

PAUL'S MINISTRY AMONG THE CORINTHIANS

BIBLE TEXT : Acts 18:1-22.

LESSON 336 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (I Corinthians 3:6).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Acts 18:1-22

¹ After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;

² And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them.

³ And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers.

⁴ And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

⁵ And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews *that* Jesus *was* Christ.

⁶ And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook *his* raiment, and said unto them, Your blood *be* upon your own heads; I *am* clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.

⁷ And he departed thence, and entered into a certain *man's* house, named Justus, *one* that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.

⁸ And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.

⁹ Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:

¹⁰ For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Tentmakers

The Apostle Paul was a tentmaker as well as a missionary. While he was in Corinth, he made his living by making tents. He lived in the home of Aquila and Priscilla, who had the same occupation. We do not know when Aquila and Priscilla became Christians. Perhaps they were saved even before they had to leave Rome. Or perhaps, by their working with Paul, they heard about Jesus, and were converted. Many people while at their work, have heard about the Gospel of Jesus. At their work, some have been given an invitation to attend a meeting. Some have been given a Christian paper to read. Some, having watched the life of a Christian who worked at their side, have inquired about his church, and then were told about salvation from sin. Going to school is part of a child's work. Christian children have an opportunity there to let their light shine. There are children who have been given an invitation to Sunday School by their schoolmates. This led them to Jesus and salvation.

A Reasonable Gospel

Paul did not let his work hinder him from going to church. When the people gathered at the synagogue (the Jewish church) Paul was there, too. Paul did not go to the Jewish church to worship as they did. He went to tell them about Jesus. He "reasoned" with them; that is, he talked with them and gave reasons why they should believe in Jesus. The Prophet Isaiah wrote: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

Paul not only reasoned with the Jews but also persuaded some to pray and to be saved. Paul had a burden for these people of Corinth. He knew that it was his duty to tell them about salvation. He felt that it was a privilege to testify about Jesus. Paul loved the souls of men, and wherever he went he was faithful to his God and to his fellow men by telling about Jesus.

Against Themselves

Silas and Timothy joined Paul at Corinth. But some of the Jews did not like their preaching. "They opposed themselves." That is what people do who reject the teaching of Jesus. They are against themselves; they do themselves harm, because the Gospel will do only good in a person's life. "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18).

Paul had faithfully preached to the Jews. If they wanted to reject Jesus, that was their responsibility and choice. Paul had done his part by telling them of salvation, and praying for them. Jesus had said to His disciples: "Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them" (Mark 6:11). Paul "shook his raiment" as a testimony against the Jews who "opposed themselves."

Cottage Meetings

Next door to the synagogue lived a man by the name of

¹¹ And he continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

¹² And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat,

¹³ Saying, This *fellow* persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law.

¹⁴ And when Paul was now about to open *his* mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you:

¹⁵ But if it be a question of words and names, and *of* your law, look ye *to it*; for I will be no judge of such *matters*.

¹⁶ And he drave them from the judgment seat.

¹⁷ Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat *him* before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

¹⁸ And Paul *after this* tarried *there* yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn *his* head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.

¹⁹ And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.

²⁰ When they desired *him* to tarry longer time with them, he consented not;

²¹ But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.

²² And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch.

Justus. Paul probably conducted services at this home when he departed from the synagogue because the Jews did not want to hear any more about Jesus. There were some people who wanted to hear Paul's preaching; and when they did, they were converted. Among them were Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and his family. He probably did not keep his position very long after he was saved. Later we read of another man who was the ruler of the synagogue.

Hearing and Believing

"Many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptised." This shows us the need of spreading the Gospel, of testifying, and of telling others about Jesus. How can a person believe unless he hears about Jesus? Perhaps you long to have a certain friend or your parents come to church with you and be saved. Have you told them about Jesus?

Paul found that all who heard about Jesus did not believe. It is true today, too. There may be some like that who come to the Sunday School. They hear about Jesus in class; they sing about Him; they study about the Son of God, but are they all saved? Are **you** saved?

Encouragement

While Paul was in Corinth, the Lord encouraged him in a vision. The Lord told Paul to speak and not to be afraid, because he would not be hurt. He also told Paul that there were many people in Corinth who believed and worshiped Christ. The Lord said, "Be not afraid, . . . for I am with thee."

God often encourages His people with just such words of promise. He corrects His people when they need correction, and He encourages them when they need encouragement. God encouraged the Children of Israel when they went to battle against an enemy with more fighting people than they had. He said, "Be not afraid of them: for the LORD thy God is with thee" (Deuteronomy 20:1). When Joshua went to battle against a great number of kings, the Lord spoke the same encouragement to him: "Be not afraid because of them" (Joshua 11:6). Jesus appeared to His disciples when they were in a storm. He said, "It is I; be not afraid" (Matthew 14:27). Thus, down through the years and even today, the Lord has been with His followers to encourage them in the time of need.

