

Series: **The Original Church Planter**

Today's Title: **"Trusting God"** part 1

June 4, 2023 – Acts 18:1-11

Objective: To encourage Christians to respect others, themselves, and be confident in God's power to change lives.

Opening Prayer

It's amazing to think of where Paul traveled as he brought the gospel to the Gentile world.

He went to places we would be thrilled to visit today.

I hope to lead a trip to many of these cities in the next couple of years – *Walk in the Footsteps of Paul* trip.

Turn to Acts 18:1-11 – p. 927

I wanted to start today by giving some background and context of the city of Corinth – but I don't have time for that in today's message.

I'll share that with you next week.

But there is some background context I want to share with you about the gospel ministry in the city of Rome – which has a connection with our passage today.

A few years prior to this, the gospel was making an impact in Rome.

We don't know who brought the gospel to Rome – but in 49 A.D. Emperor Claudius expelled Jews who were involved in riots.

Some historians and theologians believe the Jewish riots were due to a heated dispute over whether Jesus was the Messiah or not.

Something we've seen in Paul's journeys that causes very strong reactions from Jews who don't believe Jesus is the Messiah – and they often reacted with violence.

Most believe riots broke out in Rome between non-believing Jews and Messianic Jews (believers in Jesus) – and the emperor expelled them from the city as a result.

Let's read 18:1-3

God uses bad things for good. vs. 1-3

Luke tells us Paul made the journey from Athens to Corinth – and he meets a couple: Aquila and his wife, Priscilla.

These 2 become very close friends with Paul.

There is nothing mentioned about them coming to faith in Jesus – or getting baptized – so they are already followers of Jesus when Paul meets them in Corinth.

They were among the Jews who were expelled from Rome – and they made their way to Corinth.

They are tentmakers – just like Paul.

Most Rabbis had a trade – in addition to their Rabbinic studies – and Paul's trade was as a tentmaker.

Corinth was a great place for tents due to the **Isthmian Games** – held in Corinth every 2 years.

Most believe the athletes and spectators who came to the Isthmian games every 2 years would stay in tents – and so there was a great need for new tents and repairing older tents.

Their friendship developed quickly – and it's decided Paul should live with them – and work with them. Aquila and Pricilla would become wonderful and valuable ministry partners for Paul.

Let's take a step back and think about what has happened in the lives of the Apostle Paul – and this couple.

On this 2nd church planting trip, before it started, he and Barnabas had a major disagreement and they decided it was best to part ways – so they formed 2 teams.

Paul now has Silas as his partner in ministry.

They leave – and visit some of the cities from his 1st trip.

But the Spirit of God prevents them from visiting other cities in Asia Minor – and prevents them from going North into Mysia and Bithynia.

On the western coast of Asia Minor – in/near the port city of Troas, Paul has a vision of a man in Macedonia asking him to come there – so they cross the Aegean Sea, and their first stop is the city of Philippi.

In Philippi, Paul and Silas meet Lydia – and her family – and they put their faith in Jesus as their Savior.

Shortly after that, Paul and Silas are beaten and imprisoned.

After a miraculous release from prison, they leave Philippi and travel to Thessalonica.

In Thessalonica, a few hear the gospel of Jesus – and they put their faith in Jesus as their Savior.

But the non-believing Jews recruit some of the local troublemakers and they instigate a mob that wants to tear Paul apart.

They're forced to leave Thessalonica by the cover of darkness and their next destination is the city of Berea.

In Berea their initial welcoming is a pleasant surprise – and “Many of them therefore believed...” (17:12).

But the Jews from Thessalonica make the trip to Berea, and they rile up another crowd against Paul.

So, the believers there decide to send Paul 250+ miles to Athens.

In Athens Paul's spirit is “provoked” – meaning crushed – irritated, angry.

He “reasons” with the Jews in the synagogue, and with the Gentiles in the marketplace, where some of the leading intellectuals heard him and invite him to come and share this “new teaching” with the full Areopagus.

A few converts respond to Paul's message – and he moves on from Athens – about 50 miles west to the city of Corinth.

Aquila and Priscilla – all we know is they were expelled from Rome by Emperor Claudius' edict.

There is certainly a great deal of trauma in that entire story of the Jewish riots in Rome – and then being forced to leave Rome.

