

A Practical Study of ACTS:

Take It To Them!

“Putting the GO Back in the Gospel”

Study Number Fourteen – Acts 18:1-28

In our last study we left Paul in the city of Athens alone. Silas and Timothy were left in Berea because they were hungry and excited about the Word. Paul left out of the sheer hope of the disciples that he be kept safe. He was escorted down to Athens, 250 miles to the south.

He got there, went to the synagogue and started going to the marketplace every afternoon and got the attention of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers and was provided an opportunity then to speak at the Areopagus. And we got to hear his great sermon to the unknown God. And he got some results. There were some people that responded to his message.

Now let's pick up at verse 1. We left him in Athens and that's where he is now.

v. 1 After these things having left Athens he went to Corinth.

“After these things having left Athens he went to Corinth.”

Now Corinth is about 40 miles west of Athens, so it's not very far. Actually these cities were called the twin cities of culture and commerce.

Athens was the place of culture and sophisticated intellectualism and education.

Corinth was the commercial center—the seaport. The place where the boats came in and exports and imports took place. We could say of Corinth, without any contradiction, it is the Hollywood, San Francisco or Las Vegas of the Roman Empire all mixed up in one. It is really an incredibly filthy city with regards to sin. If we want to call it “sin city” we're not far off. The Sodom and Gomorrah of the modern Greek era.

The apostle hits this city next. Isn't it interesting that these two cities represent the reason more people don't come to know Christ:

1. intellectual arrogance—Athens,
2. sensual pleasure—Corinth.

And yet the apostle is going to come to town and he's going to make some waves here. Now lest we think that we're judging him and the city of Corinth, let's look at some verses from 1 Corinthians to embellish a little bit of what actually was there and what was involved in the ministry.

First Corinthians 6:9-11 describe this for us:

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.

So here the apostle comes into a very, very difficult city to establish a ministry.

When he gets there, verse 2 says:

v. 2 And when he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy and Priscilla his wife, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He went to them,

“And when he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy and Priscilla his wife, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He went to them,”

Now one thing we'll find about Jews that's just incredible is

you can drop a Jew anywhere and he'll find somebody that he can talk Hebrew to in just a matter of minutes. They just have that innate ability to find them.

Just watch them come into town. Before very long they'll find somebody that's from one of their tribes and somebody that they can really jabber a mile a minute with. They just have that ability.

Now Paul evidently had the welcome wagon stop in front of his place, and so had Aquila and Priscilla because they're both brand new in town. They probably met at the synagogue when Paul was there the first time.

These folks come from Pontus which is 300 miles north of Tarsus. So actually they'd grown up in fair proximity to one another as far as geographical location is concerned.

The thing that drew them together though was the fact that they had come from Rome. Paul has this gnawing desire in his heart—it's kind of a restlessness. It's kind of like Ulysses of Tennyson:

“I cannot rest from travel, always roaming with a hungry heart.”

(source unknown)

Before this series is over, we're going to see Paul wants to go to Rome very, very badly. And so they've been there. They've lived there and the glory of Rome is something that they have

shared with the apostle Paul and probably drew them together.

Now Rome is 600 miles as the crow flies north of Corinth, but a whole lot further by land and by boat. And they've gotten down here because Claudius drove out all the Jews and made life miserable for the Christians and the Jews in Rome.

Way back in Acts 11, Agabus the prophet came to Antioch and he said there was going to be a worldwide famine. And then the text says, Dr. Luke says underneath. He says:

Acts 11:28

...It happened during the time of Claudius.

God says, "when you bless them, I will bless you. When you curse them, I will curse you." (ref. Genesis 12:3)

Could it be that the time of Claudius' reign came to a demise through this worldwide famine as a result of his treatment of the Jews?

Here's Aquila and Priscilla, they've been driven out of the city of Rome because of Claudius' edicts there. And now they've ended up down here in Corinth, some 600 miles away.

How were they drawn together?

1. Well, they came to the synagogue.

2. They are all new in town.
3. They grew up not too far apart.
4. They were tent-makers.
5. They were believers.
6. But Paul was single and needed a place.
7. And Aquila and Priscilla are Christians because they have the gift of hospitality.

And so the apostle Paul is going to be there.

William Barker talks about Priscilla and Aquila in his book *Saints in Aprons and Overalls*. He describes them:

(Saints in Aprons and Overalls by William Barker)

At Winchester, Virginia, in the lovely Shenandoah Valley there is a quiet old cemetery where a shaft of granite commemorates the unknown dead of the Confederate Army.

On it are inscribed the words:

“Who they are, none knows
What they were, all know.”

Those are the words we can apply to the Priscillas and Aquilas of the world—the quiet, gentle, kindly Christians who in everyday living are truly fellow workers in Christ Jesus.

(source unknown)

We're meeting some neat folks in our passage. We're meeting Aquila here in the front of the study and we're going to meet Apollos in the back of it. And just some pretty stout folks that Dr. Luke includes in the biography.

Now look at verse 3.

v. 3 and because he was of the same occupation, he was staying with them and they were working; for by trade they were tent-makers.

