

## Turning the World Right-side Up: Study 15, Acts 18

Acts Studies for Teens by Mike Apodaca, MA



Begin with prayer for wisdom from God and for the presence of the Spirit.

Note: In a Bible Study, as much as possible ask the questions and let the students answer. Where they

cannot, you supply the answer and keep everything flowing.

Introduction: How do Christians work together to spread the gospel?

### Chapter 18 Kingdom Networking

#### Section 1: Acts 18:1-8 Paul Shares the Good News

**18** After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. <sup>2</sup>There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, <sup>3</sup>and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. <sup>4</sup>Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

<sup>5</sup>When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. <sup>6</sup>But when they opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent of it. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

<sup>7</sup>Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. <sup>8</sup>Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized.



The friction between the Jews and Christians had spread all over the world. In Rome the Jews were so violent against the believers that



the Roman Emperor, Claudius<sup>1</sup>, kicked the Jews out of Rome. It didn't matter if you were a Jewish Christian, all Jews had to go.

Paul does what is sensible. His occupational skills are in tentmaking. He seeks out someone to work with, to earn money to help pay his expenses. He stayed with them and taught every week in the synagogue. When Silas and Timothy caught up with him, he was able to quit working and devote himself completely to

preaching that Jesus was the Messiah.

There came a point where the Jews ran out of arguments against the gospel and resorted to simple emotional anger and violence. Paul, seeing that they were not going to accept the truth and the wonderful offer of salvation through Christ, rejected them and turned to the Gentiles.

Paul taught in the house of a Greek who had converted to Judaism. There were several who had accepted Christ in Corinth, including Crispus<sup>2</sup>, the synagogue leader, and his household.

## Section 2: Acts 18: 9-17 The Attack Comes

<sup>9</sup>One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. <sup>10</sup>For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city." <sup>11</sup>So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.

<sup>12</sup>While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews of Corinth made a united attack on Paul and brought him to the place of judgment. <sup>13</sup>"This man," they charged, "is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law."

<sup>14</sup>Just as Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to them, "If you Jews were making a complaint about some misdemeanor or serious crime, it would be reasonable for me to listen to you. <sup>15</sup>But since it involves questions about words and names and your own law—settle the matter yourselves. I will not be a judge of such things." <sup>16</sup>So he drove them off. <sup>17</sup>Then the crowd there turned on Sosthenes the synagogue leader and beat him in front of the proconsul; and Gallio showed no concern whatever.

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<sup>1</sup> *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pg. 283

<sup>2</sup> *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pg. 313

Paul knows what is coming. He can't help but be afraid. He is a representative of the Living God behind enemy lines. He is sent to proclaim the way to leave slavery to sin and Satan's claim and to become fellow insurgents behind enemy lines. The enemy is not going to stand by and let this happen. It may be interesting to consider why we don't have more direct attacks on the church in America today. Are we the threat to Satan's kingdom?

Jesus comes to Paul in a vision at night. This is different from a dream. Paul saw Jesus and heard his message. It comprised of the following:

- 1) Do not be afraid.

God often calls on His people to be strong and courageous (Deuteronomy 31:23, Josh 1:7)

- 2) Keep on speaking.

It is through people hearing the message that they can be saved. Don't stop.

- 3) I am with you.

This is perhaps the most encouraging part of the message. God has often encouraged His servants by reminding them that He is with them (Joshua 1:5, Judges 2:18, Isaiah 8:10, 41:10, Jeremiah 1:19, Matthew 28:20, etc.). This is what the name, Immanuel means. When we come to opposition

while sharing our faith, we need to remember that we are not abandoned. He is with us.

- 4) No one will harm you because I have many in this city.

Jesus had already claimed many in Corinth who had not yet even heard the message of Jesus. Paul had to continue so these could hear and come to faith. We need to consider how many are around us who already belong to Jesus and are just waiting to hear the message of salvation.

The attack did come. The Jews conspired and launched an attack against Paul, dragging him before the local Roman authorities. They had him appear before the judge at the Bema Seat, the place in the middle of the marketplace (the agora) where court was convened and judgments made.



Words can mean completely different things to different people and sometimes people exploit these differences for their own gain. The

Jews felt that Paul was going against the Law of Moses. But they knew that the Roman judge wouldn't care. So they simply declare that Paul is teaching against the law, which could mean the law of Rome. But Gallio<sup>3</sup>, the judge, sees through this deception and declares that this whole thing is meaningless.

The question arises, why beat Sosthenes<sup>4</sup>? He was the leader of the synagogue and may have been the one who came up with this plan. After being beaten by the crowd, Sosthenes read the writing on the wall. We don't know for certain, but it is likely that he is the same Sosthenes who helped Paul write his first epistle (letter) to the Corinthians. This would make sense—he would be known to them and could help Paul communicate more efficiently to them. We can assume that when Crispus<sup>5</sup>, the synagogue leader, became a Christian he was replaced by Sosthenes, who also became a Christian. You never know when enemies will become allies.

### **Section 3: Acts 18:18-28 The Christ Team Expands**

<sup>18</sup>Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sisters and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchreae because of a vow he had taken. <sup>19</sup>They

arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. <sup>20</sup>When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. <sup>21</sup>But as he left, he promised, "I will come back if it is God's will." Then he set sail from Ephesus. <sup>22</sup>When he landed at Caesarea, he went up to Jerusalem and greeted the church and then went down to Antioch.

<sup>23</sup>After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

<sup>24</sup>Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. <sup>25</sup>He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. <sup>26</sup>He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

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<sup>3</sup> *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pg. 474

<sup>4</sup> *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pg. 1195

<sup>5</sup> *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pg. 313

<sup>27</sup> When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers and sisters encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. <sup>28</sup> For he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.

