

Teaching God's Word

Acts 18:1-11, 18-21
SS Lesson for 11/29/2015

Devotional Scripture: Eph 4:11-16

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson outlines the steps we can use in **Teaching God's Word**. The **study's aim** is to understand the role of teaching ministries in a local church. The **study's application** is to recognize and use teaching as a means of spreading the gospel to people.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Acts 18:9-10

9 Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; 10 for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Without explaining the circumstances Luke simply stated, **After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth**. The cities of Athens and Corinth, though only 50 miles apart, were quite different. Athens was noted for its culture and learning, Corinth for its commerce and profligacy. Corinth was located just south of a narrow isthmus which joined the peninsula called Peloponnesus to Achaia to the north. Land trade moving north and south went through Corinth as did sea trade going east and west. Corinth possessed two seaport cities—Lechaeum two miles to the west on the Gulf of Corinth which opened to the Adriatic Sea, and Cenchrea, seven miles to the southeast which brought trade from the Aegean Sea. The southern tip of the Peloponnesus Peninsula was dangerous for ocean travel, so ships would put into port at one of Corinth's seaports and have their cargoes carried across to the other side of the isthmus for shipping there. In 146 B.C. the Romans razed Corinth. However, its strategic location would not permit the city to die. It was rebuilt a century later in 46 B.C. As one would expect from a city supported by commerce and travelers, Corinth was marked by profligate and licentious living. It was a center for the worship of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, who promoted immorality in the name of religion. Politically, Corinth was a Roman colony and capital of the province of Achaia. Some insights into Paul's emotions as he came to Corinth are seen in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5. His acknowledged weakness, fear, and much trembling may have been due to several factors: (1) He came alone. (2) The difficulties he had faced since coming to Macedonia may have filled him with apprehension as to what would happen in Corinth (cf. Acts 18:9-10). (3) Even in a world hardened to profligacy Corinth held a reputation for its sexual license. The fact that Paul came to Corinth alone *may* account for his having baptized some people in that city, a practice he normally delegated to others (cf. 1 Cor. 1:14-17).

In Corinth Paul met **Aquila** and **his wife Priscilla**. Aquila was a **Jew**, originally from **Pontus**, a province in northeast Asia Minor south of the Black Sea. Displaced from Rome because of an edict in A.D. 49 or 50 from **Claudius for all the Jews to leave Rome**, Aquila and Priscilla had come to Corinth to ply their trade. (Claudius reigned from A.D. 41 to 54; see the list of Roman emperors at Luke 2:1.) Suetonius (A.D. 69?-140), a biographer of Roman emperors, described what may have been the occasion for such a decree. In his *Life of Claudius* (25.4) he referred to the constant riots of the Jews at the instigation of Chrestus. Possibly the name Chrestus is a reference to Christ. Whether Aquila and Priscilla were Christians before they met Paul is not known. Because Aquila was called "a Jew" did not mean he knew Christ (cf. Apollos, a Jew; Acts 18:24). Nor can it be argued that Paul lived with them because they were believers; he stayed with them because they were tentmakers (v. 3). Several times Priscilla's name is given before Aquila's (vv. 18-19, 26; Rom. 16:3). This *may* be due to her noble family background. Their mutual trade was **tent-making**. The term used here is *skēnopoioi*, which some say includes working in leather. Perhaps leather was used in the tents as was goat's hair, for which Paul's home province of Cilicia was well known. As is still common in the Middle East, a workman's shop was downstairs and his living quarters upstairs. Once again Paul, according to his custom, began his work of evangelism **in the synagogue** (cf. 9:20; 13:5, 14; 14:1; 17:2, 10, 17; 18:19; 19:8). With the arrival of **Silas and Timothy... from**

Macedonia (cf. 17:14-15), **Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching**. The verb translated “devoted... exclusively” is *syneicheto* (from *synechō*) which here in the passive means “to be constrained.” Several factors about Silas and Timothy’s arrival encouraged Paul: (1) The pair evidently brought financial aid from Macedonia (cf. 2 Cor. 11:9; Phil 4:15). Because of this monetary gift it was no longer necessary for Paul to pursue a trade and he could give himself totally to the work of the gospel. (2) The good news about the steadfastness of the Thessalonian church refreshed Paul (cf. 1 Thes. 3:6-8). (3) Their companionship would have been an encouragement to the apostle. His message was the same as the one he learned on the Damascus Road: **Jesus is the Christ**, that is, the Messiah (cf. Acts 2:36; 3:18, 20; 17:3; 18:28).