“and because he was of the same occupation, he was staying with them and they were working; for by trade they were tent-makers.”

The apostle Paul does not believe in free lunches. He believes that we work for a living. And so they set up the P.A.P Tent Company. That's Paul, Aquila and Priscilla—not the P.U.P. Tent but the P.A.P. Tent Company—and began to make tents as a way of living.

On the Sabbath the apostle would then head to the synagogue—verse 4.

v. 4 And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

“And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath,

trying to persuade the Jews and the Greeks.”

What was he saying to them? He probably talked to them about Christ being Christ. Talked to them about the Resurrection and about the prophets.

We get a little glimpse in 1 Corinthians 2 when he says:

1 Corinthians 2:2

“I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and that one having been crucified.”

We now know the basic content of his message as he came into the synagogue to reason with them.

v. 5 But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was wholly absorbed in the Word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

“But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was wholly absorbed in the Word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.”

Now remember, Silas and Timothy were left in Berea. They come down the 240 miles to Athens and they’re asking everybody, “Have you seen Paul?”

They said, “Well no, not lately.”

“Well, do you know where he went?”

“Well, I’m not sure.”

And finally one of the guys says, “Well I think he was heading west to Corinth the last I saw him.”

So they go 40 miles to Corinth and when they get there, they hardly get time to tell them anything about what’s going on in Berea. He just doesn’t have time to say hello because he is “wholly absorbed in the Word [of God], solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.”

He’s so caught up in the Word of God that he doesn’t even have time to really talk to his fellow workers here and spend time with them.

Ever done that? Ever gotten so “wholly absorbed in the Word” that everything else is totally secondary? When it’s more important to just go ahead and stay in the Word than to take some pressing appointment, just to be alone with the Lord, absorbed in His Word.

Those are rich times. We should cherish it if we’re making decisions in our life and if there are circumstances that surround us right now and we have some real need for direction. That we would take time to be a person who would have such a desire to be in the Word of God we would be like the Bereans, we “were more noble-minded,” we were ready to

receive the word with “eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.” (ref. Acts 17:11)

He’s like the blessed man in Psalm 1 who meditates in His Law day and night. He’s going to be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in due season.

Paul is “wholly absorbed in the Word” when these fellas get here.

v. 6 And when they were resisting and reviling, he having shaken off his garments said to them: “Your blood be upon your own heads, I am clean; from now on I shall go to the Gentiles.”

“And when they were resisting and reviling, he having shaken off his garments said to them: ‘Your blood be upon your own heads, I am clean; from now on I shall go to the Gentiles.’”

There are two KEY WORDS in this verse:

1. “resisting” and
2. “reviling.”

They are “resisting” the truth but they’re “reviling” the person. They’re “reviling” Jesus and Paul and “resisting” the truth that he’s preaching the Gospel.

He does something here that’s a little bit strong. He shakes

the dust off and he says, “Alright, since you’re resisting and reviling, I’m going to the Gentiles.” But then he says something else that isn’t quite so plain:

“Your blood be upon your own heads, I am clean; from now on I shall go to the Gentiles.”

What does “Your blood shall be on your own heads” mean??

Basically what he is saying here is, “I gave you a chance. I presented you with the message. You’ve chosen to resist it and revile it. Now the responsibility’s yours, not mine anymore.”

Now there are three verses in Ezekiel that make this come alive . Listen to the Lord speaking to Ezekiel the prophet:

Ezekiel 3:17-19

Son of man, I have appointed you a watchman to the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from My mouth, warn them from Me. When I say to the wicked, “You shall surely die”; and you do not warn him or speak out to warn the wicked from his wicked way that he may live, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. Yet if you have warned the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity, but you have delivered yourself.

Paul says, “I told you! I said it!”

And now “Your blood be upon your own heads’ because of what you have decided to do.”

v. 7 And having departed from there he went to the house of a certain man named Titius Justus, one who is worshipping God, whose house was next door to the synagogue.

“And having departed from there he went to the house of a certain man named Titius Justus, one who is worshipping God, whose house was next door to the synagogue.”

He just gets booted out of one place and goes into the next. Evidently Titus Justus had become a Christian from his ministry. So he goes into the Gentile’s house and he starts having Bible class right next door. Even better than that, look at verse 8.

v. 8 And Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they were hearing were believing and were being baptized.

“And Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they were hearing were believing and were being baptized.”

What’s happening in sin city? A bunch of these people are deciding, “Pleasure just doesn’t have it. It’s only yours to enjoy

while you're indulging in it and then it becomes empty and hollow and shallow. And there's no purpose. It's just all ashes."

And they're finding something in Jesus Christ—and there's the fruit verse again. Many believed—turned to Him. They celebrated the ordinance of baptism as a result of his ministry there in Corinth.

So this is like another Berea. We have a bunch in Berea in our last study. Many responded there. We have "many" now in Corinth who have come to know the Lord through this ministry.

v. 9 And the Lord said to Paul during the night through a vision: "Stop being afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent;

"And the Lord said to Paul during the night through a vision: 'Stop being afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent;'"

v. 10 for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I am having many people in this city."

