

*Who is your
raison d'être?*

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 Wednesday, September 28, 2016
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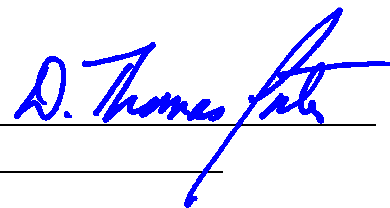
LESSON NOTES

I AM I AM WITH YOU—NO ONE WILL HURT YOU

(Acts 18) Bible Study, 6:00 & 7:00pm, September 28, 2016

OVERVIEW

Finding the Way in all the Strange Places



Believers and unbelievers alike have a cultural legacy. Sometimes that legacy helps—many have respect for the Christ because He was our parents' Lord. And sometimes that heritage hurts—many have disrespect for the Christ because He was our parents' lord.

**A QUESTION TO GET YOU THINKING:
WHICH DO YOU PREFER, A POLITICIAN
WHO LETS PEOPLE ALONE TO PRACTICE
THEIR RELIGION, OR ONE WHO
CONTROLS THEIR EXCESSES?**

A legacy which subscribes to the holiness of the Lord God creates a firmer foundation for belief in He who does indeed make us holy, who does indeed set us apart to bless, praise, and honor Him. A legacy which subscribes to the wisdom of the Lord can create a respect for knowledge of Scripture, or an idolatrous affection for knowledge. It is so easy to focus myopically on the words rather than the Word, on the text, instead of the Author of the text.

A legacy which recognizes the value of listening to the Lord God creates groundwork for a life of blessed partnership with that voice. A legacy which equates listening to the Lord God with righteousness forgets who accredits righteousness, and on what basis. Obedience is not the goal; obedience is merely a means to the goal: being blessed by the Lord God so we can in turn honor Him.

Paul, Silas, Apollos, Timothy, Priscilla, Aquila were all facing the challenge of legacy—legacies which can help people find the Way, and cloud their vision to the Way. The incidents in Corinth illustrate just how powerfully positive, and negative, these legacies can be. Listen for His voice. Learn from His wisdom. Lean on His understanding. Legacies.

CONTEXT ISSUES: A LOOK BACK AT ACTS 17

Paul has been in Athens reasoning with believers using the Scriptures as his evidence base. His major propositional truth—Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Christ and had to suffer, die, and be resurrected. Many believers were persuaded, and a number of Yahweh-fearing Greek believers.

Of course, the old guard was jealous. Using rebellion against Caesar as an excuse—after all they were proclaiming this Jesus was King—a turmoiled crowd rolled in, and the storm began. After posting bond, a friend named Jason let them go and during the night they went on to Berea.

As it turned out, the Bereans were more conscientious of Scripture than believers in Thessalonica for they examined Scripture daily to ascertain if Paul & Silas were preaching the Truth, and not just the truth. Lots of believers believed now in the Christ, as did a lot of prominent Greek believers. The storm followed them to Berea for the knuckleheads in Thessalonica sought to agitate the folks in Berea and disrupt their work. It didn't.

Even though Paul went on to Athens, Timothy & Silas stayed in Berea. It was in Athens where Paul gave his great sermon in the academic marketplace called the Areopagus, forever enshrining the gospel about the “unknown God.” And there it was—the message for the ages. God made everything. He does not live in temples, nor does He need anything. It is He who gives life, not us to Him. God created us to seek Him. God does not reside in some object made by people! In the past, He has overlooked such illogical nonsense, but today He commands everyone to return back to Him. And as for proof ... He raises people from the dead.



They were irritated, intrigued, and flabbergasted. Nonetheless, they invited him back to speak another day in the market place at Athens.

TEXTUAL ISSUES ACTS 18

Acts 18:1-11. *Paul finds his niche, the niche God intended for Paul.* After his encounter with other scholars in Athens, Paul proceeded to fertile ground in Corinth. There he met believers named Aquila & Priscilla, two Jews who had to leave Rome because of a recent purge. Since they had a lot in common, Paul stayed with them and plied his tentmaker trade. Every Sabbath, he would reason with believers in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jewish and Greek folk.

When Silas & Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul worked exclusively with Jewish believers, teaching them that Jesus was indeed Messiah. But some opposed him, and when becoming abusive, Paul shook his robes at them protesting that they

were responsible for the consequences of their opposition. Paul declared—“Henceforth, I will focus on people who do not have a Jewish heritage.” It was gasoline on the fire.

Leaving the synagogue, Paul went next door to Titius Justus, a gentile who worshiped the Lord God. And there Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, was converted to the Lord, along with his whole household. Many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were immersed into Christ.

One night in Corinth, the Lord God told Paul in a dream—“Do not be afraid—keep on keeping on. Do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack you, nor hurt you. Why? I have many people in Corinth.” Paul was impressed for he stayed in Corinth for 18 months, preaching the logos of the Lord God.

Q Why did Paul stay with Aquila and Priscilla? Why were they in Corinth?

Q Why in blue blazes would believers in the Lord God like Aquila & Priscilla go to Corinth?

Q What caused Paul to declare his primary focus and energy would be devoted to people without a Jewish legacy? Was this the right thing to do? How so? Why not?

Q Why did Paul stay in Corinth so long? How could Paul be assured of God’s protection?