Once again is seen the pattern of Jewish opposition to the gospel, followed by Paul’s subsequent turning **to the Gentiles** (cf. 13:7-11, 46; 14:2-6; 17:5; 19:8-9; 28:23-28). Paul’s shaking **out his clothes** parallels Paul’s and Barnabas’ shaking dust from their feet (13:51). When Paul said, **Your blood be on your own heads**, he was referring to their destruction and their own **responsibility** for it (cf. Ezek. 33:1-6). After **Paul left the synagogue**, he found a fortunate location for preaching the gospel to the assembly of the saints **next door in the house of Titius Justus**. He was probably a Gentile, for he is called **a worshiper of God** (cf. 16:14; 17:4). In addition, **Crispus, the synagogue ruler**, with **his family believed**. He would have been well acquainted with the Old Testament Scriptures, and his conversion undoubtedly was an impetus for **many more Corinthians** to be converted. Some threatening circumstances must have prompted this **vision from the Lord**. Perhaps this was God’s response to Paul’s vow (cf. v. 18). The Lord urged **Paul to keep on** ministering in Corinth, assuring him that **no... harm** would come. No doubt **Paul** welcomed this word because of recent attacks against him in other cities (cf. 17:5, 13) and in Corinth itself (18:6). Paul obediently followed the Lord’s direction and **stayed for a year and a half** (cf. v. 18), second only in length to his two to three years in Ephesus (19:10; 20:31). Interestingly the word used for **people** in 18:10 is *laos*, often used of God’s people Israel. Quite clearly, the Lord’s plans for the world meant that the church temporarily was to take the place of His Chosen People, the Jews (cf. Rom. 11:11-21).

Verses 12-17 form a critical point in Luke’s apologetic. It is important first because of who **Gallio** was, a Roman **proconsul**, governor of **Achaia**. Any judgment pronounced by him would establish legal precedent. Furthermore, Gallio was a brother of Seneca (4 B.C.-A.D. 65), a philosopher of great influence in Rome. **The unbelieving Jews** were not about to stop opposing **Paul** (cf. v. 6). They **united and brought him into court**. The Jews **charged Paul with persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the Roman law**. Rome did not permit the propagation of new religions. Judaism was an accepted and established belief. These Jews were saying in effect that Christianity was a new and different cult, distinct from Judaism. However, **Gallio** saw it differently. To him Christianity came under the aegis of Judaism and therefore was not a **matter** to be settled in a civil court. This decision was crucial for it was tantamount to legitimizing Christianity in the eyes of Roman law. The spontaneous outburst of violence against **Sosthenes, the synagogue ruler**, betrayed the spirit of anti-Semitism that lay just beneath the veneer of society in Corinth. The Gentiles in Corinth wanted nothing of the Jews’ contentions. Sosthenes had evidently become ruler of the synagogue in place of Crispus and had led in the Jews’ charge against Paul. He may well be the same Sosthenes who was later converted to Christianity and was referred to in 1 Corinthians 1:1. Such a minor incident was of **no concern to Gallio**. Though there was violence, he was unconcerned about religious matters. The actual length of Paul’s stay **in Corinth** is unclear because the 18 months (v. 11) may be dated from the time of Paul’s vision (vv. 9-10) or it may include all of Paul’s **time** in Corinth (from v. 5 on). **Paul then left Corinth**, heading for his sending church, Antioch on the Orontes River in **Syria**. **But before he left he had his hair cut off at Cenchrea**, Corinth’s southeastern port, **because of a vow he had taken**. When Paul made this vow is unstated. He may have made it when he left Troas for Macedonia, or at the beginning of his ministry at Corinth, or more likely, before the Lord gave him the vision (vv. 9-10). During the vow Paul would have let his hair grow. Now the time of the Nazirite vow was over (after about a year and a half), and Paul got a haircut at Cenchrea (cf. Num. 6:1-21). Josephus wrote about some Jews who immediately after a misfortune, shaved their heads and refused to offer sacrifices for 30 days (*Jewish Wars* 2. 15. 1). If this is the case Paul would have cut his hair at the