Paul left Corinth and cut his hair because he had taken a vow. The vow he took was a Nazirite vow<sup>6</sup> that Jews performed to separate themselves to God. They cut their hair as a visible sign. It may have been that Paul knew that he was going to Jerusalem and that the Jews there would expect him to have abandoned the things of God that were important to him in Judaism. He is showing them that being God's man will always be important to him.

Paul leaves Priscilla<sup>7</sup> and Aquila in Ephesus and goes on to Jerusalem. We can notice that Priscilla, the woman, is mentioned first, in the place of leadership. At this time, she was the one who was strongest in the faith and took the lead. The Bible does not discriminate between men and women (Galatians 3:28). Although the people of Ephesus wanted him to stay, he had to go. He was trying to make it to Jerusalem in time for the feast.

Paul does not abandon those he brings into the faith. He strengthens the believers wherever he goes and often returns to keep them strong in the Way.

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<sup>6</sup> *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pg. 1297

<sup>7</sup> *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pg. 1031, 94

We are here introduced to Apollos<sup>8</sup>, who becomes a great leader in the church (see 1 Corinthians 1:12). He is a Greek and well known for his great speaking ability. He had been raised in Alexandria, a great center of learning (its library was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world). He had a thorough knowledge of the Old Testament and was instructed in how these pointed to Jesus.

The one thing Apollos lacked was a complete understanding of baptism.

John the Baptist was a very powerful leader and many followed his baptism. He called people to repentance of their sins. John was pointing to the coming Christ. Apollos knew of Christ, but he had only very limited knowledge. Priscilla and Aquila fill in the blanks for Apollos. How wonderful it would have been to hear these saints explaining to Apollos what God had been doing to move His kingdom forward.

### **What have we learned?**

God seeks fellowship with man, the only creature made in His own image. Man is separated from God because of sin and now lives behind enemy lines, and is owned by Satan. Through Christ God provided the way back to Himself.

Those who come into Christ, who switch their allegiance from Satan to God and who become members of His new creation and become part of His family, are now able to lead others out of darkness and into Christ.

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<sup>8</sup> *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pg. 90

But Satan will not stand idly by and watch this happen without a fight. He will lead attacks against those who follow Christ. We must be always ready for these attacks. We must know that Christ is with us, and that no matter what happens, whether we are saved from harm or led to our deaths, we will always be His.

## What the Text Says

### Section 1 Acts 18:1-8

A wise Christian understands that all other believers are our allies. We labor together in the work of Christ—seeking to bring about God’s kingdom on this earth. Priscilla and Aquila, and later Apollos, will all help aid Paul in his mission to spread the gospel. When Silas and Timothy arrive they take over working for money so that Paul can devote himself solely to preaching the word. They all work together.

### Section 2 Acts 18:9-17

Paul is afraid and is visited by Jesus in a vision and given encouragement. This was not a hallucination but a real visit from the risen Lord. Paul had met Jesus before, on the road to Damascus. Seeing Him again was wonderful, but not shocking. He knew Jesus was alive. Jesus tells him to not be afraid, to keep teaching, and that he will not be harmed. Jesus will protect him because He has many who are His, but have not yet heard the gospel. We are not subject to the whims of those who would attack us. Our fate is completely in God’s hands. We see here another attack on those who have left Satan’s control and are bringing others to God through Christ.

### Section 3 Acts 18:18-28

Apollos, an educated man who loves God and seeks truth, shares the truth he knows. He is a great speaker. Aquila and Priscilla help to fill in his missing pieces. Those who love truth will gladly accept new knowledge of the glorious plan of God.

## Connecting to the Scripture

Paul is a great role model for us. And in this chapter we see him experiencing a very natural reaction—he is afraid. He knew the resistance was coming. It was not that long ago that Paul was stoned and left for dead. Jesus honors Paul, coming to him in a vision and giving him a pep talk.

There are several goals for us in Christ during this life. First, and foremost, we are to live a life of worship and prayer. We are to grow increasingly more connected to God and in fellowship with Him. We are to experience His presence.

Another goal is to grow in the likeness of Christ. As we grow close to God we will also grow more holy and pure. As we surrender our lives to Him we will become more and more like Him. As we learn His word and meditate on it, we will have the mind of Christ.

As we continue in Christ and give up more and more of ourselves to Him, we will eventually reach the point where we will be ready to suffer anything for Him—even death. Jesus said, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life -- he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:25-27). This does not mean that we are to hate our family or our lives. What it means is that we are to love Christ with such passion, with so much of our being, and put Him so far ahead of everything—including our lives—that it will look like we hate everything else in comparison. Coming to this point, we will never deny Christ, never betray Him.

## Questions to Ask During the Study

### Section 1 Read Acts 18:1-8

1. How does Paul proceed in sharing the gospel?
2. What does Paul do when the Jews refuse to accept the message of salvation through Christ?
3. Is there a point where we should stop sharing with certain people the gospel? At what point might this be true?

### Section 2 Read Acts 18:9-17

1. What does Jesus tell Paul in the vision?
2. How would Jesus being with Paul encourage him? How does Jesus being with us encourage us?
3. Why do the Jews have such a violent reaction to the gospel? What kind of attacks can we expect for sharing our faith? How can we react faithfully to attacks?
4. Paul and his friends work together in spreading the gospel. How do you work with your Christian friends in communicating the gospel of Christ? What strengths and resources do you have that you can share with those who are spreading the gospel?

### Section 3 Read Acts 18:18-28

1. Why did Paul have his hair cut before going to Jerusalem?
2. Priscilla and Aquila share the more complete faith with Apollos. What responsibility do we have to help those who have part of the truth gain a more complete understanding of Christ and life in Him? How can we better prepare for these opportunities to help others grow?