

# Week 29

## The Church Spreads to Corinth

### **Perseverance in the Face of Opposition**

The first 18 verses of Chapter 18 narrates Paul's missionary activity in Corinth, a city in Greece that was known for its wealth, commerce, and immorality. Paul arrived in Corinth after leaving Athens, where he had faced mockery and rejection from the philosophers, and there he met Aquila and Priscilla, a Jewish couple who had been expelled from Rome by Emperor Claudius and who would become key partners in Paul's ministry. They shared the same trade of tentmaking, and Paul stayed and worked with them. He also preached in the synagogue every Sabbath, as was his custom, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks to believe in Jesus as the Messiah.

Sadly, the resistance from some of the Jews was quite strong, and several of them blasphemed and opposed Paul's message. In response to such opposition, Paul did as Jesus had commanded his disciples to do on their first 2 x 2 mission trips, when He told them to shake the dust from their feet and leave if they were not welcomed. Paul shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." This was a rather strong response, which tells us he could see from how strong the opposition was that his efforts there would be wasted. So, he then left the synagogue and went to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God whose house was next to the synagogue. Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul also believed and were baptized. Here we see the beginning of the Corinthian church being established.

One night, the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision and said, "Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you or harm you; for I have many people in this city." Paul must have held some fear knowing that the young church movement would face such fierce opposition. However, Paul was so encouraged by this word that he stayed in Corinth for a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

God promised Paul there would be no harm come to him, but he didn't say the work would be smooth or easy. Trouble arose again when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia. The Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal. They accused him of persuading people to worship God contrary to the law. Paul was about to speak in his defense, but Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crime, I would have reason to accept your complaint. But since it is a question of words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves; I do not wish to be a judge of these things." And he drove them from the tribunal. Then all the Greeks seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. The Jews thought that a show of violence would help their cause, but Gallio paid no attention to any of these things.

After staying for some time longer, Paul took leave of the believers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Interestingly, we Luke notes that at Cenchreae, Paul had his hair cut, as a sign of a vow, though he doesn't mention what the vow was. Clearly, this time in Corinth was difficult for Paul and moved him to make a special vow to God, believing that God would continue to bless his work.

This passage reveals several themes that are relevant for Christians today. One theme is persevering in the face of opposition. Paul did not give up on preaching the gospel in Corinth, even though he faced hostility and rejection from some of the Jews. He continued to speak boldly and faithfully, knowing that God had called him to this ministry. He also found support and fellowship from other believers, such as Aquila and Priscilla, Crispus and Titius Justus. They provided him with hospitality, friendship, and encouragement.

Another theme is not being afraid but trusting in God's word. Paul received a vision from the Lord that assured him of God's presence, protection, and promise. God told him not to be afraid, but to speak and not be silent. God also told him that he had many people in this city who would respond to his message. Paul believed God's word and acted on it. He stayed in Corinth for a long time and saw many people come to faith in Christ. We too, must learn not to back down in the face of rejection and opposition to the gospel.

A third theme is recognizing God's sovereignty over human authorities. Paul was brought before Gallio, the Roman governor, who had the power to punish him or set him free. But Gallio dismissed the case as a matter of Jewish law that did not concern him. He refused to interfere with Paul's preaching or persecute him for his faith. God used Gallio's indifference to protect Paul from harm and allow him to continue his ministry.

These themes challenge us to follow Paul's example of courage, faithfulness, and trust in God. We may also face opposition and resistance when we share the gospel with others. We may also feel afraid or discouraged at times. But we can remember that God is with us, that he has a plan for us, and that he can use any situation for his glory. We can also seek support and encouragement from other believers who share our vision and mission. We can also respect human authorities but ultimately submit to God's authority over all things.

### C. THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY (15:36-18:22)

- 1 Paul and Barnabas Disagree on John Mark (15:36-40)
2. Syria and Cilicia Revisited (15:41)
3. Paul/Timothy to Galatia To Deliver Council's Decrees (16:1-5)
4. From Galatia-Mysia- To Troas (16:6-10)
  - a. The Spirit prevents them and changes their agenda (16:6-7)
  - b. God communicates through visions
5. The Work in Philippi (16:11-40)
  - a. Lydia is converted (16:11-15)

- b. Paul and Silas are jailed unjustly (16:16-24)
  - c. Paul and Silas are miraculously released (16:25-30)
  - d. The Jailer is converted (16:30-34)
- 6. The Work at Thessalonica (17:1-9)
  - a. The riotous response to the gospel
- 7. The Work in Berea (17:10-14)
  - a. A scholarly response to the gospel
- 8. The Work in Athens (17:15-34)
  - a. Paul shows how Jesus is the “unknown god” they already believe in. (17:23-28)
  - b. Paul shows that as “offspring” of the true God, we should rightly worship Him. (17:28-31)
- 9. The Work in Corinth (18:1-17)
  - a. Paul's Work in the Synagogue (1-6)
  - b. Paul's Work at the House Titus Justus (7-11)
  - c. Paul Charged by the Jews (12-17)

