

CORINTH TO ANTIOCH

ACTS 18



T. M. AND SUSIE MOORE

A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

Corinth to Antioch: Acts 18
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Introduction to Acts 18

Paul continues his ministry in Greece, moving from Thessalonica and Berea to Athens, then Corinth. In Corinth, the Lord instructs him to stay put, even though the people don't seem to be all that hospitable, and he has to work a "day job" to support his ministry.

Still, the work continues: preach the Good News, organize churches, train leaders, make disciples, put up with the threats and raging of unbelievers, win more people to the Lord. The ongoing work of Christ is being replicated in Greece, just as previously in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and Asia Minor.

Paul is a powerful witness, an excellent communicator, and a dedicated church planter. He shows us how to think about finding our place in the ongoing work of Christ in our day.

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We hope you find this study of Acts instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

T. M. Moore, Principal
tmmoore@ailbe.org

1 Settling In

Pray Psalm 25.4, 5.

Show me Your ways, O LORD;
Teach me Your paths.
Lead me in Your truth and teach me,
For You *are* the God of my salvation;
On You I wait all the day.

Sing Psalm 25.4, 5.

(Festal Song: [Rise Up, O Men of God](#))

Make me to know Your ways, teach me Your paths, O Lord!
My Savior, all day long I wait and seek You in Your Word.

Read and meditate on Acts 18.1-4.

Preparation

1. Whom did Paul meet in Corinth?

2. What did he do with them?

Meditation

Paul's strategy in Corinth marks a change in his approach to pursuing the ongoing work of Christ. Why did he decide to settle in with this man and woman and take up a "day job" in Corinth? Well, we don't know, but we can assume the Lord was leading him in this way, as will be confirmed in v. 9.

Paul took up with Aquilla and Priscilla, joining them in their trade to support his work (vv. 2, 3). We note that God had providentially brought this couple to Corinth from Rome (v. 2), undoubtedly for the purpose of learning from and helping to provide for Paul. Paul continued in Corinth for 18 months, the longest he had stayed in one place to this point. He pursued his ministry in the synagogue week by week, and wherever else he could meet people, to reason with them, as time permitted (v. 4). God blessed him with converts from both the Jews and the Greeks (v. 4).

Tentmaking – bi-vocational work – is a reasonable option for Christians called to the ministry of the Word. But the fact that a man has other employment to support him in his ministry, does not excuse those who are served by his labors from helping to meet his needs (Gal. 6.6; cf. 1 Cor. 9.3-18). And the fact that others may have their work in a full-time occupation other than proclaiming the Word does not excuse them from being witnesses for the Lord (Acts 1.8).

Paul was committed to doing whatever was necessary to keep the ongoing work of Christ going forward (1 Cor. 9.19-23). The Corinthians – except for Priscilla and Aquila – were neither very hospitable nor generous where Paul was concerned. From his two epistles, we learn that they seem to have been an immature, contentious, and self-centered lot. But God kept Paul there for 18 months (v. 11).

The ongoing work of Christ is not always pleasant, but it is always ongoing.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Paul is training us to be faithful in all our endeavors by his example in Corinth. (Acts 18.3, 4).

It does not matter what job we are called to; what matters is that we are faithful to do the work in our

Personal Mission Field, regardless of our field of endeavor.

“Oh, love the LORD, all you His saints! For the LORD preserves the faithful...” (Ps. 31.23).

“Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things...” (Matt. 25.23).

“He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much...” (Lk. 16.10).

Up to this point, Paul has had a rather dramatic life. First a tormenter and killer of Christians; then a tormented and outspoken Christian speaker and writer. Now, he is a tentmaker.

Paul’s enthusiasm for life never waned, regardless of his calling. Filled with the Holy Spirit, he took on the job of making tents with pride and sincerity. The conversations about the Lord Jesus between Aquila and Priscilla and Paul must have been fascinating and mind-expanding. The one-on-one teaching during the times of work must have been uplifting. We can almost hear the singing of hymns and the quoting of psalms and the discussions about the Sabbath reasoning in the synagogue.

And what a blessing this was for Aquila and Priscilla! They had been run out of their home in Rome by Claudius simply for being Jews (Acts 18.2), And now they were fellowshiping with Paul the apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So often in hindsight, we can see the blessings God has planned for us, that have emanated from a sad and hard time in our lives. For these three souls it appears like a time of refreshing and restoration that God knew they all needed.

