

## Acts 18:1-17 The Work of Christ Through His Witnesses

### I. The Witness Labors For the Mission (1-3)

#### A. Paul Goes to Corinth (1)

1. Corinth was a city at the crossroads of two sea routes
  - a) It was a center for commerce and culture
  - b) There would be many people from many different countries traveling through the city
2. Corinth was well-known for sexual promiscuity
  - a) In Classical Greek, to "act like a Corinthian" *corinthiazomai* meant to practice fornication, and "Corinthian companions" (or Corinthian girls) mean prostitutes
  - b) The temple of Aphrodite encouraged such sexual practices in the worship of the goddess

#### B. Paul Works With Local Believers (2-3)

1. Paul Meets Aquila and Pricilla (2a)
  - a) Aquila and Pricilla were Jews
  - b) Aquila and Pricilla were natives of Pontus
    - (1) Pontus was in north Asia Minor
  - c) Aquila and Pricilla left Rome under Claudius' command
    - (1) In A.D. 41 Claudius issued an edict that the Jews must begin practicing the ancestral Roman religion and stop conducting secret meetings. This enraged and offended the Jews in Rome and they caused many disturbances.
    - (2) In A.D. 49 issues and order to expel all the Jews from Rome because of the contestant disturbances.
2. Paul Lived and Worked With Them (2b-3)
  - a) Paul stayed with the couple while preaching in Corinth
    - (1) Aquila and Pricilla would become very important to the gospel mission (see Rom. 16:4)
    - (2) They will follow Paul to Ephesus when he leaves Corinth
  - b) Paul worked to support himself for the mission
    - (1) Both Paul and the couple were experienced tent-makers (could also be more generally "leather workers") so Paul worked with them to support himself while preaching
    - (2) Paul also made a practice of working to support himself while preaching in other cities (see 1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8) - Paul also writes of his practice in Corinth (2 Co. 11:7)

#### C. Believers Should Endure Whatever is necessary For the Mission of Christ

1. We have already seen persecution to be part of witness for Christ, but are we also willing to toil and work for the mission?
2. Paul went from preaching in the highest court of Athens' philosophers to sweating in wretched Corinth making tents to pay for his food
3. Paul would work as he needed to preach the gospel
4. Paul did not burden those to whom he preached

### II. The Witness Perseveres For the Mission (4-7)

#### A. Paul's Gospel is Rejected by The Jews (4-6a)

1. Paul preached earnestly to the Jews in Corinth (4)
  - a) Paul was persistent and consistent in his activities
  - b) Paul continued the practice of going to the synagogue and preaching the gospel to the Jews and the God fearers who were there

