

# The Rest of the Story

Studies in the Book of Acts

***“We will move the world not by criticism of it, nor conformity to it –  
but by combustion within it of lives ignited by the Spirit of God”***

Vance Havner

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Text

Acts 18:1-17

Topic

The apostle Paul is blessed by a series of events that empower him to preach with boldness in the city of Corinth

Title

*Paul the Apostle’s “A Series Of Fortunate Events”*

**Acts 18:1** After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth.

**Acts 18:2** And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them.

**Acts 18:3** So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.

**Acts 18:4** And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.

**Acts 18:5** When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews *that Jesus is* the Christ.

**Acts 18:6** But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook *his* garments and said to them, "Your blood *be* upon your *own* heads; I *am* clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

**Acts 18:7** And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain *man* named Justus, *one* who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue.

**Acts 18:8** Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.

**Acts 18:9** Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "**Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent;**

**Acts 18:10** **for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."**

**Acts 18:11** And he continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

**Acts 18:12** When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat,

**Acts 18:13** saying, "This *fellow* persuades men to worship God contrary to the law."

**Acts 18:14** And when Paul was about to open *his* mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, O Jews, there would be reason why I should bear with you.

**Acts 18:15** But if it is a question of words and names and your own law, look *to it* yourselves; for I do not want to be a judge of such *matters*."

**Acts 18:16** And he drove them from the judgment seat.

**Acts 18:17** Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat *him* before the judgment seat. But Gallio took no notice of these things.

## Introduction

**I have many people in this city.**

Jesus was talking to the apostle Paul about Corinth. Could He also have been talking to us about our cities and towns?

**Sure!** It's another way of Jesus telling us to go into the whole world making disciples. Only for most of us we're not going anywhere; we're there! We're settled in our city, with our families and our careers. How do those of us who are settled go about reaching the **many people** in our cities?

Paul settled in Corinth for about eighteen months. Not a long time by our standards but it was for him. As we read about his extended stay we can glean insights about Jesus' plan to reach the **many people** that are all around us. We can discover our place in His plan.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Step-Up & Embrace Your Place In Jesus' Plan To Reach The "Many People" In Your City, and #2 Step Back & Enjoy Your Place In Jesus' Plan To Reach The "Many People" In Your City.

#1 Step-Up & Embrace Your Place  
In Jesus' Plan To Reach The "Many People" In Your City  
(v1-8)

The thing that struck me most in these verses was the diverse cast of characters that contributed to the success of Jesus' plan to reach Corinth with the Gospel. Paul was central, of course, but he didn't reach Corinth single-handedly. He met Aquila and Priscilla, reconnected with Silas and Timothy, and was involved with Justus and Crispus. Each of them teaches us something about our place in the plan to reach our cities.

**Acts 18:1** After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth.

**Acts 18:2** And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them.

**Acts 18:3** So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.

Paul journeyed fifty-three miles alone from Athens to **Corinth**. It was a great commercial center. It was served by two seaports on opposite sides of a four-mile wide stretch of land. To save a treacherous and time consuming journey merchants often put their ships on rollers and moved them overland from one port to another. Corinth was famed for its Temple of Aphrodite in which one-thousand sacred priestesses supported the temple by prostitution.

**Aquila** and **Priscilla** had been expelled from Rome along with **all the Jews**. Don't forget that the Jews were persecuted by the Romans. They left Rome and re-established their tentmaking business in Corinth.

Aquila and Priscilla were already believers in Jesus Christ by the time Paul met them. They are mentioned six times in the New Testament. They will open up their hearts to Apollos and teach him about the Holy Spirit (Acts 18). They will open up their home in Corinth and have a church meeting in it (1Corinthians 16).

Paul had to work to support himself. Every Jewish boy was taught a trade. His was tentmaking. Paul saw the 'Help Wanted' ad at A&P Tentmaking and applied for a job.

