

Acts 18:1-22

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 April 2021

Preacher: Rev. Render Caines

- [0 : 0 0] The following sermon is from Grace and Peace Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Grace and Peace is a new church that exists for the glory of God and the good of the northeast suburbs of Hamilton Place, Collegedale, and Ottawa.
- You can find help more by visiting gracepeacechurch.org. Nothing has changed last week.
- Two weeks ago, we were in Thessalonica and Berea last week in Athens. And this week, we come to Corinth. So look with me at Acts 18, verse 1.
- 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.
- [1 : 1 9] When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that Christ was Jesus.
- And when they opposed him and reviled him, he shook out his garment 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 Justice, 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. Go on speaking and do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you.
- [2 : 1 9] 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.
- And when Galio 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, Galio 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 it to yourself. I refuse to be a judge of these things.
- And he drove them from the tribunal. And they all seized Sothenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal.
- [3 : 2 1] But Galileo paid no attention to any of this. And after this, Paul stayed many days and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria and with him Priscilla and Aquila.
- At Sincria 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. So let's pray. So Father, here we have this historical account that you have preserved for us in Holy Scripture.

Father, as we attempt to penetrate some of the significant aspects of this passage, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing and acceptable in your sight.

[4 : 39] Many years ago, I was in Moscow, and I stood in Red Square, and I couldn't help thinking that I was in the heart of the enemy.

Paul may have felt that way when he entered Corinth, because Corinth's reputation, even among the Romans, was such that if you wanted to accuse someone of sexual immorality, you accused them of Corinthianizing.

Nathanizing. That was the reputation of this city. Now Corinth, it was a major center of trade, and its matron goddess was Aphrodite, the goddess of love.

And both its own people, its citizens, and visitors to that city knew that the worship of Aphrodite involved hiring one of the thousand prostitutes, both male and female, that were readily available in Aphrodite's temple.

And Paul's, if you read Paul's two letters to the Corinthians, it becomes really clear that even the believers struggled to resist the sensual allurements of their city.

[6 : 00] Much as it is true for us today, because as Scripture teaches, there's nothing new under the sun. During his time in Corinth, Paul will face strong opposition, and he will experience times of wonderful encouragement.

For example, look at verse 2. Paul is encouraged because he meets two Jewish believers named Aquila and his wife Priscilla. Now, think about all of this.

Paul is in Corinth because he's been scorned in Athens, and he's been forced to leave Philippi and Thessalonica and Berea.

Aquila and Priscilla are in Corinth because they've been forced, along with other Jews, to leave Rome by the emperor Claudius.

Now, Claudius was just, he'd had enough. He had enough because the Jews, some of the Jews, were just continually rioting because someone was teaching about a man named Crestus.

[7 : 18] Now, we have that from Roman historical records. Crestus is the Latinized form of Christ. Apparently, some were teaching that Jesus is the Christ, which provoked many of the Jews to riot and to disrupt the peace of the city, and Claudius said, enough is enough.

I'm not putting up with this any longer. Be gone. But now, Rome, Athens, now in Corinth, this highly populated city, this is no small village, some estimate a city of 200,000.

It's a large city. Here in Corinth, Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla find each other. They become friends, and they work together as tent makers and as church planters.

It's always interesting and just delightful to reflect upon the leading of the Lord. I mean, it's just, here's Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla.

They're in the right place at just the right time to meet and become co-workers. I don't think any of them went to Corinth thinking we're going to find each other.

[8 : 42] They didn't come to Corinth anticipating that they would meet. But it's what the Lord had planned all along. Well, you being here this morning.

Listen to me. You being here this morning is no accident. You, the people of grace and peace, have been brought together by the Lord to work side by side to plant this church.

Being here is part of the Lord's plan for your life and the lives of others, just as it was the Lord's plan for Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla to meet up in Corinth.

And it's the Lord's plan to wonderfully be you, to wonderfully use you to accomplish his good purposes in this place.

And just think about that. You're not here by accident. This is all part of the unfolding of the Lord's plan. Now, the conclusion of that plan?

