

## Lesson 6            9 December, 2018

### Paul at Corinth

**Lesson Scope:** Acts 18:1-22

*References in brackets refer to Acts 18 unless otherwise specified*

#### Lesson Focus

After leaving Athens, Paul continued his travels fifty miles west to Corinth, a busy trade centre with ports on two seas. Much of the wealth of this city was consumed in drinking, pleasure-seeking, and immoral conduct. Sensuality was promoted in the worship of their gods and goddesses. Fleshly indulgence and carnality made Corinth a place where the Gospel message was much needed.

Paul spent one and one-half years in this place, pursuing tent making with Aquila and Aquila's wife Priscilla. The Corinthians heard the Gospel message Paul gave and saw in his life something quite different from what was found in the typical resident of their city. As he ministered to the spiritual needs of the people, his personal example gave an impressive witness of the truth he promoted.

Christianity is a system of belief that issues into a way of life. The harmony of a sound profession and a consistent practice produces a powerful witness for truth.

Christianity involves more than simply believing a list of Bible doctrines. Most denominations of professing Christians have such a list to which they claim to hold as the basis for their faith.

Show how Paul and all true Christians today make practical applications of the truths they hold. Their lives exhibit the effect the Gospel message has on all who follow Jesus' teachings. This gives a witness that a lips-only profession cannot provide.

**Lesson Aim:** To portray practical expressions of Christianity from Paul's life.

**Theme Verse:** 1 Corinthians 11:1. Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

## Lesson Text

### Serving with Others

Acts 18:1-6

<sup>1</sup> (KJV) After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; <sup>2</sup> And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. <sup>3</sup> And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers. <sup>4</sup> And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. <sup>5</sup> And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews *that Jesus was Christ*. <sup>6</sup> And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook *his* raiment, and said unto them, Your blood *be* upon your own heads; I *am* clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.

### Teaching the Gentiles

Acts 18:7-17

<sup>7</sup> (KJV) And he departed thence, and entered into a certain *man's* house, named Justus, *one* that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. <sup>8</sup> And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized. <sup>9</sup> Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: <sup>10</sup> For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city. <sup>11</sup> And he continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. <sup>12</sup> And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat, <sup>13</sup> Saying, This *fellow* persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. <sup>14</sup> And when Paul was now about to open *his* mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O *ye* Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: <sup>15</sup> But if it be a question of words and names, and *of* your law, look *ye to it*; for I will be no judge of such *matters*. <sup>16</sup> And he drove them from the judgment seat. <sup>17</sup> Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat *him* before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

## Encouraging the Brethren

Acts 18:18-22

<sup>18</sup> (KJV) And Paul *after this* tarried *there* yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn *his* head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow. <sup>19</sup> And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. <sup>20</sup> When they desired *him* to tarry longer time with them, he consented not; <sup>21</sup> But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus. <sup>22</sup> And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch.

## Questions for Study

### Serving with Others

1. How did Paul's association with Aquila and Priscilla enhance his ministry?
2. Why was Paul's willingness to engage in manual labour an opportunity to demonstrate the Gospel before the people of Corinth?
3. What considerations should guide us in choosing an occupation?

### Teaching the Gentiles

4. How did God's promise to be with Paul encourage him in his work?
5. How can we help new Christians to understand the concept of discipleship?
6. In what ways can we defend the Gospel when some actively oppose it?

### Encouraging the Brethren

7. Why was it important for Paul to keep his commitments?
8. What benefits do we derive from our association with fellow believers?

## Analysing the Passage

Paul reasoned (18:4) with the people in the synagogue. This was more than a meagre telling of the message. Paul probed their doubts and objections in an effort to convince them of the truth. By continuing this every week, he persuaded them of his message.

Silas and Timotheus likely brought material aid to Paul from Macedonia. (See 2 Corinthians 11:9.) This stimulated Paul's concern for the Jews.

Pressed in the spirit (18:5) means that Paul felt constrained to testify to the Jews that Jesus was their Messiah.

When the Jews opposed themselves (18:6) (placed themselves in opposition to Paul), he stated his intention of working with the Gentiles.

Paul made the home of Justus, a Gentile, his centre of activity. After Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed the Gospel, many more Corinthians took the courageous step of believing and receiving baptism.

God's message to Paul in a vision was intended to encourage him not to fear, but to speak freely. God promised that he would not be harmed.

He foretold a strong response to the Gospel.

Paul faced some tense moments when the Jews rose up against him, but God worked through Gallio to moderate their hostility.

Paul's travels and ministry took him to Syria with Aquila and Priscilla.

After visiting Ephesus, he left Aquila and Priscilla there and went on to Caesarea and then to Antioch, ministering to churches and holding forth the Gospel message.

## **Principles and Applications**

### **Serving with Others**

1. Believers find inspiration and spiritual support among other believers (18:1-2). When we travel today, we find a kindred spirit in fellow believers we encounter in places we visit. This common bond in Christ, unity of conviction, and sharing of "mutual woes" provides joy and spiritual strength.

2. Christians recognize the strength and refuge of a godly home in a corrupt society (18: 1-3). Aquila and Priscilla's home was a spiritual oasis to which Paul could retreat from the vexing ungodliness he encountered this city. Every Christian home should provide such a refuge for each member of the family and all others who may enter the door. We must diligently guard our homes from the inroads of communication technology, modern atheistic psychology, including its "Christian" forms, and cheap religion, which caters to the flesh.