"for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I am having many people in this city."

What brought about the circumstances to make it necessary for the Lord to minister to Paul on this occasion?

Sometimes we just really don't know what's going on in a person's heart. And we really don't know what their needs are. We don't know what the Lord's going to say to each person because we don't know what everyone's needs are. But we do know that He will speak if we're sensitive to His Spirit.

Remember he had a vision in Acts 16 of the Macedonia man who said come over to help us. That's the last one he had. (ref. Acts 16:9)

Now here's another one. And the Lord says:

“Stop being afraid.”

What does that tell us? It's something he is doing and he has been commanded negatively to stop it. “Stop being afraid.”

That's exactly what the Lord said to the disciples in the Upper Room just before He died. He said, “Stop being troubled in your hearts. You believe in God, believe also in Me.” (ref. John 14:1)

“Stop being afraid...go on speaking...don't be silent; for I am with you, no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I am having many people in this city.”

Isn't that wonderful that God knows our needs? And because He knows our needs, He knows just how to come and minister to us in a very specific particular way. That's beautiful when

that happens.

Back in the book of Genesis when Abraham and Lot separate from one another and Lot takes the well-watered plains of Jordan and begins to live in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, that's in Genesis 13.

In Genesis chapter 14 there is the battle between the five kings against the three kings and Lot and his whole family are apprehended and taken away as captives to these kings. Abram hears about it and he takes his 300 men and goes all night and rescues Lot and all of his family and brings them back. And he comes back to the Oaks of Mamre and he's exhausted. And he's thinking, "What if those kings mobilize and come back here. They're going to wipe me out for what I did with my 300 servants." And he's scared to death.

Listen to what the Lord says when he is so scared—Genesis 15:1—right after he gets back exhausted:

Genesis 15:1

After these things, [that is after all he'd just been through] the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you. Your reward will be very great."

"Look Abe, don't worry about it! They've got to get to Me before they get to you! I'm a shield to you!"

“The angel of the Lord encamps around those that fear and delivers them.” (Psalm 34:7)

“The Lord God is a sun and shield. He gives grace and glory. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.” (Psalm 84:11)

And so the Lord’s there and He’s saying, “Don’t be afraid. I can handle it.”

When Jacob left home after Esau was about ready to kill him, Rebecca sent him to Uncle Laban’s house. And the first night he’s away from home he has that vision of the ladder that reaches to heaven. And then God speaks to him in Genesis 28:15. He says almost the same thing to him:

Genesis 28:15

“Behold, I am with you, and will keep you wherever you go, and I’ll bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

Isaiah must have had the same problem. The Lord said:

Isaiah 41:10

“Fear thou not, for I am with you. Don’t be dismayed. Don’t go looking around for help, I’m your God. I will strengthen you, yay I will help you. I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness.”

Now listen to Paul when he confesses to the Corinthian church how he came to them. This gives us a bit of an insight:

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

When I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. [His knees were knocking together] And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

He gets a negative command: “Stop being afraid.”

Positively: “go on speaking.”

Negatively: “don’t be silent.”

Are there reasons for his fear? He got drug out of Lystra for dead on that second trip. He got his back busted open in the Philippian fray. He got driven out of Thessalonica and also out of Berea by those Jews who were ready to get him.

We don’t read anything about persecution in Athens but he’s thinking it could be “same song, fifth verse when I get to Corinth.”

And so he has these anxious fears inside him.” God hath not given us the spirit of fear,” has He? “But of power and of love and of a sound mind.” (2 Timothy 1:7)

Juanita Ryan has written a book, *Standing By*. When she comes to the prayer that relates to fear, it’s one of the best in the book. Listen to what she says:

(Standing By: Being There for a Friend in Crisis by Juanita Ryan)

I am afraid, God.
I have no control over what is happening.
Are you aware of this situation?
Are you in control?

I am so tense.
I have no peace.
I cannot relax.
I can’t do anything because of this pain.

God, you asked me to come to you in times of trouble.
Well, here I am.
This is a time of great trouble for me.
So I come to you with my fear and my pain.

I need you to protect me.
Deliver me, God.
Help me!

I'm so afraid.

I long to trust you, God.

Help me to trust you.

I long to be at peace.

Give me peace, God.

Send me loyal friends, Lord.

Send me someone who will take my fear seriously.

Send me someone who will help me face this danger.

I've come because you asked me to.

Please don't hide from my fears.

Amen.

(source unknown)

Raj Chopra, when he wrote his book *Making a Bad Situation Good*, says when we are scared there are four things we need to do:

(Making a Bad Situation Good by Raj K. Chopra)

1. *Say not to [your] fear of failure....*
2. *Give of yourself [freely]....*
3. *Find your special place, [and] niche....*
4. *Persevere toward your goals....*

(source unknown)

Just keep going! Because God is going to be faithful.

The Lord said, “There’s a lot of people here! Just don’t be scared. I’m going to take care of you.”

We’ll look at the next verse. He knows what to do when the Lord says something.

v. 11 And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

“And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.”