[9 : 44] I don't know. I don't know. But that's why he's got you here now. Then Paul is further encouraged by the arrival from Macedonia of his co-workers Silas and Timothy.

And if you were to read 2 Corinthians 11 verse 9, you would learn that Silas and Timothy brought with them a monetary gift that came from the believers in northern Greece and Macedonia, a gift meant to supply Paul's needs which frees him to spend far more time teaching the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.

Excuse me. But Paul's insistence on teaching that, okay, given far more time now to teach these things.

but his insistence on teaching that Jesus is the Christ, that he is God come in human flesh, come to pay the penalty for the sins of his people, come to physically rise from the dead on the third day triumphant over death and the grave.

The idea that such a man humiliatingly crucified by the Romans could be the long-awaited Messiah, that is in Greek the Christ.

[11 : 07] That's just plain foolishness to the Jews. They were looking for a Messiah. They were looking for a Christ who would overthrow the Romans and restore the past glories of the Davidic kingdom.

They certainly were not looking for a Christ who instead of conquering their enemies would be crucified by them.

And so those opposing Paul, they finally are able to deny him the right to teach in the synagogue. And so Paul, as Jesus had earlier instructed, Paul symbolically brushes them off, shakes them off, telling them, I mean, chilling words, telling them that their blood is on their own heads because of their refusal to acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ.

And then Paul begins to focus his ministry on teaching and preaching to Gentiles. Now, Paul may have been momentarily discouraged when he was denied the right to teach in the synagogue, but he is soon encouraged by having a Greek named Titius Justice offer his home to Paul as a place in which he can continue to preach and teach about Jesus.

Don't know much about Titius Justice. He's described as a God-fearer, perhaps once attracted by the monotheism of Judaism. He has apparently responded to Paul's teaching by embracing Jesus as both the suffering servant who died to pay the penalty for sin as well as the conquering king who rose triumphant over sin, death, and the grave.

[13 : 08] Now look at verse 8. Here you're told, I mean, how encouraging this must have been, you're told that Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, along with his entire family, they believe the message and are baptized, along with many other Corinthians, which I take that to mean many other Gentiles.

But, piling upon all of that, the best is yet to come. I mean, this is amazing to me.

I just, this is just beyond my ability to comprehend. Look at verse 9. Jesus appears to Paul in a vision at night.

Now, Paul had seen Jesus on the road to Damascus, but this is some years later. And again, Jesus appears to him. He tells Paul not to be afraid, but to keep on speaking and not be silent.

Now, wait, wait. Was Paul afraid? Well, of course he was afraid. He tells us he was afraid. He tells us in 1 Corinthians 2, verse 3, that when he first arrived in Corinth, Paul says, I felt weak and I was trembling with fear.

[14 : 36] That's the Apostle Paul. What do you do? See him as a Superman with a cape? You know, Paul says, I arrived in Corinth and I felt weak and I was trembling with fear.

You know, that's encouraging to me because I know what it is to feel weak, to be afraid, to tremble. I mean, and so did Paul because after all he was a man just like us.

In 2 Corinthians 11, the end of 2 Corinthians 11, you can read that sometime and you can read about all the severe opposition and terrible physical abuse that the Apostle Paul had to face.

Now, I haven't faced anything comparable to what Paul faced. but I still need to hear Jesus in John 16 verse 33 say to me, peace.

Be at peace. Now, he also goes on to tell me that in this world I will have many tribulations. In this world you will have many tribulations.

[15 : 52] But then he immediately says, but take heart because I've overcome the world and you through me will be the overcomers spoken of repeatedly in the opening chapters of the book of Revelation.

In Acts 18.10 Jesus goes on and he assures Paul, I am with you, no one can attack you who will cause you harm, for I have many others in this city who will be numbered among my people.

Now, I've never audibly heard Jesus' voice, but I have heard Jesus say, I am with you always. I don't know what the future will bring for us as individuals, as families, as a church, but I know that Jesus promises to be with us.