beginning of his vow. But this is somewhat improbable because there is no mention of an illness or other affliction (unless 2 Cor. 12:7-9 fits in here). **Priscilla and Aquila** accompanied **Paul** as far as **Ephesus**. Evidently Silas and Timothy remained in Macedonia and Achaia to oversee the churches there. Why Priscilla and Aquila moved to Ephesus is not known. Probably it was for the sake of the gospel. As in every city where there was a **synagogue** Paul **went in and reasoned with the Jews** (cf. 9:20; 13:5, 14; 14:1; 17:2, 10, 17; 18:4; 19:8). Unlike the obstinate refusal of the Jews in other synagogues to believe, those in **Ephesus** desired further interchange with Paul. However, he was more inclined to press on homeward. Some Greek manuscripts add that Paul's desire to go to Jerusalem in haste was to keep a feast. If this is accurate, probably Paul wanted to observe the Passover. After landing **at Caesarea** on the Palestinian coast—a voyage of about 500 miles from Ephesus—Paul **went up** (to Jerusalem) **and greeted the church and then went down to Antioch**. “Going up” and “going down” are almost technical terms that refer to going to and leaving Jerusalem's higher elevation.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

We are able to date Paul's time in Corinth more precisely than any other point in his ministry. Acts 18:12 mentions that Gallio was “proconsul of Achaia” (the Roman province in southern Greece) at the time. Archaeologists have discovered an inscription that allows us to date Gallio's tenure in Corinth to be AD 51-53, meaning that Paul's 18 months there overlapped that span of time in some way. Corinth at the time was large and important. The Romans had destroyed the city in 146 BC but planted a Roman colony in the same place 102 years later, in 44 BC. That effort recognized the area's strategic location on a narrow strip of land that connected the Peloponnesian Peninsula to the south with the larger Greek Peninsula to the north. This isthmus, less than five miles wide at its narrowest, had been improved with the diolkos: a stone pavement and a carved track for cartwheels or wooden skids that allowed ships to be plucked from the waters of the Ionian Sea to the west, transported overland, and refloated in the Aegean Sea to the east (or vice versa). This procedure eliminated hundreds of miles of dangerous sailing around the Peloponnesian Peninsula. The city of Corinth controlled this operation and reaped substantial income from it. This made Corinth a center of trade, with a very diverse and cosmopolitan citizenry as a result. The fact that Paul could spend 18 months there and then move on for reasons other than fear of life and limb certainly distinguished this mission field from others he had encountered to that point!

From the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

Sometimes we make a distinction between preaching and teaching. We think of preaching as what the pastor does in declaring the gospel to bring people to faith in Christ. We think of teaching, or educational ministries, as what teachers do to help believers know more about the Bible. While this distinction is true in part, we need to recognize also the value of teaching ministries as a means of spreading the gospel. Both preaching and teaching are needed in a church. In his book *Teaching for Spiritual Growth* (Zondervan), Perry Downs likened preaching and teaching to the two wings of a plane. A plane needs both wings to fly, and a church needs both ministries—teaching and preaching—to fulfill its mission. Preaching and teaching are different, but they share the common goal of helping people understand and respond to the Word.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Teaching in the Synagogue (Acts 18:1-6)

1 After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth.

2 And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them.

3 So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.

4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.

5 When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.

6 But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

Creating new relationships (1-3)

A relationship where we can carry other's burdens (Gal 6:2)

2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

A relationship where there is always forgiveness (Matt 18:21-22)

21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

A relationship where there is sympathy, compassion and humbleness (1 Peter 3:8)

8 Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.

A relationship where it doesn't matter the positions of others (Rom 12:16)

16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Being compelled by the Holy Spirit (4-5)

Compelled to love others (1 John 4:21)

21 And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Compelled to edify others (John 21:15-18)

15 When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." 16 Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." 17 The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. 18 I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go."

Compelled into obedience (1 John 2:4-6)

4 The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: 6 Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

Handling opposition (6)

Handle opposition understanding they are never too large for God (Judg 7:4-7)

4 But the Lord said to Gideon, "There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will sift them for you there. If I say, 'This one shall go with you,' he shall go; but if I say, 'This one shall not go with you,' he shall not go." 5 So Gideon took the men down to the water. There the Lord told him,

"Separate those who lap the water with their tongues like a dog from those who kneel down to drink." 6 Three hundred men lapped with their hands to their mouths. All the rest got down on their knees to drink. 7 The Lord said to Gideon, "With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the other men go, each to his own place."