He had an 18-month ministry! He established this substantial church during that time. Now it is a problem for him, as the Corinthian letters make it quite clear, but it is a great work that’s established.

v. 12 Now when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment-seat,

“Now when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment-seat,”

Athens and Corinth are both in Achaia. Gallio is the Roman representative, the proconsul over Achaia. And he comes to Corinth and he gets on the judgment seat and the Jews bring him to court.

It makes another verse come alive, by the way, when we read this section.

2 Corinthians 5:10

We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

That really gets to the Corinthians when they witnessed him being hailed to court. And Gallio's the judge.

That's the way we always do it. Just as soon as there's one little tiny wave we're saying, "Oh Lord! You're letting it fall apart! You don't notice it! You don't recognize what's happening!"

Now listen, we don't have any right to an opinion until all the facts are in. God's at work in this thing.

Just because the sea gets a little stormy doesn't mean that He's not going to be faithful to His promises. He's always faithful to His promises.

"when Gallio was proconsul...the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment-seat."

v. 13 saying, "This man is persuading men to be worshipping God contrary to the law."

“saying, ‘This man is persuading men to be worshipping God contrary to the law.’”

Now is that true or false? It’s false!

He has come to preach the Gospel, that man is free from the Law by relationship to Christ. But they’re turning that around.

Remember that poem by James Russell Lowell?

Truth forever on the scaffold,
Wrong forever on the throne.
Yet that scaffold sways the future,
And behind the dim unknown
Standeth God amid the shadows,
Keeping watch above His own.
(source unknown)

Here the apostle is standing, being falsely accused.

v. 14 And when Paul was about to be opening his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, “If it were a matter of wrongdoing or a serious piece of villainy, O Jews, I would have been justified in accepting your complaint.

“And when Paul was about to be opening his mouth,”

Isn't that great? He's going to defend himself!

God says, "Oops! Keep still! I said I was going to take care of you!"

Who's he going to use this time? Well he's going to use the proconsul himself here! He's using the big boy!

"Gallio said to the Jews, 'If it were a matter of wrongdoing or a serious piece of villainy, O Jews, I would have been justified in accepting your complaint.'"

v. 15 But since it is a parcel of questions concerning words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am not willing to be a judge of these matters."

"But since it is a parcel of questions concerning words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am not willing to be a judge of these matters."

And he threw them out of court.

He said, "I don't want to mess with this! This is just not part of my deal."

See how the Lord's handling the situation behind the scene? That's the way God does it. And sometimes we just don't recognize what He's doing. But we're talking about his mouth!

Gallio says, “All this has to do with is words. There’s no villainy here or any violation of the Law! So I’m just going to throw you out. I will not judge these matters.”

Commentator J. Vernon McGee says:

Now I want to say this: I wish the Supreme Court of the United States would adopt the same policy. I wish they would adopt a hands-off policy when it comes to matters of religion. What right does a group of secular men have to come along and make a decision that you can’t have prayer in the schools. If a community wants prayer in their school, then they should have prayer in their school. If they are not having prayer in school, then the state should not force prayer in school.

We claim to have freedom of speech and freedom of religion in our land. The unfortunate thing is that our freedoms are often curtailed. They are abused and misdirected. Under the guise of separating church and state, the freedom of religion is actually curtailed. If we are going to separate church and state, then the state should keep its nose out of that which refers to the church.

If this man Gallio were running for office, I would vote for him. I think we need men with this kind of vision. It says, “Gallio cared for none of those things.” Of course not. He’s a secular magistrate. He’s not going to try to settle an argument about differences in doctrine. That’s not his business, and he’ll stay out of it. I would vote for him.

(source unknown)

Gallio—great!

v. 16 And he drove them away from the judgment-seat.

“And he drove them away from the judgment-seat.”

v. 17 Then they all, having seized Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and were beating him in front of the judgment seat. And Gallio was not concerned about any of these things.

“Then they all, having seized Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and were beating him in front of the judgment seat. And Gallio was not concerned about any of these things.”

When Jews get stirred up they have to put it on somebody. Remember Crispus? The other leader at the first of the chapter has already become a Christian so he's out of the synagogue now.

So we have a new guy here by the name of Sosthenes who's the leader of the synagogue. And they have to get mad at somebody.

Evidently they're going to blame Sosthenes for the fact that Gallio turned the case around and threw it out of court. So they're going to wail on his tail! Somebody has to pay for it.

The hearing fell apart and Paul got away scot-free in the thing. So now they're taking it out on him. But what's happening? Paul and Silas and Timothy and the rest of them

are just walking away! Perfectly clean and innocent.

2 Chronicles 32:7, 8

Be strong and courageous and do not fear or be dismayed because of the king of Assyria, nor because of the multitude which is with him, for the one with us is greater than the one with him. With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles.

v. 18 And Paul, having remained many days longer, having said farewell to the brethren, was setting sail for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila, having his hair cut in Cenchrea for he was keeping a vow.

“And Paul, having remained many days longer, having said farewell to the brethren, was setting sail for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila, having his hair cut in Cenchrea for he was keeping a vow.”

