

### **Sermon 3: God's Providence in the Ordinary: Acts 18:1-11**

**Text: Acts 18:1-11** "After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers. And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles. And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized. Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be 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. And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them..."

**Summary:** God uses everything, even the often overlooked to accomplish His work through us.

**Proposition:** We must purpose to be faithful in the ordinary.

#### **Introduction:**

- **Ecclesiastes 3:1** "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven..."
- **Ecclesiastes 3:11** "He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end..."

**Truth 1: God's providence triumphs over frustration: 18:1-2** "After these things..."

- **Acts 18 is built on three frustrating circumstances:**
  - **God disrupted Paul's ministry plans: Acts 16:6-7** "When they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia...they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not..."

- **The Jews were expelled from Rome: 18:2** "Found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome..."
- **Paul's ministries in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens were short and frustrating:**
  - **Legal injustice: Acts 16:37** "They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison..."
  - **Two raging mobs:**
    - **Acts 17:5** "The Jews which believed not, moved with envy...gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason..."
    - **Acts 17:10-14** "The brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea...But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people. And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul..."
  - **Mocked and rejected in Athens: Acts 17:32-33** "When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. So Paul departed from among them..."
- **Each frustration was an important part of the Acts 18 story.**

**Truth 2: God's providence transforms ordinary work: 18:3** "Because he was of the same craft, he abode with them..."

- **Their friendship was very ordinary:**
  - They had the same culture.
  - They did the same work.
  - They had opportunity in Corinth.
- **Paul was an opportunist for gospel engagement:**
  - He preached the gospel in synagogues.
  - He preached the gospel in the public square.
  - He preached the gospel in people's homes
  - He preached the gospel before public officials.
  - He preached the gospel in public halls.
  - He preached the gospel in prison.
  - He preached the gospel in his daily work.
- **He likely spent more time working than in any other context:**
  - This context was the most ordinary.
  - It was also one of the most productive.

**Truth 3: God's providence compounds ordinary labors: 18:18** "Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila..."

- **Ordinary interactions compounded over 15 years:**

- **Paul left them in Ephesus: Acts 18:18-19** "Then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila...And he came to Ephesus, and left them there..."
- **They disciplined Apollos: Acts 18:24-28** "And a certain Jew named Apollos...an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John...when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly...when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: For he mightily convinced the Jews...shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ..."
- **They ministered in Rome: Romans 16:3-5** "Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house..."
- **They ministered in Philippi: 1 Corinthians 16:19** "The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house..."
- **They ministered again in Ephesus: 2 Timothy 4:19** "Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus..."

- **15 years of fruitfulness in Rome, Ephesus, Corinth, and Philippi:**

- They personally encouraged Paul through their faithfulness.
- They opened their home for young church plants.
- They personally disciplined an influential minister in the early church.
- They were known to Christians throughout Macedonia, Achai, Asia, and Rome.

- **It all started with ordinary work during a painful season of life.**

**Truth 4: God's providence uses all things to accomplish good things:**

- **General principle: Romans 8:28** "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his

purpose..."

**Specific example:**

- **Philippians 1:12-14** "I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel...my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.
- **Philippians 1:15-18** "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds...What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice..."

**Application:**

- **Take Comfort:**
  - He is in control and knows what He is doing.
  - Despite our many limitations He consistently accomplishes His work
  - He never wastes what he permits.
- **Be Faithful:**
  - Be faithful in what you are given.
  - Cultivate redemptive relationships in every part of your life.
  - Be ready for gospel engagement whenever you have opportunity.
- **Anticipate:**
  - Anticipate the power of the Gospel.
  - Anticipate the needs beyond your personal bubble.
  - Anticipate God's blessing through ordinary faithfulness.
  - Anticipate God's ability to do more that you thought possible.
- **Invest what you have:**
  - Take the time to learn.
  - Take the time to teach.
  - Let people into your life.
  - Never stop doing these things.
  - Lift those who are investing wisely.