2. Paul devoted himself to the mission after Silas and Timothy came (5)
  - a) Most likely they brought Paul funds from Macedonia (see Paul's comments in 2 Co. 11:8-9 and Phil. 4:5) so he could continue the missionary work.
  - b) Paul was able to concentrate solely on the mission without burdening the Corinthians after Timothy and Silas came.
3. Paul's preaching is resisted and blasphemed by the Jews (6a)
  - a) Here we see the same old thing from the Jews
  - b) They reject the gospel and they blaspheme the name of Jesus
  - c) You can imagine how frustrating this must be for Paul, the same thing happens in every city and it usually ends up with him fleeing or being physically persecuted.
- B. Paul Continues Preaching Among the Gentiles (6b-7)
  1. Paul resolves to bring the gospel to the Gentiles (6b)
    - a) Paul's opportunity to preach in the synagogue is once again cut off in another city
    - b) Paul's shakes out his garments in protest against the Jews
      - (1) This is reminiscent of Jesus' teaching to shake off the dust of one's feet
      - (2) Yet Paul shakes out his entire garment in protest
    - c) Paul proclaims that their blood is on their own hands
      - (1) In Ezekiel 3, God says that if the watchman sounds the trumpet and warns the people and they do not listen, their blood is not on his hands
      - (2) Paul is using the phrase to condemn them by their own Scriptures
      - (3) Paul is pronouncing Judgment upon them because they refuse to acknowledge Jesus as the fulfillment of God's purposes
    - d) Paul Claims that he will now go to the Gentiles with the gospel
      - (1) Make sure you recognize this, Paul pronounces judgment on the Jews and claims to offer the gospel to the Gentiles - this would have outraged them.
      - (2) This doesn't mean that Paul will no longer preach to Jews. He will go into the synagogue in Ephesus. This means that he will no longer preach to the Jews in the synagogue in Corinth.
  2. Paul bases himself in a house next to the synagogue (7)
    - a) Paul leaves and bases his operation in the house of Titius Justus who was a God fearing Gentile
    - b) Titius' house was right next door to the synagogue
    - c) This would have added insult to injury for the Jews in the synagogue
      - (1) Not only was Paul now preaching God's gospel to the Gentiles and excluding them, but he was right next door
      - (2) No one could have gone into the house where Paul preached without the Jews noticing
      - (3) Also, the God fearing Gentiles would still be coming to the synagogue which gave Paul perfect opportunity to speak to them as they came to or from the synagogue
    - d) You can imagine how angry the Jews would have been
- III. The Witness Trusts in God's Power and Promise For the Mission (8-17)
  - A. The Gospel of Christ is Still Bearing Fruit (8)
    1. Crispus the synagogue leader is converted
      - a) Crispus was the administrative ruler over the synagogue and most likely the affairs of the Jewish people in the city of Corinth.
      - b) Not only does Crispus believe, but also his whole household
      - c) Now Paul was next door to the synagogue and the head of the synagogue is one of his converts.

- (1) They were also publicly baptized into Christ which would have been an outward testimony to the people
  - (2) Paul mentions baptizing the household of Crispus in 1 Co. 1:14
- 2. Many Corinthians believe the gospel
  - a) The gospel also bore fruit among the people of Corinth
  - b) Luke records that many people were converted, both Jew and Gentile, by Paul's preaching in the city
- B. God is Always Faithful To His Word (9-17)
  - 1. Paul is Strengthened by God's promise (9-11)
    - a) God speaks directly to Paul (9-10)
      - (1) Stop being Afraid
        - (a) The construction of the text implies that Paul is afraid and that he should stop being afraid
        - (b) Perhaps Paul was weary of how this would end. He had seen it many times before. He knew the Jews wouldn't take this lying down. Persecution would be coming.
      - (2) Go on speaking and don't be silent
        - (a) God commands Paul to continue preaching the gospel and not to stop
        - (b) Maybe Paul was flirting with the idea of leaving the city for the good of the church as he has done before
        - (c) It is easy to imagine Paul getting weary and frustrated with all the beatings and persecution he has endured
        - (d) It would be much easier, now that there are some believers in the city, to leave and let them handle it.
      - (3) I will be with you
        - (a) Notice the reason that God tells Paul not to be afraid
        - (b) It is not because Paul is so smart and his arguments are better
        - (c) It is not because Paul is such a good speaker and trained in rhetoric
        - (d) It is simply because God himself is with him
          - i) 1 Co. 2:1-4 tells us a lot about Paul's mindset and how he responded to God's command. *"And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, 4 and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.*
    - (4) No one will harm you
      - (a) God promises Paul that no one in the city will harm him at all.
      - (b) This is a bold promise considering Paul's history in every single city he has been in
      - (c) This doesn't mean that we can take this as a promise that God doesn't allow harm to come to his missionaries under any circumstances
        - i) Paul has already proven this is not true, and he will again before Acts is done
        - ii) This is a promise for Paul in the city of Corinth, but the ramifications of this are encouraging for all Christ's people
        - iii) This means that when believers do face persecution, trial, and suffering, it is because God himself is allowing it for his purposes

