



Lesson 13, November 30, 2025, Teaching God's Word, Acts 18:1-21

BIBLE BASIS: Acts 18:1–21

BIBLE TRUTH: Luke writes of Paul's mission of proclaiming the Good News to Syria and Ephesus.

MEMORY VERSE: *"Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision. But not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city."* (Acts 18:9-10)

Lesson Aim- Key Takeaways from Acts 18

- 1. God Strengthens the Weary:** When we feel weak or afraid, God reminds us of His presence and purpose.
- 2. Ministry Happens in Community:** God uses friendships and teamwork to build His church and sharpen His servants.
- 3. Boldness and Wisdom Work Together:** Boldness must be guided by wisdom and humility.
- 4. God Opens Doors and Protects His People:** God opens doors for ministry and closes the mouths of opposition when it serves His plan.
- 5. Growth Requires Grace and Truth:** Even gifted leaders need grace-filled correction to grow in truth.

Background: **Acts 17: Paul in Athens**

- **Arrival in Athens:** Paul arrives alone in Athens after fleeing persecution in Berea. He's deeply troubled by the city's idolatry.
 - **Engagement with philosophers:** He debates with Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in the marketplace. They invite him to speak at the Areopagus (Mars Hill), a prominent council of thinkers.
 - **Mars Hill sermon:** Paul delivers a powerful message about the "unknown god," using cultural references to connect with his audience. He emphasizes:
 - **God as Creator**
 - **Humanity's need to seek Him**
 - **The resurrection of Jesus as proof of divine authority**
 - **Mixed response:** Some mock the resurrection, others are curious, and a few believe—including Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris.
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 **Broader Journey Context (Acts 16–17)**

- **Philippi (Acts 16):** Paul and Silas are imprisoned after casting out a spirit from a slave girl. They sing hymns in jail, and an earthquake leads to their release and the conversion of the jailer's family.
- **Thessalonica (Acts 17:1–9):** Paul preaches in the synagogue. Some Jews and many Greeks believe, but others stir up a mob, forcing Paul to flee.
- **Berea (Acts 17:10–15):** The Bereans are praised for their eagerness to examine the Scriptures. Again, opposition arises, and Paul is sent to Athens while Silas and Timothy remain behind.

The Lesson:**1. OCCUPIED WITH THE WORD: (Acts 18:1-5)**

1 Then Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.[a]

2 There he became acquainted with a Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently arrived from Italy with his wife, Priscilla. They had left Italy when Claudius Caesar deported all Jews from Rome.

3 Paul lived and worked with them, for they were tentmakers[b] just as he was.

4 Each Sabbath found Paul at the synagogue, trying to convince the Jews and Greeks alike. 5 And after Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul spent all his time preaching the word. He testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah.

What's happening here? Historical Context

- Paul arrives in Corinth: After leaving Athens, Paul enters Corinth—a major commercial hub in southern Greece, known for its wealth, diversity, and moral challenges.
- Meeting Aquila and Priscilla: These Jewish believers had recently been expelled from Rome due to Emperor Claudius's decree against Jews (around AD 49). Aquila was from Pontus (a region near the Black Sea), and both he and Priscilla were tentmakers, like Paul.
- Paul works alongside them: This shows Paul's humility and practicality—he supported himself through manual labor while continuing his ministry.

 Ministry Strategy

- Sabbath synagogue teaching: Paul continues his pattern of engaging Jews and God-fearing Gentiles in the synagogue, reasoning from the Scriptures to show that Jesus is the Messiah.
- Arrival of Silas and Timothy: Their arrival from Macedonia likely brought encouragement and financial support (see 2 Corinthians 11:9 and Philippians 4:15), sharing that the from Macedonia supplied him with what he lacked, allowing him to devote himself fully to preaching.

2. ENCOURAGED BY THE LORD: (Acts 18:6-11)

⁶ But when they opposed and insulted him, Paul shook the dust from his clothes and said, "Your blood is upon your own heads—I am innocent. From now on I will go preach to the Gentiles."

⁷ Then he left and went to the home of Titius Justus, a Gentile who worshiped God and lived next door to the synagogue. ⁸ Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, and everyone in his household believed in the Lord. Many others in Corinth also heard Paul, became believers, and were baptized.

⁹ One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision and told him, "Don't be afraid! Speak out! Don't be silent!" ¹⁰ For I am with you, and no one will attack and harm you, for many people in this city belong to me." ¹¹ So Paul stayed there for the next year and a half, teaching the word of God.

What's Happening Here?

✶ Rejection and Resolve (v.6)

- **Opposition from the synagogue:** Paul faces resistance and insults from some of the Jewish community.
 - **Symbolic gesture:** He "shakes the dust from his clothes," a powerful act of disassociation—declaring he's done all he can and is not responsible for their rejection.
 - **Turning to the Gentiles:** Paul announces a shift in focus, echoing a pattern seen throughout Acts (e.g., Acts 13:46). He will now preach primarily to Gentiles, who are more receptive. *⁴⁶ Then Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and declared, "It was necessary that we first preach the word of God to you Jews. But since you have rejected it and judged yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we will offer it to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ For the Lord gave us this command when he said, 'I have made you a light to the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the farthest corners of the earth.'*
 - He will now preach primarily to Gentiles, who are more receptive.
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New Ministry Base (v.7–8)

- **Titius Justus:** A God-fearing Gentile who lives next door to the synagogue opens his home to Paul. This proximity is strategic—Paul remains close to the Jewish community while expanding his outreach.
 - **Crispus believes:** Remarkably, the synagogue leader and his entire household come to Christ. This is a major breakthrough, showing that even in the face of opposition, the gospel penetrates hearts.
 - **Wider impact:** Many Corinthians hear the message, believe, and are baptized—evidence of a growing church.
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Divine Encouragement (v.9–10)

- **Vision from the Lord:** God speaks directly to Paul, offering reassurance and a command:
 - *“Don’t be afraid!”*—Paul likely felt discouraged or threatened.
 - *“Speak out... I am with you.”*—God affirms His presence and protection.
 - *“Many people in this city belong to me.”*—There are hearts ready to receive the gospel.
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Long-Term Teaching (v.11)

- **Paul stays for 18 months:** This is one of his longest recorded stays in a single city. Corinth becomes a major center for Christian teaching, and Paul’s letters to the Corinthians later reflect the fruit and challenges of this ministry.