He promises to build his church. And we can be sure many tribulations we can be sure Satan and his cohorts will try their worst to defeat the Lord's church, but they can never derail God's plans and purposes.

Now, in verse 11, we're told that Paul, in response to the Lord's encouragement and challenges, he remains in Corinth for a year and six months.

[17 : 21] and then, this may seem a little backward, but then, the Lord chooses to again encourage Paul in the most surprising way.

Because he chooses to encourage Paul by having him put on trial before the Roman ruler of Corinth. Now, just stay with me.

it's going to be an encouragement. The ruler's name before whom Paul is dragged is Galileo, Paul's opponents.

They stand there and they accuse him of attempting to persuade people, attempting to persuade people to worship God contrary, thank you, contrary to both Jewish and Roman law.

You got that? As you try to hear what I'm saying through this rumble. He stands before Galileo and his accusers, his opponents accuse him of attempting to persuade people to worship God contrary to both Jewish and Roman law.

[18 : 39] They accuse Paul of teaching ideas that do not accord with Judaism. Okay? Now, that is really an important accusation.

Let me tell you why. Rome allowed the Jews to practice their faith. Judaism was protected by Roman law.

It didn't mean that Jews weren't sometimes persecuted, but the practice of Judaism was protected by Roman law. Paul's accusers, what they are insisting, you've got to follow this now, you're not going to miss the encouragement.

What Paul's accusers are insisting is that what Paul teaches has nothing to do with Judaism. And therefore, they're saying, Paul isn't teaching anything that has anything to do with Judaism.

His teachings, the teachings of Judaism are protected by Roman law. That's not what Paul is doing. These are not the teachings of Judaism, and therefore, Galileo, Galio, therefore, Galio, understand that he should be punished because he's teaching ideas not allowed by Rome.

[20 : 04] look at verses 14 and 15. Even before Paul can speak in his own defense, Galileo tells Paul's accusers, I'm not interested in all this.

I'm not interested, I mean, if this dispute, I'm not interested in all this dispute about the various details of Judaism. Well, that is incredibly important and encouraging.

Why? Because think about what Galileo has just said. Galileo, as a Roman ruler, has just equated what Paul teaches, has just suggested that Paul is protected by the same laws that protect Judaism because he sees all of this dispute that's taking place as a dispute within Judaism.

And as you proceed in your reading of the book of Acts, you're going to find that Paul being protected by Roman law becomes extremely important.

Extremely important. Look at verse 16. I mean, Galileo just, I keep wanting to call this guy Galileo, Galileo just forcefully removes, his name should have been Galileo, that would be better.

[21 : 30] But Galileo forcefully removes the mob and he exits the scene. And after he leaves, the new ruler of the synagogue, Sothenes, is seized and beaten.

That language for me is just so, just lacks precision. I can't figure out who's beating who. It's hard to decide if Sothenes is being beaten by his fellow Jews because he became a believer or if Sothenes is being beaten by the Gentile Corinthians because of their latent anti-Semitism.

But whichever the case, as Paul, as Jesus promises, Paul's not harmed. In fact, he remains in Corinth for many more days before setting out for Syria, accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla.

Now look at verse 18. So before sailing from Sincree, which was a seaport of Corinth, just south of Corinth, a seaport, you've got a wonderful little map, you can find all that on your map.

Just before leaving Sincree, Paul cuts his hair and just almost a throw, you know, just an out-of-the-pocket statement.

[22 : 49] Oh yeah, and before he left Sincree, Paul cut his hair because he was under a vow. What? Well, you've got to be a Jew.

You've got to think like a Jew. Paul does what a Jew would do to express his gratitude to the Lord for his protection during his time in Corinth.

So, I mean, even eventually, as you will learn, in keeping with Jewish custom, to fulfill his vow, Paul will offer up a sacrifice in Jerusalem.

Now listen, Paul knows. I mean, how many times does he have to tell us in his epistles? Paul knows his salvation is not tied to doing these things, but he does what a man raised in the Jewish tradition would do to express his gratitude to the Lord.