Paul’s ministry was taking place all day, every day. Not just on the Sabbath when he reasoned with the folks in the synagogue. Paul never got confused about where his Personal Mission Field was because it was everywhere. In the church, or the marketplace, speaking to crowds, or making a tent.

We need to learn this very thing from him. Our work as Christians takes place everywhere, too. We must be committed, as Paul was, to doing whatever is necessary to keep the ongoing work of Christ going forward! Here are Paul’s words written back to the church in Corinth: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1Cor. 15.58).

For reflection

1. The work we’ve been given to do in God’s Kingdom is greater than the job at which we work. Explain. But it includes our job. Explain.

2. What will you do today to encourage and equip other disciples of Jesus who are in your Personal Mission Field?

3. Paul “reasoned” with unbelievers, but always from the Scriptures. What does that mean? How ready are you to do this work?

Paul, after countless journeys, despite such great wonders, stayed with a tentmaker and sewed skins. Angels honored him and demons trembled at him, and still he was not ashamed to say, “These same hands served my needs and those who were with me.”
John Chrysostom (344-407), *Catena on the Acts of the Apostles 18.3-5*

Pray Psalm 25.6-10.

Thank God for His abundant lovingkindness toward you. Enumerate His blessings, mercy, and goodness to you. Seek His guidance for this day, that you may serve Him in truth and according to His covenant.

Sing Psalm 25.6-10.

(Festal Song: [*Rise Up, O Men of God*](#))

Remember mercy, Lord, and steadfast love to me!
And all my sins before You let them not remembered be!

My sins have been of old, Your love is new each day;
according to Your goodness, Lord, regard my sinful way.

Upright and good are You, You lead us in Your way;
the humble You instruct in truth and guide him day by day.

The paths of God are all of love and faithfulness;
all they who keep His covenant the Lord will surely bless.

2 Fear Not, Stay Put, Speak On, Don't Worry

Pray Psalm 125.1, 2.

Those who trust in the LORD
Are like Mount Zion,
Which cannot be moved, *but* abides forever.
As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
So the LORD surrounds His people
From this time forth and forever.

Sing Psalm 125.1, 2.

(St. Gertrude: *Onward, Christian Soldiers*)
All who trust in Jesus, strong as Zion stand!
Naught shall ever move them from their promised land!
Like the hills surrounding safe Jerusalem,
Christ surrounds His Church and holds her in His mighty Hand!

Refrain, v. 1

All who trust in Jesus, strong as Zion stand!
Naught shall ever move them from their promised land!

Read Acts 18.1-11; meditate on verses 5-11.

Preparation

1. Who joined Paul in Corinth?
2. Who spoke to him in a vision?

Meditation

Paul and Silas having arrived from Macedonia (v. 5), and the team was back to full strength. The Jews in Corinth opposed and reviled Paul as he testified to them that Jesus is the Christ Paul (v 5). He knew when he'd worn out his welcome, but he didn't leave without a word of warning about the judgment of God (v. 6). Paul determined to go among the Gentiles in Corinth, and to symbolize that, he changed his residence (v. 7). This is not a slight to Aquila and Priscilla; rather, it was a tactical move. Having left the synagogue, where he had a platform for speaking about Jesus, he needed a place to meet with Gentiles, and so the home of a Gentile would have been a more agreeable venue than that of a Jewish couple.

This was a good move – conveniently enough – since Justus' home was right next to the synagogue (in case any Jews might want to wander in). Paul's leaving shocked certain members of the Jewish community. The ruler – the chief elder – of their synagogue, Crispus, apparently became persuaded of the Gospel and went with him (v. 8).

Many began coming to faith (v. 8). Paul doubtless began to worry about this, given what had happened in previous cities. But the Lord Jesus appeared to Paul to encourage him in his ministry, which would continue in Corinth for a year and a half. Note the Lord's commands: Fear not, stay put, speak on, don't worry. Jesus had many in Corinth who were among His people – elect, but not yet saved. He willed that Paul should continue seeking those lost sheep until enough had been gathered to ensure the ongoing work of Christ in Corinth was not only launched but established as well.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

The order of these verses is significant. Paul, who had been reasoning with the Jews (v. 4), felt compelled by the Spirit, Silas and Timothy having arrived, to testify to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 18.5). Evidently, he had not done this so far. The Jews reacted poorly, and something seemed to have snapped in Paul's thinking about his ministry. He said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads" (v. 6).

