

"The Second Missionary Journey"

Part 16

Acts 15:41-18:22

Introduction: Tonight, in our study of Acts we are still traveling with Paul and company on the second missionary journey. Last week we came to the end of Acts 17 and we listened as Paul ended his sermon on Mars Hill in Athens. It was a sad ending because only a few people believed his message and were saved. As far as we know there was never a church established in the city of Athens. The people listened to his message but it was the Truth of the resurrection which they struggled with.

Notice Acts 17:32

Greek philosophy said, "There is no such thing as resurrection; it's impossible!" Therefore the people of Athens were programmed and brainwashed against the doctrine of bodily resurrection from the dead.

It was on their response that Paul left the city.

Notice Acts 17:33-34

This now brings us to where we are in our study tonight.

➤ **The Journey Continues**

Notice Acts 18:1

As Paul leaves Athens he now comes to the city of Corinth. Before we see his ministry there, I want to give you some important background on the city. When we look at this, we may agree that this would have been a city that we may have avoided as believers, but not Paul. God had a purpose for sending Paul to Corinth.

I. The City of Corinth

I want to begin by showing you a map so that we can see the location of the city because the location is very important. The city was located between Athens and Achaia. It was located on the Peloponnesian peninsula and to be more detailed it was located on the small isthmus which led to Achaia.

Now that narrow isthmus is only 4 miles wide and when ships would sail from Rome to Athens, they had 2 options:

1. They could sail around Achaia, which was both time consuming and very dangerous. To sail around was about a 250-mile journey. There was a saying in Paul's day which would help us to understand the danger of sailing around the peninsula; "A sailor never takes a journey around the peninsula until he first writes his will." The waters at the southernmost point of the peninsula were very turbulent and many died in those waters.
2. The second option was to drag the ship across the 4-mile-wide isthmus on a DIOLKOS and this is the very option many choose to take.

Let me show you a picture of what is left of the DIOLKOS/stone roadway where the ships were portaged across the isthmus.

Today there is a canal which has been cut through the granite and so the ships can sail directly through.

So let us now consider something very interesting. Corinth sat on the south end of the isthmus and all ship traffic had to pass through the city and anyone traveling from Athens to Achaia would also need to pass through Corinth. The city of Corinth saw many travelers.

a. Life in Corinth

I believe because of all the people passing through the city of Corinth Satan chose to set up one of his workshops right there in the city. I will explain this in a moment.

There were really 2 forces which were driving people within the city.

1. Pleasure

Corinth was the pleasure capital of the Roman Empire. Remember I said that Satan had set up his workshop here? Let me now explain. There was in Corinth a temple for the worship of the sex goddess Aphrodite. Occupying the temple were several thousand prostitutes. Every evening, they would leave the temple to go into the city of Corinth to sell their trade. The immorality within the city became so terrible that the name of the city became associated with gross immorality. You see back then if someone referred to you as a "**Corinthian**" it was not a compliment. When people behaved like "**Corinthians**" they were practicing gross immorality.

Notice 1 Corinthians 6:9-11a

⁹ Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

¹⁰ Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

¹¹ And such were some of you:

So, pleasure was a major force in the city of Corinth.

2. Pursuit of Knowledge

The Great Greek thinkers, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle all had their followers within the city of Corinth. The people loved to gather in the busy plazas and debate the issues of these teachers and the people would attach themselves to the teachings of these men.

Socrates, Plato, Aristotle as well as others all had different philosophies. Their focus was really about life and the true meaning of life and they all had their ideas.

You see the Greeks prided themselves in their pursuit of knowledge. The people in the city of Corinth were given over to the love of wisdom.

1 Corinthians 1:22

²² For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:

So, there were two great forces which Satan had established in this city, there was the sexual immorality and the drive for knowledge. After the church gets established, we can see in 1 Corinthians that the spirit of the city made its way into the church. Here are several verses which will help us to see this at a glance.

1 Corinthians 1:11-12

¹¹ For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.

¹² Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

The spirit of the city is seen in the way they attached themselves to certain teachers. Some liked Paul, some Apollos, some Peter, and other claimed to follow Jesus. These divisions were right from the spirit of the city.

1 Corinthians 5:1-2

It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

² And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

Here we find the immorality of the city right in the midst of the church.

Application:

I need to stop here and remind you and me that we must never allow the spirit of the world to get into the church! Some people say we need to be more like the world in order to appeal to the world but the church is not to appeal to the world and if it does it is dead! The spirit of the world in the church will push the Holy Spirit right out the back door.

So, the pressures of the Corinthian church were the very pressures which we have today. There is the pressure of open sexuality and there is the pressure of wisdom. Everywhere we look today there is immorality and it is paraded out in the public arena. At the same time there is the pressure on our young people to gain as much worldly wisdom and knowledge as you possibly can. In many areas today people without college degrees are looked down upon. Therefore, the pressures are the same.

That is the background on the city. This is where Paul was stepping into. Why would God send Paul into a city such as Corinth? Because this city would prove to be a strategic location for a church as it would have the potential of touching the lives of all those who passed over the isthmus.

➤ **The Meeting**

Notice Acts 18:2-3

Here was another reason why God would lead Paul to Corinth. He would meet and develop a deep friendship with Aquila and his wife Priscilla. They had been forced to leave Rome because of antisemitism. At the time of their departure, I am sure that it was very

difficult but God permitted this to happen so that they would join up with the Apostle Paul.

Application:

How wonderful is the providence of God, working out circumstances and events in order to bring certain people together! Let me show you another such circumstance.

Philemon 1:1, 10-17

¹ Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer,

¹⁰ I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:

¹¹ Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me:

¹² Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels:

¹³ Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel:

¹⁴ But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.

¹⁵ For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever;

¹⁶ Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?

¹⁷ If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.

Onesimus was a slave who had departed from Philemon. In his escape he met Paul in prison and was saved. Paul was now sending him back to Philemon as a changed man. This was a Divine appointment in which God allowed Onesimus to leave and to encounter Paul in order to hear the Gospel.

Let me get you back to Acts. God allowed Aquilla and Pricilla to be driven from Italy in order to bless them with the friendship of Paul. Sometimes our plans get changed and we get redirected in life and we need to understand that it is all for a purpose. It might be to

meet someone who needs the Gospel, or maybe to meet someone who will be a blessing to us in some way.

Conclusion:

Psalm 23:1-3

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³ He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.