

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JULY 25TH–26TH // BOOK OF ACTS

FRIENDSHIP (ACTS 18:1–8)

CORINTH

Paul moved 50 miles from Athens (the intellectual center of Greece) to Corinth (a massive, wealthy, and highly materialistic metropolis).

- Famous for its pagan temples to Aphrodite and Apollo, the city was so deeply associated with immorality that the Greeks coined the term *“Corinthianize”* to describe lewd behavior.
- From a purely worldly perspective, Corinth was perhaps the least promising place to establish a new Christian community.

AQUILA AND PRISCILLA

Paul quickly made a strong, lifelong friendship with a husband and wife duo that had relocated from Rome. They were fellow tentmakers who owned a thriving business.

- Given Paul's experience, they most likely hired Paul to be part of their trade guild.
- Having another Christian who was not a pagan was probably very comforting for both Paul and Aquila and Priscilla.

EVERY SABBATH

Because Paul was bi-vocational, he could only engage in ministry on the Sabbath.

- Despite Paul's strong work ethic and Aquila and Priscilla managing their business, they still prioritized ministry.
- **We should work as if we are doing it for the Lord (Colossians 3:23), but this should not replace our commitment to actually working for the Lord.**

FRIENDS ARRIVED

Not only did Paul have the newfound friendship of A&P, but now his faithful co-laborers in the faith, Silas and Timothy, brought encouraging news about the Believers in Thessalonica and financial support from Macedonia.

- Because of this, he felt renewed determination and devoted himself full-time to preaching.
- Consequently, **the ministry flourished as the church united in purpose and action.**

“HE SHOOK OUT HIS CLOTHES”

We notice a recurring theme in Paul's ministry. As the Jews rejected the message of Christ, Paul shifted his focus to the Gentiles.

- In a dramatic and symbolic gesture, Paul shook out his garments, signifying that he had faithfully fulfilled his duty as a Jew to share the message he was given. The weight of their ultimate judgment now rested on them.
- **While we have a role in proclaiming the gospel, it is ultimately up to the individual to respond.**

THE GENTILES AND OTHERS

The first Corinthian church gathered in the home of Titius Justus (a Gentile), located right next to the synagogue.

- Due to this proximity and Paul's steadfast commitment to spreading the gospel, Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, responsible for its upkeep and the services held there, became a Believer.
- This development would have been a significant point of contention within the Jewish community.

PERSEVERANCE (ACTS 18:9–17)

PAUL'S HUMANITY

Although Paul experienced significant success in his outreach, we see a glimpse of his humanity as his confidence began to wane.

- This could be because of all of the trials he had already been part of and then the weariness of spreading the gospel in a challenging place.
- Maybe he pushed himself too hard and was suffering from burnout.

“DON'T BE AFRAID...FOR I AM WITH YOU”

Regardless of why Paul was close to giving up, **God did not allow him to stay there.**

- God encouraged Paul with a gentle rebuke, a strong directive for his next steps, and several promises.
- Even with the support of new friends, visits from familiar faces, and many coming to Christ, Paul experienced loneliness. **His true comfort ultimately came from the Lord. How are we comforted?**

A UNITED ATTACK

The Jews approached Gallio, the new proconsul of Achaia, to convince him Paul was violating Roman law by promoting a religion that had not received official approval.

- Before Paul could respond, the Lord fulfilled His promise to Paul with a swift judicial decision from Gallio. He dismissed the entire matter and refused to get involved.
- **God has a way of protecting His people in various and unexpected ways.**

SOSTHENES? (1 CORINTHIANS 1:1)

Just a few verses ago, we discovered that Crispus was the ruler of the synagogue. Now, about a year later, we see Sosthenes stepping into that role, likely inspired by Crispus's courageous conversion to Christianity.

- The Jewish community, frustrated with the situation, and with Sosthenes on the verge of becoming a Christian, expressed their frustration and took out their anger on him. However, Gallio was not impressed by this display.

