

And went to Corinth: Corinth was a major city of the Roman Empire, at an important crossroads of trade and travel. It was also a city notorious for its hedonism and immorality.

i. In Paul's day, **Corinth** was already an ancient city. It was a commercial center with two harbors and had long been a rival to its northern neighbor, Athens.

Corinth was a city with a remarkable reputation for loose living and especially sexual immorality. In classical Greek, to *act like a Corinthian* meant to practice fornication, and a *Corinthian companion* meant a prostitute. This sexual immorality was permitted under the widely popular worship of Aphrodite (also known as Venus, the goddess of fertility and sexuality). In 146 b.c. Corinth rebelled against Rome and was brutally destroyed by Roman armies. It lay in ruins for a century, until Julius Caesar rebuilt the city. It quickly re-established its former position as a center for both trade and immorality of every sort. One ancient writer described Corinth as a town where "none but the tough could survive." (Williams)

ii. "It is significant that it was from this city that Paul wrote his Roman letter; and when one reads his description of Gentile corruption in that Roman letter, one has almost certainly a mirror of what he found in Corinth. (Romans 1:22-32)"

(Morgan)

iii. Paul knew that because people from all over the Empire passed through Corinth, a strong church there could touch lives all over the Empire. He knew Corinth was a tough city, but he wasn't only interested in planting churches where he thought it was *easy*.

v.2 This began one of the important friendships of the New Testament – Paul and **Aquila** and **his wife Priscilla**. Paul called them his *fellow workers* who had *risked their own necks for my life* (Romans 16:3-4).

ii. "*Priscilla* is a diminutive form of Prisca, which is one of the great families of Rome. She was probably related to this family in some way." (Hughes) In half the mentions of this New Testament married couple, Priscilla's name is written first – which is said to be unusual.

c. **For by occupation they were tentmakers:** Paul's tentmaking was an important part of his ministry. Though he recognized his right to be supported by those he ministered to (1 Corinthians 9:7-14), he voluntarily supported himself in his missionary and preaching work so that no one could accuse him of seeking converts for the sake of enriching himself (1 Corinthians 9:15-18).

ii. In the modern missions movement, people call any work that a missionary does to support himself on the mission field *tentmaking*.

iii. "In Judaism it was not considered proper for a scribe or a rabbi to receive payment for his teaching, so many of them practised a trade in addition to their study and teaching of the law." (Bruce)

d. **Because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome:** The Roman historian Suetonius wrote that **Claudius** banished Jews from Rome because they were "indulging in constant riots at the instigation of Chrestus." There have been many attempts to explain who *Chrestus* was, but a likely solution is that Suetonius referred to Jesus Christ, but writing some 70 years after the events, had the name somewhat mixed up. It seems that the expulsion had to do with "dissension and disorder within the Jewish community of Rome resulting from the introduction of Christianity into one or more of the synagogues of the city." (Bruce)

2. (4-5) Paul's ministry among the Jews and Gentiles of Corinth.

And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks. When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.

a. **And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath:** Paul was effective as he **reasoned** (discussed, debated) among the Jews and Greeks. The **Greeks** present in the synagogue were Gentiles interested in and sympathetic with Judaism.

i. Paul later described the character of his bold preaching in Corinth in: *For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified* (1 Corinthians 2:1-16).

b. **When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia:** When Timothy came, he brought news about how the Christians in Thessalonica were remaining steadfast in the faith (1 Thessalonians 3:6-10). This brought Paul great joy, spurring him on in ministry (**Paul was compelled by the Spirit**). He answered back by writing 1 Thessalonians from Corinth.

i. According to 2 Corinthians 11:8-9, while Paul was in Corinth, financial support arrived from the Christians in Philippi, and he was able to put aside tentmaking for a while and concentrate more fully on the task of building the church in Corinth.

