

## LESSON FIVE

(18:1-22)

### In Corinth, 18:1-17

**18** *After this he left Athens and went to Corinth. 2 And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them; 3 and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them, and they worked, for by trade they were tentmakers. 4 And he argued in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks. synagogue every*

*5 When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with preaching, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. 6 And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." 7 And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God; his house was next door to the synagogue. 8 Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with all his household; and many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized. 9 And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision. "Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; 10 for I am with you, and no man shall attack you to harm you; for I have many people in this city." 11 And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.*

*12 But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack upon Paul and brought him before the tribunal, 13 saying, "This man is persuading men to worship God contrary to the law." 14 But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "It if were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, I should have reason to bear with you, O Jews; 15 but since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves; I refuse to be a judge of these things." 16 And he drove them from the tribunal. 17 And they all seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to this.*

V. 1 - Though some believed in Athens, Paul either had to leave or thought it best to leave. Hence, he went to the trade capital of Greece, Corinth, some 45 miles southwest of Athens, situated on the Isthmus that provided passageway from the Aegean Sea to the Adriatic, and thence to Rome.

The city is famous in history for its bad character which doubtless made all sorts of difficulty for the people in the church. Nevertheless the people needed Christ, and Paul was the man to do it. The two letters to the Corinthian brethren are doubtless the most helpful letters of any we have in the areas of understanding relationships in Christ, of brethren to each other, how to take care of church problems, what to do about support of preachers, how to live in the world but not be of the world, etc. Additionally, reading of the two epistles to Thessalonica both written during this time in Corinth, will aid in understanding Paul's spirit while in Corinth. (See, for example, II Thess. 3:2).

V. 2 - Aquila was probably from the Pontus next to Bithynia, and lived in Rome until Claudius drove (all) Jews out about the 9th year of his reign, approximately A.D. 49-50. They had therefore been in Corinth for some time, since it is now approximately A.D. 51-52.

V. 3 - It is not stated that Aquila and Priscilla were Christians, but if not they evidently became so before too much time had passed. Paul made reference in 20:34 that he worked in Ephesus, and in II Thess. 3:6ff, about working in Thessalonica (though he received financial help while there from the Philippians, 4:14-16). He wrote in II Cor. 12:13 that he was not a financial burden to the Corinthians.

V. 4 - Many Jews (a stone has been found in Corinth that probably had on it the words: "synagogue of the Jews") would be present in a place like Corinth, where business opportunities would be excellent. Paul kept reasoning with them.

V. 5 - Paul had left orders for Silas and Timothy to come when possible (17:15) and so they did come, bringing gifts from the Macedonians (I Thess. 3:6, II Cor. 11:9; Phil. 4:15). Timothy was evidently sent back to Thessalonica with the first epistle to the church there. The gifts of money (all evidence that brethren were supporting him) apparently freed Paul from tent-making so that he could increase his efforts, and doubtless also was aided by Timothy and Silas. (See II Cor. 1:19, and the Thessalonian epistles). He was compelled by the word to speak of Jesus as the Christ.

V. 6 - The Jews, like others previous, arrayed themselves against Paul, blaspheming the message he proclaimed. He, as before, left them, after warning them of the consequences of their choice. His statement was like that in Acts 20:26, and to the effect that he was not responsible for their damnation (see Ezek 3).

V. 7 - The scene of labor barely changes to the house next door, and the work goes on, with evident success (v. 9).

V. 8 - As is evident elsewhere, Jews and Greeks were convicted through the preached word. We note that some of the Corinthians were of bad backgrounds (I Cor. 6:9-11). Crispus is mentioned in I Cor. 1. His reception of Christianity undoubtedly was a major factor in the response of others.

V. 9 - Noting I Cor. 2:3, this action of God is most impressive. NASV correctly translates the Greek: Paul was to stop being afraid and to keep speaking, not becoming silent. Certainly the apostle well knew what Jewish hatred could do, as well as the wrath of Gentiles (see v. 12). The foreknowledge of God is displayed here. The human agency God used to accomplish his will. God had chosen Paul for a rugged life, but often encouraged Paul in a personal way.

V. 10 - **I have many people** - Perhaps this was partially prophetic, and would then have been a great encouragement to Paul.

V. 11 - Whether this is an inclusive statement of time, or to be considered apart from the time in v. 18, we have no knowledge. At any rate, Paul spent much time preaching to people, helping them become Christian and continuing with them to help them grow. He evidently did not practice what is sometimes said: "No one has the right to hear the gospel twice until everyone has heard it once."

V. 12 - Gallio became proconsul (under the Roman senate) in July A.D. 51. So we know about when Paul was there. Gallio ruled one year, then left.