Relocating in the ancient world was no easy task – and when they left, they would likely never see the family and friends who lived in Rome.

All of those difficulties and traumatic experiences – in Paul's life – and Aquila and Priscilla's life – God used those things to bring them to Corinth – and now they begin to form a bond of friendship due to their common faith in Christ – and their common trade of tentmaking.

This is what God does.

He uses all things – both good and bad – to accomplish His purposes.

He uses the good and bad in your life – to form the image of Christ in you.

He uses the good and bad to deepen your faith and strengthen your character.

James 1:2

“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds...”

In some ways the Bible can be like a jigsaw puzzle. Not when it comes to an understanding of a passage – but to understand the backstory – or the interpersonal realities of the people involved.

Let’s put one of those puzzles together...

‘Completed puzzle’: We know Paul was alone in Athens waiting for Timothy and Silas – and we know he arrives in Corinth alone.

But Timothy and Silas had actually joined him in Athens (not recorded in Acts) – but shortly after they arrived in Athens – Paul sent them back to Macedonia (Thessalonica & Philippi).

We know this by what he wrote in his letter to the Thessalonians – and his letter to the Corinthian church – after his time in Corinth.

In his first letter to the Thessalonian church, Paul writes:

1 Thessalonians 3:1-2 (We’re not sure who the ‘we’ refers to – probably some unnamed members of the church planting team.)

“Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God’s coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith...”

A few verses later – Paul writes this:

1 Thessalonians 3:6-7

“But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you--for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith.”

So, it's clear (when you put the puzzle pieces together) that Paul sent Tim back to Thessalonica – to encourage the believers there – and to bring back a report on how they were doing.

But what about Paul sending Silas to Philippi?

This one is not as clear – but since we know Timothy and Silas were Paul's 2 closest co-workers – and if Timothy went to the Thessalonians – that leaves Silas to visit the Philippians.

Philippians 4:15

“And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only.”

OK – the church in Philippi supported Paul financially. But Paul left Philippi in a hurry.

They might have given Paul some financial help when they left – (Lydia was wealthy) but there was another time some money was sent to Paul.

2 Corinthians 11:9

“And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need.”

In his 2nd letter to the church in Corinth – Paul reminds them that he wasn't a financial burden to them in any way – **BECAUSE** – the brothers who came from Macedonia (Timothy and Silas?) “...supplied my need.”

When we put the puzzle pieces together, we see that Timothy and Silas arrived when Paul was still in Athens. He then sent them back to the churches in Macedonia, to help them – encourage and strengthen them – and to bring back a report on how they were doing. They brought back a great report – the churches were growing and faithful – and they also brought back money from the church in Philippi to support Paul's ministry.

Always remember... God uses bad things for good!

Our priority and passion for ministry. vs. 4-5

Paul's life purpose was not tentmaking.

His purpose was gospel ministry.

His purpose was sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

As was his practice – he started his ministry in the synagogue (the Jewish place of worship) to tell the Jewish population that their long-awaited Messiah had come – and it was Jesus of Nazareth.

Read vs. 4-5

Once again “he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath...” – this is discussion, dialogue, 2-way conversations, debating, etc.

“...and tried to persuade” – the verb tense (persuade – imperfect, indicative, active) indicated this was an ongoing action.

Paul was *‘trying to persuade’* or *‘continually trying to persuade’*.

Frequency: He’s doing this on every Sabbath.

We don’t know how many Sabbaths this went on.

He likely had other discussions / conversations outside of the synagogue during the week.

But he was limited in how much time he could commit to ministry.

He had to eat, have a roof over his head, there were expenses to life – so during the week he is working – as a tentmaker.

But then there is a shift in **vs. 5**.

We see a change in the time he’s able to commit to ministry.

“When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word...”

The verb “was occupied” is where we find the change.

The NASB translates this as, “began devoting himself completely...”

This Greek term was often used to describe someone that was afflicted by illness – seized by sickness.

Interesting word to describe Paul's full devotion to sharing about Christ.

What happened?

Timothy and Silas returned with money so Paul could focus all of his time on ministry.

He didn't need to spend his time tentmaking – he could give himself completely to the work of the gospel.

He was now able to focus full-time talking with the Jewish population about Jesus – continuing to try and persuade them that Jesus was the Christ.

