The Book of Acts Lesson 34

Acts 18: 1-28

“God is Guiding Many to the Goal”

# Paul carried grace to a wicked place.

1. The city of Corinth was famous for its immorality.
2. The population of Corinth was around 600,000 when Paul came on the scene.
3. It was a place where many people went to indulge in the appetites of the flesh much like people go to Las Vegas today.
4. It speaks of the culture that the term “*Korinthian*”, used to address a woman was synonymous in that day with calling her a harlot.
5. There was much wealth in this city.
6. Corinth was located on an Isthmus, making it the shortest distance for traders to travel, much like the Panama Canal.
7. Much trade and enterprise took place here, so there were many people with a lot of money and a lot of pride.
8. Paul’s message of salvation was in complete opposition with the average Corinthian citizen, nevertheless Paul preached.
9. Idolatry was a part of their lives.
10. Because of the many sailors that would have docked in Corinth’s ports, Neptune the Greek god of the sea was worshipped there.
11. A common practice in the worship of these “gods” would have involved prostitution.

D. Corinth for many reasons would not have been the ideal place to take the gospel.

1. Christians today would not have wanted to live here or even visit.

2. But Paul, in spite of having been chased and even beaten in his recent stops cared about these people and knew that if they laid down their pride in wealth, intellect, importance, and sinful indulgences that God could change their lives.

# Paul’s ministry took a turn to focus on finding faith.

1. He identified with and loved the Jewish community.
2. This is why he went to the synagogue and tried to reason with them from the scriptures.
3. He had a desire to see the Jewish community in this place trust Christ.
4. After consistently laboring to see them saved he heard their rejection.
5. Time and again Paul was hurt in every sense by the Jew’s rejection of Christ the Messiah.
6. When he saw that their hearts were hardened to the point that they were willing to forsake the truth and contradict themselves he turned his efforts to the gentiles.
7. God vindicated his decision in verse 6 by the conversion of many and by a vision in vs 9-10.
8. Some might say that Paul lost his cool, but it is in line with what Jesus told the disciples to expect.

Mark 6:11 *Ando whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.*

1. When we share the gospel with others we must not allow our good intentions drive us to cram the gospel down people’s throats.
2. God is looking for willing hearts, and sometimes we will meet people who need time to process. I don’t believe that Paul considered the Jews to be hopeless, but he did want to focus his efforts on the gentiles since God had made clear that His offer of saving grace was for them as well.
3. Paul remained with those believers for 18 months.
4. When Paul preached something amazing happened. Verse 8. Many believed and were baptized.
5. Paul stayed in spite of danger because God promised that He would keep him safe. Vs. 9-10

# God used the weapon of the unbelievers for Paul’s protection.

1. The Roman law is used to accuse Paul.
2. When the Jews saw the gentile conversion they again were jealous and accused Paul of treason.
3. Like with Jesus they claimed that Paul required allegiance of another above Caesar.
4. The Jewish religion would have been a *religio licita (*authorized religion), and could make the claim that Paul preached according to an unauthorized religion.
5. Gallio’s decision takes this matter off the court.
6. He refused to become involved in deciding matters of religion.
7. Paul was protected by an official decision to keep the state separate from matters of faith.
8. This is in line with the historical Baptist stance on separation of church and state.
9. This set a precedent which would allow Christians to practice their faith.
10. God grants Paul safe travels to continue on his journey. Vs. 18.

Note: Paul’s vow is likely a Nazarite vow and is not weird, but an expression of thankfulness and commitment to the Lord. It was something he was comfortable participating in because of the liberty he found in Christ.

1. Through God’s protection Paul reports back in Antioch. Vs. 22-23
2. His relationship with the church in Antioch is not arbitrary, but an example for missions.
3. Paul had been called out of Antioch and the church continued to support him through prayer. They were a part of his ministry.
4. Hillcrest at this time has sent out 11 missionaries and church planters and we play an important role in their ministries.
   1. We have a responsibility to pray for them.
   2. We have a responsibility to be a help to them as the Lord enables us.
   3. We have a reason to rejoice in the fruit that is being produced by His servants all over the world.

Transition: The focus of Paul’s ministry is to find faith in all who will believe, ours is the same. It is a blessing to see pastors and missionaries doing this, but Aquila and Priscila serve as the example of how every one of us can contribute to the strengthening of believers.

# The strength of the disciples serves to perfect the partial.

1. Apollos was preaching the partial truth, which was all the truth he knew.
2. He was from Alexandria and was very knowledgeable in the scriptures.
3. However he only knew the baptism of John.
4. Aquila and Priscila’s teaching helped make Apollos a blessing to the church in Corinth.
5. The influence of Apollos upon the Corinthian church is seen in how Paul writes of his respect for Apollos.
6. 1 Cor. 3:6 *I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.*
7. You can help others in the same way by making Bible study a part of your life.
8. Make daily Bible reading a must in your life.
9. Memorize Scripture.
10. Make preaching a priority in your life.
11. This will have the greatest impact upon your relationship with Christ.
12. 3 John 1:4 *I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*
13. Deuteronomy 11:18 *Therefore shall ye lay up there my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.*
14. John 17:17 *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*