

Acts 18:1-17, Corinth
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Overview

The last of the eight stereotyped city visits. Luke focuses our attention on three details, which help us understand better what's been going on all along.

1. 1-3, Paul's support. Here we see explicitly that Paul has been supporting himself. All this labor for the Lord...and now we suddenly realize that it's in ADDITION to Paul's work in serving the Lord. A model for our LABOR.
2. 4-11, preaching and teaching. The clearest exposition we've seen yet of the series of stages through which evangelism moves. In some cities we've had a focus on one stage; in others on another; here the whole process is laid out for us. A model for our DILIGENCE.
3. 12-17, civil opposition; note progress from Philippi (where they were abused without due process) through Thessalonica (where security was taken for them), to Athens (if the Aeropagitica is indeed a preliminary hearing; very courteous), to Corinth (where the proconsul is positively a help). A model for our FAITH.

A. 1-3, Paul's Employment: a Model for our Labor

1. 2, His Companions
 - a) We've noted the lack of company in Athens, and how unusual it is. Here he finds encouragement in some compatriots.
 - b) Their salvation status when they meet Paul is unclear.
 - 1) It would seem that their place as saints would be a far stronger common bond than being tentmakers, yet Luke doesn't mention it.
 - 2) Yet those who are saved, 18:8, are called out as such.
 - 3) Certainly, by the time they all leave Corinth together (v.18), they are not only believers but also laborers with Paul.
 - c) Note their origin: Pontus, east of Bithynia on the south shore of the Black Sea; an area that Paul might have entered if the Spirit had not redirected him in 16:7. Cf. Lydia of Thyatira in Asia. The Spirit directs to people more than to places.
 - d) Note also their discharge from Rome under Claudius. They no doubt felt this was a heavy burden. But
 - 1) it led to their meeting Paul, and training with him;
 - 2) in later years (Rom. 16), they were able to return to Rome and host a church.
 - 3) --> Sovereignty of God's dealings in our lives.

2. 3, His Work

- a) Rabbinical roots: it was deemed disgraceful to accept \$\$ for teaching Torah, and every rabbi had a trade. Paul continues that custom.
- b) 2 Thes. 3:8, written about this time, shows that it was his custom elsewhere in his ministry.
- c) 1 Cor. 9 reflects on his practice here in Corinth.
- d) Acts 20:33-35 shows that he did it in Ephesus too, and set it as normative for the elders there.
- e) *Application*: Paul's example and explicit teaching should urge us to great caution whenever anyone wants to gain revenue from the ministry of God's word.

B. 4-11, Paul's Ministry: a Model for our Diligence

Note four successive stages in his presentation; natural progress of evangelization. This is the fullest picture we have of the whole process.

1. 4, Dialog and reasoning (as at Athens, 17:17)

Some have suggested that Paul's approach in Athens was in error, and that 1 Cor. 2:2 shows a resolve on his part to change direction. Evidences that this is not the case:

- a) No criticism on the part of Luke, who rather seems to be balancing Acts 13 as an example of preaching to the Jews with Acts 17 as example of preaching to Gentiles;
- b) Use of this verb here in Corinth (and many other places in Acts);
- c) Reproduction of the Athens reasoning later in Romans 1,2;
- d) Appearance of interruption in Athens; can't say that he wasn't going on to the cross. Pre-evangelism. If he had been able to go further there, no doubt he would have
- e) *Application*: People have legitimate questions. We must guard against diversionary tactics, but at the same time, the Gospel rests on basic OT concepts of God as a personal creator and our responsibility to him, and until we grasp those truths, we cannot understand sin, or judgment, or redemption.

At some point, the plowing has to yield to planting. Can't stop with preevangelism.

2. 5, Urgent proclamation of Jesus

Now he has their attention, and can move on to his main point, that Christ has come, and is Jesus of Nazareth. In addition to the content, notice

- a) timing: Silas and Timothy don't start him on this. Verb tenses indicate that when they arrived, he was already in the process. They found him ...
- b) motive: constrained in his spirit, cf. 17:16. Paul is not ministering out of cold intellectualism. Spiritually he is in touch with God, and responds as God's Spirit moves him.

The facts of the gospel will always lead to division, and the servant of God needs to expect this and know how to respond.

3. 6-10, The Great Division

Seen in every city. Some reject; some accept.

a) 6-7, Rebuke to the rejectors

"Oppose themselves" means "set themselves in opposition," not "get in their own way."

1) symbolic shaking off the dust of the city, as the Lord had commanded, Luke 9:5; cf. 13:51.

2) Announce turning to the Gentiles. Cf 13:46 (Antioch), 19:9 (Ephesus), 28:28 (Rome). Not a nonce decision; repeated in each town. Means that *in this locality* he now directs his attention to the Gentiles.

