

CHAPTER 18

In this chapter we have,

- I.** Paul's coming to Corinth, his private converse with Aquila and Priscilla, and his public reasonings with the Jews, from whom, when they rejected him, he turned to the Gentiles (v. 1-6).
- II.** The great success of his ministry there, and the encouragement Christ gave him in a vision to continue his labours there, in hopes of further success (v. 7-11).
- III.** The molestations which after some time he met with there from the Jews, which he got pretty well through by the coldness of Gallio, the Roman governor, in the cause (v. 12-17).
- IV.** The progress Paul made through many countries, after he had continued long at Corinth, for the edifying and watering of the churches which he had founded and planted, in which circuit he made a short visit to Jerusalem (v. 18-23).
- V.** An account of Apollo's improvement in knowledge, and of his usefulness in the church (v. 24-28).

~~481~~ ACTS 18:1-6

PAUL AT CORINTH

We do not find that Paul was much persecuted at Athens, nor that he was driven thence by any ill usage, as he was from those places where the Jews had or could make any interest; but this reception at Athens being cold, and little prospect of doing good there, he departed from Athens, leaving the care of those there who believed with Dionysius; and thence he came to Corinth, where he was now instrumental in planting a church that became on many accounts considerable. Corinth was the chief city of Achaia, now a province of the empire, a rich and splendid city. *Non cuivis homini contingit adire Corinthum* — *It is not permitted every man to see Corinth.* The country thereabouts at this day is called *the Morea*. Now here we have,

I. Paul working for his living, v. 2, 3.

1. Though he was bred a scholar, yet he was master of a handicraft trade. He was a tent-maker, an upholsterer; he made tents for the use of soldiers and shepherds, of cloth or stuff, or (as some say tents were then generally made) of leather or skins, as the outer covering of the tabernacle. Hence to live in tents was to live *sub pellibus* — *under skins*. Dr. Lightfoot shows that it was the custom of the Jews to bring up their children to some trade, yea, though they gave them learning or estates. Rabbi Judah says, “He that teaches not his son a trade is as if he taught him to be a thief.” And another says, “He that has a trade in his hand is as a vineyard that is fenced.” An honest trade, by which a man may get his bread, is not to be looked upon by any with contempt. Paul, though a Pharisee, and bred up at the feet of Gamaliel, yet, having in his youth learned to make tents, did not by disuse lose the art.

2. Though he was entitled to a maintenance from the churches he had planted, and from the people to whom he preached, yet he worked at his calling to get bread, which is more to his praise who did not ask for supplies than to theirs who did not supply him unasked, knowing what straits he was reduced to. See how humble Paul was, and wonder that so great a man could stoop so low; but he had learned condescension of his Master, who came not to be ministered to, but to minister. See how industrious he was, and how willing to take pains. He that had so much excellent work to do with his mind, yet, when there was occasion, did not think it below him to work with his hands. Even those that are redeemed from the curse of the law are not exempt from that sentence, *In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread*. See how careful Paul was to recommend his ministry, and to prevent prejudices against it, even the most unjust and unreasonable; he therefore maintained himself with his own labour that he might not make the gospel of Christ *burdensome*, [☞]2 Corinthians 11:7, etc.; [☞]2 Thessalonians 3:8, 9.

3. Though we may suppose he was master of his trade, yet he did not disdain to work at journey-work: He *wrought with Aquila and Priscilla*, who *were of that calling*, so that he got no more than day-wages, a bare subsistence. Poor tradesmen must be thankful if their callings bring them in a maintenance for themselves and their families, though they cannot do as the rich merchants that raise estates by their callings.

4. Though he was himself a great apostle, yet he chose to work with Aquila and Priscilla, because he found them to be very intelligent in the things of God, as appears afterwards (v. 26), and he owns that they had been his *helpers in Christ Jesus*, ^{<516>}Romans 16:3. This is an example to those who are going to service to seek for those services in which they may have the best help for their souls. Choose to work with those that are likely to be helpers in Christ Jesus. It is good to be in company and to have conversation with those that will further us in the knowledge of Christ, and to put ourselves under the influence of such as are resolved that they will serve the Lord. Concerning this Aquila we are here told,

(1.) That he was a Jew, but born in Pontus, v. 2. Many of the Jews of the dispersion were seated in that country, as appears ^{<611>}1 Peter 1:1.

(2.) That he was lately come from Italy to Corinth. It seems he often changed his habitation; this is not the world we can propose ourselves a settlement in.

(3.) That the reason of his leaving Italy was because by a late edict of the emperor Claudius Caesar all Jews were banished from Rome; for the Jews were generally hated, and every occasion was taken to put hardship and disgrace upon them. God's heritage was as a *speckled bird, the birds round about were against her*, ^{<247>}Jeremiah 12:9. Aquila, though a Christian, was banished because he had been a Jew; and the Gentiles had such confused notions of the thing that they could not distinguish between a Jew and a Christian. Suetonius, in the life of Claudius, speaks of this decree in the ninth year of his reign, and says, The reason was because the Jews were *a turbulent people — assiduo tumultuantes*; and that it was *impulsore Christo — upon the account of Christ*; some zealous for him, others bitter against him, which occasioned great heats, such as gave umbrage to the government, and provoked the emperor, who was a timorous jealous man, to order them all to be gone. If Jews persecute Christians, it is not strange if heathens persecute them both.

II. We have here Paul preaching to the Jews, and dealing with them to bring them to the faith of Christ, both the native *Jews and the Greeks*, that is, those that were more or less proselyted to the Jewish religion, and frequented their meetings.

1. He *reasoned with them in the synagogue publicly every sabbath*. See in what way the apostles propagated the gospel, not by force and violence, by

fire and sword, not by demanding an implicit consent, but by fair arguing; they drew with the cords of a man, gave a reason for what they said, and gave a liberty to object against it, having satisfactory answers ready. God invites us to come and reason with him (^{<23118>}Isaiah 1:18), and challenges sinners to *produce their cause, and bring forth their strong reasons*, ^{<23421>}Isaiah 41:21. Paul was a rational as well as a scriptural preacher.