Handle opposition understanding God helps the powerless against the mighty (2 Chron 14:9-12)

9 Zerah the Cushite marched out against them with a vast army and three hundred chariots, and came as far as Mareshah. 10 Asa went out to meet him, and they took up battle positions in the Valley of Zephathah near Mareshah. 11 Then Asa called to the Lord his God and said, "Lord, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, O Lord our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army. O Lord, you are our God; do not let man prevail against you." 12 The Lord struck down the Cushites before Asa and Judah. The Cushites fled,

Handle opposition understanding reliance on God can always bring deliverance (2 Cor 1:8-10)

8 We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. 9 Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. 10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us,

Teaching in the Home (Acts 18:7-8)

7 And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue.

8 Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.

Finding locations (7)

We should pray that God leads us to the right places (Ps 27:11)

11 Teach me your way, O Lord; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors.

Use God's word as the guide to where we should be (Ps 119:105)

105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

God always places people where and when He wants them (1 Cor 12:18)

18 But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

Experiencing the power of belief in God (8)

Belief in Jesus overcomes condemnation (John 3:18)

18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

Belief in God provides righteousness (Rom 3:22)

22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference,

Belief in God allows us to be children of God (Gal 3:26)

26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,

Teaching Protected by God (Acts 18:9-11)

9 Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent;
10 for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."
11 And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Hearing and trusting God (9-10)

Trusting God is a blessing (Ps 84:12)

12 O Lord Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in you.

Trusting God overcomes challenges (Rom 8:31-36)

31 What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? 33 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died — more than that, who was raised to life — is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

Hearing God through His making His voice and words known to us (John 10:14-16)

14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father — and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

Hearing God brings eternal life (John 5:24)

24 "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

Be steadfast in obedience (11)

Steadfast because obedience is an obligation (Rom 8:12-14)

12 Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation — but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, 14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Steadfast because we should obey regardless of circumstances (Dan 3:16-18)

16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

Steadfast because obedience leads to righteousness (Rom 6:16)

16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey — whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

Steadfast because obedience shows love for God (1 John 5:2-3)

2 This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. 3 This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,

Teaching in New Mission Fields (Acts 18:18-21)

18 So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him. He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow.

19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there; but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.

20 When they asked him to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent,

21 but took leave of them, saying, "I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing." And he sailed from Ephesus.

Remember and keep promises (18)

When making a promise, we must keep it (Eccles 5:4)

4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow.

Never be slow about fulfilling our promises to God (Deut. 23:21)

21 If you make a vow to the Lord your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the Lord your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin.

Keep promises even when it hurts (Ps 15:2-4)

2 He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart 3 and has no slander on his tongue, who does his neighbor no wrong and casts no slur on his fellowman, 4 who despises a vile man but honors those who fear the Lord, who keeps his oath even when it hurts,

Never hastily or rashly give a promise (Prov 20:25)

25 It is a trap for a man to dedicate something rashly and only later to consider his vows.

Be a good witness wherever you go (19)

Witness because Jesus commanded it (Matt 28:18-20)

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Witness through the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8)

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Witness through teaching (2 Tim 2:2)

2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

Respect commitments (20-21)

Commitments to cling to what is good (Rom 12:9)

9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

Commitments of faith (1 Tim 1:5)

5 The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

Commitments to draw near to God (Heb 10:22)

22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Commitments to the wisdom of God (James 3:17)

17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

The first thing we can learn from our text is that Paul is human and that he has his fears and his weaknesses. If God finds it necessary to speak to Paul in a night vision and to tell him to stop being afraid, then we certainly are justified in concluding that Paul has his weaknesses, like us. James tells us that Elijah was just a man, like us:

Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain and there was no rain on the land for three years and six months! (James 5:17)

Other texts of Scripture indicate how Paul must have felt at this point in time:

5 So when I could bear it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter somehow tempted you and our toil had proven useless. 6 But now Timothy has come to us from you and given us the good news of your faith and love and that you always think of us with affection and long to see us just as we also long to see you! 7 So in all our distress and affliction, we were reassured about you, brothers and sisters, through your faith. 8 For now we are alive again, if you stand firm in the Lord. 9 For how can we thank God enough for you, for all the joy we feel because of you before our God? 10 We pray earnestly night and day to see you in person and make up what may be lacking in your faith (1 Thessalonians 3:5-10).