I was in Nigeria. We were in a prayer meeting, and I learned about cultural distinctives, because when it came time to pray, I, like a good American, I bowed my head, and I waited to see who would pray first.

[24 : 08] I was stunned. When everyone got up, up out of their seats, began to walk around the room, and everyone prayed aloud at the same time.

I mean, I didn't know what to make of it. I'm ashamed to say I kept my seat. I just wasn't sure what was going on here.

And those prayers continued for 10 minutes, 15 minutes, until the leader said in a loud voice, and this we pray in Jesus' name, and everybody on cue said, Amen, and took their seats.

Now, that's not how I've, that's not what I've experienced when I've attended a prayer meeting, but that's how they pray in Nigeria. And what Paul does here is not something I would do, but it is keeping with his cultural background.

So, Paul and his companions cross the Aegean Sea, they arrive in Ephesus, which is on the west coast of modern Turkey, and during his brief stop in Ephesus, Paul goes to the synagogue to reason with the Jews, but then after a few days, he says goodbye to Aquila and Priscilla, and he departs by ship.

[25 : 32] He promises to return to Ephesus if the Lord so wills, which you will find he does in Acts chapter 19.

Now, we're talking about the ways of the Lord, so just stop and ponder this for a moment. All these details aren't right here, but we get them from comparing Scripture with Scripture.

The Lord will use Aquila and Priscilla, who've come from Corinth to Ephesus. They've come from Corinth to Ephesus. The Lord will use them to instruct a very learned man named Apollos, Apollos will end up leaving Ephesus and going back to Corinth, where he will become a pillar in that church, and Aquila and Priscilla will eventually return to Rome, where they will host a church in their own home.

I mean, you can't plan this. The ways of the Lord are just amazing to ponder. other. But now, here in Acts 18, Paul sails from 600 miles to the seaport of Caesarea, which is situated some 50 miles northwest of Jerusalem.

And then after visiting Jerusalem, Paul returns to his home church in Antioch, some 300 miles north. I know it says, and he went down to Antioch, if you read the verse.

[27 : 07] And for us as Americans, if you go down, you go south. Well, that's not how it works as far as this culture is concerned. To go down is to go from a higher elevation to a lower elevation.

So he went down from Jerusalem to Antioch. So, thus ends Paul's second missionary journey.

this is the end of it. He will very quickly begin his third missionary journey, which your pastor will lead you through. And Paul's been powerfully used by the Lord to plant several churches along the way.

He's faced strong opposition. He's had moments of great encouragement. He's faithfully proclaimed that Jesus is the Christ, God come in human flesh, you having no sin of his own, dies to pay the penalty for the sins of his people, then physically rises from the dead.

Forty days after his resurrection, he ascends back to the Father's right hand, so he's at the Father's right hand where he now sovereignly reigns, and yet at the same time, he is with us always, working in and through us to build his church.

[28 : 30] one day, may it be soon, he promises that he'll come again to set all things right side up.

And that's why you're here. And that's why you're here. You're here to hear once more the good news that by grace through faith in Jesus you're saved from sin's curse and power.

You're here to be reminded that your Savior, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, he is at work in and through you.

You're here to be encouraged to know that though you live in the midst, that we all live in the midst of a Corinthian-like culture, Jesus promises, I'll build my church.

you're here. You're here. You're here to hear the Lord say, don't be afraid. Be at peace.

[29 : 35] I have planted you here to reach all those whom I will draw to myself through you. You're not going to build this house on your own.

You're going to build it with the Lord at work. in and through you. And the Lord says that the sower who goes out and sows the seed will return rejoicing over the harvest that the Lord will give.

Now, like Paul, sorry, you're going to know times of discouragement. You haven't known any discouragements, have you, Benji? No, no, not a one.

Not a one. You better examine him. Okay. You're going to know times of discouragement, but by God's grace, you're going to experience times of great encouragement.

And whatever the future brings, this is absolutely certain. the Lord's plans for you cannot fail.

[30 : 52] Let's pray. Father, teach us, instruct us, encourage us, and challenge us, and may we be your people, and may you be our God.

And we pray it in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.