2. *He persuaded them* — *epeithe*. It denotes,

(1.) The urgency of his preaching. He did not only dispute argumentatively with them, but he followed his arguments with affectionate persuasions, begging of them for God's sake, for their own soul's sake, for their children's sake, not to refuse the offer of salvation made to them. Or,

(2.) The good effect of his preaching. He persuaded them, that is, he prevailed with them; so some understand it. *In sententiam suam adducebat* — *He brought them over to his own opinion*. Some of them were convinced by his reasonings, and yielded to Christ.

3. He was yet more earnest in this matter when his fellow-labourers, his seconds, came up with him (v. 5): *When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia*, and had brought him good tidings from the churches there, and were ready to assist him here, and strengthened his hands, then Paul was more than before *pressed in spirit*, which made him more than ever pressing in his preaching. He was grieved for the obstinacy and infidelity of his countrymen the Jews, was more intent than ever upon their conversion, and the *love of Christ constrained him* to it (^{<4114>}2 Corinthians 5:14): it is the word that is used here, it *pressed him in spirit* to it. And, being thus pressed, he *testified to the Jews* with all possible solemnity and seriousness, as that which he was perfectly well assured of himself, and attested to them as a *faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus is the Christ*, the Messiah promised to the fathers and expected by them.

III. We have him here abandoning the unbelieving Jews, and turning from them to the Gentiles, as he had done in other places, v. 6.

1. Many of the Jews, and indeed the most of them, persisted in their contradiction to the gospel of Christ, and would not yield to the strongest reasonings nor the most winning persuasions; they *opposed themselves and blasphemed*; they *set themselves in battle array* (so the word signifies)

against the gospel; they joined hand in hand to stop the progress of it. They resolved they would not believe it themselves, and would do all they could to keep others from believing it. They could not argue against it, but what was wanting in reason they made up in ill language: they *blasphemed*, spoke reproachfully of Christ, and in him of God himself, as ^{<413>}Revelation 13:5, 6. To justify their infidelity, they broke out into downright blasphemy.

2. Paul hereupon declared himself discharged from them, and left them to perish in their unbelief. He that was *pressed in spirit to testify to them* (v. 5), when they opposed that testimony, and persisted in their opposition, was pressed in spirit to testify against them (v. 6), and his zeal herein also he showed by a sign: he *shook his raiment*, shaking off the dust from it (as before they *shook off the dust from their feet*, ^{<415>}Acts 13:51), for a testimony against them. thus he cleared himself from them, but threatened the judgments of God against them. As Pilate by washing his hands signified the devolving of the guilt of Christ's blood from himself upon the Jews, so Paul by shaking his raiment signified what he said, if possible to affect them with it.

(1.) He had done his part, and was clean from the blood of their souls; he had, like a faithful watchman, given them warning, and thereby had *delivered his soul*, though he could not prevail to deliver theirs. He had tried all methods to work upon them, but all in vain, so that if they perish in their unbelief their blood is not to be required at his hands; here, and ^{<416>}Acts 20:26, he plainly refers to ^{<358>}Ezekiel 33:8, 9. It is very comfortable to a minister to have the testimony of his conscience for him, that he has faithfully discharged his trust by warning sinners.

(2.) They would certainly perish if they persisted in their unbelief, and the blame would lie wholly upon themselves: “*Your blood be upon your own heads*, you will be your own destroyers, your nation will be ruined in this world, and particular persons will be ruined in the other world, and *you alone shall bear it.*” If any thing would frighten them at last into a compliance with the gospel, surely this would.

3. Having given them over, yet he does not give over his work. Though Israel be not gathered, Christ and his gospel shall be glorious: *Henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles*; and the Jews cannot complain, for they had the first offer, and a fair one, made to them. The guests that were first invited will not come, and the provision must not be lost; guests must be had

therefore *from the highways and the hedges*. “We would have gathered the Jews (<4257>Matthew 23:37), would have *healed them* (<2519>Jeremiah 51:9), and they would not; but Christ must not be a head without a body, nor a foundation without a building, and therefore, if they will not, we must try whether others will.” Thus the fall and diminishing of the Jews became the riches of the Gentiles; and Paul said this to their faces, not only because it was what he could justify, but to *provoke them to jealousy*, <5112>Romans 11:12, 14.

<4817>ACTS 18:7-11

PAUL AT CORINTH

Here we are told,

I. That Paul changed his quarters. Christ directed his disciples,, disciples, when he sent them forth, not to *go from house to house* (<2407>Luke 10:7), but there might be occasion to do it, as Paul did here. He departed out of the synagogue, being driven out by the perverseness of the unbelieving Jews, and he *entered into a certain man's house, named Justus*, v. 7. It should seem, he went to this man's house, not to lodge, for he continued with Aquila and Priscilla, but to preach. When the Jews would not let him go on peaceably with his work in their meeting, this honest man opened his doors to him, and told him he should be welcome to preach there; and Paul accepted the proposal. It was not the first time that God's ark had taken up its lodging in a private house. When Paul could not have liberty to preach in the synagogue, he preached in a house, without any disparagement to his doctrine. But observe the account of this man and his house.

1. The man was next door to a Jew; he was one that *worshipped God*; he was not an idolater, though he was a Gentile, but was a worshipper of the God of Israel, and him only, as Cornelius. That Paul might give the less offence to the Jews, though he had abandoned them, he set up his meeting in this man's house. Even when he was under a necessity of breaking off from them to turn to the Gentiles, yet he would study to oblige them.

2. The house was next door to the synagogue, it *joined close to it*, which some perhaps might interpret as done with design to draw people from the

synagogue to the meeting; but I rather think it was done in charity, to show that he would come as near to them as he could, and was ready to return to them if they were but willing to receive his message, and would not contradict and blaspheme as they had done.

