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Acts 18:1-28

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Exegetical Study

1. **Acts 18:1-17** - *“After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. 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, and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks. When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. 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.’ Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized. One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: ‘Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.’ So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God. While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him into court. ‘This man,’ they charged, ‘is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law.’ 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. 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.’ So he had them ejected from the court. Then they all turned on Sosthenes the synagogue ruler and beat him in front of the court. But Gallio showed no concern whatever.”*

- a. The Journey and the Ministry

i. Corinth

1. Corinth was the commercial and trade center of the world at this time.
2. Corinth was a port city with two harbors.
3. Corinth was the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia.
4. The population in Corinth at this time was about 700,000, comprising about 200,000 Roman citizens and 500,000 slaves.
5. The temple of Aphrodite, in addition to eleven other temples, was located in Corinth.
 - a. Aphrodite was the goddess of love and sexual pleasure.
 - b. There were approximately 1,000 male and female temple prostitutes at this temple.
6. Corinth was commonly considered to be the center of immorality and sexuality.
 - a. Paul wrote the book of Romans while he was in Corinth, and in [Romans 1:18-32](#), he makes reference to the gross nature of sin that was taking place.
 - i. [Romans 1:18-32](#)- *“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator – who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with*

women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them."

ii. Aquila and Priscilla

1. Aquila was Jewish.
2. Bible scholars do not know whether Priscilla was Jewish or not.
3. Priscilla or Prisca, as some translations use, was in a high position of social status.
4. The Bible implies that they were Christians because only Jewish Christians were expelled from Rome by Emperor Claudius.
5. Priscilla and Aquila were tent makers, who were what we would call bi-vocational ministers.

iii. Silas and Timothy

1. Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia bringing financial support for the work of the ministry.
 - a. Paul was able to devote *"himself exclusively to preaching,"* so the implication is that he no longer needed to work as a tent maker to support himself.
 - i. **2 Corinthians 11:9** - *"And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so."*
 - ii. **Philippians 4:15-16** - *"Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and*

receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need."

iv. Paul's Vision ([Acts 18:9-10](#))

1. Pastor Gary said, "I want you to notice that the Lord would not minister these things to Paul if he [wasn't] wrestling with the things the Lord [addressed with him]. I point that out because sometimes when we hear about the heroes of the Bible, and Paul would certainly fall into that category as far as I'm concerned, [we think that these men and women never] had any personal fears or worries or struggles... What this tells us is that [Paul] was afraid. If Paul wasn't afraid, the Lord wouldn't have shown up and said, 'Don't be afraid.' ... Fear is not of the Lord, and yet fear is a very real emotion, [and] it can be a very debilitating emotion, and it can be something that many of us struggle with... [Yet, the first words from the Lord were] *'Do not be afraid.'* ... What [was Paul afraid of]? [One reason would be that he had previously] been beaten and left for dead... He was probably afraid that if he stayed in Corinth, people were going to beat him up and try to kill him, and, worse, maybe even succeed in killing him! ... I [also love the comfort the Lord gave Paul] because he said he had many people in this city. God has many of his people in every city, and God's in control... everything [was] going to be fine. These were words of great comfort and encouragement to Paul."
 - a. [1 John 4:18](#) - *"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear..."*
 - b. [2 Timothy 1:7](#) - *"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."* (NKJV)

v. Gallio of Achaia

1. In 1905 an inscription was discovered in the ancient Greek city of Delphi, which indicated that Gallio was the proconsul of Achaia in the years 51 and 52 AD.
2. This historical reference to Gallio gives evidence to the time Paul was in Corinth.

vi. Sosthenes

1. Crispus was the synagogue ruler, so the implication here is that since he and his household put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ, he was removed from his position in the synagogue.
 - a. Crispus was baptized by Paul.
 - i. [1 Corinthians 1:14](#) - *"I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius..."*
2. Sosthenes was Crispus' replacement as the ruler of the

synagogue.

3. Sosthenes also became a follower of Jesus Christ.

a. **1 Corinthians 1:1** – *“Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes...”*

2. **Acts 18:18–23** – *“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. They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. But as he left, he promised, ‘I will come back if it is God’s will.’ Then he set sail from Ephesus. When he landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church and then went down to Antioch.”*

a. Paul’s Vow

i. Pastor Gary said, “Most Bible scholars believe that the vow [Paul made was] a Nazarite vow.” (**Numbers 6:1–21**)

1. The purpose of a Nazarite vow

a. A Nazarite vow was a voluntary vow of separation, consecration, and dedication to God.

b. A Nazarite vow applied to both men and women; however, there are no references in the Bible to a woman taking a Nazarite vow.

c. A Nazarite vow was usually for a set period of time, but sometimes it was a lifetime vow.