For even when we came into Macedonia, our body had no rest at all, but we were troubled in every way - struggles from the outside, fears from within (2 Corinthians 7:5).

In fact, it was through Paul's weakness that God glorified Himself:

7 . . . Therefore, so that I would not become arrogant, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to trouble me - so that I would not become arrogant. 8 I asked the Lord three times about this, that it would depart from me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is enough for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." So then, I will boast most gladly about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may reside in

me. 10 Therefore I am content with weaknesses, with insults, with troubles, with persecutions and difficulties for the sake of Christ, for whenever I am weak, then I am strong (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

The second thing we should learn is that God never intended for us to be “Lone Ranger” Christians; He purposed to use Christians collectively to accomplish His purposes. When we read about spiritual growth in Ephesians 4:10-16, Paul speaks of growing up together *as a church*, and not just individual growth. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul describes individual Christians as members of the body of our Lord, members of the church. When God set someone apart for missions, He set apart Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:1-4), not just Saul (Paul). In our text, we see a number of Christians being used of God, and not just Paul. There is Silas and Timothy (Acts 18:5), Priscilla and Aquila (18:1-3, 26), and Apollos (Acts 18:24-28).

Thus, when Paul writes his First Epistle to the Corinthians, he rebukes those who foolishly follow one man:

11 For members of Chloe’s household have made it clear to me, my brothers and sisters, that there are quarrels among you. 12 Now I mean this, that each of you is saying, “I am with Paul,” or “I am with Apollos,” or “I am with Cephas,” or “I am with Christ.” 13 Is Christ divided? Paul wasn’t crucified for you, was he? Or were you in fact baptized in the name of Paul? (1 Corinthians 1:11-13)

4 For whenever someone says, “I am with Paul,” or “I am with Apollos,” are you not merely human? 5 What is Apollos, really? Or what is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, and each of us in the ministry the Lord gave us. 6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused it to grow. 7 So neither the one who plants counts for anything, nor the one who waters, but God who causes the growth. 8 The one who plants and the one who waters work as one, but each will receive his reward according to his work (1 Corinthians 3:4-8).

In a day when Christians are tempted to idolize a particular Christian leader, let us remember Paul and our text.

Third, God used people to encourage and to strengthen Paul in his hour of weakness. Paul was alone when he first came to Corinth (Acts 17:14; 18:5). God first brought Paul to Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:1-3), and then later he was joined by Silas and Timothy (who appear to have come with a gift from the saints at Philippi – see Acts 18:5; Philippians 4:15-16). Apollos did not have direct contact with Paul in our text, but his ministry did complement Paul’s ministry (Acts 18:27).

Wonder of wonders, God even used a pagan Roman official like Gallio to encourage Paul. God first encouraged Paul by assuring him that there were many souls in Corinth whom He had chosen for salvation (Acts 18:9-10). He also assured Paul that he would not be harmed in Corinth, as he had been earlier. Who would have thought that God’s instrument of deliverance would have been Gallio? When charged with insurrection, Paul does not even get the opportunity to speak in his own defense. Instead, he is defended by Gallio. And rather than Paul taking a beating, it appears that the Jewish man who led the opposition (Sosthenes), took a beating instead (Acts 18:16-17).

James indicated that Elijah was a man “**of like passions,**” a man like us (James 5:17). I have taught about Elijah before, and I always assumed that Elisha was chosen merely as Elijah’s replacement (lest Elijah think of himself as indispensable). But in studying our text in Acts 18, I have changed my mind about Elisha. Elisha was immediately selected to accompany Elijah, and he remained at his side until he (Elijah) was taken up into heaven (2 Kings 2:1-11). I now believe that one of Elisha’s primary functions was to provide fellowship and encouragement to Elijah.

Paul, too, was merely a man, like us. But God knows our frame and that we are but dust (Psalm 103:14), and thus God provided encouragement for Paul in his hour of weakness and fear. He encouraged him by a night vision, as well as by working through others like Aquila and Priscilla, Silas and Timothy, Apollos, and even Gallio. What a gracious God we serve.