II. That Paul presently saw the good fruit of his labours, both among Jews and Gentiles.

1. *Crispus* a Jew, an eminent one, the *chief ruler of the synagogue*, *believed on the Lord Jesus, with all his house*, v. 8. It was for the honour of the gospel that there were some rulers, and persons of the first rank both in church and state, that embraced it. This would leave the Jews inexcusable, that the ruler of their synagogue, who may be supposed to have excelled the rest in knowledge of the scriptures and zeal for their religion, believed the gospel, and yet they opposed and blasphemed it. Not only he, but his house, believed, and, probably, were baptized with him by Paul, ~~¶~~ 1 Corinthians 1:14.

2. Many of the Corinthians, who were Gentiles (and some of them persons of bad character, as appears, ~~¶~~ 1 Corinthians 6:11, *such were some of you*), *hearing, believed, and were baptized*. First, they heard, for *faith comes by hearing*. Some perhaps came to hear Paul under some convictions of conscience that the way they were in was not right; but it is probable that the most came only for curiosity, because it was a new doctrine that was preached; but, hearing, *they believed*, by the power of God working upon them; and, *believing*, they were *baptized*, and so fixed for Christ, took upon them the profession of Christianity, and became entitled to the privileges of Christians.

III. That Paul was encouraged by a vision to go on with his work at Corinth (v. 9): *The Lord Jesus spoke to Paul in the night by a vision*; when he was musing on his work, *communing with his own heart upon his bed*, and considering whether he should continue here or no, what method he should take here, and what probability there was of doing good, then Christ appeared very seasonably to him, and *in the multitude of his thoughts within him* delighted his soul with divine consolations.

1. He renewed his commission and charge to preach the gospel: “*Be not afraid of the Jews*; though they are very outrageous, and perhaps the more enraged by the conversion of the chief ruler of their synagogue. Be not afraid of the magistrates of the city, for they have no power against thee

but what is given them from above. It is the cause of heaven thou art pleading, do it boldly. *Be not afraid of their words, nor dismayed at their looks; but speak, and hold not thy peace; let slip no opportunity of speaking to them; cry aloud, spare not.* Do not hold thy peace from speaking for fear of them, nor hold thy peace in speaking” (if I may so say); “do not speak shyly and with caution, but plainly and fully and with courage. Speak out; use all the liberty of spirit that becomes an ambassador for Christ.”

2. He assured him of his presence with him, which was sufficient to animate him, and put life and spirit into him: “*Be not afraid, for I am with thee, to protect thee, and bear thee out, and to deliver thee from all thy fears; speak, and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee, to own what thou sayest, to work with thee, and to confirm the word by signs following.*” The same promise that ratified the general commission (⁴¹⁸⁹Matthew 28:19, 20), *Lo I am with you always*, is here repeated. Those that have Christ with them need not to fear, and ought not to shrink.

3. He gave him a warrant of protection to save him harmless: “*No man shall set on thee to hurt thee; thou shalt be delivered out of the hands of wicked and unreasonable men and shalt not be driven hence, as thou wast from other places, by persecution.*” He does not promise that no man should set on him (for the next news we hear is that he is set upon, and *brought to the judgment-seat*, v. 12), but, “*No man shall set on thee to hurt thee; the remainder of their wrath shall be restrained; thou shalt not be beaten and imprisoned here, as thou wast at Philippi.*” Paul met with coarser treatment at first than he did afterwards, and was now *comforted according to the time wherein he had been afflicted*. Trials shall not last always, ⁴⁹⁶⁰Psalm 66:10-12. Or we may take it more generally: “*No man shall set on thee, **tu kakosai se** — to do evil to thee; whatever trouble they may give thee, there is no real evil in it. They may kill thee, but they cannot hurt thee; for I am with thee,*” ⁴⁹²⁰Psalm 23:4; ⁴⁹¹⁰Isaiah 41:10.

4. He gave him a prospect of success: “*For I have much people in this city. Therefore no man shall prevail to obstruct thy work, therefore I will be with thee to own thy work, and therefore do thou go on vigorously and cheerfully in it; for there are many in this city that are to be effectually called by thy ministry, in whom thou shalt see of the travail of thy soul.*” *Laos esti moi polys* — *There is to me a great people here.* The Lord knows those that are his, yea, and those that shall be his; for it is by his

work upon them that they become his, and *known unto him are all his works*. “I have them, though they yet know me not, though yet they are let captive by Satan at his will; for the Father has given them to me, to be a seed to serve me; I have them written in the book of life; I have their names down, and of all that were given me I will lose none; I have them, for I am sure to have them;” *whom he did predestinate, those he called*. In *this city*, though it be a very profane wicked city, full of impurity, and the more so for a temple of Venus there, to which there was a great resort, yet in this heap, that seems to be all chaff, there is wheat; in this ore, that seems to be all dross, there is gold. Let us not despair concerning any place, when even in Corinth Christ had *much people*.

IV. That upon this encouragement he made a long stay there (v. 11): He *continued at Corinth a year and six months*, not to take his ease, but to follow his work, *teaching the word of God among them*; and, it being a city flocked to from all parts, he had opportunity there of preaching the gospel to strangers, and sending notice of it thence to other countries. He staid so long,

1. For the bringing in of those that were without. Christ had many people there, and by the power of his grace he could have had them all converted in one month or week, as at the first preaching of the gospel, when thousands were enclosed at one cast of the net; but God works variously. The people Christ has at Corinth must be called in by degrees, some by one sermon, others by another; another; *we see not yet all things put under Christ*. Let Christ's ministers go on in their duty, though their work be not done all at once; nay, though it be done but a little at a time.