Paul just stayed on several more days to kind of say goodbye to everybody and wrap up the ministry there for now.

And then he asks Priscilla and Aquila to go with him. And they consent. They’re “setting sail for Syria.”

Understand where they’re going? They’re kind of heading back toward Antioch. That’s home base. He wants to wrap up this second journey and report home now. He’s had a long trip.

And so he's heading back toward Syria.

But it says they came to Cenchrea. That's only 8 miles down the road from Corinth and that's the seaport. It's where they're going to catch the boat. And when they got there, he got a "hair cut in Cenchrea for he was keeping a vow."

Now when we look at that it kind of causes a question, doesn't it? Is this man a legalist or is he not a legalist? Is he keeping vows? Is he doing things like this? And what's the meaning of all of this?

Well let's look at two verses in Ecclesiastes first:

Ecclesiastes 5:4, 5

When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it, for He takes no delight in fools. Pay what you vow. It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay.

Paul probably made a vow to the Lord to say, "I'm not going to get my haircut for 30 days." And he might have fasted during part of this time too, of certain foods.

"But I'm just doing this Lord to say thank You to You for being faithful to Your promise to protect me for the last 18 months."

Men of God who are really walking with God very seldom

become public with their spiritual disciplines. When we hear a man who has to spend a lot of time talking about how much he prays and how much he witnesses and how much he reads the Word, we can smell a rat. It's to satisfy his ego and his pride.

These personal disciplines are in the closet. It's a private matter. And a godly man runs deep.

Paul evidently made some vow to the Lord that was between him and the Lord. And a Jew had a way of saying thanks by his vow.

He's just saying, "Thanks Lord for this wonderful opportunity to minister in Corinth these 18 months." And now it's time to get a haircut because the vow is finished. He's in fact accomplished what he said he would do in saying thanks to the Lord. So he gets a haircut before they get on the boat there.

v. 19 And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there, and he himself having entered into the synagogue, reasoned with the Jews.

"And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there,"—WHO? Priscilla and Aquila—"and he himself having entered into the synagogue, reasoned with the Jews."

Now when he got to Cenchrrea he pulled out his American Express card, because we don't leave home without it. And he bought five tickets for a sailing trip 240 miles northwest of

Corinth. They're going up to Ephesus.

Now the FIVE PEOPLE involved are:

1. Paul,
2. Silas,
3. Timothy,
4. Aquila, and
5. Priscilla.

v. 20 Now when they were asking him to remain for a longer time, he did not consent,

“Now when they were asking him to remain for a longer time, he did not consent,”

They liked what they were listening to. They were almost like the Bereans—almost. And they wanted him to stay. He has that restless, gnawing desire to get to Antioch. And so he does not consent.

There are TWO PRINCIPLES OF LEADERSHIP that are really incredible in these verses:

1. A man of God runs deep—There are personal, private disciplines that nobody knows anything about.

2. A man of God knows when to say no and has the courage to say it.

And here Paul just says, “This just doesn’t fit! I’m sorry I cannot stay.”

“he did not consent,”

v. 21 but having bid them adieu and having said: “I will return again to you if God is desiring it,” he sailed from Ephesus.

“but having bid them adieu and having said: “I will return again to you if God is desiring it,” he sailed from Ephesus.”

Well, “if God is desiring it.”

There are a lot of verses that talk about that:

Isaiah 30:21

And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee saying, “This is the way, walk ye in it,” when you turn to the right and when you turn to the left.

Psalm 37:23, 24

The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord...

Proverbs 3:5, 6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, don't lean on your understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your path.

James 4:14-17

You do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just like a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that." Because all such boasting to say that I'm going to do this is really evil in the eyes of the Lord.

v. 22 And when he landed at Caesarea, having gone up and having greeted the church, he went down to Antioch.

"And when he landed at Caesarea,"

Now we look at that and we say he got on a boat in Ephesus and he went to Caesarea. How far is that? That is 600 miles. If they made 60 miles a day with favorable winds, that's 10 days. So this has been a long trip.

And he lands at Caesarea:

"having gone up and having greeted the church, he went down to Antioch."

Now we always have to remember they go down north and up south. He went from Caesarea 50 miles after the 600 mile sailing trip. He went 50 miles down to Jerusalem to greet the folks at the church. Then he turns around and goes 300 miles straight north to Antioch to come home to the church.

v. 23 And having spent some time there, he departed, passing successively through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

“And having spent some time there,” he just gets on with it. There he goes again!

“he departed, passing successively through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.”

What's he doing? He's going right back over some of the territory of missionary journey #2. He takes off, goes north, heads through Tarsus, Derbe, Iconium, Lystra, Antioch of Pisidia. And what's he doing? He's going through and involving himself in his pediatric ministry.

On the first trip he was an obstetrician. There were a whole bunch of these people that were born again of the Spirit into God's family.

Now he feels a responsibility for them so he's coming back through and “strengthening” them and encouraging all of the disciples. That in itself is about a 300 or 400 mile trip that's

involved there.