Whereupon the ruler of the synagogue, with all his household, believed on the Lord (Acts 18.8). The very people Paul "shook off" now became believers.

I once heard a radio show about people caring for their injured or otherwise disabled loved ones. The premise was that sometimes overwhelming love gets in the way of the best care. Seems counter-intuitive, I know. But when you think about it, sometimes we don't do or say the *hard* things because we care too much.

So I am wondering about Paul: Could it be that his love for the Jews was hampering his message to them? Was his "reasoning" merely interesting and non-objectionable? After all, it was only after the arrival of Silas and Timothy that Paul seems to have unloaded the truth about Jesus being the Messiah. Was his Sabbath reasoning with them perhaps merely academic? (Acts 18.4) Was he withholding the warning, "Your blood *be* upon your *own* heads" (v. 6) out of love? I'm not judging Paul; I'm merely wondering.

Many of us have loved ones who are not believers. Because of more than "brotherly love and concern" we are grieved in the extreme for their souls. What if we were able to lay this all on Jesus? What if we were willing to "shake off" the human worry and trust the very able Lord Jesus to bring them to Himself? It does seem that once Paul, in his heart, put the salvation of the Jews in another category, things happened (Acts 18.8). His fondest hopes began to be realized when he removed his overt care and trusted the Lord for the results.

Again, just wondering. But here is what I know for sure: God cares more for our loved ones than even we do (1 Pet. 5.7). Shake off the worrying about them, and put on trust in the Lord. Let's claim this Word for them: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3.9).

Maybe backing off and trusting, like Paul did, could be just what they need to come to Christ?

For reflection

1. Do you think it's possible to love a lost one so much that you hold off telling the whole Gospel to them? Explain.
2. Paul's message to the Jews in Corinth was sharpened by the arrival of Timothy and Silas. Do you have a prayer partner or mission partner to encourage you in working your Personal Mission Field? Could you benefit from having one? Explain.
3. How would you describe the state of the ongoing work of Christ in your life at this time?

Let us not despair concerning any place, when even in wicked Corinth Christ had much people. He will gather in his chosen flock from the places where they are scattered. Thus encouraged, the apostle continued at Corinth, and a numerous and flourishing church grew up. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Acts 18.7-11

Pray Psalm 125.3-5.

Ask the Lord to protect His people from wickedness and to redouble their efforts in seeking the Kingdom and righteousness of the Lord. Pray for God's peace to be on you throughout this day and on all those who serve Jesus throughout the world.

Sing Psalm 125.3-5, 1.

(St. Gertrude: [*Onward, Christian Soldiers*](#))

Wickedness shall rest not on this holy land;
sinfulness shall never come forth from their hand.

Trusting in the Savior, firm in His caress,
Ever shall His favor on this holy city rest.

Refrain, v. 1

All who trust in Jesus, strong as Zion stand!
Naught shall ever move them from their promised land!

Lord, do good and care for those upright in heart.

All who turn to evil shall from You depart.

Sinful men may increase, on their way to hell!

Save Your people, let your peace abound in Israel!

Refrain

3 Trouble in Corinth

Pray Psalm 53.5, 6.

There they are in great fear
Where no fear was,
For God has scattered the bones of him who encamps against you;
You have put *them* to shame,
Because God has despised them.
Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion!
When God brings back the captivity of His people,
Let Jacob rejoice *and* Israel be glad.

Sing Psalm 53.6, 6.

(Leoni: *The God of Abraham Praise*)

The wicked flee in shame; their ways our God rejects.
Renew Your people in Your Name with great effects!
Let great rejoicing sound once we renewed have been,
and let salvation's Word resound from us again!

Read Acts 18.1-17; meditate on verses 12-17.

Preparation

1. What happened to Paul?
2. How did the judge respond?

Meditation

It was inevitable. Those who could not silence Paul by reason or reviling, decided to turn the instruments of government against him (vv. 12, 13). We see this in every age, including our own. We should not be surprised when people try to force Christians either to conform or be silent by appealing to civil government.

Paul was about to explain himself (v. 14), but Gallio, being a true Roman magistrate, recognized at once that this was a *religious* matter and should be settled within the *religious* community (v. 15). The Romans allowed all kinds of religions in the Empire, as long as all participants, regardless of their sect, remained devoted to the emperor. Each sect had its own forms of discipline; Rome only got involved with civil matters.