2. For the building up of those that were within. Those that are converted have still need to be *taught the word of God*, and particular need at Corinth to be taught it by Paul himself; for no sooner was the good seed sown in that field than the enemy came and sowed tares, the false apostles, those deceitful workers, of whom Paul in his epistles to the Corinthians complains so much. When the hands of Jewish persecutors were tied, who were professed enemies to the gospel, Paul had a more vexatious trouble created him, and the church more mischievous damage done it, by the tongue of judaizing preachers, who, under colour of the Christian name, undermined the very foundations of Christianity. Soon after Paul came to Corinth, it is supposed, he wrote the first epistle to the Thessalonians, which in order of time was the first of all the epistles he wrote by divine

inspiration; and the second epistle to the same church was written not long after. Ministers may be serving Christ, and promoting the great ends of their ministry, by writing good letters, as well as by preaching good sermons.

⌄ ACTS 18:12-17

PAUL AT CORINTH

We have here an account of some disturbance given to Paul and his friends at Corinth, but no great harm done, nor much hindrance given to the work of Christ there.

I. Paul is accused by the Jews before the Roman governor, v. 12, 13. The governor was *Gallio, deputy of Achaia*, that is, proconsul; for Achaia was a consular province of the empire. This Gallio was elder brother to the famous Seneca; in his youth he was called Novatus, but took the name of Gallio upon his being adopted into the family of Julius Gallio; he is described by Seneca, his brother, to be a man of great ingenuous and great probity, and a man of wonderful good temper; he was called *Dulcis Gallio* — *Sweet Gallio*, for his sweet disposition; and is said to have been universally beloved. Now observe,

1. How rudely Paul is apprehended, and brought before Gallio; *The Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul*. They were the ringleaders of all the mischief against Paul, and they entered into a confederacy to do him a mischief. They were unanimous in it: they came upon him *with one accord*; hand joined in hand to do this wickedness. They did it with violence and fury: *They made an insurrection* to the disturbance of the public peace, and hurried Paul away *to the judgment-seat*, and, for aught that appears, allowed him no time to prepare for his trial.

2. How falsely Paul is accused before Gallio (v. 13): *This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law*. They could not charge him with persuading men not to worship God at all, or to worship other gods ([⌄]Deuteronomy 13:2): but only to worship God in a way contrary to the law. The Romans allowed the Jews in their provinces the observance of their own law; and what then? Must those therefore be prosecuted as

criminals who worship God in any other way? Does their toleration include a power of imposition? But the charge was unjust; for their own law had in it a promise of a prophet whom God would raise up to them, and him they should hear. Now Paul persuaded them to believe in this prophet, who was come, and to hear him, which was according to the law; for he came not *to destroy the law, but to fulfil it*. The law relating to the temple-service those Jews at Corinth could not observe, because of their distance from Jerusalem, and there was no part of their synagogue-worship which Paul contradicted. Thus when people are taught to worship God in Christ, and to worship him in the Spirit, they are ready to quarrel, as if they were taught to worship him contrary to the law; whereas this is indeed perfective of the law.

II. Gallio, upon the first hearing, or rather without any hearing at all, dismisses the cause, and will not take any cognizance of it, v. 14, 15. Paul was going about to make his defence, and to show that he did not teach men to worship God contrary to the law; but the judge, being resolved not to pass any sentence upon this cause, would not give himself the trouble of examining it. Observe,

1. He shows himself very ready to do the part of a judge in any matter that it was proper for him to take cognizance of. He *said to the Jews*, that were the prosecutors, "*If it were a matter of wrong, or wicked lewdness, — if you could charge the prisoner with theft or fraud, with murder or rapine, or any act of immorality, — I should think myself bound to bear with you in your complaints, though they were clamorous and noisy;*" for the rudeness of the petitioners was no good reason, if their cause was just, why they should not have justice done them. It is the duty of magistrates to right the injured, and to animadvert upon the injurious; and, if the complaint be not made with all the decorum that might be, yet they should hear it out. But,

2. He will by no means allow them to make a complaint to him of a thing that was not within his jurisdiction (v. 15): "*If it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look you to it: end it among yourselves as you can, but I will be no judge of such matters; you shall neither burden my patience with the hearing of it, nor burden my conscience with giving judgment upon it;*" and therefore, when they were urgent and pressing to be heard, *he drove them from the judgment-seat* (v. 16), and ordered another cause to be called. Now,

(1.) Here was something right in Gallio's conduct, and praise-worthy — that he would not pretend to judge of things he did not understand; that he left the Jews to themselves in matters relating to their own religion, but yet would not let them, under pretence of that, run down Paul, and abuse him; or, at least, would not himself be the tool of their malice, to give judgment against him. He looked upon the matter to be not within his jurisdiction, and therefore would not meddle in it. But,

(2.) It was certainly wrong to speak so slightly of a law and religion which he might have known to be of God, and with which he ought to have acquainted himself. In what way God is to be worshipped, whether Jesus be the Messiah, whether the gospel be a divine revelation, were not *questions of words and names*, as he scornfully and profanely called them. They are questions of vast importance, and in which, if he had understood them himself aright, he would have seen himself nearly concerned. He speaks as if he boasted of his ignorance of the scriptures, and took a pride in it; as if it were below him to take notice of the law of God, or make any enquiries concerning it.

