

ACTS 18: 1 – 18 AN EVER PRESENT HELP

Last week we saw how Paul built a bridge in order to evangelize those with an entirely different worldview. That was a major step and undertaking, but it isn't the first time this has been done. Jesus did it when He left His Father in Heaven and became a man so that He could empathize with us. That is the longest gap to ever be bridged. And we need to always remember that. The point is that this step always has to be taken in order to communicate anything, let alone the Gospel. Now we pick up with Paul as he leaves Athens and goes West, across the isthmus to Corinth. In many ways, once again, he has left one world and entered into a different one. Though Athens and Corinth aren't far apart geographically, they are worlds apart in the vibe of the city. And today we will see how this takes its toll on Paul. But we will also see that God is always a few steps ahead of him in order that His plan works out, as it should.

1 After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. 2 And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had

recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. 3 So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers. 4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.

5 When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. 6 But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." 7 And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. 8 Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.

9 Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; 10 for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city." 11 And he continued there a year and

six months, teaching the word of God among them.

12 When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat, 13 saying, "This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law."

14 And when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, O Jews, there would be reason why I should bear with you. 15 But if it is a question of words and names and your own law, look to it yourselves; for I do not want to be a judge of such matters." 16 And he drove them from the judgment seat. 17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. But Gallio took no notice of these things. 18 So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him. He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a VOW.

MAP

This whole section is bookended by things we can date.

Caesar Claudius' decree – AD 49 (over issues between Jews and Christians)

Gallio – second half of AD 51 to early 52.

Paul meets Aquila and Priscilla – tentmakers – all things to do with lather work and possibly making/ repairing sails in a port city. Business partners? A place to stay. Just who he is going to need in Corinth.

Bio on Corinth. Typical port city, large temple brothel. Military post. “Corinthian girl.” Temples, several and one to Caesar.

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“Compelled.”

Major blow-back. Paul's frustration comes out like it hasn't before. (To the Gentiles, washings his hands of the Jews. Not permanent, just here in Corinth.

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worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. 8 Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.

Moves next door/ across the street to teach. Having success but is fed up with the Jews. Then look at Jesus does for him.

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Jesus encourages him. He knew he needed this. And if we look back a few verses, we see that Paul met up with Aquila and Priscilla, same trade, a home. Paul was able to take out his tools for the first time in a long time. God needed him here for a longer time and set all this up for him, knowing he would face all the blow-back from the zealous Jews. And as we go ahead, we can see God moving again.

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Jews take Paul to court and tell Gallio what their problem is.

Paul is going to defend himself when Gallio speaks.

This is an internal matter, not a criminal one.

Gallio wants no part of it.

What does this mean? That at least in Corinth, though not in Rome, Christianity and Judaism

are still considered the same faith and the religious exemption still stands. This gives Paul the time and room he needs to evangelize there. And as we have already been told, Paul stayed there for a year and a half.

Paul spent more time in Corinth and wrote more to this church than to any other. And it was this church that gave him the most trouble. Just read the letters of 1st and 2nd Corinthians.

But what are we to make of this and take from it? God knew how rough it was going to be for Paul and He foresaw the frustration of Paul.

Therefore, God sent Aquila and Priscilla as friends and supporters, giving him a home, plenty of work so that he could support himself for an extended stay. Jesus spoke to him in a vision, encouraging him, telling him that there were many people there who would hear and believe, despite all the trouble he would have. And this time Paul wouldn't have to take a beating. He didn't even have to defend himself in court. While Corinth wasn't a rose garden, God was there ahead of Paul, setting the stage, giving him the legal protection he needed, giving him the support system he would need to do what had to be done. God was there. God was there "before Paul" was. God moved people into

his life in order to help him and God's plan to move forward.

And God moves like this for us also. We may not always see it. But look around you and take account of the people God has placed in your life. Take account of the situations, not just the pleasant ones, but even the bad ones He has brought you out of. God has a plan for the world. He has a plan for each of us. And when we are moving forward, in the Spirit, moving God's plan forward, then we will see, if we are looking, how God is moving. And we will get that encouraging word from a friend or acquaintance, or even from the Lord Himself, when it is needed. We aren't promised a rose garden, but we are promised help, encouragement and whatever is needed to finish the journey.