

BIBLE LESSON
Acts 18:1

LESSON
Corinth

VERSE 1
*After these things
Paul departed from Athens,
and came to Corinth.*

From Athens, Paul went to Corinth, which was strategically located on the four-mile-wide isthmus between the Ionian and Aegean Seas. To avoid the dangerous voyage around the southern tip of Greece, shippers moving cargo between Italy in the West and Asia Minor in the East would move small ships across the isthmus by tramway or cargo was transferred to transportation waiting at the Eastern port. Corinth was the acclaimed hub of Roman Empire commerce. Its population of several hundred thousand people comprised different races, religions and cultures. There was a large mobile population of seafarers and businessmen, and a large population of slaves.

Corinth was also a sports capital hosting the Isthmian Games, which was second in importance only to the Olympics. The new rebuilt city boasted many huge buildings and an Acropolis on which stood the Temple for Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of Love, where a thousand temple prostitute priestesses provided services to men every day. The city was rich and opulent, and the people sensual, pleasure-seeking and arrogant in their humanistic philosophy. Corruption, debauchery and immorality was rampant. The Greek word “korinthiazomai” (“to act the Corinthian”) came to mean “to commit adultery”.

Many cities today are strikingly similar to the Corinth of old and ours is no different. Paul, upon arrival in Corinth “in weakness and in fear and trembling”, was burdened as to whether any could be saved. May God grant to us a deep compassion for the lost in our country and the regions beyond.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 3
PSALM 39

THOUGHT

For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. – Matthew 24:38-39

BIBLE LESSON
Acts 18:2

LESSON
Aquila
and Priscilla

VERSE 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.*

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 4
PSALMS 40-41

Paul was alone in the great metropolis of Corinth, having left Silas and Timothy behind at Macedonia. God providentially met Paul's need by bringing him and a Jewish couple, Aquila and Priscilla, together.

They had come to Corinth from different parts of the world and for different reasons – Paul from Antioch, pressing westward in his desire to extend the kingdom of Christ; Aquila and Priscilla driven eastward because the Jews were banished from Rome. They had mutual affinity being fellow Jews with a common occupation, being tent-makers.

This kind couple welcomed Paul into their home where Paul abided for 18 months. Thus began a beautiful, loving and life-long relationship founded upon the redeeming love of Christ, nourished and bonded by Christian fellowship and labouring together for the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Aquila and Priscilla's home and heart were always open. Wherever they were, be it Ephesus [1 Corinthians 16:19] or Rome [Romans 16:3], their home became a centre for Christian worship, prayer and fellowship. They had love and concern for the young preacher Apollos whom they brought home and instructed in the faith [Acts 18:24–26]. They were loyal and devoted to Paul. They risked their lives to save him [Romans 16:3,4] from severe persecution [Acts 18:6, 12-17; 2 Corinthians 1:8]. Their love and fellowship with Paul, co-labouring with him, was great encouragement to the Lord's servant, helping him to press on. Even in his last days, Paul acknowledged their steadfast loyalty to him and their faithfulness in serving God [2 Timothy 4:19]. Surely their godly examples are for all true believers to emulate.

THOUGHT

May God grant to us a heart like that of Aquila and Priscilla.

BIBLE LESSON
Acts 18:3

LESSON
Giving
account

VERSE 3

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

Paul was a tent maker by trade. He was trained as a scholar under Gamaliel and an apostle appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ, but he earned his living by making tents when he came to Corinth.

Many have applied Paul's example wrongly by being stingy with God's servants (pastors, missionaries and full-time workers), expecting that they should not live by the Gospel. This is contrary to the teaching of the Bible. God has ordained that those who labour full-time in the Gospel ministry should live by the Gospel [1Corinthians 9:6-18] and it is the responsibility of individual members and church leaders to ensure that they are well-provided for. The Pastor should be free from any material concerns for himself or his family so that he may give himself entirely to prayer, study and preaching [Acts 6:2-4].