v.5 compelled by the Spirit

Jeremiah after preaching is imprisoned- Jer. 20:9

3. (6-8) Opposition rises against Paul in Corinth.

a. **But when they opposed him and blasphemed:** The blasphemy must have been directed against Jesus, because Paul preached Jesus as the Messiah (*testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ, Acts 18:5*). This is an indirect declaration of the deity of Jesus, because someone can only really blaspheme God.

b. **From now on I will go to the Gentiles:** Paul strongly sensed his responsibility to preach to the Jews first (Romans 1:16), but when his message was rejected, he wasted no time in going to the Gentiles.

i. Paul fulfilled the spirit of what Jesus said in Matthew 7:6: *Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces*. When people are determined to reject the gospel, we shouldn't keep trying with them until the door is open again.

c. **He shook his garments:** Paul did this so that not a speck of dust from the synagogue would remain on his clothes, much less his sandals. This was a dramatic way of expressing *his* rejection of *their* rejection. Paul was certainly capable of dramatic and vivid demonstrations of his message.

d. **Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household:** This shows that Paul treated the Jews of Corinth with love and grace even after they rejected him and his message. He certainly did not forbid Jewish

people from coming to Jesus; he merely switched the focus of his evangelism from the Jews to the Gentiles.

i. **Crispus** was one of the few in Corinth whom Paul personally baptized (1 Corinthians 1:14).

e. **Many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized:** Paul told us what kind of people these Corinthians were in 1 Corinthians 1:26: *For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.*

4. (9-11) God's special encouragement to Paul in Corinth.

Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city." And he continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

a. **Do not be afraid:** The implication behind this message was that Paul *was* afraid, fearing that here in Corinth his work would be cut short by either opposing Jews (as in Thessalonica and Berea) or by the highly-charged worldliness around him.

i. "There had been culture shock in Athens, and now Paul experienced moral shock in Corinth. Its sweat and perfume and grit smothered Paul's righteous soul, and he became depressed." (Hughes)

b. **But speak, and do not keep silent:** The solution to Paul's fear was for him to *obey* Jesus' command to not be afraid; and to **speak and not keep silent**, that is, to keep getting the Word of God out.

i. Jesus didn't tell Paul that his opponents wouldn't *try* to stop him, only that they would not be successful (**no one will attack you to hurt you**).

c. **For I am with you:** This promise was the *basis* for God's command to not be afraid and to keep preaching. When we understand what this means, and Who says it, this is enough.

i. Spurgeon considered the promise of Jesus, “**For I am with you.**” He thought it emphasized three things: The *presence* of Jesus, the *sympathy* of Jesus, and the *cooperation* of Jesus.

d. **For I have many people in this city:** This additional promise was a constant assurance to Paul, who must have often had doubts about the survival and health of the Corinthian church.

e. **And he continued there a year and six months:** Paul was in Corinth a year and a half, which seems to be longer than in any other city where he founded a church. His ministry at Corinth is described simply: **teaching the word of God among them.**

i. The duration of Paul’s stay in Corinth shows where his heart was in ministry. He was no “in and out” evangelist, but a man committed to making disciples.

5. (12-17) The Jews of Corinth attempt (unsuccessfully) to convict Paul before the civil authorities.

When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia: In approaching Gallio, the Jews of Corinth tried to stop Paul’s preaching work in the entire province.

i. “If Gallio had accepted the Jewish charge and found Paul guilty of the alleged offense, provincial governors everywhere would have had a precedent, and Paul’s ministry would have been severely restricted. As it was, Gallio’s refusal to act in the matter was tantamount to the recognition of Christianity as a *religio licita*” (Longenecker)

c. **Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat:**

- Crispus and Sosthenes same person?
- Sosthenes replaced Crispus perhaps because *Crispus* trusted in Jesus, he was replaced as *ruler of the synagogue* (Acts 18:8) by **Sosthenes** – who later himself seems to have become a Christian (1 Corinthians 1:1).
- or simply two different synagogues