

SPEAK WITHOUT FEAR / Sunday, November 29, 2015

Unifying Topic: **TEACHING GOD'S WORD**

I. **Paul Finds Co-Laborers** (Acts 18:1-4)

II. **Paul Preaches In Corinth** (Acts 18:5-11)

III. **Paul Fulfills A Vow** (Acts 18:18-21)

The Main Thought: Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city. (Acts 18:9-10, KJV).

Unifying Principle: People can be persistent when they really believe that what they are doing and saying is the right thing. How do people sustain their enthusiasm for their work or vocation? Luke points out that the success in Paul's Corinthian mission led Paul to extend his mission of proclaiming the Good News to Syria and Ephesus.

Lesson Aim: To explore Paul's use of available resources in furthering the spread of the Gospel in Corinth.

Life Aim: To become more sensitive to people and other resources at hand that might help them be better witnesses for Christ.

HISTORY:

Acts Chapter 17:28-34 At this point, Paul tells the Athenians that God causes us to live. It is in Him we live, and move, and have our being. Even their own poets have said, "*For we are also his offspring*" (v.28). We are God's children; His workmanship. He is not our workmanship for He is a Spirit (John 4:24). He is the designer of us. If He designed us, then we can't design any image from metal or stone; gold or silver or wood, for we know not how the designer looks. God is a Spirit. We worship Him in Spirit and in Truth! ¹What ignorance God may have overlooked in the past, such is no longer the case. He now commands all men everywhere to repent. Why? - Because of the coming Judgment, in which God will judge the world in righteousness. God will judge the world through Jesus Christ (vv.29-31). Paul mentioning the resurrection provoked a response (v.32). Some mocked because many at that time, the idea of a bodily resurrection was foolishness. Others were more cordial, offering to listen again at another time. As Paul left, some joined him and believed. Specifically mentioned are Dionysius the Areopagite and Damaris, a woman. Others joined Paul and believed (vv.33-34).

LESSON:

Acts 18:1-4 Paul Finds Co-Laborers

18:1 After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;— Paul finds himself at a low point in his grueling ministry. His second missionary journey had been arduous (tough). After travelling through Asia Minor strengthening the churches (**Acts 15:41**), he crossed the Aegean Sea to the Greek mainland. His healing of a demon-possessed girl in Philippi sparked a riot, and he and Silas had been beaten and thrown into prison. After being released following a devastating earthquake, he was forced to leave the city (**16:39-40**). From there he went to Thessalonica, where his ministry enjoyed great success (**17:4**). Persecution forced him to flee to Berea (**17:10**), where many did respond to his preaching and teaching (**17:12**), however, when persecution followed him from Thessalonica to Berea, Paul was again forced to escape danger (**17:14**). He arrived alone in the great city of Athens, where his brilliant speech in defense of Christianity had largely been ignored (**17:19-32**). Paul then left Athens and travelled to Corinth (a fifty-three mile walk. The decision was by choice. No doubt he stayed in Athens long enough. Apparently, Paul felt his time could be spent more profitably in Corinth.

18:2 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. Wherever Paul went, he looked for people who either needed Christ or needed to grow in Christ. With Silas and Timothy still in Macedonia, he had to bear it alone, and God knew Paul needed someone else to help him shoulder any difficulty. At this point he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus and his wife Priscilla. Priscilla and Aquila were originally residents of Rome, but the Roman emperor, Claudius had the Jews banished from Rome

¹ http://executableoutlines.com/acts_so/ac17_16.htm

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sunday-school.html>

in A.D. 52. So Aquila and Priscilla moved to Corinth.

18:3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers. Paul, no doubt looked for work to support himself, and found that Aquila and Priscilla were of the same craft; of the same occupation — tentmakers, so they opened their home to Paul, and he stayed with the couple as they went into the tent-making business together; even eventually risking their lives for him (**Rom. 16:3-4**). They later travelled with Paul to Ephesus eventually settling there (**18:18**).

18:4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. Every Sabbath Paul reasoned in the synagogue persuading Jews and Greeks. **Two points:**

1. Paul reasoned; presented sound, thoughtful, logical points; answered and settled questions in a reasonable way.
2. Paul persuaded; prevailed, urged, induced, pleaded, begged, sought to move and bring about a change of heart and mind.

