

# ACTS

## Chapter 18

### *In Corinth*

After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.<sup>2</sup> There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them,<sup>3</sup> and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them.<sup>4</sup> Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.<sup>5</sup> When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.<sup>a 6</sup> But when the Jews opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am clear of my responsibility. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”<sup>7</sup> Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God.<sup>8</sup> Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.<sup>9</sup> One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent.<sup>10</sup> For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.”<sup>11</sup> So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.<sup>12</sup> While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him into court.<sup>13</sup> “This man,” they charged, “is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law.”<sup>14</sup> Just as Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to the Jews, “If you Jews were making a complaint about some misdemeanor or serious crime, it would be reasonable for me to listen to you.<sup>15</sup> But since it involves questions about words and names and your own law—settle the matter yourselves. I will not be a judge of such things.”<sup>16</sup> So he had them ejected from the court.<sup>17</sup> Then they all turned on Sosthenes the synagogue ruler and beat him in front of the court. But Gallio showed no concern whatever.

**18:1** *went to Corinth.* Either by land along the isthmus (a distance of about 50 miles) or by sea from Piraeus, the port of Athens, to Cenchrea, on the eastern shore of the isthmus of Corinth. See Introduction to 1 Corinthians: The City of Corinth; see also map of “Corinth”. – The most commercial of the cities of ancient Greece. Corinth was perfectly situated on an isthmus to control all land traffic moving east and west. (LL) – Was notorious for its sexual immorality. (PBC)

**18:2** *Pontus.* In the northeastern region of Asia Minor, a province lying along the Black Sea between Bithynia and Armenia (see 2:9).

*Priscilla.* The diminutive form of Prisca. Since no mention is made of a conversion and since a partnership is established in work (see v. 3), it is likely that they were already

Christians. They may have been converted in Rome by those returning from Pentecost or by others at a later time.

*Claudius*. Emperor of Rome (A.D. 41–54).

*ordered all the Jews to leave Rome*. Recorded in Suetonius (*Claudius*, 25). The expulsion order was given, Suetonius writes, because of “their [the Jews’] continual tumults instigated by Chrestus” (a common misspelling of “Christ”). If “Chrestus” refers to Christ, the riots obviously were “about” him rather than led “by” him.

*all the Jews*. † No doubt hyperbole (exaggeration), for Suetonius’ Latin may be translated “the Jews who were constantly causing tumult”—i.e., the leaders among the very large Jewish population in Rome, both the unconverted Jews and the Jewish Christians, who may have been exceedingly zealous in their missionary endeavors.

**18:3** *tentmaker*. † Paul would have been taught this trade as a youth. It was the Jewish custom to provide manual training for sons, whether rich or poor. The term could refer also to canvas sails and large ropes (hawsers) for ships, as Paul’s hometown, Tarsus, was 10 miles from the Mediterranean on the Cydnus River.

**18:4** *synagogue*. See note on 13:14.

**18:5** *Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia*. Paul instructed these two to come to him at Athens (17:15). Evidently they did (1Th 3:1), but they may have been sent back to Macedonia almost immediately to check on the churches—perhaps Silas to Philippi and Timothy to Thessalonica. – From 1 Thessalonians 3:1 we gather that Silas and Timothy had joined Paul in Athens, but that then he sent them back to Macedonia because the churches there needed them. Now they joined Paul in Corinth. From the fact that Paul could spend all his time preaching after they arrived we gather that they brought funds from Macedonia to support his gospel work in Corinth. (PBC)

**18:6** CLEAR OF MY RESPONSIBILITY – The guilt for their unbelief was on them for refusing to hear, not on him for withholding the message. (PBC)

**18:7** *Titius Justus*. Titius was a common Roman name. Justus is used to distinguish him from the Titus of 2Co 2:13; 7:13–14; 8:16, 23.

*worshiper of God*. Like Titus, an uncircumcised Gentile, but attending the synagogue.

**18:8** *Crispus*. Paul baptized him (1Co 1:14).

*synagogue ruler*. See note on 13:15.

*believed and were baptized*. † The response to the gospel, a response occurring daily, as the tense of the Greek verbs indicates.

**18:9** *in a vision*. Paul had seen the Lord in a resurrection body at his conversion (9:4–6; 1Co 15:8) and in the temple at Jerusalem in a trance (22:17–18). Now he sees him in a vision (see 23:11).

**18:11** *a year and a half*. During this time he may also have taken the gospel to the neighboring districts of Achaia (2Co 1:1). – During this time he also wrote his letter to the Galatians and the two letters to the Thessalonians. (PBC)

**18:12** *Gallio*. The brother of Seneca, the philosopher, who was the tutor of Nero. Gallio was admired as a man of exceptional fairness and calmness. From an inscription found at Delphi, it is known that Gallio was proconsul of Achaia in A.D. 51–52. This information enables us to date Paul’s visit to Corinth on his second journey as well as his writing of the Thessalonian letters.

