

### 63. The Development of the Church in Corinth

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to share the Gospel with people who have no background of the Bible. We saw that Paul had to begin with the Creator and the creation to begin to build a foundation. He began with the Creator and ended with the death and resurrection of Christ. We want to help our children understand the importance of teaching about the death and resurrection of Christ to all with whom they share the Gospel. In this topic, we will see that Paul left Athens and went to the city of Corinth and will see how the Lord laid the foundation and developed the church in that city.

In Acts 18:1-4, we read, “After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers. And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.” Paul went from Athens to Corinth which was the largest city of Achaia or Southern Greece.

We see that Paul found a couple by the name of Aquila and Priscilla. The word translated “found” can mean to find without previous search (by chance) or to find by enquiry when it talks about people. As a result, we do not know whether Paul met them in the marketplace, the synagogue or some other place. Aquila had been born in Pontus, a Roman province in what is today in northeastern Turkey along the Black Sea. However, he and his wife, Priscilla, had been living in Rome. They had come to Corinth from Rome, because the Roman Emperor, Claudius, had commanded all Jews to move from Rome. It is possible that they had become Christians either in Pontus or in Rome, because there were people from both places in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:9-10) nearly twenty years earlier. From the book of Romans, we learn that a church had been established in Rome probably by people who had been in Jerusalem on Pentecost.

Aquila and Priscilla were tentmakers, which was the trade of Paul and probably the trade by which he had made his living for at least several years. Because they had the same trade, we see that Paul stayed with them and worked with them making tents to support himself. Working together making tents gave them many hours to discuss together the life and teachings of Christ as well as His death and resurrection. If they were already Christians, this gave Aquila and Priscilla the opportunity to learn much more about His teachings. If they were not yet Christians, they became Christians as they talked together. However, Aquila and Priscilla also learned the importance of spending time together with individuals to help them learn to understand the life, death, resurrection and teachings of Christ. That will be seen by what they do in their later ministry.

At the same time Paul was working with Aquila and Priscilla, he spent time every Sabbath reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout Greeks who attended the synagogue. Here, we see that Paul was laying the foundation for the churches that would be established in the city of Corinth and the surrounding region. During this time, we see that many Jews and many devout Greeks were persuaded. The word translated “persuaded” means *to believe, to trust or*

*share words that cause a person to be persuaded.* This word is used twice in Acts 28:23-24 where we read, “So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at *his* lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening. And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved.” Paul used the Old Testament to explain the things that he taught about Christ.

Acts 18:5-7 says, “When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews *that* Jesus is the Christ. But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook *his* garments and said to them, ‘Your blood *be* upon your *own* heads; I *am* clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.’ And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain *man* named Justus, *one* who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue.” We see that Silas and Timothy caught up with Paul and rejoined him in Corinth.

After they arrived, we see that Paul was compelled by the Spirit to solemnly testify to the Jews in the synagogue that Jesus is the Christ. Later, Paul would use this same word as he wrote to the church in Corinth when he said in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” We see that Paul was urged by both the Holy Spirit and by the love of Christ to tell the Corinthians that Jesus is the Christ. This solemn testimony that Jesus is the Christ caused the Jews to realize that they had to make a choice either to accept or reject Jesus.

We see that many of the Jews opposed and blasphemed Paul when he solemnly testified that Jesus was the One who fulfilled all of the promises about Christ in the Old Testament. Then, Paul spoke to those Jews and said, “Your blood *be* upon your *own* heads; I *am* clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.” This was similar to what Paul and Barnabas had said when they said in Acts 13:46, “Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, ‘It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.’” Then, Paul left the synagogue and stopped teaching in the synagogue. Instead, he started teaching in the house of Justus who lived next door to the synagogue. Justus was a Gentile since this is a Roman name. He was also a worshiper of God. He was probably one of the devout Gentiles who had believed in Christ as Paul had reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and devout Gentiles each Sabbath.

However, not all of the Jews rejected the message about Jesus. Acts 18:8-11 says, “Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized. Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, ‘Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city.’ And he continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.” One of the Jews who did believe was Crispus. He was the one that had been the leader in the synagogue. We see that he believed on the Lord along with his entire household. This was probably very upsetting to the Jews who had rejected the message of Jesus.

In addition, we read that many Corinthians believed as they heard the teaching of Paul. Many of these were probably devout Gentiles who had been attending the synagogue to learn about the true and living God. When these Corinthians believed, they were baptized as a testimony of their belief in Christ. This probably caused the unbelieving Jews to become more upset, because the Jews had lost their control over these people. 1 Corinthians 8:1 says, “Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.” The Corinthians had been following idols. The Jews had depended on their knowledge of the Old Testament. In contrast, we see that love edifies (builds up). As a result, these new Christians were now beginning to learn to be led by the love of Christ instead of being driven by the fear of people.

Paul had previously been forced to leave several cities, because he was faithful in preaching the Gospel. The Lord chose to encourage Paul as people began to turn to Christ in Corinth. That was a great encouragement to Paul, because 1 Corinthians 2:2-3 says, “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.” To encourage Paul, the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision. The Lord told Paul, “Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city.” Here, we see that the Lord assured Paul that he did not need to be fearful. Paul was told not to be silent. Instead, he knew that he could speak boldly for Christ. The Lord had many people in the city of Corinth that He was going to draw to Himself as Paul faithfully taught the Word of God. The Lord assured Paul that no one would hurt or attack him in this city.

For the next year and six months, we see that Paul and the team continued to faithfully teach the Word of God in the city of Corinth. Instead of depending on their own words, Paul and those with him understood the truth of Hebrews 4:12 which says, “For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” The Word of God will do what we can never do through our own efforts, because God says that His Word is living and powerful. Our words may appeal to the mind. In contrast, we see that the Word of God discerns the thoughts and the intents of the heart. That is why 1 Corinthians 14:25 says, “And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on *his* face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.” The Word of God will reveal the secrets of the heart.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to work with the Holy Spirit in evangelism. That will happen as we show them how to share the Word of God instead of sharing their own opinions. Then, the Holy Spirit can convict, the Father can draw and the Son can seek and save. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand why the Lord worked in the lives of many people in Corinth.