The court was a place of judgment which was located near the agora (market place). In recent years, evacuation has been done, and the agora uncovered. It had an elevated platform for the bema (Latin rostra), which is undoubtedly the exact spot where Paul stood. The agora itself was surrounded by various shops where food, etc. could be bought. An underground tunnel for water supplies connected all the ships. The main roads leading to Corinth's two ports (Lechaian and Cenchreae) led away from this agora. A stone with the name Erastus, commissioner of public works, has recently been found; perhaps the same man as in Romans 16:24.

V. 13 - The charge was ambiguous: whose law was being broken, and in what way? Gallio was too sharp for the Jews, however, and refused to judge the case. Paul was indeed stirring people up by persuasion, but that was not necessarily unlawful.

V. 15 - Gallio stated that Paul was not a criminal, one who worked deceit, or a doer of evil. Therefore, he would not honor their charges. (This is somewhat the same thing as in seen later in Acts when Paul is arrested in Jerusalem, and is tried before Felix, etc.) His sentence had the effect of protecting Christianity by law, since the Jewish religion was approved under law, and Gallio had refused to make Christianity a separate thing.

V. 17 - This action may have pleased Gallio, since it might have given tacit approval to the onlookers that his decision was correct. I Cor. 1:1 mentions a Sosthenes. The name was common, but it is surely more than a coincidence that it appears in both accounts.

### **At Cenchreae, 18:18**

*18 After this Paul stayed many days longer, and then took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he cut his hair, for he had a vow.*

V. 18 - Paul had a "scissors cut" in Cenchreae (in Acts 21, the word is "shave", not "cut"). Cenchreae was the eastern port of Corinth. From Rom. 16, it appears that a congregation was evidently there, though we are not told how it began.

The vow Paul took has always been a point of contention. It was possible to become a Nazarite for a time, but why would Paul do so, since it generally involved abstinence from wine, etc., which Paul probably did not drink anyway. Since the hair

was cut, not shaved, it may have been in connection with some other type of vow. Any or all of the law could be kept, as long as it was not kept for the purpose of redemption. Many Christians kept it, at least major points in it, as is evident here and elsewhere. Again, the reason for keeping it would be paramount.

### **In Ephesus, 18:19-21**

*19 And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there; but he himself went into the synagogue and argued with the Jews. 20 When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined; 21 but on taking leave of them he said, "I will return to you if God wills," and he set sail from Ephesus.*

V. 19 - Whether Ephesus was his intended stop in Asia is a guess. Maybe he was trying to see where the work could be done at some future time, though intending now to go to Antioch.

**argued** - The same procedure as in Thessalonica, 17:2, and the other places he has been.

Priscilla and Aquila evidently went back to Rome later, since A.D. 57 finds them in Rome (Rom. 16:3).

V. 21 - Ephesus was the capital of Asia, across the Aegean Sea from Greece, home of Diana (Artemis) of the Ephesians. Paul, recognizing the presence of God's will in his plans, promised to return. We can't help but admire Paul for his never-ceasing efforts to win his countrymen (Rom. 9:1ff; 11:13ff).

### **At Caesarea, 18:22a**

*22 When he landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church.*

### **In Antioch, 18:22b**

*and then went down to Antioch.*

## **QUESTIONS**

73. What do you know about Corinth?

74. Approximately what year was it when Paul was in Corinth?
75. Did Paul have the right to be supported by the Christians in Corinth? (ref. I Cor. 9; II Cor. 12)
76. Why does the apostle always try to persuade people? Would this mean that God did not make them become Christians, but rather left each to decide what course life would take?
77. When Paul argued that Jesus was the Messiah, would this indicate that the Jews believed in a coming Messiah, but disagreed as to who it was? (Isn't it often the case that the "facts" are the same for all, but it is the interpretation thereof that brings the disagreement?)
78. Did Paul's persuasiveness convince any to believe in Jesus?
79. What did the Corinthians who were persuaded do (v. 8)?
80. Did Paul need encouragement even as we do?
81. Considering the charge brought against Paul by the Jews, were they correct, in some senses, that Paul was trying to get people to worship God contrary to the law?
82. What do you know about Priscilla and Aquila?

83. Were the Jews in Ephesus willing to hear Paul's case?

84. What expression did Paul use that would be good for us to use (and practice)? See James 4.

### **ABA REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 5**

1. Discuss the location and history of Corinth.

2. Identify Aquilla and Priscilla.

3. Identify Crispus.

4. What two things did the Corinthians do after hearing Paul?

5. Complete the textbook statement: "No one has the right to \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ until everyone has \_\_\_\_\_ it once".

6. Who was Gallio?

7. Describe the court and agora of Corinth.

8. Where was Cenchreae located?

9. Why did Paul make the vow described in Acts 18:18?

10. Discuss the location and history of Ephesus.

11. List each city visited by Paul on his Second Missionary Journey, and describe what happened at each location.