3) 7, moves his locus of teaching from the Synagogue to the house of a Gentile convert to Judaism, a group that was usually more receptive.

b) 8, Favorable response by some. Even the ruler of the synagogue! Cf. 1 Cor. 1:26, "not many wise, mighty, noble," but there were some, and Crispus would be among them.

c) 9-10, the Lord's encouragement to Paul takes account of both responses. *The two "for"s in v. 10 are parallel to each other, not subordinated.*

1) God will protect him from the rejectors.

2) There are many elect here, so he should continue to labor.

Still the work is not over. Need to build up the new believers in their faith and equip them for ministry in the body.

4. 11, Instruction of the believers--period of 18 months. The longest residency so far on record; results no doubt from the Lord's clear promise.

C. **12-17, Paul's Trial: a Model for our Faith**

Previously, Paul has been forced to leave each city that he has visited. But here, the Lord has promised to foil the adversaries. This sect. shows the fulfillment of the Lord's promise.

1. 12 Gallio is described as proconsul (AV "deputy") of the province of Achaia. This legal threat is thus qualitatively different from those previous. They had been before city officials (the level of a mayor in our system). This was before a provincial governor (like the governor of a state); a Roman official, appointed by the Senate, rather than a member of the local citizenry. Up until now Paul has been dealing with local folk. This hearing establishes precedent for Roman law.

2. 13, Accusation

At Philippi (16:21) and Thessalonica (17:6-7) the accusation was twofold: riot and unlawful religion. Here only the second charge is made. Strictly speaking, Judaism was a permitted religion, though new ones were forbidden; but given the recent expulsion of Jews from Rome, 18:2, this is the pot calling the kettle black!

3. 14-16a, Official Response
No need for Paul himself to respond; the proconsul dismisses the charges as an internal Jewish squabble of no concern to Roman government.
4. 16b-17, Unofficial Response. MT shows that it is the Greeks who do the beating here. As the lictors cleared the court of the grumbling Jews, the Gentiles in the crowd took advantage of the direction of the decision to unleash some of the animosity for Jews that was always just under the surface, and Gallio looked the other way.
5. *Application*: Prov. 21:1, "The king's heart [is] in the hand of the LORD, [as] the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will." This decision, unlike the local ones in previous cities, could set precedent for Roman law. God keeps his promise to preserve Paul from his adversaries, and keeps the door open for the propagation of the gospel throughout the empire.

Summary:

Three important models for missionary outreach, summarized here for us:

1. Preaching the gospel is hard work, but does not excuse the preacher from the responsibility, wherever possible, to earn his own living.
2. Church planting is not just evangelism. At least four stages: arousing interest through discussion; proclamation of the content; a natural time of decision leading to a split; and teaching of the new believers.
3. God's protection for his own. Where he wants us to stay, he will provide a way; otherwise, we move on.

Hymn: Ps. 72, Christ Shall Have Dominion

Analysis

A. 1-3, setting: association with P&A

1. 18:1 Meta\ tau^ta xwrisqei\s e)k tw^n)Aqhnw^h h)^lqen ei)s Ko/rinqon.
2. 18:2 kai\ eu(rw/n tina)Ioudai^on o)no/mati)Aku/lan, ... kai\ Pri/skillan gunai^ka au)tou^
 - a) Pontiko\n tw^| ge/nei,
east of Bithynia on the south shore of the Black Sea; an area that Paul might have entered if the Spirit had not redirected him in 16:7. Cf. Lydia of Thyatira. The Spirit directs to people more than to places.
 - b) prosfa/tws e)lhlugo/ta a)po\ th^s)Itali/as ...
 - 1) dia\ to\ diatetaxe/nai Klau/dion xwri/zesqai pa/ntas tou\s)Ioudai/ous a)po\ th^s (Rw/mhs,
3. prosh^lqen au)toi^s,

4. double reason p
That this was his practice elsewhere is attested by 2 Thes. 3:8, written about this time, and by 1 Cor. 9.
 a) reason: 18:3 kai\ dia\ to\ o(mo/texnon ei)^nai
 b) text: e)/menen par' au)toi^s kai\ h)rga/zeto:
 c) reason: h)^san ga\r skhnopoiou\ th^| te/xnh|.

B. 4-11, preaching and teaching

Note four successive stages in his presentation; natural progress of evangelization

1. Dialog and reasoning (as at Athens??!!)

Some have suggested that Paul's approach in Athens was in error, and that 1 Cor. 2:2 shows a resolve on his part to change direction. Evidences that this is not the case:

- a) No criticism on the part of Luke, who rather seems to be balancing Acts 13 with this;
- b) Use of this verb here;
- c) Reproduction of the Athens reasoning later in Romans 1,2.
- d) Appearance of interruption in Athens; can't say that he wasn't going on to the cross. Pre-evangelism.

- a) 18:4 diele/geto de\ e)n th^| sunagwgh^| kata\ pa^ n sa/bbaton,
- b) e)/peiqe/n te)Ioudai/ous kai\ (/Ellhnas.

2. Urgent proclamation of Jesus

temporal p

imperfect in main clause suggests the sense, "they found him constrained ..."