2. The practice of a Nazarite vow

a. No wine, fermented drink, or anything from the grape vine.

i. Pastor Gary said, “The idea was that if you were going to be consecrated and separated unto the Lord, you didn’t want anything that would risk the potential of intoxication. [The idea was that the person] was to be completely sober-minded at all times.”

b. No contact or closeness to a dead body.

i. A person who took a Nazarite vow was not permitted to attend a funeral or even walk through a cemetery.

c. No cutting of the hair.

i. There was no power that came from long hair.

ii. Long hair was a symbol or evidence of a person taking a Nazarite vow.

d. Samson lived under a Nazarite vow,¹ and some believe

¹ **Judges 13:1–7**

that John the Baptist had taken a Nazarite vow.

- ii. Pastor Gary said, “Why would he have taken a Nazarite vow during the time he was living in Corinth? ... Because [Corinth] was such an immoral place... I’m personally convinced that Paul was living in the middle of such immorality that he decided that the influence and the temptation, perhaps, of all that was going on around him required this vow so that he would constantly be reminding himself, ‘I’m consecrated, I’m separated, and I’m devoted to God.’ I think he did this as some means of self-accountability, [being] constantly aware of the bombarding influence of temptation of the culture of Corinth and wanting to be separate unto the Lord... [It’s as though he said to himself,] ‘Even though I’m living [among] these people, I don’t want to become like these people, and I don’t want to start doing what the people do; I want to live my life separated, and consecrated, and dedicated to God.’ ... I think it’s important for all of us to think about what are some important safeguards [we need] in our own lives? What are some things that we are going to put in place, as Christians, because we don’t want to get absorbed into the temptations of our culture? ... [We need to remind ourselves] that we are separated, dedicated, and consecrated unto God, and we need to put into place certain measures and safeguards and accountability to help safeguard our own hearts against being absorbed into the immoral culture in which we [live.] ... [Are] you separate enough and distinct enough that people can tell, even from your life, that there is something unique and different about you that would speak about Christ just by the way that you live?”

- a. [John 17:14-19](#) - *“I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.”*

- b. The Journey and the Ministry

- i. Ephesus

1. Paul, as was his pattern, went to the synagogue to preach Christ to the Jews.
2. Pastor Gary, commenting on the fact that Paul did not stay longer, said, “There are some times when the Lord says, ‘Tarry,’ and there are some times when the Lord says, ‘You aren’t supposed to [stay], because your ministry here is finished.’ ”

3. Paul's decision to leave is something that should serve as a lesson for us in that we need to seek the Lord's will and ask for wisdom and discernment in matters large and small.
 - ii. Paul left Ephesus and sailed to Caesarea, and then he made his way back to Antioch of Syria, thus concluding his second missionary journey.

3. **Acts 18:23-28** - *"After spending 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. Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. 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. 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. For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ."*
 - a. The Journey and the Ministry
 - i. Antioch of Syria
 1. Paul stayed in Antioch at most one year.
 - ii. Paul's third missionary journey
 1. Paul traveled to Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Antioch of Pisidia, Ephesus, Troas, Neopolis, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens, all for the purpose of strengthening and encouraging the disciples.
 - b. Apollos
 - i. Apollos was from Alexandria, Egypt.
 - ii. Apollos was an educated man who knew the Scriptures.
 - iii. Apollos was a man whose goal was to speak and teach about Jesus according to the Scriptures.
 - iv. Speaking about Priscilla and Aquila and their invitation to help Apollos understand the Scriptures more fully, Pastor Gary said, "There are a lot of people... [who] have a working knowledge [of who Jesus is], but [they] may not have an adequate working knowledge of who Jesus is and some of the deeper things of the faith related to Scripture and doctrine. ... They invested in his life and they disciplined him."
 - v. Apollos went to the region of Achaia, and he met with Jews to prove *"from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ."*
 1. Examples of Scripture Apollos may have used includes:
 - a. **Genesis 3** - The seed of the woman who would crush the

head of the serpent was Jesus.

- b. [Exodus 12](#) - The Passover lamb was Jesus.
- c. [Deuteronomy 18](#) - The prophet like Moses that God would raise up from among his people was Jesus.
- d. [Micah 5](#) - The Messiah that would be born in Bethlehem was Jesus.
- e. [Zechariah 9](#) - The Messiah who would enter Jerusalem prior to his crucifixion, riding on a donkey, was Jesus.
- f. [Psalm 22](#) - The Messiah who would be crucified was Jesus.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the 1984 New International Version (NIV)