make the feast in Jerusalem (KJV = "*but took leave of them, saying, "I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing."*)
- Paul possibly wanting to make Passover.

- WISDOM - James 4:13-15 "Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are (just) a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, (you ought) to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.""

Act 18:22 When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and went down to Antioch.

- Paul landed in Caesarea and then went UP. Going UP always referred to going up to Jerusalem.
- It was in Jerusalem that he greeted them and then went DOWN to Antioch in Syria which was his home base. Paul will spend some time there with the saints.

Act 18:23 And having spent some time {there,} he left and passed successively through the Galatian region and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

MINISTERS:
Strength gained
from others

- Paul's Third Missionary Journey Begins.



- Paul returns to the Galatia Region the scriptures says "strengthening all the disciples"
- "Strengthening" Paul's ministry wasn't just converting souls. It was strengthening. Our ministries may have a main emphasis, teaching, singing, serving, encouraging. But everyone's role is to strengthen the Body of Christ. Are we asking each other if they are getting stronger?
- "All The Disciples" Paul didn't pick a few. He didn't just speak to his favorites. Paul concerned himself with all. He was strengthening the fringe people, the least of them as well as those who hung on his every word. Are we seeing everyone in the room?

Act 18:24 3) Meanwhile Back in Ephesus vs 24-28

Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures.

- Apollos
 - Jew
 - Alexandrian by birth (second largest city in the empire second only to Rome.)
 - Eloquent
 - Mighty in the Scriptures
- These two traits lead some to believe Apollos was the writer of the Book of Hebrews.

Act 18:25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John;

- Had received instruction concerning the way of the Lord
- Fervent in spirit (*boil over / bubble with enthusiasm*)
- Spoke & taught accurately about Jesus
- Limited to Repentance (John's Baptism)

Act 18:26 and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue.

MINISTRY:
Strength gained
by serving
others

- He Spoke out Boldly

But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

- Priscilla and Aquila heard him in the synagogue.
- They took him aside to help him understand more accurately.
 - Apollos was faithful to what he knew.
 - Apollos was teachable even though he was Eloquent, Mighty in the Scriptures He was still teachable. We too must receive the wisdom God brings us through the people around us.
 - Priscilla and Aquila wasn't trying to stop Apollos but strengthen his understanding.
 - Priscilla and Aquila took him aside to explain. They were not seeking their own authority but help Apollos keep his but with greater insight.

Act 18:27 And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace,

Act 18:28 for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

- With the encouragement and a letter of support, Apollos left Ephesus and went to Achaia. (Corinth)
 - How Apollos was led by the Lord 1) He Inclined 2) The Church Confirmed
- He was of great benefit to those in Corinth
 - Refuted the Jews
 - Used Scripture to show Jesus was the Messiah
- So effective was Apollos that some converts in Corinth became divisive. It does not appear that Apollos taught this.
 - 1 Corinthians 3:4-5 "For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not {mere} men? What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave {opportunity} to each one."
- Even though this occurred, Paul considered Apollos a co-laborer
 - 1 Corinthians 3:6+7 "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth."
 - 1 Corinthians 16:12 "But concerning Apollos our brother, I encouraged him greatly to come to you with the brethren; and it was not at all {his} desire to come now, but he will come when he has opportunity."
 - Paul Planted in Corinth, Apollos Watered
 - Apollos Planted in Ephesus, Paul Watered

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