ACTS 18:1-11

After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. ²There 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, ³and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. ⁴Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

⁵When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ [i.e., Messiah]. ⁶But 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."

⁷Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. ⁸Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.

⁹One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. ¹⁰For I am [εγω ειμι] with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city." ¹¹So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching them the word [λογον] of God.

Acts 18:12-21. *The gospel finds a friend in a politician*. It was during this sojourn in Corinth that Achaia's proconsul Gallio confronted some Jewish believers who had brought Paul into court. They argued that Paul was persuading people to worship the Lord God in ways which were contrary to the Law.

Gallio was not impressed. If you guys were charging him with a crime, or even a misdemeanor, I would listen to you. This nonsense is about your customs & laws, your words & names, not the law of Rome. I have not the time. Get out of my court.

Turning their wrath on Sosthenes the ruler of the synagogue, they beat him right there, on the courthouse steps.

Gallio was neither impressed and nor showed any concern whatsoever.

Paul stayed on for awhile, then he left for Syria, with Priscilla & Aquila accompanying him. Getting his hair cut off because of a vow he had taken, they stopped at Ephesus where Priscilla and Aquila stayed. Again, he went to the synagogue and reasoned with Jewish believers. They asked him to stay longer, but he said no, but promised he would come back if it is God's will. He set sail then from Ephesus for Syria.

- Q About what do you suppose Jewish believers were most upset regarding Paul's preaching which was "...persuading people to worship God in ways contrary to the law?"
- Q Was Gallio a friend or foe of the Way? If he were running for office, would you vote for him today as a governor or judge or sheriff?
- Q So, was it wrong then to have long hair? (1 Corinthians 11:14 says "Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him...") What's up with Paul getting a barber involved?
- Q Why did Paul decline to stay longer in Ephesus? Why did Aquila & Priscilla stay in Ephesus?

ACTS 18:12-21

While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him into court. ¹³"This man," they charged, "is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law."

¹⁴Just 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.

¹⁵But 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." ¹⁶So he had them ejected from the court.

¹⁷Then they all turned on Sosthenes the synagogue ruler and beat him in front of the court. But Gallio showed no concern whatever.

¹⁸Paul 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. ¹⁹They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. ²⁰When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. ²¹But as he left, he promised, "I will come back if it is God's will." Then he set sail from Ephesus.

Acts 18:22-28. *A new ally is found and primed for the Way, Apollos*. When Paul finally got to Syria, he landed at Caesarea, and proceeded to Antioch where he greeted the church there.

After enjoying himself at Antioch, Paul set out and traveled throughout the region of Galatia & Phrygia building the faith of all the followers of the Way.

While all this was happening, another believer, Apollos from Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an educated man with a comprehensive knowledge of the Scriptures. He had learned the Way, and he spoke with great enthusiasm and accuracy about Jesus the Christ, although he only knew of John's baptism. While

speaking courageously in the synagogue, Priscilla & Aquila heard him, invited him home, and explained to him the Way of God more accurately [*ἀκριβέστερον*; "ah-kri-bes-teh-ron," carefully, exactly, strictly, 199].

So when Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brethren not only told just do it, but they wrote a letter of recommendation for his work there. When he got there, he was a great help to those who by the mercy of God had believed. He vigorously refuted recalcitrant Jewish believers in public debate, proving using the Scriptures that Jesus was indeed Christ.

- Q What did Paul do in Galatia and Phrygia? How is that manifested today? How should it be manifested today?
- Q What's the significance of Apollos being from Alexandria? What was his name?
- Q On what Scripture did Apollos (as well as Paul for that matter) argue that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed Messiah?
- Q Why did Aquila & Priscilla move to Ephesus?
- Q What is the difference between the "baptism of John" and the "baptism of the Way?" Do you suppose this was part of what Aquila & Priscilla taught? What else would Apollos need to know about the Way?

ACTS 18:22-28

When he landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church and then went down to Antioch.

²³After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening [*ἐπιστηρίζων*, e-pist-ayr-i-zone, epistemology/faith building, 1991] all the disciples.

²⁴Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. ²⁵He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor [*or being fervent in spirit*] and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶He 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.

²⁷When 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.

²⁸For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

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.

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 possible 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.

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.

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.

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, probably uncircumcised, Gentile but attending the synagogue.

18:8 *Crispus.* Paul baptized him (1Co 1:14). *synagogue ruler.* Those who were responsible for calling readers and preachers, arranging the service and maintaining order.

believed and were baptized. The response to the gospel, a process going on daily, as the tense of the Greek verbs indicates.

18:11 *a year and a half.* During this time he may also have taken the gospel to the neighboring districts of Achaia (see 2 Corinthians 1:1).

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 Jewish believers were claiming Paul was advocating a religion not recognized by Roman law, as was Judaism. If he had been given the opportunity to speak, he could have argued

¹Adapted, corrected, and revised by D. Thomas Porter from Compton's Interactive NIV © 1996.

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. Some have asserted this is the overall purpose of Luke & Acts, to demonstrate that the Way is a natural extension, fulfillment of an approved Roman religion, Judaism.

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. 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 in response to Paul's preaching (see v. 8).

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).

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).

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.

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 *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 16:6).

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

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 completed work of Christ.

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