The problem as the Jews saw it, of course, was that Paul was still preaching *right next door!* (v. 7) So, since they couldn't get at Paul, why not beat up one of their own? (v. 17: I take "all" in v. 17 as referring to the Jews, not the Greeks. "Jews" – also "your", "yourselves", and "them" – are the only plural antecedents in this passage, and "the Greeks" is not in the original text.) Why Sosthenes? Perhaps because he was leaning toward, if not already supporting, Paul in his mission. Perhaps as a warning to other synagogue members. That beating seems only to have strengthened Sosthenes in his faith and determination to follow Jesus together with Paul (1 Cor. 1.1).

We might be inclined to think that Paul was not a very good witness for the Lord, since everywhere he went, folks got upset and tried to bash him. But this is exactly what Jesus told us to expect, and Paul certainly understood this would be the case. Nevertheless, he was undeterred in his witness, and the Lord took care of him, even though the ongoing work of Christ meant he must suffer indignities, hostility, and even violence.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

For all the claims that there is no God (Ps.14.1), people get mighty upset about Someone Who doesn't exist.

That's the thing about Jesus. If you believe that He exists, and that He rose from the dead, just as He said He would (Matt. 28.6), then you must also believe the other things that He said. And those things have great bearing on your personal life and how you live it. "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (Jn. 14.6).

So unbelievers must strive very hard to expunge the reality of Jesus Christ. It has always been thus.

It is interesting to note that there is not much violence associated with Santa Claus, the Easter bunny, or the tooth fairy. Though they are joy-bringing phenomena, they have no power. Life and death are not in their wheelhouse.

But Jesus. What we do with Him is The Issue of all time.

"Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing?"

"Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way,
when His wrath is kindled but a little.

Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him." (Ps. 2.1, 11, 12)

There will always be "trouble in Corinth". But when we put our trust in Jesus, He will be with us as we stand with Him, believing in Him, the great I AM.

"I AM WHO I AM." (Ex. 3.14)

"Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.'" (Jn. 8.58).

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live" (Jn. 11.25).

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (Jn. 14.27).

There is indeed a God. Worship Him (Acts 18.13).

For reflection

1. Why do some people get upset about being encouraged to believe in Jesus?
2. Their aversion to the Gospel can make us reluctant to share. How can we overcome that reluctance?
3. How can believers help one another be more consistent in their witness for the Lord?

No crime had been committed against Rome. Gallio considered Christianity to be a Jewish sect. Because Judaism was an established religion in the Roman Empire, this "sect" was not in violation of Roman law. Gallio had his bailiffs drive the accusers out of his presence. Once again the sovereign hand of God preserved the life of His faithful servant. Earl Radmacher (1931-2014), NKJV Study Bible Note on Acts 18.14

Pray Psalm 53.1-5.

Pray for Christians around the world who are experiencing persecution. Pray for safety and boldness for them, and that God would work in their tormentors and many would come to faith in Jesus. Pray for the unbelievers in your Personal Mission Field, and ask God to let you bear witness to Jesus today.

Sing Psalm 53.1-5.

(Leoni: The God of Abraham Praise)

The fool says in his heart, "There is no God at all!"

Corrupt are they in whole and part, unjust and small.
Not one of them does good; God sees their wicked ways.
None understands the Word of God or gives Him praise.

Have all these wicked men no knowledge of God's grace?
The Church they hate with passion and seek not God's face.
Lord, strike their hearts with fear, where fear was not before.
And scatter all who camp so near Your holy door.

4 Ministering As He Goes

Pray Psalm 33.1-3.

Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous!
For praise from the upright is beautiful.
Praise the LORD with the harp;
Make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings.
Sing to Him a new song;
Play skillfully with a shout of joy.

Sing Psalm 33.1-3.

(Truro: *Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*)

Sing with rejoicing in the Lord, for praise becomes His righteous ones!
With harps and songs raise grateful words, and let new songs of praise be sung!

Read Acts 18.1-23; meditate on verses 18-23.

Preparation

1. What did Paul do on his way back to Antioch?
2. What did he do while he was there?

Meditation

God had called Paul to be a minister of the Gospel, and Paul took that call very seriously. Even as he made his journey back to Antioch – the end of his second missionary journey – Paul ministered to the believers all along the way.

