

Acts 18

Paul made few disciples in Athens and he traveled to Corinth. There he became acquainted with a couple who will prove to be a great help to him for years to come. Aquila and Priscilla were Jews from Pontus but had recently lived in Rome. They were there because Claudius had commanded all Jews to leave Rome. What quarrels the Jews had had that prompted such extreme measures on the Emperor's part is not given. Possibly the problem was the Jewish-Christian conflict but that is surmising. The record seems to indicate Priscilla and Aquila were already Christians when Paul met them for nothing is said of his converting them. Because they were tentmakers as he, he lived with and worked with them (18:3). As ever, each Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogues and persuaded Jews and Greeks.

Sometimes after Paul had arrived in Corinth, Timothy and Silas arrived from Macedonia (18:5). From chapter 17, verse 14 it appears Paul intended that they catch up with him in Athens but he left before their arrival. Their coming was a great boost to Paul's spirit for he "was constrained by the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ." Since he already had been "persuading" Jews and Greeks, this must mean Paul redoubled his efforts and soon was meeting the opposition from incorrigible Jews. They blasphemed and opposed themselves (18:6). Following the instructions of the Lord "not cast your pearls before swine" (Mt. 7:6), he shook out his raiment saying "Your blood be upon your own heads" (18:6). This gesture is identical with "shaking off the dust of his feet against them" which earlier he and Barnabas had done at Iconium (Mt.10:14; Acts 13:5). Shortly after Timothy and Titus's arrival, Paul wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians, one of his earliest letters. The date is about AD 53.

Leaving the synagogue, Paul went into the home of one of his converts, Titus Justus, where he continued his teaching, which met with more success: "Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house and many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized" (18:8). Although Paul left the actual baptisms of converts into the hands of others (likely Timothy and Silas), Crispus was one whom he personally baptized, along with Gaius and the household of Stephanas (1 Cor. 1:14, 15). Thus is recorded the beginning of what was to be a prominent church in Greece.

Shortly after these events "the Lord said unto Paul in a vision, Be no

afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee and no man shall set on thee to harm thee: for I have much people in this city (18:10). In critical times in the apostle's life, Paul received special visions which served to strengthen and uphold him, viz chapters 16:9; 22:17-21; 23:11; 27:23-25. Perhaps this vision came in Corinth because at other points on this journey when he had had met much success in making converts, opposing Jews made grave threats against him and since he has seen many Corinthians believe and be baptized, Paul may have feared the same would happen now. Indeed, unbelieving Jews did raise up and attempt to drive him from their city. They charged him before Gallio, who was the proconsul of Achaia thusly "This man persuaded men to worship God contrary to Law" (18:13). But, Gallio was fair minded and recognized their alleged grievances for what they were, "questions about words, and names, and your own law; not of matters of wrong or wicked villainy". Therefore he would not entertain their charges. He drove them from his judgment seat (18:14-16). In fact, Jewish efforts backfired. Some laid hold on Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in Gallio's judgment seat (18:17). The Holy Spirit did not choose to reveal who or why these were who beat Sosthenes, neither whether Sosthenes had been appointed to be ruler of the synagogue after Crispus had vacated that place nor whether he had been co-ruler with Crispus. At any rate, Paul is not disturbed and the way was open for him to continue his teaching. He stayed in Corinth one year and six months teaching the word of God (18:118).

After the incident before Gallio's judgment seat, Paul continued yet many days. But the time came when he felt he needed to return to Syria. He took with him Priscilla and Aquila and sailed away, having shorn his head in Cenchrea for he had a vow (18;18). It is useless to ponder what kind of vow Paul made, but the fact that he "shaved his head" shows Paul felt it proper to make vows and follow some of the Mosaic requirement at the fulfillment of the vow, i.e. not cutting his hair during the duration of the vow, then shaving his head when it was concluded (Num. 6:1-5; 18ff). Still, the fact that Paul shaved his head in Greece while Moses instructed it should be done at the door of the tabernacle shows that he was not keeping Moses' law. A sense of God's Being and the various trials that enter our lives make it obvious that all of God's people from time to time may "vow a vow to the Lord". And while it is not needful that one allow his hair to be uncut during the vow's duration, nor to shave one's head at its conclusion, one thing is NEEDFUL, we must keep our vows we made, whether to God or to others in His hearing. One of the vows most often broken men make is the marriage vow. God expects all to keep that vow and will not hold guiltless those who violate and break those vows.

Paul traveled from Corinth to Ephesus where he parted from Priscilla and Aquila. Just why they left Corinth for Ephesus is not known. They did not remain there a great length of time for 4-5 years later when Paul wrote the Roman letter, he sent his greetings to them there, calling them his "fellow workers" who had "laid down their own necks" for the life of the apostle (Rm. 16:2). Even though they were back in Rome (from where they had been expelled when first we meet them); they return back to Ephesus for in Paul's second letter to Timothy he sends greetings to them (2 Tim. 4:16; 1 Tim. 1:3). Paul preached in the synagogue in Ephesus and was asked to remain longer, but he declined giving a promise that he would return "If God permit" (18:18-21). Only a few brief words record his arrival in Syria and then he began his third journey. "And when he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and saluted the church and went down to Antioch (18:22).

In Paul's absence from Ephesus, a certain Jew named Apollos appeared in the city. He was by race an Alexandrian and he was an eloquent, mighty man in the scriptures (18:24). He was fervent in spirit and taught accurately the things of Jesus but his knowledge was deficient; he knew only the baptism of John. As he spoke boldly in the Ephesian synagogue, his teaching came to the attention of Priscilla and Aquila. They took him unto them and expounded to him the word of God more accurately (18:25-26).

When Apollos wished to go into Achaia, the "brethren" encouraged him, writing letters to brethren there to receive him. Whether the "brethren" referred to here included more than Priscilla and Aquila is not certain. At any rate, Apollos travels to Achaia (Corinth) and proved to help the disciples there very much. He powerfully publicly confuted the Jews, showing that Jesus was the Christ. However some of the brethren in Corinth formed an unwholesome attachment to him, identifying themselves as his disciples rather than realizing their loyalty was to be to Christ to the man who had led them to Him (1 Cor. 1:12).

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