Paul worked for his living out of necessity as there was no established church to support him. It was a personal choice as he preferred not to burden those whom he was ministering to.

This had already been his pattern in Thessalonica [1 Thessalonians 2:9, 2 Thessalonians 3:8] and later in Ephesus [Acts 20:34]. However after their conversion, Paul would teach the new believers that they should support adequately the preachers of the Gospel [1 Corinthians 9:14, Galatians 6:6].

We thank God for blessing His church and Ministry with faithful servants. May we always cherish and honour them with prayer support, seeing to their every need as we labour together advancing God's Kingdom for His own glory.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 5
PSALMS 42-43

THOUGHT

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.
– 1 Timothy 5:17-18

BIBLE LESSON
Acts 18:4-5

LESSON
Jesus was
the Christ

VERSE 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.*

Paul visited the synagogue every Sabbath to preach to those gathered there. Each week he would proclaim and argue for the person and work of the Lord Jesus drawn from the Old Testament Scriptures. He wanted the Jews to understand that simply observing and obeying the Law would not get them to heaven. Only by believing in Jesus Christ as their Saviour could save their souls. Paul pleaded with them, desiring that they would see the error of their ways. And when the Jews raised objections, he reasoned with them with his arguments.

As there was no church in Corinth to support him financially, Paul spent part of his time working as a tent-maker. It must have been a strain on Paul, working and preaching daily without help from other co-labourers and facing rejection from the people. When Silas and Timothy arrived from Philippi and Thessalonica respectively, bearing gifts from the churches there and good news concerning the spiritual growth of their members, it stirred Paul to renewed vigour in proclaiming the Gospel. Paul was compelled and energised by the Holy Spirit to give himself completely to preaching to the Jews. Constrained by his love for his Lord and grieved by the obstinacy and rebellion of his fellowmen against Christ, Paul preached with even greater zeal and urgency.

May the Holy Spirit fill us with a similar sense of urgency and place upon our hearts the same burden for unsaved souls, so that we will go forth and proclaim the Gospel to those still outside the fold.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 6
PSALM 44

THOUGHT

For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

– 1 Corinthians 9:16

BIBLE LESSON
Acts 18:6

LESSON
I will go
to the Gentiles

VERSE 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.

The Jews were stubborn and resolute in rejecting the Gospel message from Paul. The original language can be rendered “set themselves in battle array”, which gives an indication of their belligerent attitude. They blasphemed the name of Jesus Christ and were determined to reject His message. Then they banded together to do what they could to prevent others from believing. The Jews were spiritually blind. They denied the Lord as the Messiah and were blind to their sin of crucifying Him. Why would they reject the Gospel of Christ when it offered salvation from sins and promised eternal life in heaven? Because the human heart is desperately wicked and innately rejects God [1 Corinthians 2:14].

Finally in the face of continual rejection, Paul declared he had fulfilled his responsibility of offering them the Gospel. He shook off their dust just as the Lord Jesus had told His disciples to do to those who rejected their message [Matthew 10:14]. The responsibility was theirs now for refusing to accept Christ as their Saviour and repentance for their sins. Their blood was upon their own hands.

Paul would now turn his evangelistic efforts to the Gentiles. Such is the design and will of God that the Jews who were first given the Gospel would reject it through their hardness of heart. Gentiles would then receive the Gospel. Yet one day, the Jews will be finally restored [Romans 11:25, 26]. Thank God that by this, we who are Gentiles, have received the benefit.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 7
PSALM 45

THOUGHT

It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. – Acts 13:46

BIBLE LESSON
Acts 18:7-8

LESSON
Justus
and Crispus

VERSE 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 baptised.*

Paul redirected his preaching ministry and soon found the ideal replacement venue – the house of Justus next to the synagogue. Evidently, Justus loved God and His servant Paul. He would likely encounter the same hostility that Paul himself faced from the unbelieving Jews and idol-worshipping Gentiles. Yet Justus opened his home because the Word of God was in his heart. He was a true worshipper. Justus’ family did not mind the crowds that would enter their house to hear Paul preaching. They probably delighted in extending hospitality to these strangers, and they could testify how their lives had been changed because they had accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

Even as God opened the way for Paul to continue preaching in Justus’ house, so the Jews who rejected the Gospel message would continue to have an avenue to hear the message if they were interested. Paul still yearned for them to come to the Lord.