His goal was to persuade the Jews, and God-fearing Greeks (*Gentiles who had abandoned their pagan religion in favor of worshipping Jehovah God*) that Jesus Christ was Israel's Lord, Messiah, and Savior from sin and hell.

Acts 18:5-11 Paul Preaches In Corinth

18:5 And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. At this time Silas and Timothy caught up with Paul. They had been left behind at Berea with instructions to meet Paul in Athens, but this had evidently not worked out. Silas had left Berea for Philippi to help Luke with the new church there. Timothy at Paul's request had gone back to Thessalonica to oversee the work there. Thessalonica is the chief city and capital of the province of Macedonia. Both men now meet Paul in Corinth. Silas brought a financial gift for Paul from the Philippian church for his missionary support, which is referred to in 2 Corinthians 11:8 and Philippians 4:15 which freed Paul to preach Christ full time; and Timothy came with a good report concerning the Word in Thessalonica; churches of Macedonia growing in the Lord. Paul was "*pressed in the spirit*" means "*compelled of the Spirit*." Paul had been working part time as a tentmaker, now the Holy Spirit has set him on fire to preach the gospel message. Whether it was the generous gift which came, where he can now devote himself completely to the Word or that Silas and Timothy being there had strengthened him, or not, we cannot say. He boldly proclaimed Jesus as the Christ.

18:6 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. As Paul preached in Corinth, they rejected. The Jews opposed themselves (*meaning contradicted the scriptures and hold onto religious doctrine*) and they blasphemed the name of Jesus. The idea is that they organized and opposed the preaching and teaching of Jesus as the Messiah, and they reviled and spoke reproachfully of Christ. Paul shook out his garment; his clothes in protest. It was a gesture; a sign, much like shaking the dust from one's feet of their rejection of God; judgment of those rejecting the gospel, (Matt. 10:14; Mark 6:11; Acts 13:51), for he would not spend time where he simply faces hostile opposition. "*Your blood be upon your own heads*" reflects Ezekiel's words about God's prophetic watchman (Ezk. 33:1-9). The responsibility for their judgment by God was upon them, thereby, they opposed themselves and their blood was upon their heads. Paul had faithfully discharged his responsibility, so that at the final judgment no part of these Jews' failure to believe could be attributed to his failure to tell them about Christ. It is our responsibility to share the gospel, because we don't want their blood to be upon our hands or upon our heads. If they reject, then they are the rejecters, not us!

- Paul shook off the dust of those who had rejected him.
- Paul declared their blood; the responsibility for their salvation was upon their own heads.
- Paul's was clean; conscious was now clear.
- Paul turned from the Jews to the Gentiles.

18:7 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. Rejected by the Jews, Paul could no longer preach in the

synagogue. He departed the synagogue, entering into a certain man's house, named Justus, a devout proselyte; a Gentile. Justus was one who worshipped God and whose house was next door to the synagogue.

18:8 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. Also, as Paul preached, Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue and his household believed on the Lord and were baptized, as were many other Corinthians hearing the message and wanted to be baptized.

18:9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: Now, Paul struggled with whether to continue to preach in Corinth, and the Lord spoke to Paul in a night vision. This was one of the six visions Paul received in Acts, all coming at crucial points in his ministry. Paul was apparently thinking about moving on from Corinth, to not face an uproar of persecution again, this time from the message that caused the baptism of Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue and the other Corinthians. To encourage His servant at this time, the Lord Himself spoke to Paul in a vision: *"Don't be afraid, speak out, and don't be silent"*

18:10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city. It was the presence of the Lord that encouraged Paul. The Lord gave Paul a most glorious promise: *"I am with thee and no one can harm you, because I have many in this city who are my people."* This indicates that many in Corinth would come to faith in Christ. Paul needed nothing else, just the perfect assurance and sense of the Lord's presence, the presence of the One who had done so much for him and in whom he loved so much.

18:11 And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. Paul's strength was fully renewed by God's promise to him for he continued a year and six months to minister; teaching God's Word there in Corinth. Many were saved and grew in faith because Paul stayed.

