

ACTS

Chapter 18

Paul in Corinth

After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. 2 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, 3 and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade. 4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks. 5 When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. 6 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.” 7 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. 8 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. 9 And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, 10 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.” 11 And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. 12 But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews[b] made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, 13 saying, “This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law.” 14 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. 15 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.” 16 And he drove them from the tribunal. 17 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.

18:1 *went to Corinth.* Either by land along the isthmus (a distance of about 50 miles) or by sea from Piraeus, the port of Athens, to Cenchræa, on the eastern shore of the isthmus of Corinth. (CSB)

Paul journeyed west to the strategic, sea-trading city of Corinth, set on a narrow isthmus. This is the setting of his two Letters to Thessalonica. (TLSB)

The most commercial of the cities of ancient Greece. Corinth was perfectly situated on an isthmus to control all land traffic moving east and west. (LL) – Was notorious for its sexual immorality. (PBC)

18:2 *Pontus.* In the northeastern region of Asia Minor, a province lying along the Black Sea between Bithynia and Armenia (see 2:9). (CSB)

Aquila ... Priscilla. This couple became prominent co-workers with Paul. They were from northern Asia Minor, but came to Corinth from Rome. (TLSB)

Priscilla. The diminutive form of Prisca. Since no mention is made of a conversion and since a partnership is established in work (see v. 3), it is likely that they were already Christians. They may have been converted in Rome by those returning from Pentecost or by others at a later time. (CSB)

Claudius. Emperor of Rome (A.D. 41–54). (CSB)

commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. Recorded in Suetonius (*Claudius*, 25). The expulsion order was given, Suetonius writes, because of “their [the Jews’] continual tumults instigated by Chrestus” (a common misspelling of “Christ”). If “Chrestus” refers to Christ, the riots obviously were “about” him rather than led “by” him. (CSB)

The Roman historian Suetonius relates how the emperor Claudius expelled Jews from the city in AD 49 because of their squabbling over a “Chrestus,” probably a reference to Christ. (TLSB)

all the Jews.† No doubt hyperbole (exaggeration), for Suetonius’ Latin may be translated “the Jews who were constantly causing tumult”—i.e., the leaders among the very large Jewish population in Rome, both the unconverted Jews and the Jewish Christians, who may have been exceedingly zealous in their missionary endeavors. (CSB)

18:3 tentmakers.† Paul would have been taught this trade as a youth. It was the Jewish custom to provide manual training for sons, whether rich or poor. The term could refer also to canvas sails and large ropes (hawsers) for ships, as Paul’s hometown, Tarsus, was 10 miles from the Mediterranean on the Cydnus River. (CSB)

Gk *skēnopoios*, “tent making” or “leather making.” This could refer to material for tents or canvas for sails. Paul probably learned his trade as a youth; Pharisees regularly had an occupation, and Paul often worked to provide for himself. (TLSB)

18:4 synagogue. Evidence of a synagogue in Corinth has been found, including the doorpost, an inscription, and other artifacts. (TLSB)

18:5 Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia. Paul instructed these two to come to him at Athens (17:15). Evidently they did (1Th 3:1), but they may have been sent back to Macedonia almost immediately to check on the churches—perhaps Silas to Philippi and Timothy to Thessalonica. (CSB)

From 1 Thessalonians 3:1 we gather that Silas and Timothy had joined Paul in Athens, but that then he sent them back to Macedonia because the churches there needed them. Now they joined Paul in Corinth. From the fact that Paul could spend all his time preaching after they arrived we gather that they brought funds from Macedonia to support his gospel work in Corinth. (PBC)

occupied with the word ... the Christ was Jesus. Using OT Scriptures, as was Paul’s custom at the synagogue (cf 13:16–41; 17:2–3), to demonstrate Jesus was the promised Messiah. (TLSB)

18:6 Some Jews, though not all (vv 7–8), become hostile. (TLSB)

shook out his garments. Sign of rejection (cf Lk 9:5; 10:11). (TLSB)

your blood be on your own heads – The guilt for their unbelief was on them for refusing to hear, not on him for withholding the message. (PBC)

They are responsible for the judgment they will face before God's throne. (TL SB)

18:7 *Titius Justus*. Titius was a common Roman name. Justus is used to distinguish him from the Titus of 2Co 2:13; 7:13–14; 8:16, 23. (CSB)

A Gentile who had been at the synagogue. (TL SB)

worshiper of God. Like Titus, an uncircumcised Gentile, but attending the synagogue. (CSB)

18:8 *Crispus*. Paul baptized him (1Co 1:14). (CSB)

An important Jewish convert who then brought his household to the faith. (TL SB)

believed and were baptized.† The response to the gospel, a response occurring daily, as the tense of the Greek verbs indicates. (CSB)

The witness of Crispus was understandably quite effective in Corinth. (TL SB)

18:9 *in a vision*. Paul had seen the Lord in a resurrection body at his conversion (9:4–6; 1Co 15:8) and in the temple at Jerusalem in a trance (22:17–18). Now he sees him in a vision (see 23:11). (CSB)