**18:13** *contrary to the law*.† The Jews were claiming that Paul was advocating a religion not recognized by Roman law as Judaism was. If he had been given the opportunity to speak, he could have argued that the gospel he was preaching was the faith of his fathers (see 24:14–15; 26:6–7) and thus authorized by Roman law. But Gallio realized that the bone of contention was Jewish law, not Roman law, and therefore he refused to recognize the charge brought against Paul (see vv. 14–15).

**18:15** **SETTLE THE MATTER YOURSELF** – In the providence of God, the indifferent attitude of powerful men like Gallio made it possible for the gospel to spread with little opposition from the Roman government. (PBC)

**18:17** *they all turned on Sosthenes*.† It is not clear whether the Greeks beat Sosthenes, seeing the occasion as an opportunity to vent their feelings against the Jews, or the Jews beat their own synagogue ruler because he was unsuccessful in presenting their case, or the Roman military attendants beat the synagogue ruler when he refused to accept Gallio’s judgment and leave the courtroom. A Sosthenes is included with Paul in the writing of 1 Corinthians (1:1). Perhaps he was the second ruler of the synagogue at Corinth to become a Christian, probably in response to the preaching of Apollos, Paul’s successor at Corinth (see v. 8).

### *Priscilla, Aquila and Apollos*

**<sup>18</sup> Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchrea because of a vow he had taken. <sup>19</sup> They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. <sup>20</sup> When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. <sup>21</sup> But as he left, he promised, “I will come back if it is God’s will.” Then he set sail from Ephesus. <sup>22</sup> When he landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church and then went down to Antioch. <sup>23</sup> After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples. <sup>24</sup> Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. <sup>25</sup> He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor<sup>a</sup> and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. <sup>26</sup> He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and**

**Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.<sup>27</sup> When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. On arriving, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed.<sup>28</sup> For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.**

**18:18** *Priscilla and Aquila.* The order of the names used here (but cf. v. 2) may indicate the prominent role of Priscilla or her higher social position (see Ro 16:3; 2Ti 4:19). – The fact that Luke mentions Priscilla first in this instance (18:18) – and again in 18:26 and Romans 16:3 – may indicate the prominent role she and other women played in early Christianity. (LL)

*a vow he had taken.* Grammatically this could refer to Aquila, but the emphasis on Paul and his activity makes Paul more probable. It was probably a temporary Nazirite vow (see Nu 6:1–21). Different vows were frequently taken to express thanks for deliverance from grave dangers. Shaving the head marked the end of a vow.

**18:19** *Ephesus.* Leading commercial city of Asia Minor, the capital of provincial Asia and the warden of the temple of Artemis (Diana). See Introduction to Ephesians: The City of Ephesus; see also map of “Ephesus” there.

*Paul left Priscilla and Aquila.* They would give valuable aid upon Paul’s return, providing advice as to where and how the work there could be started.

*synagogue.* See note on 13:14.

**18:22** *greeted the church.* Could refer to a congregation in Caesarea, but the explanation that “he went up” makes it more likely that it was the church in Jerusalem, some 2,500 feet above sea level.

**18:23** See map No. 11 at the end of the Study Bible.

*region of Galatia and Phrygia.* The same route he had taken when starting on his second missionary journey, but in the reverse order (16:6). The use of the phrase may indicate the southern part of Galatia in the Phrygian area (see note on 16:6).

**18:24** *Alexandria.* In Egypt. It was the second most important city in the Roman empire and had a large Jewish population.

**18:25** *baptism of John.* It was not in the name of Jesus (see also 19:2–4). Apollos knew something about Jesus, but basically he, like John, was still looking forward to the coming of the Messiah. His baptism was based on repentance rather than on faith in the finished work of Christ. – The most popular Greek translation of the OT, the Septuagint, had been produced in Alexandria. Apollos had not yet gotten to know how those prophecies were fulfilled. He was still, in a sense, an OT believer. (PBC)

**18:26** **EXPLAINED TO HIM** – To tell him the complete story of what Jesus did to save sinners. Apollos, a learned man, was not too proud to receive instruction from the tentmaker and his wife. Most likely, Priscilla is mentioned first because she was the more apt teacher of the husband and wife team. (PBC)

**18:27** *Achaia*. The Roman province with Corinth as its capital.

WROTE TO THE DISCIPLES – The letter of recommendation which the brothers in Ephesus sent to the disciples in Achaia certified that Apollos was qualified to help in the gospel work in Greece. The disciples would find him reliable and able. (PBC)

GREAT HELP...HAD BELIEVED – Luke reminds us in verse 27 that even believing is by God's grace and that believers still need help from God's word to grow in faith. We always need the reminder. (PBC)