

Paul comes to Corinth.

Acts 18:1-4.

Sunday morning, June 5, 2011.

I. A look back at Athens.

- A. The text simply says “After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth.” “These things” refers back to Paul’s address on Mars Hill.
- B. Paul’s departure seems abrupt. Paul had given instructions to the Berean brothers for Timothy and Silas to come to him in Athens at their earliest convenience, but Paul does not even wait for them to arrive; he departs from Athens before Timothy and Silas can get there. They meet up with Paul in Corinth as Acts 18:5 reports.
- C. Perhaps the testimony of silence speaks the loudest here in terms of giving us an idea of why Paul left so abruptly.
 1. It is not reported that a church was formed in Athens.
 2. Paul never wrote a letter to a church in Athens as best as we know.
 3. Paul never went back to Athens as best as we know.
 4. The hand full of believers gathered in Athens, Acts 17:34, may have followed Paul elsewhere, or there could have been small churches within traveling distance from Athens for them to be a part of.
 5. Nowhere did Paul receive a more civil or polite welcome than in Athens, and yet perhaps nowhere did he meet with more indifference on the part of the people than in Athens. The Athenians were used to hearing and speaking about new things. They filled their days with nothing else, and Paul’s voice and message became just one more among so many others.
 6. It is refreshing to see that Paul did not have to leave Athens because of persecution. Tolerance of new ideas was one of the things that marked the Athens of Paul’s days; yet Paul had to leave Athens just the same as he had to leave all the cities where persecution forced his departure.
 7. This makes us wonder which is better, to meet the gospel head on with hostility, or to meet it with a spirit of indifference. The Lord Jesus would say later to the Laodicean Christians: “I could wish that you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.” Revelation 3:15,16.

II. At the crossroads.

When Paul leaves Athens he moves some 60 miles West to Corinth. Corinth was a city that truly sat at the crossroads.

- A. It was situated on a narrow land bridge, only a few miles wide, connecting the lower half of the province of Achaia with the upper half. All land traffic between upper and lower Achaia went through the city of Corinth.
- B. Also, the narrow land bridge on which Corinth was situated was the only thing separating the Adriatic and Aegean seas at this point. Sea traffic and cargo traveling between Asia Minor and Italy could avoid the treacherous waters of the open Mediterranean, particularly in the winter season, and use the much more sheltered waters of the Aegean and Adriatic seas to cross over to Italy. Ships would cross over from Asia Minor to Corinth’s Eastern port which was

called Cenchrea; unload their cargo and passengers, transport them right down Main Street in Corinth for a few miles to Corinth's Western port, upload them onto a new ship, and cross the Adriatic Sea to Italy.

- C. Like so many port cities with so many sailors and visitors passing through, Corinth was marked by moral laxness, so much so that even in the morally depraved Roman Empire Corinth had become a byword for sexual depravity.
 - 1. Gospel living would prove a challenge in Corinth as Paul's two letters to the church in Corinth show us.
 - 2. Paul would labor in Corinth for a year and a half, planting many seeds which others would water, and laying a foundation on which others coming after him would build. 1 Corinthians 3:6,10.
 - 3. The church in Corinth would become a springboard for the gospel as Paul's second letter shows us in places such as 2 Corinthians 9:10-15.

III. Aquila and Priscilla.

- A. This was a Jewish couple that recently had been expelled from Rome.
 - 1. According to the Roman historian Suetonius, Claudius the emperor ordered all Jews to leave Rome because of the unrest the Jews caused over one Chrestus. It is generally believed that Chrestus is an alternate Latin spelling for Christus (Christ). Given the Jewish reaction wherever the gospel of Christ was preached, this is likely to be the case.
 - 2. It is unclear whether Aquila and Priscilla had become Christians in Rome, or that this happened as a result of their meeting up with Paul.
- B. What is clear about this couple is instructive for us.

They use their home as a means to further the gospel.

 - 1. Paul stayed with them while in Corinth that year and a half.
 - 2. Here Apollos would be instructed in the way of the Lord more perfectly.
 - 3. The church in Corinth would meet in their home.
 - 4. Later when they moved to Ephesus the Ephesian church meets in their home.
 - 5. Later Jews were allowed back in Rome; and one of the Roman churches meets at their home. 1 Cor. 16:19; Romans 16:3-5; 2 Tim. 4:19.

Application:

In thus opening their home and hearts Aquila and Priscilla labored in the footsteps of their Lord who opens and prepares room for us in His and the Father's house. We would do well to labor thus in the Lord's footsteps also.

IV. Tentmakers.

- A. All Jewish boys of that time would learn a trade regardless of what they would end up doing in life. As such it is said that Paul was a tentmaker.
- B. Professional orators charged for speaking in those days; many were charlatans. Paul refused to do so and offered the gospel free of charge.
- C. Paul taught that the church should support its teachers 1 Cor. 9:7-14, but he chose not to exercise his right to compensation.
- D. The Lord Jesus emptied Himself of His rights in order to provide us with the blessings of the gospel. Doing what is right is not always doing what is best. Doing what is gracious and after the image of Christ is always best.