

The Book of Acts / The History of the Apostles

Lesson 60 – Acts 16-18 – Paul's Second Journey Part 7

INTRODUCTION

Paul's second journey (Acts 15:36-18:22) marks a significant expansion of the Gospel into Europe, with Paul, Silas, and later Timothy and Luke, traversing Asia Minor and Greece. Spanning approximately AD 50-52, this journey demonstrates the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit, Paul's adaptability, and the impact the Gospel had across diverse cultures.

In Acts 18:1-11, Paul arrives in Corinth, meets Aquila and Priscilla, works as a tentmaker while reasoning in the synagogue on Sabbaths, and shifts to full-time ministry upon Silas and Timothy's arrival. Opposition from Jews leads him to focus on Gentiles with notable conversions like Crispus. A divine vision encourages Paul to persist fearlessly, assuring protection and promising many believers in the city. Paul remains in Corinth for 18 months, establishing a strong church amid a morally challenging environment.

Now, in Acts 18:12-28, we see the climax of opposition in Corinth, resolved through Roman legal intervention, followed by Paul's return to Antioch, marking the end of the second journey. The narrative then transitions to the ministry of Apollos in Ephesus and Corinth, bridging to Paul's third journey. This section highlights themes of divine protection, legal rights in evangelism, the role of key collaborators, and the spread of the Gospel through eloquent teachers like Apollos.

ACTS 18:12-28 PAUL FINALIZES HIS JOURNEY, APOLLOS IS INTRODUCED

Geographical Notes (Acts 18:12-28)

Corinth (Acts 18:12-17): As previously noted, Corinth was a Roman colony on the isthmus, infamous for its commercial vitality and moral laxity and linked to the temple of Aphrodite. The bema (judgment seat) where Paul appears before Gallio was a public platform in the agora, excavated today, symbolizing Roman authority. Corinth's diverse population—Jews, Greeks, Romans—created a volatile mix for ministry, with the synagogue likely near the marketplace.

Cenchreae (Acts 18:18): Corinth's eastern port, about 7 miles from the city, served as a gateway to the Aegean Sea. It was a bustling harbor with temples, including one to Isis, and archaeological remains show its significance in trade.

Ephesus (Acts 18:19-21, 24-28): A major port in Asia Minor (modern Turkey). Ephesus was the capital of the province of Asia, renowned for the Temple of Artemis (one of the Seven Wonders), a massive structure drawing pilgrims and fostering a cult of fertility and magic. The city's theater, agora, and harbor made it a cultural and economic hub. The synagogue indicates a substantial Jewish community, setting the stage for Apollos's ministry and Paul's future extended stay.

Antioch (Acts 18:22): Paul's return voyage likely hugged the coast, stopping at Caesarea (a Roman port in Judea) before heading inland to Jerusalem (implied) and then to Antioch, the

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missionary base. Antioch, in Syria, was a cosmopolitan city with a strong church, serving as the launch point for Paul's journeys.

Alexandria (Acts 18:24): Apollos's hometown of Alexandria, Egypt, was an intellectual center founded by Alexander the Great, home to the famous library and a large Jewish diaspora.

People:

Gallio (Acts 18:12-17): Proconsul of Achaia (Greece) around AD 51-52, as confirmed by the Delphi Inscription (an archaeological find dating his tenure). Brother of the philosopher Seneca and adopted son of a rhetorician, Gallio represented the Roman elite. His dismissal of the case against Paul reflects Roman policy of non-interference in Jewish religious disputes.

Sosthenes (Acts 18:17): Successor to Crispus as synagogue ruler, beaten by the crowd (possibly Greeks or even frustrated Jews).

Apollos (Acts 18:24-28): A Jew from Alexandria, eloquent and Scripture-savvy, initially knowing only John's baptism (repentance in preparation for the Messiah). Taught by Aquila and Priscilla, he becomes a powerful advocate for the Gospel. References in 1 Corinthians (1:12, 3:4-6) show his influence in Corinth, where factions formed around him, Paul, and others. His ministry demonstrates that Paul was not alone in ministry to both Jews and Greeks in proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah.

Timing:

This section spans the latter part of Paul's 18-month stay in Corinth (AD 50-52). The return voyage (Acts 18:18-22) likely took weeks, involving sea travel and brief stops. Apollos's ministry (Acts 18:24-28) overlaps or follows shortly after, around AD 52-53, as Paul begins his third journey (Acts 18:23). The narrative compresses time, focusing on pivotal transitions.

The Role of Non-Apostles

Aquila and Priscilla's instruction of Apollos highlights the importance of tentmaker missionaries and second-generation teaching. They exemplify collaborative ministry, correcting incomplete knowledge. This demonstrates a model of Paul entrusting doctrine to proficient teachers who would maintain the truth during and after Paul's journeys.

ACTS 18:12-28 EXPOSITION

Acts 18:12-17 – Trial Before Gallio

Verse 12: While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews united in opposition to Paul, bringing him before the judgment seat (bema). Gallio's brief tenure (confirmed externally) dates this precisely, underscoring historical accuracy. The "Jews" likely include synagogue leaders like Sosthenes, motivated by jealousy over believers in Jesus (similar to Thessalonica, Acts 17:5). The bema was a raised platform for public rulings, emphasizing the spectacle.