Either a physical appearance or a dream in the night. Note Paul's continuing personal contact with Jesus (cf 9:4–6). (TL SB)

18:10 *I am with you*. Jesus is with us always (Mt 28:20); here He is present esp to bless Paul's work in Corinth. (TL SB)

I have many in this city. The fields are ripe for harvest in Corinth (cf Lk 10:2). (TL SB)

18:11 *a year and six months*. During this time he may also have taken the gospel to the neighboring districts of Achaia (2Co 1:1). (CSB)

Opposition usually drove Paul from a city within a short time. His lengthy stay in Corinth reflects the promise in v 10. (TL SB)

During this time he also wrote his letter to the Galatians and the two letters to the Thessalonians. (PBC)

18:12 *Gallio*. The brother of Seneca, the philosopher, who was the tutor of Nero. Gallio was admired as a man of exceptional fairness and calmness. From an inscription found at Delphi, it is known that Gallio was proconsul of Achaia in A.D. 51–52. This information enables us to date Paul's visit to Corinth on his second journey as well as his writing of the Thessalonian letters. (CSB)

Roman governor of the province. An inscription found at Delphi, Greece, places Gallio in this position from AD 51 to 52. (TL SB)

18:13 *contrary to the law*.† The Jews were claiming that Paul was advocating a religion not recognized by Roman law as Judaism was. If he had been given the opportunity to speak, he

could have argued that the gospel he was preaching was the faith of his fathers (see 24:14–15; 26:6–7) and thus authorized by Roman law. But Gallio realized that the bone of contention was Jewish law, not Roman law, and therefore he refused to recognize the charge brought against Paul (see vv. 14–15). (CSB)

The charge of the Jews was that Paul’s teachings did not fall under Rome’s policy of religious tolerance. (TLSB)

18:15 *be a judge of these things* – In the providence of God, the indifferent attitude of powerful men like Gallio made it possible for the gospel to spread with little opposition from the Roman government. (PBC)

Gallio properly concludes that the dispute is an internal matter not addressed by Roman law. Christianity is not disruptive of proper authority. Roman officials typically viewed Christians as a sect of Judaism until the Jewish Bar Kokhba revolt (AD 132–35) forced a clear distinction and different policies. (TLSB)

18:17 *they all seized Sosthenes*. † It is not clear whether the Greeks beat Sosthenes, seeing the occasion as an opportunity to vent their feelings against the Jews, or the Jews beat their own synagogue ruler because he was unsuccessful in presenting their case, or the Roman military attendants beat the synagogue ruler when he refused to accept Gallio’s judgment and leave the courtroom. A Sosthenes is included with Paul in the writing of 1 Corinthians (1:1). Perhaps he was the second ruler of the synagogue at Corinth to become a Christian, probably in response to the preaching of Apollos, Paul’s successor at Corinth (see v. 8). (CSB)

Either Greeks showing their anti-Semitism or Jews venting their frustration or perhaps both. *Sosthenes*. The new synagogue ruler (cf v 8). (TLSB)

18:1–17 Paul’s stay in Corinth demonstrates two lessons: (1) The Gospel is the power of God for salvation, even in the face of rejection. (2) Opposition to the Gospel—not the Gospel itself—disrupts proper authority. Hostility to the message of Jesus is to be expected. Nevertheless, His Gospel remains the only power for eternal good. • Heavenly Father, thank You for governments that allow us to practice our faith and to share it with the rest of the world. May Jesus’ presence continue to be among His people to bless their labors in His name. Amen. (TLSB)

Paul Returns to Antioch

18 After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers[c] and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had cut his hair, for he was under a vow. **19** And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there, but he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. **20** When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined. **21** But on taking leave of them he said, “I will return to you if God wills,” and he set sail from Ephesus. **22** When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch. **23** 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.

18:18 *set sail for Syria*. As at the end of his first journey, Paul plans to report back to the believers in Syrian Antioch who sponsored his work. (TLSB)

Priscilla and Aquila. The order of the names used here (but cf. v. 2) may indicate the prominent role of Priscilla or her higher social position (see Ro 16:3; 2Ti 4:19). (CSB)

Paul's co-workers travel along with him but are left to work in Ephesus (v 19). (TLSB).

The fact that Luke mentions Priscilla first in this instance (18:18) – and again in 18:26 and Romans 16:3 – may indicate the prominent role she and other women played in early Christianity. (LL)

he was under a vow. Grammatically this could refer to Aquila, but the emphasis on Paul and his activity makes Paul more probable. It was probably a temporary Nazirite vow (see Nu 6:1–21). Different vows were frequently taken to express thanks for deliverance from grave dangers. Shaving the head marked the end of a vow. (CSB)

Most likely refers to Paul, not Aquila. Perhaps he had taken a temporary Nazirite vow (Nu 6:1–21) in thanksgiving. (TLSB)

18:19 *Ephesus.* Leading commercial city of Asia Minor, the capital of provincial Asia and the warden of the temple of Artemis (Diana). See Introduction to Ephesians: The City of Ephesus; see also map of “Ephesus” there. (CSB)

he left them there. They would give valuable aid upon Paul's return, providing advice as to where and how the work there could be started. (CSB)