First stop, Cenchreae (v. 18), from where he would take his leave by ship to Syria. He took a vow here and shaved his head, doubtless to gain entry among the Jewish community there.

Next stop, Ephesus (vv. 19-21), and a little seed-sowing in the synagogue before probably finding a new ship to continue his journey. Paul was encouraged by the response at Ephesus, so, since he could not remain, he left Aquila and Priscilla to continue sowing and cultivating the Kingdom seed.

His next stop was Caesarea (v. 22). From there he made a quick journey to Jerusalem to greet the church there, and probably to give a report on his journey. Then back home to Antioch (v. 22), continuing his ministry there in his home church. After spending some time there, Paul began his third missionary journey, heading out overland to visit and strengthen the churches he and Barnabas had birthed on an earlier journey (v. 23).

Paul was called to minister the Word of God, and ministering the Word of God defined every aspect of his life. Whether he was doing the work of evangelism, doing good to others, making disciples, or developing leaders for the next generation, the ministry of the Word was central. We are called to imitate Paul and Jesus as ministers of His Word (1 Cor. 11.; Eph. 4.11, 12), bringing the truth and grace of Jesus to everyone in our Personal Mission Field. Let Paul's example guide your own work today.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“We are called to imitate Paul and Jesus as ministers of His Word, bringing the truth and grace of Jesus to everyone in our Personal Mission Field.”

Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus, to encourage them in their faith and calling. He told them that this was how he prayed for them: that God “would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3.16-19).

And then he added these additional words of blessing: “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (Eph. 3.20, 21).

Whom are we able to tell that we pray for them in this way?

To whom have we ministered who could use this kind of encouragement?

Who in our life needs to know about the width, length, depth and height of God’s love for them?

With whom can we share the exceeding abundance of God’s love today?

Are you in the Word daily, being reminded and encouraged about God’s love for you?

Are you ready for God’s power to work within you for His glory?

We must find our strength to serve in God’s Word. “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4.16).

And then let us minister as we go, like Paul, so that we can write and live words of love and encouragement to those in our Personal Mission Field.

For reflection

1. Jesus commanded us to make disciples as we are going (Matt. 28.18-20). Why is it important that you map out your Personal Mission Field?
2. Can we make disciples if we’re not growing as disciples ourselves? Explain.
3. What’s one thing you can do today to improve in working your Personal Mission Field?

Let us earnestly seek, in our several places, to promote the cause of Christ, forming plans that appear to us most proper, but relying on the Lord to bring them to pass if he sees good. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Acts 18.18-23*

Pray Psalm 33.4-12.

Pray for God to bless you and all His people to bear witness to Jesus by your lives and words throughout your own Personal Mission Fields.

Sing Psalm 33.4-12.

(Truro: [*Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*](#))

Joyfully shout! His Word is true; He does His work in faithfulness.

His love prevails the whole world through; the Lord loves truth and righteousness.

God spoke and heaven came to be, and all its hosts His Spirit wrought.
He heaps the waters of the sea; the deeps their dwelling place are taught.

Let all below now fear the Lord; let all in awe of Him abide!
The worlds exist by Jesus’ Word; let all on earth in Him confide.

He nullifies the nations’ plans; forever stands His sov’rign Word.

All they are blessed who with Him stand – the chosen people of the Lord.

5 God's Timing (1)

Pray Psalm 78.1-4.

Give ear, O my people, to my law;
Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
I will open my mouth in a parable;
I will utter dark sayings of old,
Which we have heard and known,
And our fathers have told us.
We will not hide *them* from their children,
Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD,
And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.

Sing Psalm 78.1-4.

(Foundation: *How Firm a Foundation*)

Give ear, O my people, attend to my word, dark sayings and parables sent from the Lord, things we have before by our fathers been told, which we would not dare from our children withhold.

Read Acts 18.1-25; meditate on verses 24 and 25.

Preparation

1. How did Luke describe Apollos?

2. What did Apollos do?

Meditation

We don't know anything more about Apollos than what we read here. He was steeped in the Old Testament, eloquent, and a believer in Jesus as the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world. But that's all he knew.

Still, he preached this message fervently, believing John's witness concerning Jesus, but not knowing anything beyond that. Apollos shows us that we must be zealous to proclaim as much of Jesus as we know, even though there's always room for learning and growth. We don't have to be theologians or preachers to tell others what we have seen and know to be true about Jesus. We may not be able to answer all their questions, but we can at least show them Jesus.