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Verse 13: The accusation: "This man persuades people to worship God contrary to the law." Ambiguous, it could mean Roman law (sedition) or Jewish law (blasphemy). In context, it's likely Jewish, as Paul taught grace over Mosaic observance, echoing the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). This charge mirrors those against Jesus (Luke 23:2) and Stephen (Acts 6:13), politicizing theology.

Verses 14-15: Before Paul speaks, Gallio dismisses the case: "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, I would hear you. But since it's questions about words, names, and your own law, see to it yourselves." Gallio's indifference reflects Roman tolerance for religion, viewing Christianity as a Jewish sect. "Words and names" may allude to debates over "Messiah" or "Jesus," dismissing them as semantics.

Verse 16: Gallio drives them away, showing impatience with internal disputes. This upholds Pax Romana, prioritizing order over religious squabbles.

Verse 17: The crowd seizes Sosthenes and beats him before the bema, with Gallio unconcerned. Who beats him? Possibly Greeks frustrated by Jewish disruption, or even Jews venting failure. The beating underscores Corinth's volatility but also God's protection—Paul remains unharmed, fulfilling the vision (Acts 18:10).

Acts 18:18-22 – Return to Antioch

Verse 18: Paul stays "many days longer" (post-trial, extending the 18 months), then sails for Syria with Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae, he cuts his hair due to a vow. Maybe a Nazirite vow (Numbers 6:1-21), symbolizing dedication or thanksgiving for protection. Cutting hair at journey's end may fit a Jewish custom (Acts 21:24), though Paul's observance here is voluntary, not legalistic (1 Corinthians 9:20).

Verses 19-21: In Ephesus, Paul enters the synagogue, reasons with Jews, who ask him to stay. He declines, promising return "if God wills", and sails away. Leaving Aquila and Priscilla sets up their role with Apollos. Ephesus's brief stop foreshadows Paul's third journey focus (Acts 19). The synagogue dialogue shows Paul's consistent pattern, even in transit.

Verse 22: Landing at Caesarea, Paul greets the church (likely in Jerusalem, implied), then goes to Antioch. This completes the second journey, reporting back to the sending church (Acts 14:26-27 parallel). The upward journey ("went up") often denotes Jerusalem, suggesting a quick temple visit, aligning with his vow's completion. This return emphasizes closure, rest, and preparation, with the Gospel now firmly planted in Europe.

Acts 18:23-28 – Apollos's Ministry

Verse 23: After time in Antioch, Paul departs for his third journey, strengthening disciples in Galatia and Phrygia. This transitional verse links journeys, showing ongoing care for established churches (cf. Acts 15:36).

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Verses 24-26: Apollos arrives in Ephesus—a learned Alexandrian Jew, eloquent, mighty in Scriptures, instructed in "the way of the Lord," fervent, teaching accurately about Jesus but knowing only John's baptism.

This guy is an enigma. Who is he named after? A Greek God

Eloquent - λόγιος logios – Well spoken, logical, learned. This also may be a play on words. In Alexandria, there was a philosopher named Philo (20 BC – AD 50). He was very much a contemporary of Apollos. Philo developed a philosophy called the Logos as a synthesis between Greek Philosophy and Jewish Theology.

- **Mediator Between God and Creation:** The Logos serves as a metaphysical bridge between the transcendent, unknowable God and the finite, sensible world. It allows God to interact with creation without compromising His absolute purity.
- **Divine Wisdom and Reason:** The Logos is the embodiment of divine wisdom, functioning as the rational principle that orders and sustains the cosmos.
- **When did he write this?:** Debate ensues, but it would appear that he wrote this around 40 AD. My theory is that this is Philo's philosophical response to Jesus and John's Gospel.

"Way of the Lord" may refer to Isaiah 40:3, John's preparatory message. His knowledge is incomplete—aware of Jesus but lacking a full understanding of Christian baptism or the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-7). Aquila and Priscilla hear him, take him aside privately, and explain "the way of God more accurately." Their belief in Jesus, coupled with their willingness to help Paul and learn from him, developed into ministry. Notice they did not shut down Apollos; they guided him into a correct understanding.

Verses 27-28: Apollos desires to go to Achaia (Greece); Ephesian brethren encourage him, writing ahead. In Corinth, he greatly helps believers, vigorously refuting Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ. His eloquence complements Paul's planting (1 Corinthians 3:6), but divisions rise. (1 Corinthians 1:12). "Refuting" implies thorough use of Old Testament proofs (e.g., Isaiah 53, Psalm 110). Apollos takes what was corrected and goes full throttle, demonstrating full understanding that Jesus is the Christ.

ACTS 18:12-28 CONCLUSION

Acts 18:12-28 wraps Paul's second journey with themes of protection amid opposition, strategic returns, and the emergence of new leaders like Apollos. Gallio's ruling exemplifies how God uses secular authorities for His purposes, while Aquila and Priscilla's mentorship shows how God's plan for generation training will work.