We're going to leave Paul right now until our next study. He's going to show up in Ephesus. He's going to come in over land, because it is God's will for him to be back there. So we'll leave him now.

We're going to be introduced to one more man before we wrap up the study. Aquila on the front-end, now we're coming to Apollos on the back-end.

v. 24 Now a certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent (cultured) man, came down to Ephesus, being a powerful man in the Scriptures.

“Now a certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent (cultured) man, came down to Ephesus, being a powerful man in the Scriptures.”

Well, what'd he do? He went 475 miles northwest of Alexandria and came to Ephesus. He grew up in Alexandria, Egypt. He's had the training from the finest universities there. He's a very “eloquent (cultured) man.” He's a capable communicator.

Dr. Apollos, Ph.D. from Alexandrian University, Th.D. from the Jewish Seminary. He is a well-educated man. He got an A in public speaking and in every class he took. He was on the debate team and he would join ToastMasters at the earliest possible age. He is a “powerful man” and has a great ability

and presence when he speaks.

v. 25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John.

“This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John.”

Verse 25 is a critical verse. The reason it's a critical verse is we're going to study that very, very difficult passage in Acts 19. It's the central teaching of the charismatic movement.

Part of the way of preparation for treating that is to recognize that what we have happening now is happening in Acts 19. We have a man who only knows the teaching of John the Baptist. Recognizing that and realizing what's happening here now to Apollos will help us realize what's happening when Paul runs into some of John's disciples in Ephesus.

Next critical phrase: “being fervent in spirit.” This only occurs in one other place in the New Testament and that's in Romans 12:11.

Let's talk about being “fervent in spirit.”

Phillips translates Romans 12:11 like this:

Romans 12:11 (Phillips)

Let us not allow slackness to spoil our work, and let us keep the fires of the Spirit burning as we do our work for God.

To be “fervent in spirit” means “brought it to a boil.” It’s been on the heat but now the water’s boiling.

Can we say of our life that we are totally absorbed in the Word and we’ve been brought to a boil? We have it inside and we’re just so excited about every opportunity that we have to share it? We’re “fervent in spirit”!

Here comes a man to town, he’s boiling, he’s eager, he’s excited. And like the apostle Paul he has a burning zeal.

Now when it comes, he’s “speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus.”

What is he “teaching...concerning Jesus?”

TWO THINGS:

1. he is teaching **WHO HE WAS**—the Son of God and
2. he is teaching **WHAT HE SAID**, period.

But he is not teaching what **HE DID**. He does not know about the Cross! He doesn’t even know about the death of John the

Baptist! They don't communicate like we can because information doesn't get around like that.

So when he's coming into town he's teaching only what he knows.

v. 26 And this man began to be speaking out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

“And this man began to be speaking out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.”

He starts speaking. Priscilla and Aquila are going to take him aside.

Now notice something strange here? We have Priscilla mentioned first and Aquila mentioned second. In the first account it was Aquila and Priscilla. Realize their names are mentioned together 8 times in the Bible and 6 times Priscilla is mentioned first and Aquila is mentioned only first twice.

And some of the girls are saying, “Yay! It's about time in this male chauvinist world that women get a little credibility!”

When is Priscilla mentioned first? Well maybe socially she's superior. Maybe she's part of the upper class. Maybe she's

more capable, more intelligent, more vigorous.

There's another possibility. She might be more aggressive and wear the pants in the relationship. Who knows. We meet couples like that all the time.

If we're ever going to get to know the male species in the family, we have to get him off by himself because while he's with his wife we'll never hear a word out of him! He never gets a chance!

The other possibility is that maybe Aquila is just a little bit more laid back. Maybe he's just a real solid, stable deal in this whole thing. And so he's a great guy! He's just laid back that's all. And Priscilla comes up with it.

She jabs him in the ribs while he's preaching in the synagogue and says, "Go up and tell him to come home to lunch." And Aquila goes up afterwards and says, "Apollos, we'd love to have you come and eat lunch." He's a single minister so that's music to his ears. He has a great place to go and eat!

After they get through eating and Priscilla's put up the dishes, she comes in and sits down and they start to talk. And she says, "Are you aware Apollos that John the Baptist was beheaded?" He says, "No! No! That can't be! No!" She says, "Yes, he's gone."

"And let us tell you something else that's pretty sad too, Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem some time ago. And something

exciting! He was risen from the dead! And there are a lot of people that witnessed that! And He's gone back to glory. And you know Apollos, people now can come to know Him by faith in receiving Christ as Savior."

Apollos most likely became a Christian right here. He received Jesus Christ in the New Testament terms and prayed a prayer of faith right here with them on this occasion.

That's so exciting just to see the fact of TWO THINGS:

1. You've got a man with a Ph.D. and a Th.D. who could have said, "Well, what are you hot dog, simple tent-makers going to tell a man with my degrees! And teach me nothing! You know I've been through it all and I know it all!"

We meet a lot of that in Christian circles. The unteachable spirit, just knowing it all.

And then there's something else that's so beautiful in this passage. It's not only on Apollos' side, but it's on the side of Aquila and Priscilla.