TRAVELS (ACTS 18:18–23)

PRISCILLA

Paul spent some time in Corinth after the tumultuous events, then left for Syria with Priscilla and Aquila. It is notable that Priscilla was named first in this section, highlighting her significance.

- Like Lydia, she was an important woman in the early church, which further supports the idea that this movement was not male-dominated.
- Upon arriving in Ephesus Paul parted ways with the strong team of P&A. **P&A's bond was not only one of marriage but also of powerful partnership in ministry.**

NAZARITE VOW

On the trip to Ephesus, we see Paul shave his head at Cenchreae. This act was not merely due to the heat from his long hair; it signified the completion of a vow.

- During the time of the vow, Paul would have abstained from alcohol and refrained from cutting his hair. This vow was likely made in response to **God's protection and faithfulness** to Paul during his challenging time in Corinth. **We participate in similar rituals when we fast.**

GREETING, ENCOURAGING, STRENGTHENING

As Paul left Ephesus, he made a brief stop in Jerusalem to update the church on everything that God had been doing.

- After that, he returned to encourage the churches he helped plant through God's grace.
- Paul was very evangelistic, **but he also had a strong heart for discipleship. How are we supporting and walking alongside other Believers?**

KNOWLEDGE (ACTS 18:24–28)

ON FIRE FOR GOD

We are introduced to a Jew named Apollos, who was well-versed in the Scriptures (Old Testament). He had heard about Jesus and felt a strong passion to share what he knew, even though his knowledge was not complete.

- It's easy to be distracted by what we don't know about Christ. **It is important to live confidently in the truths we understand about Christ and share them boldly, rather than letting fear of our lack of knowledge hold us back.**

THEY TOOK APOLLOS ASIDE

Once again, Priscilla and Aquila shine brightly in the story, embodying their love for the gospel by addressing Apollos's misunderstandings. They likely welcomed him into their home, sharing a clearer understanding of baptism with grace and kindness.

- Their choice to refrain from publicly rebuking Apollos speaks volumes about their compassion and humility. **True correction should come from a place of love rather than a desire to “win the argument.”**

THE ABILITY TO LEARN

Apollos had every reason to be prideful, given his education from Alexandria, yet he embraced a teachable heart.

- Because of his humility and willingness to continue learning, he became an even more effective teacher. **We should never feel like we have fully arrived. Keeping a teachable heart will enable us to improve our ability to minister and disciple others.**

A GREAT HELP

Apollos travelled to Achaia (specifically Corinth), likely inspired by the accounts from P&A. He was a skilled debater and was used significantly by God to strengthen and support the church.

- Through his gift of reason, he was able to defend and convince both Jews and Greeks of the truth of Christ. **Being led by the Spirit does not mean ignoring our intellect.**

THE MUNDANE

- Some of the most difficult times in our Christian journeys can be the repetitive days, weeks, months, and years. In these times, it may be hard to see God's active presence, even when others can recognize it clearly.
- **Feeling overwhelmed can tempt us to abandon the calling God has placed on our lives.**
- **We must acknowledge our weaknesses and be open to sharing them with others.**

ENCOURAGEMENT

- Recognizing our weaknesses opens the door to receiving encouragement more effectively.
- **Who do we allow to speak into our lives and motivate us in our faith? Who are the people in our close circles that help inspire us?**
- **Although the presence of supportive friends is valuable, true satisfaction and strength can only come from the Lord.**

LIVING ON FIRE

- As we are encouraged by others and strengthened by Christ, He keeps the fire alive in our hearts.
- **Let's be a flame that spreads Christ's warmth and inspiration, rather than one that burns out. Pride can quickly dim our light and the light of others.**
- **When we start to notice our spark fading or fear beginning to creep in, we must cling to God's promises: Don't be afraid, but keep speaking and don't be silent. “For I am with you.”**