MISSING PIECES (vs. 12-17))

¹²But when Gallio became governor of Achaia, some Jews rose up together against Paul and brought him before the governor for judgment. ¹³They accused Paul of “persuading people to worship God in ways that are contrary to our law.”

¹⁴But just as Paul started to make his defense, Gallio turned to Paul’s accusers and said, “Listen, you Jews, if this were a case involving some wrongdoing or a serious crime, I would have a reason to accept your case.”

¹⁵ But since it is merely a question of words and names and your Jewish law, take care of it yourselves. I refuse to judge such matters.”

¹⁶ And he threw them out of the courtroom.

¹⁷ The crowd^[c] then grabbed Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and beat him right there in the courtroom. But Gallio paid no attention.

Legal Confrontation

- **Gallio becomes governor:** Gallio was the proconsul of Achaia (southern Greece), a Roman official with judicial authority. His arrival marks a new phase of Roman oversight.
 - **Jewish opposition:** Some Jews in Corinth, frustrated with Paul’s message, try to use Roman law to silence him. They accuse him of promoting worship “contrary to our law”—referring to Jewish religious law, not Roman civil law.
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Gallio’s Response

- **Dismisses the case:** Gallio immediately recognizes that this is a religious dispute, not a criminal matter. He refuses to intervene in what he sees as internal Jewish theology.
 - **Sets a precedent:** By throwing the case out, Gallio effectively protects Paul’s right to preach under Roman law. This moment becomes a key legal precedent for the early church’s freedom to operate within the empire.
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Violence and Indifference

- **Sosthenes beaten:** The crowd turns on Sosthenes, the synagogue leader—possibly because he was involved in the failed prosecution or had become sympathetic to Paul (he’s later mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:1 as a believer).
 - **Gallio’s indifference:** He ignores the violence, showing how Roman officials often distanced themselves from religious conflicts unless public order was threatened.
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Spiritual and Strategic Themes

- **God's protection:** This fulfills the promise from Acts 18:9–10—Paul is not harmed, and the gospel continues to spread.
 - **Legal favor:** Gallio's ruling gives Paul and the church breathing room to grow without Roman interference.
 - **Tension within Judaism:** The beating of Sosthenes may reflect internal divisions among Jewish leaders over how to respond to Paul's message.
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III. Compelled To Return (Acts 18: 18-21)

¹⁸ Paul stayed in Corinth for some time after that, then said good-bye to the brothers and sisters^[d] and went to nearby Cenchrea. There he shaved his head according to Jewish custom, marking the end of a vow. Then he set sail for Syria, taking Priscilla and Aquila with him.

¹⁹ They stopped first at the port of Ephesus, where Paul left the others behind. While he was there, he went to the synagogue to reason with the Jews. ²⁰ They asked him to stay longer, but he declined. ²¹ As he left, however, he said, "I will come back later,^[e] God willing." Then he set sail from Ephesus.

What's Happening Here?

Departure from Corinth

- **Paul stays "for some time":** After 18 months of fruitful ministry (v.11), Paul remains a bit longer, likely strengthening the new believers and preparing for travel.
- **Farewell to the church:** He says goodbye to the Corinthian believers, who now form a thriving community.
- **Visit to Cenchrea:** This port city near Corinth is where Paul performs a ritual act—shaving his head, likely marking the completion of a Nazirite vow (see Numbers 6). **3 distinct restrictions:**
 - (1). He must abstain from wine and fermented drink;

- (2) the hair could not be cut, and the beard could not be shaved;
 - (3) touching a dead body was prohibited.
 - The purpose of the Nazirite vow was to raise up a group of leaders devoted completely to God.
 - This shows Paul's continued respect for Jewish customs, even as he ministers to Gentiles.
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Journey to Syria with Priscilla and Aquila

- **Travel companions:** Paul takes Priscilla and Aquila with him—trusted partners in ministry who will later play a key role in Ephesus (see Acts 18:26).
 - **Destination: Syria:** He's heading back toward Antioch, his sending church, but makes a strategic stop first.
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Stop in Ephesus

- **Brief but impactful visit:** Paul goes to the synagogue and reasons with the Jews, continuing his pattern of starting with Scripture and showing how Jesus fulfills it.
- **Invitation to stay:** The Jews in Ephesus are receptive and want him to stay longer—a contrast to the resistance he faced in Corinth.
- **Paul's response:** He declines but promises to return, saying *"God willing."* This phrase reflects his dependence on divine guidance and timing.

Character	Role in the Story	Lesson for Us
Paul	Bold preacher, discouraged but obedient	God strengthens us when we're weary
Aquila & Priscilla	Faithful friends and co-workers	Ministry is a team effort
Apollos	Gifted speaker, humble learner	We all need growth and guidance
God (in vision)	Encourager and protector	God is with us in hard places

Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think Paul was afraid in Corinth (v.9)?
- How did God encourage him?
- What does this teach us about facing rejection or fear?
- Who are your "Aquila and Priscilla"—people who help you grow in faith?
- Where might God be calling you to speak boldly or serve faithfully?