- iv) If God is powerful enough to stop any harm from coming to his servants, when harm does come to them, it is God allowing it for a purpose.
- (5) I have many people in the city
  - (a) God's purpose for the promise is here given that he has many people in the city
  - (b) This doesn't mean that his people will rise up and keep harm from happening to Paul
  - (c) It means that God intends for his people to hear the gospel and be converted in the city. God will protect Paul as the gospel goes forth and there will be conversions throughout the city as God calls out his people.
- b) Paul trusts and obeys God (11)
  - (1) Paul settles in at Corinth and stays there for 18 months preaching the gospel
  - (2) You can imagine that throughout that time, the Jews were plotting how they might stop Paul and the gospel he preaches.
- 2. God is Faithful To His Promise To Paul (12-17)
  - a) Paul is arrested and brought to trial
    - (1) The Jews bring Paul to Gallio
      - (a) The Jews have had enough of Paul
      - (b) From inscriptions found in Delphi, we know that Gallio, the son of Seneca, was proconsul of Corinth from A.D. 51-52. This gives us a precise date when Paul was in the city
      - (c) Paul is brought before the judgment seat (Bema) where the proconsul rendered civic and criminal judgments
    - (2) The Jews charge Paul with breaking the Law
      - (a) They charge him with persuading men to worship God in ways that are contrary to the law
      - (b) We are not exactly sure whether they are talking about Roman law or Jewish law
        - i) Most likely, they were talking about Jewish law, but this would also have ramifications in Roman law as well
        - ii) The Jews were the only group exempted from worshipping the Caesars in the imperial cult and the pagan gods of the cities
        - iii) If the Jews could convince Gallio that Paul and his new church were not Jewish, and therefore not exempt from worshipping the gods, they would be in violation of Roman law
  - b) Paul's case is dismissed by Gallio (14-16)
    - (1) Paul is interrupted before he can speak (14a)
      - (a) You can imagine what Paul may have been thinking, "Oh great, here we go again." What comes next is a trial and even if I am let off the hook, I will have to leave the city or be beaten
      - (b) Could Paul have been thinking about the promise of Christ given to him here?
    - (2) Gallio dismisses Paul's case (14b-15)
      - (a) Paul is nevertheless ready to give his defense. He opens his mouth and begins to speak just as Jesus commanded when he said, when they drag you into court do not worry about what you will say. It will be given to you

- (b) Before Paul can even utter a word, Gallio interrupts him and throws out the case. He says it is not worthy for him to hear and he dismisses the whole thing immediately.
    - i) Gallio says that this case concerns names, teachings, and things that deal with the Jews own laws. This didn't concern him.
  - (c) Paul doesn't even have to say a word in defense.
- (3) Gallio drives the Jews away from the court (16)
  - (a) The Jews probably protested and continued to argue in the court
  - (b) Gallio doesn't listen to any more and has them all forcefully removed from the court by the Roman guards
  - (c) This probably set a precedent in the Roman provinces so that the gospel could be proclaimed freely for the next 10 or 12 years, until official Roman policy changed regarding the Christians
- c) Paul's Accuser is Beaten (17)
  - (1) We don't know for sure if it was the Jews themselves or the Gentiles around the court who beat Sosthenes
    - (a) Sosthenes is the ruler of the synagogue who succeeded Crispus after he became a Christian
    - (b) Being the leader of the synagogue, it would have probably been Sosthenes who was the spokesman for the case against Paul before Gallio
    - (c) So instead of Paul being persecuted and beaten, this time the one who brought the charges against Paul is beaten
      - i) God has perfectly kept his word and promise
      - ii) Not only was Paul protected from harm, but the one who would seek to harm Paul is beaten himself
      - iii) Notice also that Gallio himself could care less that all this beating was going on
  - (2) In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, he addresses the church in the first verse saying, "Paul called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother."
    - (a) We cannot say absolutely for certain, but it is highly possible that the beaten Sosthenes later became a Christian himself
    - (b) That would mean two of the rulers of the synagogue that tried to bring charges against Paul were converted to the faith.