Jesus had said He would build His Church (Matt. 16.18), and in the book of Acts we're getting a good look at the ways He carries out this commitment. A strong unity existed among the churches of the Lord during this period, and this made it possible for people like Paul and Apollos to be available as the Lord led to serve in various places, if only for limited periods of time. In each place they served, they left disciples who were strengthened in their love and witness for the Lord.

The Spirit of God supervised and energized this work, and not even the gates of hell could prevail against it, much less the Jews or the Romans. God continues raising up leaders to keep the ongoing work of Christ *ongoing*. Priscilla, Aquila, Apollos, Timothy, Titus – all became effective leaders in their generation, in no small part because of their association with Paul. Leaders don't just happen. They must be made.

Pray that God will make you a more faithful leader and witness in His ongoing work.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Apollos was not fully knowledgeable about Christ and the way of salvation; but what he did know, he was diligent to share. And he was fervent. The dictionary defines this as having or displaying a passionate intensity. And a passionate intensity about following the Scriptures is a characteristic to emulate.

He had so many wonderful characteristics: eloquence, mighty in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, instructed in the way of the Lord, fervent in spirit, willing to teach and speak, and boldness in his witness.

God's timing is always perfect. Apollos was in the right place at the right time, and hearts were blessed. Being fervent in spirit, along with his humility, made him a great help in the ongoing work of the Church (Acts 18.26, 27).

So many of his characteristics are those that Paul wrote to praise as testaments of righteous living: "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord..." (Rom. 12.9-11).

Peter also encouraged this characteristic. "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart..." (1 Pet. 1.22).

We are all called to be fervent in spirit, with a passionate intensity about our own faith and work. "I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes forever, to the very end" (Ps. 119.112).

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Ps. 51.10).

Apollos was the antithesis of what William Butler Yeats wrote about in his poem, *The Second Coming*: "The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity." Yet another truth that needs to be turned upside-down for the Lord!

So let us also be the antithesis of the norm and be the best – the Christ-ones full of passionate intensity for our Savior and His Kingdom and glory. Just like Apollos. Fervent in spirit.

For reflection

1. Would you describe your work in your Personal Mission Field as "fervent"? Explain.
2. Where does fervor for the Lord come from? How does being fervent for the Lord relate to our time in His Word?
3. How can you encourage your fellow believers to be more fervent in serving the Lord?

*The dispensation of the Spirit, whatever the measure of it may be, is given to every man to profit withal. [Apollos] was a lively, affectionate preacher; fervent in spirit. He was full of zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of precious souls. Here was a complete man of God, thoroughly furnished for his work. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Acts 18.24-28**

Pray Psalm 78.5-7.

Pray for all the teachers in your church, that they might be faithful in all their teaching and in urging their students to search the Scriptures daily.

Sing Psalm 78.5-7.

(Foundation: [How Firm a Foundation](#))

The glorious deeds of our God in His might, and all of the works He has done in our sight, together with all of the words of His Law, would we on ourselves and our children bestow.

Lord, let all our children arise and declare the truth of the Lord every day, everywhere,
and set all their hopes in God's wonderful Word, and never forget all the works of the Lord.

6 God's Timing (2)

Pray Psalm 19.7, 8.

The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul;
The testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple;
The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes...

Sing Psalm 19.7, 8.

(St. Christopher: *Beneath the Cross of Jesus*)

The Law of God is perfect, His testimony sure;
the simple man God's wisdom learns, the soul receives its cure.
God's Word is right, and His command is pure, and truth imparts;
He makes our eyes to understand; with joy He fills our hearts.

Read Acts 18.1-28; meditate on verses 26-28.

Preparation

1. What did Priscilla and Aquila do for Apollos?
2. Where did Apollos go to do his ministry?

Meditation

How timely that Paul left Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus – for such a time as this (Act 18.19).

Apollos was fervent and persuasive in his witness for Christ, but his witness lacked some important details. Priscilla and Aquila filled in the gaps of Jesus' life and work, which, for Apollos, would have made more of the pieces of the Old Testament puzzle fall into place in the story of redemption (v. 26).

Apollos seems to have been looking for a place to serve, and when he learned about the Gospel taking root in Corinth and elsewhere, he longed to go to Achaia (southern Greece as we know it today, v. 27), perhaps because he may have been trained in Greek culture and literature in Alexandria. Apollos was seeking to serve the Lord in a context most agreeable to his background, training, interests, and skills.

