

Acts 18: Christ Builds His Church

1. God Provides Companions

Acts 18:1–4

“After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade. And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.”

Paul arrived in Corinth after a long and difficult season of ministry.

- He had been beaten and imprisoned in Philippi, opposed in Thessalonica, driven from Berea, and separated from his companions. After spending time alone in Athens, he traveled approximately fifty miles to Corinth.

Paul later described his condition:

“And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling.” ~ 1 Corinthians 2:3

Corinth



Corinth was:

- The capital of the Roman province of Achaia
- A prosperous center of business and transportation
- Located between two important ports
- Filled with travelers, merchants, laborers, immigrants, and enslaved people
- Religiously diverse and morally troubled

Paul met Aquila and Priscilla, who had recently been forced to leave Rome because Emperor Claudius had ordered the Jews to depart.

- Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla shared the same trade.
- The word translated “tentmakers” may also describe leatherworkers or workers in heavy cloth and canvas.

Scripture doesn’t tell us when Paul learned this trade.

- But God had placed a practical skill in Paul’s hands that allowed him to support himself when necessary.

An unwanted imperial decree brought Aquila and Priscilla to Corinth.

- There they met Paul and became his lifelong friends and ministry partners.

Consider

1. Have you ever recognized that God used an unwanted change to bring an important person or relationship into your life?
2. Who has God given you to share life and service with?

2. God Opens Hearts

Acts 18:5–11

“When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.” 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. Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized. And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.” And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.”

Silas and Timothy eventually arrived from Macedonia.

Timothy brought encouraging news about the believers in Thessalonica:

- *“In all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith.” ~ 1 Thessalonians 3:7*

They may also have brought financial support from the Macedonian churches.

- *“Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.” ~ Philippians 4:16*
- *“The brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need.” ~ 2 Corinthians 11:9*

This support apparently allowed Paul to reduce his manual labor and devote more time to proclaiming the gospel.

Different Responses to the Same Gospel

Some people in the synagogue opposed and reviled Paul. He left that particular group and began teaching in the home of Titius Justus, right next door to the synagogue.

God Moves:

- Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed.
- His household believed.
- Many Corinthians heard the gospel.
- They believed and were baptized.

Paul could faithfully proclaim Christ, but he couldn't predict who would believe.

- ***“Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you...for I have many in this city who are my people.” ~ Acts 18:9–10***

Before these people knew Christ, Christ knew them:

- Paul did not know who they were, so he faithfully proclaimed the gospel to everyone.

Paul remained in Corinth for at least eighteen months teaching the Word of God.

- During this period, he probably wrote 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

Consider

1. How does knowing that salvation is God's work free us from pressure without freeing us from responsibility?
2. How can prayer, encouragement, practical help, or financial generosity help someone else devote more time to Christ's work?

3. God Provides Unexpected Protection

Acts 18:12–17

“But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, saying, “This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law.” But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, “If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. 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.” And he drove them from the tribunal. And they all seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to any of this.”



Paul’s opponents brought him before Gallio, the Roman proconsul of Achaia. They accused Paul of persuading people to worship God contrary to the law.

- **Gallio refused to treat the dispute as a violation of Roman law.**
 - He dismissed the case before Paul could even defend himself.
- **An ancient inscription discovered at Delphi confirms that Gallio served as proconsul of Achaia around AD 51–52.**
 - This gives us one of the clearest chronological markers in the book of Acts.

The Lord had promised Paul: *“No one will attack you to harm you.”*

Paul’s enemies still opposed him and dragged him before the tribunal.

- God’s promise did not mean that Paul would experience no opposition.
- It meant that the opposition would not accomplish its purpose.

God used a Roman official who did not believe the gospel to protect Paul and provide a season of relative peace for ministry.

- After the case was dismissed, Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, was beaten in front of the tribunal.
 - He may be the same Sosthenes whom Paul later called *“our brother”* in 1 Corinthians 1:1, although we cannot know for sure.

Consider:

1. Where have you seen God use an unexpected person or circumstance to provide protection or open a door?

4. A Closed Door Opens

Acts 18:18–23

“After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had cut his hair, for he was under a

vow. And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there, but he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined. But on taking leave of them he said, "I will return to you if God wills," and he set sail from Ephesus. When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch. After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples."

Paul eventually left Corinth with Aquila and Priscilla.

Paul's Journey: Corinth → Cenchreae → Ephesus → Caesarea → Jerusalem → Antioch

- **At Cenchreae, Paul had his hair cut because he was under a vow.**
 - Luke does not explain the nature of the vow.
 - It was probably a voluntary expression of devotion or thanksgiving to God.
- **Cenchreae was Corinth's eastern port.**
 - A church was eventually established there, and Phoebe became a servant of that church (Romans 16:1–2).
- **Paul then made his first recorded visit to Ephesus.**
 - In Acts 16, the Holy Spirit had prevented Paul from entering Asia. Now the door was beginning to open.
 - God's earlier "not yet" had not meant "never."

Paul left Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus and promised to return:

- *"I will return to you if God wills."*

Paul sailed to Caesarea, probably visited the church in Jerusalem, and then returned to his home church in Antioch.

- After spending some time there, he departed again and began his third missionary journey.

Consider

1. What does “if God wills” teach us about the way Christians should make plans?
2. Have you ever seen God turn an earlier “not yet” into a later open door?

5. A Gifted Teacher Remains Teachable

Acts 18:24–28

“Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak 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 when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.”

While Paul was traveling, a Jewish teacher named Apollos arrived in Ephesus.

Luke describes Apollos as:

- Eloquent
- Competent in the Scriptures
- Instructed in the way of the Lord
- Fervent in spirit
- Accurate in what he taught about Jesus
- Bold in the synagogue

However, Apollos knew only the baptism of John. His understanding was accurate but incomplete.

- **When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they did not publicly embarrass him or dismiss everything he knew.**
 - They took him aside privately and explained the way of God more accurately.
- **Apollos was already knowledgeable and gifted...**
 - but he remained humble enough to learn.
 - There is almost no greater quality to help us in life than to be teachable
- **He later traveled to Corinth and became a great help to the believers there. Paul described their different roles this way:**

"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth." ~ 1 Corinthians 3:6

Consider

1. What did Aquila and Priscilla do well when they recognized that Apollos's understanding was incomplete?
2. Which is more difficult for you: receiving correction humbly or offering it graciously?

What Has God Placed in Your Hands?

No single person in Acts 18 accomplished everything.

- **Paul** offered his voice, knowledge, labor, and time.
- **Aquila and Priscilla** offered their trade, friendship, home, and understanding.
- **Silas and Timothy** offered companionship and encouragement.
- The **Macedonian churches** offered financial support.
- **Titius Justus** offered his home.
- **Apollos** offered his teaching gift and his willingness to learn.

Questions:

1. Write down one ordinary thing God has placed in your hands:

2. How might it become part of what Christ is doing?

We can't produce spiritual growth or determine when God will move.

- **But we can remain available, offer Christ what He has placed in our hands, and faithfully enter the opportunities He prepares.**

Paul planted. Apollos watered.

Others supported, encouraged, opened their homes, and shared the work.

But God gave the growth.