Paul was in Corinth for a year and a half. During this time, he taught the Word of God to the people. Many Corinthians believed. No doubt this was the beginning of the Church at Corinth. Not everyone who heard Paul believed his words about Jesus. Some of them not only doubted but also caused trouble for Paul.

Accused

On one occasion, Paul was taken before the judgment seat of Gallio, the Roman official of Achaia. He was accused of persuading men to worship God contrary to the Law. Before Paul could say anything, Gallio had spoken to the accusers. He said that he would not hear the case if it was a matter of their religion. Gallio, being a Roman official, would not be in a position to judge a matter concerning the Jewish religion. He was annoyed that they would go to him with a case that he could not judge. Gallio dismissed the case and drove them from the judgment seat. The some Greeks, who had been watching, grabbed Sosthenes. As chief ruler of the Synagogue, he was probably at the head of the Jews who had accused Paul. Sosthenes was beaten by the Greeks there in front of the judgment seat. Gallio paid no attention, caring not that the Jews were being treated as they had hoped to treat Paul.

Indifferent

Gallio did not especially defend Paul. He did not take sides with either Paul or the Jews. He was indifferent, caring for none of those teachings. Perhaps his chief concern was to please and to impress Claudius, the Roman emperor who had made him deputy of Achaia. Many people today are indifferent to spiritual teachings. Their chief interest is to please people who have influence in their work. Some think that they need not take sides with Christ or with His opposers. The Word of God teaches that those who are not for Christ are against Him (**Matthew 12:30** ³⁰ **He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.**). As we study the Bible we find that there is no neutral way. Only two ways are mentioned: the narrow way leads to eternal life, while the broad way leads to death and destruction (**Matthew 7:13-14** ¹³ **Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: ¹⁴ Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.**)

Sometimes people, including children, fail to realise that they must make a choice whether or not to serve God. They may think that they can put off making that choice, but by failing to choose Christ they have chosen Satan as their master. They may even attend Sunday School and church, and plan to serve God later; but they are not on the Lord's side, because they have failed to pray and be saved. They do not belong to Jesus, the King of kings, unless their sins are forgiven and they live for Jesus each day.

This incident before Gallio did not cause Paul to be frightened and to flee from Corinth. He stayed there for some time after that, preaching and spreading the Gospel. The time came when Paul felt that he must continue his missionary journey.

Helpers

Although Paul had to leave the disciples at Corinth, he did not forget them. He prayed for them. He sent other ministers to help them. Paul encouraged them with letters, two of which are recorded in the Bible and are known as First Corinthians and Second Corinthians. Although Paul started the Church at Corinth, he took little credit to himself. He knew that others had also helped and that God should receive the honour and glory. Paul said, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (I Corinthians 3:6).

From Corinth Paul sailed to Syria. When the ship anchored at Ephesus, probably after eight or nine days' sailing, Paul went to the Jewish church to tell them of the Gospel of Jesus. Priscilla and Aquila had gone with Paul to Ephesus. They were the Christian friends with whom Paul had lived. He called them "my helpers in Christ Jesus." These two followers of Christ seemed to give themselves wholly to the Lord's work. They probably stayed in Ephesus where church services were held in their home (**1 Corinthians 16:19** ¹⁹ **The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.**). Later they must have moved to Rome where their home was also open for the church meetings (**Romans 16:3-5** ³ **Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: ⁴ Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. ⁵ Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.**).

If God Will

The people of Ephesus wanted to hear more of Paul's preaching and asked him to stay a while with them. But Paul felt that he must be in Jerusalem for the next religious feast. He

promised that he would return to Ephesus if it was the Lord's will. We can learn this lesson from Paul: he said, "If God will." Paul did not make plans and promises without considering the Lord and His plan. Paul made a similar statement to the Corinthians when he expected to make another trip there. He said, "I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit" (I Corinthians 16:7). In the Epistle of James we read that "ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that" (James 4:15). In another lesson we shall study about Paul's return to Ephesus.

Paul did go to Jerusalem. It was there that the headquarters of the Gospel work was located. Paul greeted the disciples at the Church in Jerusalem. Perhaps he gave a report as he and Barnabas had done at the end of Paul's first missionary trip. "They rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27). From Jerusalem, Paul went to Antioch where he ended his second missionary journey.

QUESTIONS

1. Where was Corinth located?
2. Why did Aquila and Priscilla leave Italy?
3. Name two men who made their living by making tents.
4. What did Paul do when the Jews "opposed themselves"?
5. Who was Justus?
6. Name a man who believed on the Lord with all his house.
7. How long was Paul in Corinth?
8. What vision did God give Paul while he was in Corinth?
9. Why did Paul want to go to Jerusalem?
10. Where did Paul end his second missionary trip?