NOT APART OF THE LESSON VERSES 12-17

Some months later a new deputy, Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia began his rule in the district of which Corinth was a part of. The Jews thought they might be able to manipulate this new ruler, so they rose up on one accord against Paul and dragged him before Gallio (v.12), saying that he's inciting men to worship God contrary to the law (v.13). Before Paul could open his mouth to defend himself, Gallio refused to be a judge of such matters. He wouldn't even hear it (vv.14-15). He had them removed from the court (v.16). The Jews were so embarrassed and shamed that they turned against the leader Sosthenes, who had aroused them against Paul. They beat him right there in the judgment hall before Gallio (v.17). Sosthenes later became a convert to Christ. He also became a minister of the gospel with Paul (1 Cor.1:1).

Acts 18:18-21 Paul Fulfills A Vow

18:18 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. After all this, Paul still stayed in Corinth ministering a considerable number of days, for he didn't really have to leave Corinth because...

- He was protected by Gallio's ruling.
- He was having phenomenal results.
- He was loved by many of the believers.
- He was in a strategic city of commerce and trade which would assure the spread of the gospel far and wide.

The city evidently had a strong church, for Paul highly praised Phoebe, a deaconess of the church. At some point, he said good-bye to the Christian brothers and set sail to Syria, taking with him Priscilla and Aquila to continue spreading the gospel. Paul was not called to be the minister of a local church. He was called to carry the gospel forth as an evangelist, and a missionary. As Christian believers who are the called to carry the gospel of Jesus Christ, we deny ourselves, take up our cross daily and follow Christ no matter where it takes us. On the occasion of some circumstance unknown to us,—perhaps under some distress, in view of eventual deliverance, Paul had vowed to let his hair grow for a certain time. Having kept the vow, he then shaved his hair, for the vow had now

been fulfilled and completed as he reached Cenchrea, the eastern part of Corinth.

The "*Nazarite vow*" (covered in Numbers 6 [especially verse 18]) had to be carried out at the door of the tabernacle in Jerusalem with the shaving of the head, and the hair burned on the fire of the sacrifice at the temple, which differed from this vow.

18:19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. Paul now arrives in Ephesus, the most important city in Asia Minor, where he leaves Priscilla and Aquila there. Whatever town he entered, he always went to the synagogue. He entered and reasoned with the Jews.

18:20 When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not;— As in Berea, he was well received in Ephesus, so much so that the Jews asked him to stay longer with them. They were open and hungry for the Word of God; however, he refused this great opportunity. This is why Priscilla and Aquila were left behind—to teach the people. Most of the time when you see their names, Priscilla's name comes before her husband Aquila which points to the fact that she was the stronger and more mature Christian of the two.

18:21 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. He said farewell to the people in Ephesus, for he was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem to keep the feast (probably the Passover Feast). He promised that if it was God's Will, he would return to them again. This was the end of Paul's second missionary journey.

SUMMARY:

²Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. He found Aquila and Priscilla. He stayed with them, as they were all of the same trade; tentmakers. Aquila and Priscilla had left Rome because of the command by Claudius. And during this time, Paul taught in the synagogue and "*persuaded both Jews and Greeks*" that Jesus Christ was Israel's Lord, Messiah, and Savior from sin and hell (**vv.1-4**).

Silas and Timothy then joined Paul at Corinth, coming from Macedonia. Paul taught the Jews that "*Jesus is the Christ.*" They opposed him. Paul told them, "*Your blood be on your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.*" Paul then went to Justus' house, which was next to the synagogue. Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, and his household believed and were baptized. And many Corinthians believed and were baptized. The Lord spoke to Paul in a vision, encouraging him to be bold and to continue to speak; for the Lord would be with him. Paul continued teaching there another year and a half (**vv.5-11**).

Paul remained there a while longer. Next, Paul, Priscilla, and Aquila set sail for Syria. As they were departing, Paul had his hair cut off at Cenchrea as part of a vow. Paul left Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus, as they were traveling. Paul did not remain in Ephesus, as he wanted to keep the feast in Jerusalem (**vv.18-21**).

²http://executableoutlines.com/acts/acts_18.htm
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sunday-school.html>