III. The abuse done to Sosthenes, and Gallio's unconcernedness in it, v. 17.

1. The parties put a great contempt upon the court, when *they took Sosthenes and beat him before the judgment-seat*. Many conjectures there are concerning this matter, because it is uncertain who this Sosthenes was, and who the Greeks were that abused him. It seems most probable that Sosthenes was a Christian, and Paul's particular friend, that appeared for him on this occasion, and probably had taken care of his safety, and conveyed him away, when Gallio dismissed the cause; so that, when they could not light on Paul, they fell foul on him who protected him. It is certain that there was one Sosthenes that was a friend of Paul, and well known at Corinth; it is likely he was a minister, for Paul calls him his brother, and joins him with himself in his first epistle to the church at Corinth (~~401~~ 1 Corinthians 1:1), as he does Timothy in his second, and it is probable that this was he; he is said to be a *ruler of the synagogue*, either joint-ruler with Crispus (v. 8), or a ruler of one synagogue, as Crispus was of another. As for the Greeks that abused him, it is very probable that they were either Hellenist Jews, or Jewish Greeks, those that joined with the Jews in opposing the gospel (v. 4, 6), and that the native Jews put them on to do it, thinking it would in them be less offensive. They were so enraged

against Paul that they beat Sosthenes; and so enraged against Gallio, because he would not countenance the prosecution, that they beat him before the judgment-seat, whereby they did, in effect, tell him that they cared not for him; if he would not be their executioner, they would be their own judges.

2. The court put no less a contempt upon the cause, and the persons too. But *Gallio cared for none of these things*. If by this be meant that he cared not for the affronts of bad men, it was commendable. While he steadily adhered to the laws and rules of equity, he might despise their contempts; but, if it be meant (as I think it is) that he concerned not himself for the abuses done to good men, it carries his indifference too far, and gives us but an ill character of him. Here is *wickedness done in the place of judgment* (which Solomon complains of, ^{<2186>}Ecclesiastes 3:16), and nothing done to discountenance and suppress it. Gallio, as a judge, ought to have protected Sosthenes, and restrained and punished the Greeks that assaulted him. For a man to be mobbed in the street or in the market, perhaps, may not be easily helped; but to be so in his court, the judgment-seat, the court sitting and not concerned at it, is an evidence that *truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter; for he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey*, ^{<2304>}Isaiah 59:14, 15. Those that see and hear of the sufferings of God's people, and have no sympathy with them, nor concern for them, do not pity and pray for the, it being all one to them whether the interests of religion sink or swim, are of the spirit of Gallio here, who, when a good man was abused before his face, *cared for none of these things*; like those that were *at ease in Zion, and were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph* (^{<3006>}Amos 6:6), like *the king and Haman, that sat down to drink when the city Shushan was perplexed*, ^{<1085>}Esther 3:15.

~~<4188>~~ ACTS 18:18-23

PAUL'S VISIT TO EPHESUS AND JERUSALEM

We have here Paul in motion, as we have had him at Corinth for some time at rest, but in both busy, very busy, in the service of Christ; if he sat still, if he went about, still it was to do good. Here is,

I. Paul's departure from Corinth, v. 18.

1. He did not go away till some time after the trouble he met with there; from other places he had departed when the storm arose, but not from Corinth, because there it had no sooner risen than it fell again. Some tell us that Gallio did privately countenance Paul, and took him into his favour, and that this occasioned a correspondence between Paul and Seneca, Gallio's brother, which some of the ancients speak of. *After this he tarried there yet a good while*, some think, beyond *the year and a half* mentioned, v. 11. While he found he laboured not in vain, he continued labouring.

2. When he went, he took leave of the brethren solemnly, and with much affection, with suitable comforts and counsels, and prayers at parting, commending what was good, reprovng what was otherwise, and giving them necessary cautions against the wiles of the false apostles; and his farewell sermon would leave impressions upon them.

3. He took *with him Priscilla and Aquila*, because they had a mind to accompany him; for they seemed disposed to remove, and not inclined to stay long at a place, a disposition which may arise from a good principle, and have good effects, and therefore ought not to be condemned in others, though it ought to be suspected in ourselves. There was a great friendship contracted between them and Paul, and therefore, when he went, they begged to go along with him.

4. At Cenchrea, which was hard by Corinth, the port where those that went to sea from Corinth took ship, either Paul or Aquila (for the original does not determine which) had his head shaved, to discharge himself from the vow of a Nazarite: *Having shorn his head at Cenchrea; for he had a vow*. Those that lived in Judea were, in such a case, bound to do it at the temple: but those who lived in other countries might do it in other places. The Nazarite's head was to be shaved when either his consecration was accidentally polluted, in which case he must begin again, or *when the days of his separation were fulfilled* (⁴⁰⁶Numbers 6:9; 13:18), which, we suppose, was the case here. Some throw it upon Aquila, who was a Jew (v. 2), and retained perhaps more of his Judaism than was convenient; but I see no harm in admitting it concerning Paul, for concerning him we must admit the same thing (⁴⁰⁷Acts 21:24, 26), not only in compliance for a time with the Jews, to whom he *became as a Jew* (⁴⁰⁸1 Corinthians 9:20), *that he might win upon them*, but because the vow of the Nazarites, though ceremonial, and as such ready to vanish away, had yet a great deal of

moral and very pious significance, and therefore was fit to die the last of all the Jewish ceremonies. The Nazarites are joined with the prophets (^{<3021>}Amos 2:11), and were very much *the glory of Israel* (^{<2407>}Lamentations 4:7), and therefore it is not strange if Paul bound himself for some time with the vow of a Nazarite from wine and strong drink, and from being trimmed, to recommend himself to the Jews; and from this he now discharged himself.

II. Paul's calling *at Ephesus*, which was the metropolis of the Lesser Asia, and a sea-port.

1. *There he left Aquila and Priscilla*; not only because they would be but burdensome to him in his journey, but because they might be serviceable to the interests of the gospel at Ephesus. Paul intended shortly to settle there for some time, and he left Aquila and Priscilla there in the mean time, for the same end as Christ sent his disciple before to every place where he himself would come, to prepare his way. Aquila and Priscilla might, by private conversation, being very intelligent judicious Christians, dispose the minds of many to give Paul, when he should come among them, a favourable reception, and to understand his preaching; therefore he calls them his *helpers in Christ Jesus*, ^{<5608>}Romans 16:3.