The believers in Ephesus wrote Apollos a letter of recommendation (v. 27), and Priscilla and Aquila may have gone with him, to introduce him to the believers, before continuing on to Rome (Rom. 16.3), which had been their home (Acts 18.2).

Apollos appears to have been well received and effective in his ministry among the churches Paul had started in Greece (vv. 27, 28; cf. 1 Cor. 1.12; 3.5-9). The emergence of evangelists and teachers like Priscilla, Aquila, and Apollos is further evidence that this is a work of God, and not just some personality cult organized around Peter or Paul or anyone else.

God uses the gifts and insights He gives to each of us to help others in their calling. We must be ready and available to our fellow believers to encourage, instruct, and assist as needed so that the ongoing work of Christ can continue in our lives and theirs.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Look at all the different ways and examples the Scriptures put forth for us to serve!

Priscilla and Aquila took Apollos aside. They did not publicly embarrass him, but quietly explained to him the “way of God more accurately” (Acts 18.26). They watered the seeds already planted in his heart.

Then we see Apollos do for others what they had done for him. He “greatly helped those who had believed through grace...” (Acts 18.27). He, too, watered seeds that had already been planted.

Apollos then showed up at the local synagogue and refuted the Jews publicly, “showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 18.28). He planted firmly. This, no doubt, brought with it some vigorous turning over of the soil.

“To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven:
A time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted...” (Ecc. 3.1, 2).

Paul, later in his letter to the church in Corinth, expounded upon the unique skills that God has given each of us to use in our Personal Mission Field: “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase” (1 Cor. 2.5, 6).

Each of us is called by God to do the things that He has called us to do. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2.10).

It is interesting to note that we are called to a variety of tasks each day. Just like the people in the book of Acts. Sometimes we water. Other times we plant. Some days we till the soil. But always we should be shining the light and love of the Lord Jesus on everyone. After all, Jesus told us that we are the light of the world, and that we are to let our light so shine before people, that they see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven (Matt. 5.14, 16).

And when all this seems too hard, we have Paul’s words of encouragement from his own experience: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Phil.4.13).

In every moment of every day, there is something we can do to fulfill our calling from the Lord. Pray. Plant. Pray. Water. Pray. Shine. Pray. Without ceasing (1 Thess. 5.17).

For reflection

1. What works of ministry (Eph. 4.11, 12) do you expect to be involved in today? How should you prepare for these?
2. We need to encourage our brothers and sisters in the Lord (Heb. 10.24). Whom will you encourage today?
3. Why do we need to be always in prayer as we go out into our Personal Mission Field?

*Here was a complete man of God, thoroughly furnished for his work. Aquila and Priscilla encouraged his ministry, by attendance upon it. They did not despise Apollos themselves, or undervalue him to others; but considered the disadvantages he had labored under. And having themselves got knowledge in the truths of the gospel by their long intercourse with Paul, they told what they knew to him. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Acts 18.24-28**

Pray Psalm 19.9-14.

Ask God to let His Word penetrate, search, cleanse, and transform your soul, and to equip you for every good work you will do today.

Sing Psalm 19:9-14.

(St. Christopher: *Beneath the Cross of Jesus*)

The fear of God is cleansing, forever shall it last.

His judgments all are true and just, by righteousness held fast.

O seek them more than gold most fine, than honey find them sweet;

be warned by every word and line; be blessed with joy complete.

Who, Lord, can know his errors? O keep sin far from me!

Let evil rule not in my soul that I may blameless be.

O let my thoughts, let all my words, before Your glorious sight

be pleasing to You, gracious Lord, acceptable and right!

7 Momentum

Pray Psalm 133.1.

Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is*
For brethren to dwell together in unity!

Sing Psalm 133.1, 3.

(Tryggare Kan Ingen Vara: [*Children of the Heavenly Father*](#))
Behold, how sweet, how pleasant, when the brethren dwell together;
all in unity abiding find God's blessing there presiding.

Read Acts 18.1-28; meditate on verses 5, 17, 18, and 24-26.

Preparation

1. What do all the verses for meditation have in common?
2. How can you see momentum building for the Gospel in this chapter?

Meditation

Since Acts 15 a subtle development has been taking place, one that would be a constant feature of Paul's ministry and that sets a template for all the followers of Christ (1 Cor. 11.1).