3. Christians maintain vocations consistent with and subservient to a

life of faith and service (18:3). We should choose occupations that complement our witness and sufficiently free us for service to the Lord and the church. We must not shun the lowly tasks nor hard physical labour. We must avoid all business involvements that would jeopardize our pilgrim-and-stranger lifestyle.

4. Believers are faithful in witnessing to people of all classes and walks of life (18:4). All classes of people need the Gospel because “there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Romans 3:12). We should never bypass anyone, thinking that they do not need the Gospel or are unlikely to see their need of it.

5. Christians are moved by the spiritual needs around them, regardless of the response (18:5-8). God does not hold us responsible for how people respond to the Gospel. He commands us to sow the seed. We continue to reach out even though some reject the message and some actively oppose us.

### **Teaching the Gentiles**

6. Followers of Christ are sensitive to His leading (18:9-11). We too can claim the promise the Lord made to Paul: “I am with thee” (18:10).

When we engage in church work, we can go with assurance that God is leading us. When our hearts are in tune with God, we will love the people Christ died to save and will seek to bring them to salvation.

7. Believers are eager to seize opportunities for defending the Gospel (18:12-14). In the midst of uprising and opposition from the Jews, Paul was ready to speak in defense of the Gospel. We can use opposition as a springboard for declaring our faith. When people question why we do not have television, do not take part in community entertainment events, or do not use the Internet, we see it as an opportunity to explain our beliefs in light of the Scriptures.

### **Encouraging the Brethren**

8. Christians do not allow opposition to deter them from their calling (18:18). Paul stayed in Corinth, not letting Jewish opposition force him to withdraw. Truly Paul did not count his own life too dear to lose for the sake of the Gospel. He declared, “I am set for the defence of the gospel” (Philippians 1:17). We can stand in confidence because Jesus gives the power to stand.

9. Christians are loyal to God and faithful to their commitments (18:18-21). The stresses and hardships of life weigh upon us at times.

Satan and those he uses to deter us from our mission try hard to get us to give up our efforts and neglect our commitments. God gives grace at such times in added measure so that we can endure.

11. The faithful maintain a close relationship with the church (18:22). Our connection to the local church and with saints in other places is vital to our own faithfulness and stability. The example of faithfulness we observe in fellow believers inspires us to be strong and courageous.

### **Important Teachings**

1. Believers find inspiration and spiritual support among other believers (18:1-2).
2. Christians recognize the strength and refuge of a godly home in a corrupt society (18:1-3).
3. Christians maintain vocations consistent with and subservient to a life of faith and service (18:3).
4. Believers are faithful in witnessing to people of all classes and walks of life (18:4).
5. Christians are moved by the spiritual needs around them, regardless of the response (18:5-8).
6. Followers of Christ are sensitive to His leading (18:9-11).
7. Believers are eager to seize opportunities for defending the Gospel (18:12-14).
8. Christians do not allow opposition to deter them from their calling (18:18).
9. Christians are loyal to God and faithful to their commitments (18:18-21).
10. The faithful maintain a close relationship with the church (18:22).

### **Answers to Questions**

1. How did Paul's association with Aquila and Priscilla enhance his ministry?

They were familiar with persecution for their faith. Having like occupations was also an asset. Their home gave Paul a place to rest from his ministering activities and receive counsel and encouragement from fellow believers.

2. Why was Paul's willingness to engage in manual labour an opportunity to demonstrate the Gospel before the people of Corinth?

It enabled him to minister to them without becoming a financial liability. He could exemplify diligence and thrift. He could show how Christianity affects the way one conducts his business affairs.

3. What considerations should guide us in choosing an occupation?

We should choose work that meets man's necessities rather than his desire for entertainment or luxury. The work environment should be such that it does not pose a spiritual threat. The time spent working should not crowd out our involvement in the activities of the local congregation.

4. How did God's promise to be with Paul encourage him in his work?

God's presence and aid to Paul were not dependent on the number of persons who responded to the Gospel. Paul received courage, knowing that God's power in his life would make his work effective. He was assured of God's protection from harm.

5. How can we help new Christians to understand the concept of discipleship?

We must teach them that doing what Jesus taught is just as necessary as believing His teachings. It is important that we follow Jesus' example in the way we relate to those who oppose us. A life of constancy and consistency will hold steady in the midst of changing times.

6. In what ways can we defend the Gospel when some actively oppose it?

We should give a clear, understandable message, and not adjust it to please those who think and believe otherwise. Remaining calm and composed when opposers become angry or argumentative is possible when we remember that the message we give is not ours, but God's.

7. Why was it important for Paul to keep his commitments?

Onlookers expected him to do what he had said he would do. Keeping his vows gave credibility to his witness for the Lord. His hearers were more likely to accept the Gospel message from one who was trustworthy in all of life.

8. What benefits do we derive from our association with fellow believers?

We can encourage them by our presence and by our words. They can do the same for us. The faithful example of our brethren gives us a pattern to follow.

## **Summarizing the Lesson**

Paul's witness for the Lord was not limited to preaching the Gospel in word. His personal obedience to Christ in his life each day showed the genuineness of the Gospel's power to transform him from a life of rebellion to a life submitted and committed to God.

Paul's courage in spite of opposition makes him a worthy pattern for us to follow. Nothing moved him from his calling or caused him to detour from his purpose.

## **Research Guide**

1. Using a Bible dictionary, read about Corinth to glean an understanding of the spiritual needs of the people there.
2. Note how the household of Stephanas, whom Paul baptized (1 Corinthians 1:16), followed his example, dedicating themselves to the ministry of the saints (1 Corinthians 16:15-18).