Fourth, Luke provides us with insight into how missionary activity was financed in the early days of the church. It appears that Paul did not “raise support” in the way it is done today. We know from 1 Corinthians 9

that it is not wrong to be supported by those to whom we minister. But Paul set his right to support aside for the good of the gospel. Instead of being supported, Paul supported himself and others by tent-making, by working with his own hands so that he could give to others in need.

Now for many, a tent-making ministry is not possible. A computer programmer would find little work to support himself in the jungles of the Amazon River. Some ministries require support from the church. But not all ministries do. In fact, tent-making ministries may be the only way that some missionaries will ever be able to enter certain countries legally, so that they can proclaim Christ. Let us keep this option open in our minds, because it is a wonderful way to minister in some situations.

Let us also bear in mind that this is not the only way to do ministry. When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, they seem to have come with a financial gift, a gift which enabled Paul to cease his tent-making job and devote himself fully to the proclamation of the Word of God. Let us not look down on this divine provision as well.

Finally, let us rejoice in the way that God worked through human instruments to bring salvation to those who were desperately lost and destined for eternal judgment. Let us remember the kind of people God saved in Corinth:

9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! The sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, passive homosexual partners, practicing homosexuals, 10 thieves, the greedy, drunkards, the verbally abusive, and swindlers will not inherit the kingdom of God. 11 Some of you once lived this way. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

God is still in the business of taking sinful men and making saints of them through the shed blood of His Son, Jesus Christ. And He has given us the privilege of having a part in this marvelous ministry. Let us be about the task, knowing that He will save those He has chosen, and that He will use us in our weakness to do so.

Let us also take note of the fact that God works through His body, the church, and not just through individual effort. God used others to comfort Paul in his time of need, and He used these same people to advance the gospel. Are you lonely? Are you fearful? Do you feel helpless? If you have not trusted in Jesus, do so today. And if you have trusted in Jesus, then get involved in a good church where you can minister with others and to others, and where they can minister to you.

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/seeing-paul-perspective-acts-181-8211-197>)

Concluding Thoughts from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

When Paul left Athens, he made his way to Corinth. Once he arrived, he met Aquila and Priscilla, who were tentmakers. Since Paul was familiar with the craft, he stayed with them and supported himself by making tents as well. On the Sabbath, Paul would go to the synagogue and talk about Jesus with the Jews and the Gentiles who worshipped with them. There are many people in the body of Christ who desire to be in full-time Christian ministry. Why some saints are able to walk into the "ministry" as soon as they receive the call and others are not is a question for God alone. Sometimes we have to keep our day jobs until the time comes when we can teach about Christ all day long. Until that day, be patient. God has not forgotten your desires. When Timothy and Silas arrived in Corinth, Paul was released to make teaching his main focus. He continued to try to persuade the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah, but they remained stubborn and became abusive. Paul said, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." Paul left the synagogue and began preaching at a nearby house. Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, accepted Paul's teaching about Jesus, and Crispus's entire household believed and were baptized. Have you ever noticed how a breakthrough often comes just at the point when we are ready to give up? Paul was ready to move his focus away from the Jews, and God had the chief ruler of the synagogue join him in faith, followed by many other Corinthians. God does not give up on anyone. He is patient, wanting people to come to repentance. The scene

at the synagogue must have been quite traumatic to cause Paul to want to wash his hands of the Jews. If we take ridicule and abuse on a daily basis, it begins to wear down our spirits. Even a heart that trusts God completely can be heavy in the midst of trying circumstances. Our God is merciful, and He sees what is happening around us. God spoke to Paul in a dream, saying, "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" (Acts 18:9-10). Paul ended up staying and teaching in Corinth for a year and a half. God gave him the strength to persevere. We cannot expect people to change their actions if we do not provide them with the truth to change their thoughts. As truth-tellers, we need to be teachers of the Word not only through words but also through actions and deeds.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. Mundane work still must be done despite the urgency of evangelizing the lost (Acts 18:1-4)
2. Many people look for a Saviour but refuse Jesus because He is not what they expect (vs. 5)
3. We must not spend all our time on hard-hearted people, but move on to those who are more open to the gospel (vs. 6)
4. Those who truly begin seeking God are ready when they see the light of the gospel (vss. 7-8)
5. God's power provides the strongest protection we can have (vss. 9-11)