Having secured employment Paul settled in to his regular weekly ministry of preaching Jesus in the local synagogue(s):

**Acts 18:4** And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.

Aquila and Priscilla are the first Christians in our text who teach us things about our place in Jesus' plan. Let me highlight a few observations:

1. First of all we see that they had a solid home life. Their marriage was one of companionship and cooperation. They were ready to minister to Paul and could help reach Corinth because they were spiritual at home.
2. Second, their approach to business and earning a living was spiritual. Out in the everyday work force they manifested their Christianity.
3. Third, they kept their material affairs in proper perspective. They were in a position to help support Paul by offering him work. When the need arose they opened up their home for the church to use.

Want to be part of reaching your city? *Start at home!* Make yours a Christian home. Then bring Jesus Christ with you to work. Then realize you only work to be able to share your resources with other believers when needs arise.

Silas and Timothy arrived in Corinth:

**Acts 18:5** When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews *that Jesus is* the Christ.

These guys, along with Luke, had been traveling with Paul on this second mission's trip. They had stayed behind but now rejoined Paul.

**Compelled by the Spirit** can be translated several different ways. The gist of it is that Paul dedicated himself wholly to the ministry. He could do so because we learn in Second Corinthians that Silas and Timothy brought Paul a financial gift from the church in Philippi. Paul could quit his tentmaking job and devote full time to the Word of God.

From Silas and Timothy we also learn several things, notably these two:

1. First, that it's a good thing for the church to financially support those who are compelled by the Spirit to devote full-time to the Word of God.
2. Second, that God wants to raise-up men who will come alongside of and spiritually support those who are compelled to devote full-time to the Word of God.

Want to be part of reaching your city? All of us can financially support the ministry. And in every church there are some who God wants to raise-up to come alongside and offer strong, loyal spiritual support so that the teaching of God's Word can go forth.

**Acts 18:6** But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook *his* garments and said to them, "Your blood *be* upon your *own* heads; I *am* clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

At the point they **blasphemed** God Paul turned away from them. In a symbolic gesture he **shook his garments** signifying he had fulfilled his responsibility to reach them but they had rejected the blood of Jesus Christ. No longer welcome in the synagogue, Paul went outside to the Gentiles.

**Acts 18:7** And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain *man* named Justus, *one* who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue.

They started Calvary Chapel of Corinth in a house next door to the synagogue!

Scholars believe **Justus** is a.k.a. Gaius Titius Justus, mentioned in Romans sixteen. From him, too, we learn something about reaching our cities. When there was a need, and he had the resources to meet the need, he stepped-up and did so.

**Acts 18:8** Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.

How exciting! Yet in verse seventeen we read that **Sosthenes** was ruler of the synagogue. **Crispus** probably had to resign once he got saved. From him we learn that there can be a cost to following Jesus

Christ. It can cost us our position, our status, our standing. But what does it matter when I am seated in heavenly places with Jesus?

When we think about reaching a city for Jesus we might initially think about getting all the churches on-board for an evangelistic crusade in the football stadium. Jesus leads that way sometimes; there's nothing wrong with a city-wide crusade.

But what you see in Corinth is much more personal. Jesus would reach the **many people** in that city by building His church. In His church would be believers who stepped-up to find their place in His plan. They established spiritual homes. They dedicated their businesses and careers to help further the Gospel. They financially and spiritually came alongside the teaching of God's Word. When they heard of a need and had the wherewithal to meet it they did so. And they were willing to sacrifice, even suffer, for their testimony.

That's the plan for reaching our cities. It is for every Christian to step-up and embrace their place in the church. It is for me to personally account for myself to my Lord, offering myself a living sacrifice, allowing Him to use me as He sees fit.

## #2 Step Back & Enjoy Your Place In Jesus' Plan To Reach The "Many People" Your City (v9-17)

For all the encouragement Paul received he was fearful and repressed. After all, he'd been run out of Thessalonica and Berea. His ministry in Athens was not all that outwardly successful. Who could tell what bonds or beatings or bereavements awaited him in Corinth?