- a) time: 18:5 (Ws de\ kath^lqon a)po\ th^s Makedoni/as o(/ te Sila^s kai\ o(Timo/qeos,
- b) text: sunei/xeto tw^| Pneumati o(Pau^los,
cf. 17:16 "angered in his spirit"
 1) result: diamarturo/menos toi^s)Ioudai/ois ei)^nai to\n Xristo/n,)Ihsou^ n.

3. The Great Division (contrast p)

a) Rebuke to the rejectors: execution p

1) statement:

- a> time: 18:6 a)ntitassome/nwn de\ au)tw^ n kai\ blasfhou/ntwn
- b> manner: e)ktinaca/menos ta\ i(ma/tia
- c> text: quote p
 - 1> quote f: ei)^pen pro\s au)tu/s,
 - 2> quote:
 - a: To\ ai(^ma u(mw^ n e)pi\ th\n kefalh\n u(mw^ n:
 - b: kaqaro\s e)gw/:
 - c: a)po\ tou^ nu^ n ei)s ta\ e)/qnh poreu/somai.
cf 13:46 (Antioch), 19:9 (Ephesus), 28:28 (Rome).
Not a nonce decision; repeated in teach town.

2) execution: comment p

- a> text: 18:7 kai\ metabas e)kei^ qen ei)sh^lqen ei)s

oi)ki/an tino\s o)no/mati)Iou/stou sebome/nou to\n
qeo/n,
b> comment <Ioustou>: ou(^ h(oi)ki/a h)^n sunomorou^sa
th^| sunagwgh^|.

b) Favorable response by some

- 1) 18:8 Kri/spos de\ o(a)rxisuna/gwgos e)pi/steusen tw^|
kuri/w| su\n o(/lw| tw^| oi)/kw| au)tou^,
- 2) kai\ polloi\ tw^n Korinqi/wn a)kou/ontes e)pi/steuon kai\
e)bapti/zonto.

c) summary: quote p: God's encouragement to Paul

- 1) quote f: 18:9 ei)^pen de\ o(ku/rrios e)n nukti\ di'
o(ra/matos tw^| Pau/lw|,
- 2) quote:
 - a> text: contrast "Carry on"
 - 1> Mh\ fobou^,
 - 2> alla\ la/lei
 - 3> kai\ mh\ siwph/sh|s,
 - b> reason-1: God's protection from the rejectors (cf. vv.
6-7)
 - 1> 18:10 dio/ti e)gw/ ei)mi meta\ sou^
 - 2> kai\ ou)dei\s e)piqh/setai/ soi tou^ kakw^sai/ se,
 - c> reason-2: God's people (cf. v.8)
 - 1> dio/ti lao/s e)sti/ moi polu\s e)n th^| po/lei
tau/th|.

4. Instruction of the believers

- a) 18:11)Eka/qisen de\ e)niauto\n kai\ mh^nas e(\c dida/skwn
e)n au)toi^s to\n lo/gon tou^ qeou^.

C. 12-17, fulfillment of the Lord's promise
temporal p

1. setting: 18:12 Galli/wnos de\ a)nqupa/tou o)/ntos th^s)Axai/+as

2. 13, Accusation

- a) katepe/sthsan o(moqumado\n oi()Ioudai^oi tw^| Pau/lw|
- b) kai\ h)/gagon au)to\n e)pi\ to\ bh^ma,
- c) quote p
 - 1) quote f: 18:13 le/gontes o(/ti
 - 2) quote: Para\ to\n no/mon a)napei/qei ou(^tos tou\s
a)nqrw/pous se/besqai to\n qeo/n.
*Pot calling the kettle black! Recall the historical
context, 18:2; the Jews themselves were suspect in this
era.*

3. 14-16, Response

- a) setting: 18:14 me/llontos de\ tou^ Pau/lou a)noi/gein to\
sto/ma
- b) text: quote p
 - 1) quote f: ei)^pen o(Galli/wn pro\s tou\s)Ioudai/ous,

2) quote: contrast

a> legitimate complaint: conditional p

1> Ei) me\n h)^n a)di/khma/ ti h)\ r(a|diou/rghma
ponhro/n, w)^)Ioudai^oi,

2> kata\ lo/gon a)\n a)nesxo/mhn u(mw^n:

b> illegitimate complaint: conditional p

1> 18:15 ei) de\ zhth/mata/ e)stin peri\ lo/gou kai\
o)noma/twn kai\ no/mou tou^ kaq' u(ma^s,

2> o)/yesqe au)toi/:

3> reason: krith\s e)gw\ tou/twn ou) bou/lomai ei)^nai.

c) 18:16 kai\ a)ph/lasen au)tou\s a)po\ tou^ bh/matos.

4. Imitation: 18:17 e)pilabo/menoi de\ pa/ntes oi Ellhnes Swsqe/nhn
to\n a)rxisuna/gwgon e)/tupton e)/mprosqen tou^ bh/matos:

5. kai\ ou)de\n tou/twn tw^| Galli/wni e)/melen.