2. There he preached *to the Jews in their synagogue*; though he did but call there in his journey, yet he would not go without giving them a sermon. *He entered into the synagogue*, not as a hearer, but as a preacher, *for there he reasoned with the Jews*. Though he had abandoned the Jews at Corinth, who opposed themselves, and blasphemed, yet he did not, for their sakes, decline the synagogues of the Jews in other places, but still made the first offer of the gospel to them. We must not condemn a whole body or denomination of men, for the sake of some that conduct themselves ill.

3. The Jews at Ephesus were so far from driving Paul away that they courted his stay with them (v. 20): *They desired him to tarry longer with them*, to instruct them, in the gospel of Christ. These were more noble, and better bred, than those Jews at Corinth, and other places, and it was a sign that God had not quite cast away his people, but had a remnant among them.

4. Paul would not stay with them now: *He consented not; but bade them farewell*. He had further to go; he *must by all means keep this feast at*

Jerusalem; not that he thought himself bound in duty to it (he knew the laws of the feasts were no longer binding), but he had business t Jerusalem (whatever it was) which would be best done at the time of the feast, when there was a general rendezvous of all the Jews from all parts; which of the feasts it was we are not told, probably it was the passover, which was the most eminent.

5. He intimated his purpose, after this journey, to come and spend some time at Ephesus, being encouraged by their kind invitation to hope that he should do good among them. It is good to have opportunities in reserve, when one good work is over to have another to apply ourselves to: *I will return again to you*, but he inserts that necessary proviso, *if God will*. Our times are in God's hand; we purpose, but he disposes; and therefore we must make all our promises with submission to the will of God. *If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that. I will return again to you, if the Spirit suffer me* (~~4487~~ Acts 16:7); this was included in Paul's case; not only if providence permit, but if God do not otherwise direct my motions.

III. Paul's visit to Jerusalem; a short visit it was, but it served as a token of respect to that truly mother-church.

1. He came by sea to the port that lay next to Jerusalem. *He sailed from Ephesus* (v. 21), *and landed at Caesarea*, v. 22. He chose to go by sea, for expedition and for safety, and that he might *see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep*. Joppa had been the port for Jerusalem, but Herod having improved Caesarea, and the port at Joppa being dangerous, that was generally made use of.

2. He went *up, and saluted the church*, by which, I think, is plainly meant the church at Jerusalem, which is emphatically called *the church*, because there the Christian church began, ~~4488~~ Acts 15:4. Paul thought it requisite to show himself among them, that they might not think his success among them, that they might not think his success among the Gentiles had made him think himself either above them or estranged from them, or that the honour God had put upon him made him unmindful of the honour he owed to them. His going to salute the church at Jerusalem intimates,

(1.) That it was a very friendly visit that he made them, in pure kindness, to enquire into their state, and to testify his hearty good-will to them. Note, The increase of our new friends should not make us forget our old ones, but it should be a pleasure to good men, and good ministers, to revive

former acquaintance. The ministers at Jerusalem were constant residents, Paul was a constant itinerant; but he took care to keep up a good correspondence with them, that they might rejoice with him in his going out, and he might rejoice with them in their tents, and they might both congratulate and wish well to one another's comfort and success.

(2.) That it was but a short visit. He went *up, and saluted them*, perhaps *with the holy kiss*, and made no stay among them. It was designed but for a transient interview, and yet Paul undertook this long journey for that. This is not the world we are to be together in. God's people are *the salt of the earth*, dispersed and scattered; yet it is good to see one another sometimes, if it be but to see one another, that we may confirm mutual love, may the better keep up our spiritual communion with one another at a distance, and may long the more for that heavenly Jerusalem in which we hope to be together for ever.

IV. His return through those countries where he had formerly preached the gospel.

1. *He went and spent some time in Antioch*, among his old friends there, whence he was first sent out to preach among the Gentiles, ^{<411>}Acts 13:1. He went down to Antioch, to refresh himself with the sight and conversation of the ministers there; and a very good refreshment it is to a faithful minister to have for awhile the society of his brethren; for, *as iron sharpeneth iron, so doth a man the countenance of his friend*. Paul's coming to Antioch would bring to remembrance the former days, which would furnish him with matter for fresh thanksgiving.

2. *Thence he went over the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order*, where he had preached the gospel, and planted churches, which, though very briefly mentioned (^{<416>}Acts 16:6), was yet a glorious work, as appears by ^{<414>}Galatians 4:14, 15, where Paul speaks of his preaching the gospel to the Galatians at the first, and their receiving him *as an angel of God*. These country churches (for such they were [^{<412>}Galatians 1:2], and we read not of any city in Galatia where a church was) Paul visited *in order* as they lay, watering what he had been instrumental to plant, and *strengthening all the disciples*. His very coming among them, and owning them, were a great strengthening to them and their ministers. Paul's countenancing them was encouraging them; but that was not all: he preached that to them which strengthened them, which confirmed their

faith in Christ, their resolutions for Christ, and their pious affections to him. Disciples need to be strengthened, for they are compassed about with infirmity; ministers must do what they can to strengthen them, to strengthen them all, by directing them to Christ, and bringing them to live upon him, whose strength is perfected in their weakness, and who is himself their strength and song.

⌄ ACTS 18:24-28

THE CHARACTER OF APOLLOS

The sacred history leaves Paul upon his travels, and goes here to meet Apollos at Ephesus, and to give us some account of him, which was necessary to our understanding some passages in Paul's epistles.

I. Here is an account of his character, when he came to Ephesus.

1. He was *a Jew, born at Alexandria* in Egypt, but of Jewish parents; for there were abundance of Jews in that city, since the dispersion of the people, as it was foretold ([⌄]Deuteronomy 28:68): *The Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again.* His name was not *Apollo*, the name of one of the heathen gods, but *Apollos*, some think the same with *Apelles*, [⌄]Romans 16:10.

2. He was a man of excellent good parts, and well fitted for public service. He was *an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures* of the Old Testament, in the knowledge of which he was, as a Jew, brought up.