*Jesus could!*

**Acts 18:9** Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "**Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent;**

Jesus doesn't waste words. He doesn't tell someone, **Do not be afraid**, unless they are fearful. He doesn't tell them to **speak, and... not keep silent** unless they are holding back.

After all we've read thus far this seems almost out of place. You'd expect this at the beginning of the chapter – before all of the encouragements Paul received.

It's a reminder that discouragement can set in at any time. Just because things seem to be going OK it doesn't counter spiritual discouragement.

What does? A fresh vision *of* the Lord and *from* the Lord. Paul received several visions of the risen Lord in his lifetime. We may never see Him in that same way, but we can still 'see' Him. He comes to you in His Word to lift you up when you are down and distressed and discouraged.

We also need a fresh vision *from* the Lord. Paul got his in verse ten:

**Acts 18:10** for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."

It was a special word for Paul at that time. Jesus isn't saying this to us; but He does want to say something to us! We need fresh vision from the Lord in our ministering, in our serving. It's too easy to get comfortable, to get in a rut, to go on auto-pilot. The things we've always done may not be infused with the Holy Spirit anymore. We need to let the Lord analyze us, challenge us, reinvent us. We never leave the basics; but we do them we renewed vision.

**Acts 18:11** And he continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

A series of providential events gave Paul an eighteen-month period of relative calm. When all the things we've mentioned come together, when everyone is stepping-up to their place in the church, there can be a season of growth in the Word and in the Lord.

It seemed for a moment that the peace would be broken:

**Acts 18:12** When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat,

**Acts 18:13** saying, "This *fellow* persuades men to worship God contrary to the law."

Roman law allowed Jews freedom to worship as long as they did not actively seek converts. The Jews accused Paul of acting contrary to Jewish worship which would therefore be against Roman law as establishing a new religion not sanctioned by the government.

**Acts 18:14** And when Paul was about to open *his* mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, O Jews, there would be reason why I should bear with you.

**Acts 18:15** But if it is a question of words and names and your own law, look *to it* yourselves; for I do not want to be a judge of such *matters*."

**Acts 18:16** And he drove them from the judgment seat.

We can be sure Paul wanted to **open his mouth** not to defend himself but to give **Gallio** a sermon! Jesus had other plans. He had gone before Paul to assure that nothing would harm him.

Gallio mistakenly dismissed the ruckus as an internal problem among the Jews. He **drove them from the judgment seat**, which would have been in the public square.

**Acts 18:17** Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat *him* before the judgment seat. But Gallio took no notice of these things.

It seems that non-Jewish **Greeks** out in the public square took the opportunity to express a little anti-Semitism by beating **Sosthenes**, the new **ruler** of the Jewish **synagogue**. Gallio witnessed it but did nothing to stop it. These people weren't exactly living under the First Amendment!

Sosthenes is mentioned later and, when he is, we see that he has become a Christian (1Corinthians 1:1).

I'm certain Paul was bummed he didn't get to share Jesus with Gallio. But he must have enjoyed being a part of God's much larger plan:

1. God kept Paul from a confrontation with Gallio that probably would have gotten him kicked out of town.
2. And the Lord used the situation in the life of Sosthenes, eventually leading him to saving faith.

It was a rare moment when Paul stepped-back and simply observed. It speaks to me about remembering that Jesus has a big and long-term plan in mind for reaching our cities. We are a part of it. If we are doing our part (as described in the opening verses) we can, in a sense, step back and enjoy our part – trusting that it contributes to the overall plan.

Want to be a part of reaching the **many people** Jesus has in the cities of Kings County?

Of course we do! Then let's try to learn from, and identify with, Aquila and Priscilla... and Silas and Timothy... and Justus... and Crispus... and even Sosthenes.

Let their simple but significant faith challenge you to embrace your place in the church.