18:20–21 Paul moves on quickly, but according to God's will, he does return for an extended stay in Ephesus (19:1–10). (TLSB)

18:22 *greeted the church.* Could refer to a congregation in Caesarea, but the explanation that “he went up” makes it more likely that it was the church in Jerusalem, some 2,500 feet above sea level. (CSB)

Brief stop in Jerusalem, perhaps to confer with colleagues there. Paul then returns to Antioch in Syria and completes his second missionary journey. (TLSB)

18:23 *region of Galatia and Phrygia.* The same route he had taken when starting on his second missionary journey, but in the reverse order (16:6). The use of the phrase may indicate the southern part of Galatia in the Phrygian area. (CSB)

strengthening all the disciples. Third visit to the Galatian believers begins Paul's third journey; this ongoing fellowship builds up their faith. (TLSB)

18:18–23 These travels conclude Paul's second missionary journey and begin his third. Travel plans and visits may not always turn out the way you intend. When you travel, begin with prayer, and serve the Lord with purpose. Place your life in God's hands; He works all things according to His good and gracious will. • Heavenly Father, whenever and wherever I travel in this world, watch over me through Your guardian angels and strengthen me by the presence of my fellow believers. Empower me to live according to Your will. In Jesus' name. Amen. (TLSB)

Apollos Speaks Boldly in Ephesus

24 Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. **25** He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit,[d] he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus,

though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 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. 27 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, 28 for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

18:24 *Apollos*. A Jew from Egypt. (TLSB)

Alexandria. In Egypt. It was the second most important city in the Roman empire and had a large Jewish population. (CSB)

an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. Lit, “a man [with] words ... being powerful in the [OT] Writings.” He likely learned the Scriptures from Jewish teachers in Alexandria and had training in rhetoric. (TLSB)

18:25 *instructed in the way of the Lord*. Likely a reference to the Way (cf 19:9, 23); Apollos trusted in the coming Messiah. (TLSB)

fervent in spirit. Perhaps the charisma of his teaching, but more likely the Holy Spirit. (TLSB)

baptism of John. It was not in the name of Jesus (see also 19:2–4). Apollos knew something about Jesus, but basically he, like John, was still looking forward to the coming of the Messiah. His baptism was based on repentance rather than on faith in the finished work of Christ. (CSB)

John’s Baptism was a temporary institution, in preparation for the coming Messiah and the Baptism He would institute (cf Lk 3:3; 5:33–35; 7:26–29; Mt 28:19). Somehow Apollos did not know the distinction of Christian Baptism. Luther: “If [a Christian] is in a place where there are no Christians he needs no other call than to be a Christian, called and anointed by God from within. Here it is his duty to preach and to teach the gospel to erring heathen or non-Christians, because of the duty of brotherly love, even though no man calls him to do so.... In such a case a Christian looks with brotherly love at the need of the poor and perishing souls and does not wait until he is given a command or letter from a prince or bishop” (AE 39:310). (TLSB)

The most popular Greek translation of the OT, the Septuagint, had been produced in Alexandria. Apollos had not yet gotten to know how those prophecies were fulfilled. He was still, in a sense, an OT believer. (PBC)

18:26 *synagogue*. Apollos, like Paul, began teaching about Jesus in the synagogue. (TLSB)

Priscilla and Aquila. Christians continued worshiping and witnessing in the synagogue as long as they were allowed. (TLSB)

explained to him – To tell him the complete story of what Jesus did to save sinners. Apollos, a learned man, was not too proud to receive instruction from the tentmaker and his wife. Most likely, Priscilla is mentioned first because she was the more apt teacher of the husband and wife team. (PBC)

They privately instructed the learned teacher Apollos, particularly about Christian Baptism. (TLSB)

18:27 *Achaia*. The Roman province with Corinth as its capital. (CSB)

Apollos heads to Achaia, including Corinth, with the written approval of the believers in Ephesus (cf 1Co 3:4–6). (TLSB)

wrote to the disciples – The letter of recommendation which the brothers in Ephesus sent to the disciples in Achaia certified that Apollos was qualified to help in the gospel work in Greece. The disciples would find him reliable and able. (PBC)

greatly helped – Luke reminds us in verse 27 that even believing is by God’s grace and that believers still need help from God’s word to grow in faith. We always need the reminder. (PBC)

Believing is a work of God’s grace, by which we are saved. (TLSB)

18:28 *refuted the Jews in public*. The debate begun by Paul at Corinth’s synagogue (v 4) had spilled out into the public square. (TLSB)

the Christ was Jesus. The same message Paul preached. (TLSB)

18:24–28 Apollos is a gifted teacher with sincere faith, yet he needs to grow in his knowledge of the faith. While our knowledge in this life will always be incomplete, teachers should strive to learn everything God has revealed and teach it fully and properly to His people. God’s Word, including His Word in the Baptism instituted by Jesus Christ, is the power by which we believe. • Heavenly Father, thank You for Your gracious gift of Baptism. Spread Your Word, that it may be received and taught as Your means to wash away our sins and adopt us into Your family. Amen. (TLSB)