(1.) He had a great command of language: he was *an eloquent man*; he was *aner logios* — *a prudent man*, so some; *a learned man*, so others; *historiarum peritus* — *a good historian*, which is an excellent qualification for the ministry: he was one that could speak well, so it properly signifies; he was *an oracle of a man*; he was famous for speaking pertinently and closely, fully and fluently, upon any subject.

(2.) He had a great command of scripture-language, and this was the eloquence he was remarkable for. He *came to Ephesus*, being *mighty in the scriptures*, so the words are placed; having an excellent faculty of expounding scripture, he came to Ephesus, which was a public place, to trade with that talent, for the honour of God and the good of many. He was

not only ready in the scriptures, able to quote texts off-hand, and repeat them, and tell you where to find them (many of the carnal Jews were so, who were therefore said to have the *form of knowledge*, and *the letter of the law*); but he was *mighty in the scriptures*. He understood the sense and meaning of them, he knew how to make use of them and to apply them, how to reason out of the scriptures, and to reason strongly; a convincing, commanding, confirming power went along with all his expositions and applications of the scripture. It is probable he had given proof of his knowledge of the scriptures, and his abilities in them, in many synagogues of the Jews.

3. He was instructed in the way of the Lord; that is, he had some acquaintance with the doctrine of Christ, had obtained some general notions of the gospel and the principles of Christianity, *that Jesus is the Christ*, and *that prophet that should come into the world*; the first notice of this would be readily embraced by one that was so mighty in the scripture as Apollos was, and therefore understood *the signs of the times*. He was instructed, *katechemenos* — he was catechised (so the word is), either by his parents or by ministers; he was taught something of Christ and the way of salvation by him. Those that are to teach others must first be themselves taught the word of the Lord, not only to talk of it, but to walk in it. It is not enough to have our tongues tuned to the word of the Lord, but we must have our feet directed into the way of the Lord.

4. Yet he *knew only the baptism of John*; he was instructed in the gospel of Christ as far as John's ministry would carry him, and no further; he knew *the preparing of the way of the Lord by that voice crying in the wilderness*, rather than the way of the Lord itself. We cannot but think he had heard of Christ's death and resurrection, but he was not let into the mystery of them, had not had opportunity of conversing with any of the apostles since the pouring out of the Spirit; or he had himself been baptized *only with the baptism of John*, but was not baptized with the Holy Ghost, as the disciples were at the day of pentecost.

II. We have here the employment and improvement of his gifts at Ephesus; he came thither, seeking opportunities of doing and getting good, and he found both.

1. He there made a very good use of his gifts in public. He came, probably, recommended to the synagogue of the Jews as a fit man to be a teacher

there, and according to the light he had, and *the measure of the gift given to him*, he was willing to be employed (v. 25): *Being fervent in the Spirit, he spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord*. Though he had not the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, as the apostles had, he made use of the gifts he had; *for the dispensation of the Spirit*, whatever the measure of it is, *is given to every man to profit withal*. And our Savior, by a parable, designed to teach his ministers that though they had but one talent they must not bury that. We have seen how Apollos was qualified with a good head and a good tongue: he was *an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures*; he had laid in a good stock of useful knowledge, and had an excellent faculty of communicating it. Let us now see what he had further to recommend him as a preacher; and his example is recommended to the intimation of all preachers.

(1.) He was a lively affectionate preacher; as he had a good head, so he had a good heart; he was *fervent in Spirit*. He had in him a great deal of divine fire as well as divine light, was burning as well as shining. He was full of zeal for the glory of God, and the salvation of precious souls. This appeared both in his forwardness to preach when he was called to it by *the rulers of the synagogue*, and in his fervency in his preaching. He preached as one in earnest, and that had his heart in his work. What a happy composition was here! Many are fervent in spirit, but are weak in knowledge, in scripture-knowledge — have far to seek for proper words and are full of improper ones; and, on the other hand, many are eloquent enough, and mighty in the scriptures, and learned, and judicious, but they have no life or fervency. Here was a complete *man of God, thoroughly furnished for his work*; both eloquent and fervent, full both of divine knowledge and of divine affections.

(2.) He was an industrious laborious preacher. *He spoke and taught diligently*. He took pains in his preaching, what he delivered was elaborate; and he did not offer that to God, or to the synagogue, that either cost nothing or cost *him* nothing. He first worked it upon his own heart, and then laboured to impress it on those he preached to: *he taught diligently, akribos* — *accurately, exactly*; every thing he said was well-weighed.

(3.) He was an evangelical preacher. Though he knew only the baptism of John, yet that was the beginning of the gospel of Christ, and to that he kept close; for he taught the things of the Lord, of the Lord Christ, the things

that tended to make way for him, and to set him up. The things pertaining to the kingdom of the Messiah were the subjects he chose to insist upon; not the things of the ceremonial law, though those would be pleasing to his Jewish auditors; not the things of the Gentile philosophy, though he could have discoursed very well on those things; but the things of the Lord.

(4.) He was a courageous preacher: *He began to speak boldly in the synagogue*, as one who, having put confidence in God, did not fear the face of man; he spoke as one that knew the truth of what he said, and had no doubt of it, and that knew the worth of what he said and was not afraid to suffer for it; *in the synagogue*, where the Jews not only were present, but had power, there he preached the things of God, which he knew they were prejudiced against.

2. He there made a good increase of his gifts in private, not so much in study, as in conversation with *Aquila and Priscilla*. If Paul or some other apostle or evangelist had been at Ephesus, he would have instructed him; but, for want of better help, *Aquila and Priscilla* (who were tent-makers) *expounded to him the way of God more perfectly*. Observe,

(1.) Aquila and Priscilla heard him preach in the synagogue. Though in knowledge he was much inferior to them, yet, having excellent gifts for public service, they encouraged his ministry, by a diligent and constant attendance upon it. Thus young ministers, that are hopeful, should be countenanced by grown Christians, for it becomes them to fulfil all righteousness.