First Silas became a member of Paul's ministry team (Acts 15.40). Timothy was enlisted in Lystra (Acts 16.1, 2), and Luke joined them as they entered Europe (Acts 16.10: "we"). Silas and Timothy became so effective and dependable that Paul could leave them to care for the churches in Berea as he went south to Athens (Acts 17.13, 14). They would join him later in Athens (Acts 17.15).

From Athens Paul went to Corinth, where he brought Priscilla and Aquila into his work (Acts 18.2, 3) and later, Sosthenes (v. 17; cf. 1 Cor. 1.1). Priscilla and Aquila became so effective in disciple-making that the Lord sent Apollos to them for further training (Acts 18.24-27) before he moved on the Greece to continue the ongoing work begun by Paul and his team (Acts 18.27). For his next missionary journey, Paul returned to those places where churches had been established and shepherds were in place, leading their flocks to enter ever more deeply into the Kingdom of God (Acts 18.23; cf. Acts 14.21-23).

The development? Disciple-making, which we see extending to a third generation from Paul: Paul, Priscilla and Aquila, Apollos. We must never forget that the Great Commission of our Lord is not merely to win converts, but to make disciples (Matt. 28.18-20). As Paul would later put it, we must seek out and train faithful people to do the work of ministry, and to do it so well that they will make disciples of others also (2 Tim. 2.2).

Paul took this as his mission. It must be ours as well, working in our Personal Mission Fields just as Paul did in His to make disciple-making disciples by every available means. Making disciples creates Kingdom momentum for turning the world rightside-up for Jesus.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Part of making disciple-making disciples is the comfort and care we offer to one another. Also, an aspect of positive peer pressure can be seen at play here when Silas and Timothy arrived in Corinth. They seemed to have lit a fire under Paul to ratchet up his witness in the synagogue (Acts 18.5).

But most encouraging are the relationships between all these people. They were bolstering one another's courage and resolve to live for Jesus and His Kingdom (Acts 17.7) in very difficult times and circumstances.

We should offer the same comfort to one another that God offers to us. He said, "I, even I, am He who comforts you. Who are you that you should be afraid of a man who will die, and of the son of man who will be made like grass?" "I have covered you with the shadow of My hand" (Is. 51.12, 16).

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ" (2 Cor. 1.3-5).

"Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing" (1 Thess. 5.11).

As Psalm 133.1 says, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

There is something so absolutely special about Christian fellowship because our Lord Jesus promises that "where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matt. 18.20).

The great joy of having a Personal Mission Field is that there is always something we can do, someone we can encourage, someone we can comfort, someone we can pray with, someone we can share the Good News of Jesus with; and someone we can worship with any time of the day or night. That's momentum. That's life to the fullest.

For reflection

1. Your Personal Mission Field includes many believers. How will you encourage them today in their walk with and work for the Lord?
2. Who encourages you in your ministry? Have you thanked them lately?
3. What can you do to enrich the fellowship of believers in your church?

Young scholars may gain a great deal by conversing with old Christians. Those who do believe through grace, yet still need help. As long as they are in this world, there are remainders of unbelief, and something lacking in their faith to be perfected, and the work of faith to be fulfilled. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Acts 18.24-28

Pray Psalm 133.2, 3.

Pray for the various ministry teams – pastors, teachers, leaders – whose work helps you to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. Give thanks for them by name. Pray for unity among these various teams. Ask God to bless many through their work.

Sing Psalm 133.2, 3.

(Tryggare Kan Ingen Vara: [*Children of the Heavenly Father*](#))

Like the precious oil of blessing flowing down on Aaron's vestment,
God's anointing rests forever where His people dwell together.

Like the dew of Hermon's fountain falling down on Zion's mountain,
so the blessing of the Savior dwells where unity finds favor.

For reflection or discussion

1. So far in Acts 1-18 we have seen the ongoing work of Christ *launched* into various communities and regions. Typically, what does this *launch* phase involve?
2. Making disciples requires *established* communities of faith. From what we've seen in Acts thus far, what are the characteristics that tell us that a church has become *established* as a sign and outpost of the Kingdom?
3. Paul's second missionary journey was part of the *dispersion* and *replication* process of the ongoing work of Christ. How many different components or facets are involved in this part of that work?
4. What next steps for working your Personal Mission Field can you derive from our study of this section of Acts?
5. What's the most important insight or lesson you've learned from Acts 18?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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