We must learn to leave people in their unbelief. vs. 6

This might be one of the most difficult realities of ministry – especially when the unbeliever is a spouse, loved one, or a close friend.

Read vs. 6

“opposed” and “reviled” are strong words in the Greek.

“opposed” was a military term – and it referred to placing a soldier or platoon in a strategic position to advance on the enemy or to resist the enemy's attack.

“reviled” – is ‘*blasphemeo*’ – the word for blaspheme.

Slandering or profaning what is sacred – abusive or insulting language about God.

At some point, as Paul continued to try and persuade them about Jesus, they stopped having conversations – stopped discussing this – and the Jews in the synagogue became organized in their opposition to Paul and his message.

They started to say things about Jesus that Paul would not put up with.

So, he makes a very strong gesture of his rejection of their disbelief.

Shaking out his garments was a symbolic rejection of them by Paul.

He wanted no part of them – they had crossed the line.

“Your blood be on your own heads!

I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”

He did his job.

Their disbelief is not his fault – not his responsibility.

They are fully responsible before God for their rejection of Jesus.

From this point forward – in Corinth – Paul will look for Gentiles who want to hear the message of Jesus.

This can be one of the most difficult decisions we have to make.

When do you stop sharing the gospel with someone?

There comes a point when sharing more actually creates more opposition – more resistance to Christ.

There are times we must move on – leave someone in their unbelief – and look for others who are willing to talk about spiritual things.

Love them – serve them – help them – encourage them. We don't do those things as ploys or strategies in bringing people to faith.

Leave them in their unbelief.

Ask God to help you find someone else to share the gospel with!

He'll answer that prayer!!!!

Encouragement from God as we share the gospel. vs. 7-11

Here we see 4 great encouragements for Paul – who was discouraged and fearful and timid when he arrived in Corinth (more on that next week).

God encourages the Apostle to the Gentiles in 4 ways.

1. Converts
2. Power of God
3. Protection
4. Promise of more converts

Read vs. 7-11

Wow! What a difference in the results of Paul's ministry!!!

1. Converts

How about that – once Paul leaves the synagogue in their unbelief is when “the ruler of the synagogue” comes to faith in Christ!

When Paul leaves the synagogue – he goes to a a Gentile who had likely expressed interest in Paul’s message – and he happens to live right next door to the synagogue – and Paul uses his home as a base of operations!!

Titius Justus – a Gentile man - is also named Gaius (Gaius Titius Justus).

Luke is very specific mentioning the conversions of Titius – and Crispus.

1 Corinthians 1:14

“I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius...”

Since Gaius is mentioned with Crispus – most scholars believe this was another name this man had.

And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.

There’s nothing that encourages those in ministry than converts.

When someone puts their faith in Jesus as their Savior – all the hard work and challenges are insignificant compared to the joy of someone coming to faith!

2. Power

“...for I am with you...”

God’s presence = God’s power.

God’s presence brought comfort and confidence.

When Paul arrived in Corinth he felt alone – worn out – fearful.

When God tells him, “...for I am with you” – that was all Paul needed!!! (2 Thess. 1:9)

3. Protection

God promises to protect Paul.

He will not be in danger like he had been in so many other cities.

“...no one will attack you to harm you...”

What did this do for Paul’s emotions – anxieties?

Do you think this liberated him for ministry?

Do you think it made him even bolder?

Paul could minister without fear of attack or physical harm.

4. Promise of more converts

“...for I have many in this city who are My people.”

I’m sure Paul’s spirit was provoked even more than it was in Athens with all the blatant immorality of Corinth. But in this place – he would see a tremendous response to the gospel.

Not only does the leader of the synagogue come to faith – but many others will too!

What a great promise from God.

This is my hope... my prayer.

That we will see converts – many, many converts over the years.

That the message of Christ we're committed to sharing will result in hundreds and hundreds of people coming to faith.

Is this your prayer?

Have you put your faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins?

vs. 11 - "And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them."

The church in Corinth – planted with Gaius and Crispus and the others – grew and grew as more and more people in the city heard the gospel and started following Jesus as their Savior.

Paul was able to stay and minister to them for 18 months!

What a blessing compared to the other churches they had planted – where he was forced to leave town due to physical dangers.

Apply it...

Be encouraged in difficulty.

Be passionate about the gospel.

Entrust unbelievers to God's care.

Closing prayer