(2.) Finding him defective in his knowledge of Christianity, *they took him to them*, to lodge in the same house with them, and *expounded to him the way of God*, the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, *more perfectly*. They did not take occasion from what they observed of his deficiency either to despise him themselves, or to disparage him to others; did not call him a young raw preacher, not fit to come into a pulpit, but considered the disadvantages he had laboured under, as knowing only the baptism of John; and, having themselves got great knowledge in the truths of the gospel by their long intimate conversation with Paul, they communicated what they knew to him, and gave him a clear, distinct, and methodical account of those things which before he had but confused notions of.

[1.] See here an instance of that which Christ has promised, that *to him that hath shall be given*; he that has, and uses what he has, shall have more. He that diligently traded with the talent he had doubled it quickly.

[2.] See an instance of truly Christian charity in Aquila and Priscilla; they did good according to their ability. Aquila, though a man of great knowledge, yet did not undertake to speak in the synagogue, because he had not such gifts for public work as Apollos had; but he furnished Apollos with matter, and then left him to clothe it with acceptable words. Instructing young Christians and young ministers privately in conversation, who mean well, and perform well, as far as they go, is a piece of very good service, both to them and to the church.

[3.] See an instance of great humility in Apollos. He was a very bright young man, of great parts and learning, newly come from the university, a popular preacher, and one mightily cried up and followed; and yet, finding that Aquila and Priscilla were judicious serious Christians, that could speak intelligently and experimentally of the things of God, though they were but mechanics, poor tent-makers, he was glad to receive instructions from them, to be shown by them his defects and mistakes, and to have his mistakes rectified by them, and his deficiencies made up. Young scholars may gain a great deal by converse with old Christians, as young students in the law may by old practitioners. Apollos, though he *was instructed in the way of the Lord*, did not rest in the knowledge he had attained, nor thought he understood Christianity as well as any man (which proud conceited young men are apt to do), but was willing to have it expounded to him more perfectly. Those that know much should covet to know more, and what they know to know it better, pressing forward towards perfection.

[4.] Here is an instance of a good woman, though not permitted to speak in the church or in the synagogue, yet doing good with the knowledge God had given her in private converse. Paul will have *the aged women to be teachers of good things* ^{<411>} Titus 2:3, 4.

III. Here is his preferment to the service of the church of Corinth, which was a larger sphere of usefulness than Ephesus at present was. Paul had set wheels a-going in Achaia and particularly at Corinth, the county-town. Many were stirred up by his preaching to receive the gospel, and they needed to be confirmed; and many were likewise irritated to oppose the

gospel, and they needed to be confuted. Paul was gone, was called away to other work, and now there was a fair occasion in this vacancy for Apollos to set in, who was fitted rather to water than to plant, to build up those that were within than to bring in those that were without. Now here we have,

1. His call to this service, not by a vision, as Paul was called to Macedonia, no, nor so much as by the invitation of those he was to go to; but,

(1.) He himself inclined to go: *He was disposed to pass into Achaia;* having heard of the state of the churches there, he had a mind to try what good he could do among them. Though there were those there who were eminent for spiritual gifts, yet Apollos thought there might be some work for him, and God disposed his mind that way.

(2.) His friends encouraged him to go, and approved of his purpose; and, he being a perfect stranger there, they gave him a testimonial or letters of recommendation, exhorting the disciples in Achaia to entertain him and employ him. In this way, among others, the communion of churches is kept up, by the recommending of members and ministers to each other, when ministers, as Apollos here, are disposed to remove. Though those at Ephesus had a great loss of his labours, they did not grudge those in Achaia the benefit of them; but, on the contrary, used their interest in them to introduce him; for the churches of Christ, though they are many, yet they are one.

2. His success in this service, which both ways answered his intention and expectation; for,

(1.) Believers were greatly edified, and those that had received the gospel were very much confirmed: *He helped those much who had believed through grace.* Note,

[1.] Those who believe in Christ, it is through grace that they believe; it is *not of themselves, it is God's gift to them;* it is his work in them.

[2.] Those who through grace do believe, yet still have need of help; as long as they are here in this world there are remainders of unbelief, and something lacking in their faith to be perfected, and the work of faith to be fulfilled.

[3.] Faithful ministers are capable of being in many ways helpful to those who through grace do believe, and it is their business to help them, to help them much; and, when a divine power goes along with them, they will be helpful to them.

(2.) Unbelievers were greatly mortified. Their objections were fully answered, the folly and sophistry of their arguments were discovered, so that they had nothing to say in defence of the opposition they made to the gospel; their mouths were stopped, and their faces filled with shame (v. 28): *He mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly*, before the people; he did it, *eutonos* — *earnestly*, and with a great deal of vehemence; he took pains to do it; his heart was upon it, as one that was truly desirous both to serve the cause of Christ and to save the souls of men. He did it effectually and to universal satisfaction. He did it *levi negotio* — *with facility*. The case was so plain, and the arguments were so strong on Christ's side, that it was an easy matter to baffle all that the Jews could say against it. Though they were so fierce, yet their cause was so weak that he made nothing of their opposition. Now that which he aimed to convince them of was *that Jesus is the Christ*, that he is *the Messiah promised to the fathers, who should come*, and they were to look for not other. If the Jews were but convinced of this — that Jesus is Christ, even their own law would teach them to hear him. Note, The business of ministers is to preach Christ: *We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord*. The way he took to convince them was *by the scriptures*; thence he fetched his arguments; for the Jews owned the scriptures to be of divine authority, and it was easy for him, who was mighty in the scriptures, from them to show that Jesus is the Christ. Note, Ministers must be able not only to preach the truth, but to prove it and defend it, and to convince gainsayers with meekness and yet with power, instructing those that oppose themselves; and this is real service to the church.