2. To create such an environment and to have said it so beautifully that Apollos responds. And there's effective communication that takes place.

The key to communication is to look for the teachable moment and to never break it by getting personal. And always dealing with the problem and never speaking in a derogatory fashion

to that person, showing up any deficiencies. Creating an environment where they're affirmed and accepted so they'll communicate.

Not only did they tell him about the rest of the Gospel, they told him about the wonderful ministry they had in Corinth before they got to Ephesus. And so the young guy wants to go to Corinth. That's where we're going to lead him now. Look at verse 27.

v. 27 Now when he was wanting to go through into Achaia, the brethren having encouraged him, wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he arrived, he helped greatly those who had believed through grace.

“Now when he was wanting to go through into Achaia,”— WHY? Because he'd been talking to Priscilla and Aquila about it—“the brethren having encouraged him, wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he arrived, he helped greatly those who had believed through grace.”

What did they do for him? They “encouraged him,” they affirmed him, they expressed trust and confidence, they wrote a letter.

Lee Iacocca in his book talks about how to get employees to really become productive. He says:

(Iacocca, an Autobiography by Lee Iacocca)

You can't let a corporation turn into a labor camp. Hard work is essential. But there's also a time for rest and relaxation, for going to see your kid in the school play or at a swim meet. And if you don't do those things while the kids are young, there's no way to make it up later on.

One evening two weeks before her death, Mary called me in Toronto to tell me how proud she was of me. We had just announced our first-quarter earnings. Yet during those last few difficult years, I never once told her how proud I was of her.

Mary sustained me, and she gave everything she had to Kathi and Lia. Yes, I've had a wonderful and successful career. But next to my family, it really hasn't mattered at all. (source unknown)

Gail and Gordon MacDonald in their book *If Those Who Reach Could Touch* says:

(If Those Who Reach Could Touch by Gail and Gordon MacDonald)

At critical times in the life of Christ, the Father is seen affirming the Son. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"...

(source unknown, paraphrased)

Not only did they communicate with him, they "encouraged him" and sent him on and he was preaching—verse 28.

v. 28 For he was powerfully refuting the Jews publicly, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

“For he was powerfully refuting the Jews publicly, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.”

When we come to the Corinthian letter, Paul says “Y’all are divided. Some of you are saying ‘I’m of Paul,’ and others are saying ‘I’m of Apollos.’ We are just servants. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.” (ref. 1 Corinthians 3:4-6)

So Apollos had an incredible ministry in the city as well as the apostle.

Now what lessons come out of our text?

Lesson #1: The apostle teaches us that we are to earn our keep.

In other words, there are no free lunches. He goes to work along with Priscilla and Aquila in making tents to sustain himself while he’s in Corinth.

Lesson #2: We find Paul, wholly absorbed in the word.

We find Paul, wholly absorbed in the word. Just think about that statement. What does it mean to be wholly absorbed in the word?

Lesson #3: God is faithful to fulfill His promise of protection.

And He will for you too. We don't have to fear and be anxious or worried. God will protect and provide for His own.

Lesson #4: A true man and woman of God runs deep.

A true man and woman of God runs deep. They don't talk a lot about their personal disciplines.

Lesson #5: It is important to know when and to have the ability to say no.

Lesson #6: Evangelizing and edifying are both crucial ministries to the Lord.

That's obstetrics and pediatrics if you please. It's evangelizing and edifying are both critical ministries. Paul indulges in both of them here in our study.

Lesson #7: Do we have a burning zeal tonight? And are we fervent in spirit?

Do we have a burning zeal? Or does the Laodicean situation better characterize you?

"I wish you were cold or hot, because you're lukewarm you make me sick," the Lord says. (ref. Revelation 3:16)

"Lord, make me a man absorbed in Your Word and boiling in

the Spirit.” Just write that on the mirror. Just let it haunt us every morning when we get up, asking God to let our priorities be such that we are absorbed in the Word of God and we’re boiling in the Spirit.

Lesson #8: Apollos teaches us that no matter how many schools you go to, there will still be lessons that you can learn from the simplest of men.

Lesson #9: We must not demonstrate a dogmatic, know-it-all attitude in our relationships to each other.

The last one is to kind of focus on Priscilla and Aquila:

Lesson #10: Encouraging the young and gently giving criticism is big business in God’s economy.

Let’s close with some statements from Charles Stanley’s book, *Confronting Casual Christianity*. The price of his book is in the chapter on lordship and he gives us eight ways that we can tell whether Jesus is really Lord. We can’t copy them, but we can get the book and read them. We’re going to take just a capsule statement out of these eight for us to meditate on.

If we are not wholly absorbed in the Word and boiling in the Spirit? Is He Lord?

(Confronting Casual Christianity by Charles F. Stanley)

1. Jesus Christ is my Lord when I obey the initial

promptings of the Holy Spirit without hesitation or argument.

2. Jesus Christ is my Lord when I am committed to fulfilling His will for my life before I even know what it is He will require of me.

3. Jesus Christ is my Lord when I am available to serve Him without regard to time, space, or circumstance.

4. Jesus Christ is my Lord when I recognize His ownership of my total life and all my possessions—and submit to that ownership.

