

'Acts' - Extra Teaching Points #25

Acts 18:1-17 (NASB)

Acts 18:1-4 (NASB)

After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth. ² And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, ³ and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers. ⁴ And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

Q: Who were Aquila and Priscilla? And why would Paul partner with them?

- Aquila was a Jewish tent maker, originally from Pontus, (Northern Turkey), who had been working in Rome with his wife Priscilla.
 - They were most likely already Christians when Paul met them.
- They had been expelled, along with all the other Jews, from Rome by the Emperor Claudius due to the controversies over Christianity.
 - Claudius exiled the Jews and Jewish Christians, but not the Gentile Christians.
 - Under Nero, the Jews were allowed to return to Rome. When the Jewish Christians returned, they were distressed to find the Church embracing non-Jewish customs, which led to a great deal of friction.
 - This friction was a major reason for Paul writing the letter to the Romans.
- Being "tent-makers" was more than making camping gear.
 - They would have worked with all kinds of leather and other goods, making products for military, industrial, and other uses.
 - It seems likely that Aquila and Priscilla had set-up a business in Corinth, and took Paul on as a business partner.
- Corinth would have been a great place for "tent-makers" to set-up business.
 - Corinth was a major seaport and commercial center.



Acts 18:5-11 (NASB)

But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. ⁶ But when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." ⁷ Then he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue. ⁸ Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized. ⁹ **And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; ¹⁰ for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city."** ¹¹ And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Q: Why did Jesus tell Paul not to be afraid?

- Usually, when he stirred up trouble in a town, he had to leave or be killed!

Q: What does Jesus mean when He says to Paul, "I have many people in this city"?

- He probably means that evangelism is just getting started!
- Jesus has put Paul in a place He wants him to stay a while.
 - As a major port, Paul was going to have contact, directly and indirectly, with an incredible number of people who were going to take the gospel in hundreds of different directions.

Q: The last vision Paul had been given was in [Acts 16:9](#), when he was told to go somewhere he hadn't expected. Now he is told to stay put... apparently something else he was not expecting. What should we learn from this?

- We usually get guidance from the Lord when we need it, not before... and not in too much detail!

Acts 18:12-17 (NASB)

But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat, ¹³ saying, "This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law." ¹⁴ But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to put up with you; ¹⁵ but if there are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters." ¹⁶ And he drove them away from the judgment seat. ¹⁷ And they all took hold of Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and began beating him in front of the judgment seat. But Gallio was not concerned about any of these things.

A drawing of Ancient Corinth about 100 AD. Number 4 is the bema or judgment seat:



The judgment seat in Corinth today:



Q: Why is the mention of the trial before Gallio important?

- 1st: It sets the date of Paul's time in Corinth at late 49AD or early 50AD to the middle or end of 51AD.
 - This helps us work out the timeframe for the rest of Paul's ministry.
- 2nd: It is the first time Christianity has been put on trial as a crime against the state.

Q: Why would the Jews in Corinth want to see Christianity, and Paul, on trial in a Roman court?

- Jealousy always seems to be at the heart of problems with the Jews; but there is another more practical reason to consider.
- The Christians were, (at this time), seen as a part of Judaism.
 - The Christians were claiming there was another King, Jesus, who is the King of Kings.
 - That kind of claim could bring down the wrath of Rome; so the Jews probably wanted to make sure the state distinguished between *them* and *Christians*.
- While the definition of Christians as 'not just another Jewish sect' might have begun to be drawn here, the result of the trial was that Christianity would now have the same "permitted" status as the Jews... at least in central and southern Greece.

Q: Who was Sosthenes, and what is important for us to note about him?

- Sosthenes was the leader of the synagogue, and a persecutor of the church.
 - Paul mentions a man named Sosthenes in the beginning of his 1st letter to the Corinthians ([1Cor 1:1](#)), and calls him “our brother.”
 - Though we cannot be absolutely certain that this is the same Sosthenes, it seems likely that it is... which means this man had a similar road to conversion as Paul himself did!
 - This man who zealously persecuted the Church, became a fellow servant of the Lord.
 - If this is so, you could imagine the connection he and Paul would have shared!
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Follow Up Assignment

Q: Are you afraid of evangelism? If so, what would Jesus likely say to *you*?

- Would He say, “Stay put and keep working; I have many people in this city”? ([Acts 18:10](#))
- Would He say, “Go and preach to people in new places”? ([Acts 16:9-10](#))
- Would He say, “That’s OK... let someone else do the work”?

Q: How do you expect to get guidance from the Lord?

- Paul only seemed to get it when he needed it, not before, and not in much detail. What kind of guidance are *you* expecting to get?

Q: If *you* were Paul, how would *you* have treated Sosthenes?

- Is there a Sosthenes in your life?
- If so, who is it, and how are you treating him or her?