In time, Paul’s efforts began to bear fruit. Crispus, the Jewish chief ruler of the synagogue and his family came to believe on the Lord. His conversion would have considerable impact among the people. If one who held such a high position in their society and whose knowledge of the Law excelled others saw his need for salvation in Christ, surely others might also see that there was merit in the Gospel. Indeed, no one will be excused for rejecting the Gospel.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 8
PSALMS 46-47

SING

Marvellous, infinite, matchless grace,
Freely bestowed on all who believe!
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within.
Grace that is greater than all our sin.

BIBLE LESSON
Acts 18:9

LESSON
Do not
hold thy peace

VERSE 9

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

In many cities where Paul had evangelised before, some people would be converted while others would be provoked by the very same message to oppose him. Paul would face persecution, physical abuse, imprisonment and attempts on his life. This occurred in Jerusalem [Acts 9:29], Antioch of Pisidia [Acts 13:50], Iconium [Acts 14:5], Lystra [Acts 14:19], Philippi [Acts 16:23], Thessalonica [Acts 17:5] and Berea [Acts 17:13].

Through this vision, the Lord gave Paul the reassurance and encouragement he sorely needed. He reaffirmed Paul's commission to preach the Gospel without fear to the people of Corinth. Paul was not to be cautious or hold back what he had to say, but boldly declare the message of salvation.

So for us too. God has put us in our schools, our places of work, within our family and social networks so that we can be His witness. Our effectiveness in this depends on our willingness to speak the Word, share the Gospel and reflect God's love in our actions. We evangelise by going forth to spread the Good News. The Great Commission our Lord Jesus gave His disciples is still in force for his disciples today. [Matthew 28:19-20].

Have we been faithful in carrying out this commission? Perhaps we have been shy to tell unsaved loved ones about their need for Jesus to save them. We may be fearful that our relationships will turn sour by raising such difficult topics. May God help us to obey Him first and trust Him to work in the hearts of the hearers that they may turn to Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 9
PSALM 48

THOUGHT

How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? – Romans 10:14

BIBLE LESSON
Acts 18:10-11

LESSON
Spirit's
promise

VERSE 10

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

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 10
PSALM 49

Through this vision, the Lord gave Paul both soothing comfort and rousing encouragement. Paul was comforted by the reassurance that the Lord was with him as he laboured to spread the Gospel. He had travelled great distances, endured hardship and persecution because of his love for Christ and for his fellow man. Yet he would have experienced loneliness and discouragement when at times few responded to the Gospel call. What balm for the weary, to know that our Lord Himself is strengthening us and directing our steps [Psalm 37:23-24].

Paul was cheered by the protection that the Lord Himself promised. He would not suffer hurt in Corinth despite inevitable opposition. This must have raised his spirits and spurred him to redouble his missionary efforts.

Our Lord Jesus also revealed to Paul that Corinth was a ripened harvest field that would yield much fruit. This was clear indication to Paul that he and his co-workers were to sow the Gospel seed faithfully and God would save many in this city. Paul's heart must have rejoiced at the shift of his fast-paced itinerant ministry from city to city, to one where he could spend a longer period of time in one place preaching, teaching and building up the local church.

Even as God has elected those whom He will save, it is also His will that they be saved by the preaching of His Word [1 Corinthians 1:21]. May God's reassurance to Paul likewise encourage us in our evangelistic efforts.

THOUGHT

Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.
– Romans 8:30