5. Jesus Christ is my Lord when pleasing Him exceeds my desire to please others.

6. Jesus Christ is my Lord when I look to Him as the source of all my needs and desires. God will work out His providential provisions in our lives.

7. Jesus Christ is my Lord when I am turning my difficulties and my failures into opportunities for spiritual growth.

8. Jesus Christ is my Lord when to know Him intimately becomes the obsession of my life.

(source unknown)

Father, You know the hearts of those who've gathered here. We pray that this passage of Scripture would prove to be powerfully meaningful. Pray that Your Holy Spirit can make

application to the truth in each life and we can truly say it's good to have been here because we had a chance to meet with the Lord. If there's someone without Christ, please our Father speak to them. Bring them to Calvary so that they might receive the Savior. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Copyright © 2024 by Bible Teaching Resources by Don Anderson Ministries. The author's teacher notes incorporate quoted, paraphrased and summarized material from a variety of sources, all of which have been appropriately credited to the best of our ability. Quotations particularly reside within the realm of fair use. It is the nature of teacher notes to contain references that may prove difficult to accurately attribute. Any use of material without proper citation is unintentional. Teacher notes have been compiled by Genevieve Martin.

A Practical Study of ACTS:

Take It To Them!

“Putting the GO Back in the Gospel”

STUDY NUMBER ONE – ACTS 18:1-28

NOTES

v. 1 After these things having left Athens he went to Corinth.

v. 2 And when he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy and Priscilla his wife, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He went to them,

v. 3 and because he was of the same occupation, he was staying with them and they were working; for by trade they were tent-makers.

v. 4 And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

v. 5 But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was wholly absorbed in the Word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

v. 6 And when they were resisting and reviling, he having shaken off his garments said to them: “Your blood be upon your own heads, I am clean; from now on I shall go to the Gentiles.”

v. 7 And having departed from there he went to the house of a certain man named Titius Justus, one who is worshipping God, whose house was next door to the synagogue.

v. 8 And Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they were hearing were believing and were being baptized.

v. 9 And the Lord said to Paul during the night through a vision: “Stop being afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent;

v. 10 for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I am having many people in this city.”

v. 11 And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

NOTES

v. 12 Now when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment-seat,

v. 13 saying, “This man is persuading men to be worshipping God contrary to the law.”

v. 14 And when Paul was about to be opening his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, “If it were a matter of wrongdoing or a serious piece of villainy, O Jews, I would have been justified in accepting your complaint.

v. 15 But since it is a parcel of questions concerning words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am not willing to be a judge of these matters.”

v. 16 And he drove them away from the judgment-seat.

v. 17 Then they all, having seized Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and were beating him in front of the judgment seat. And Gallio was not concerned about any of these things.

v. 18 And Paul, having remained many days longer, having said farewell to the brethren, was setting sail for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila, having his hair cut in Cenchrea for he was keeping a vow.

v. 19 And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there, and he himself having entered into the synagogue, reasoned with the Jews.

v. 20 Now when they were asking him to remain for a longer time, he did not consent,

v. 21 but having bid them adieu and having said: “I will return again to you if God is desiring it,” he sailed from Ephesus.

v. 22 And when he landed at Caesarea, having gone up and having greeted the church, he went down to Antioch.

v. 23 And having spent some time there, he departed, passing successively through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

v. 24 Now a certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent (cultured) man, came down to Ephesus, being a powerful man in the Scriptures.

v. 25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John.

v. 26 And this man began to be speaking out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

NOTES

v. 27 Now when he was wanting to go through into Achaia, the brethren having encouraged him, wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he arrived, he helped greatly those who had believed through grace.

v. 28 For he was powerfully refuting the Jews publicly, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Acts 18:1-28 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What couple does Paul meet in Corinth and how are they similar, according to verses 2 & 3?

3. Who joined him in Corinth, according to verse 5?

4. What outstanding person became a Christian, according to verse 8?

5. How does the Lord encourage His servant ,according to verses 9 & 10?

6. How is Apollos described in verses 24 & 25?

7. What do Priscilla and Aquila do for Apollos, according to verse 26?

8. How does Apollos respond and how has the Lord blessed, according to verses 27 & 28?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: The apostle teaches us that we are to earn our keep.

LESSON #2: We find Paul in Corinth, wholly absorbed in the Word.

LESSON #3: God was faithful to fulfill His promise of protection to Paul.

LESSON #4: A true man and woman of God runs deep. They don't talk a lot about their personal disciplines.

LESSON #5: It is important to know when and have the ability to say no.

LESSON #6: Evangelizing and edifying are both crucial ministries.

LESSON #7: Do you have a burning zeal? And are we fervent in spirit?

LESSON #8: Apollos teaches us no matter how many schools you go to or degrees you get, there will still be lessons for us to learn from the simplest of men.

LESSON #9: We must not demonstrate a dogmatic, know-it-all attitude in relationship to fellow believers.

LESSON #10: Encouraging the young and gently giving criticism is big business in God's economy.