

- Prayer
  - You support us Lord in all things and all times.
  - You are there in our obedience and you are there in our loneliness.
  - You give to us what we need when we need it.
  - I pray that we recognize that, and we should be praying in all things always.
  
- When I was studying for the Mens retreat a few months ago I came across an interview with:
  - Richard Jensen
  - Professor of Homiletics
  - Lutheran School of Theology; Chicago, IL
  - ◇ He was saying how all the years of teaching the most effective aspect was bonding relationally with the characters in the Bible.
    - “Don't just teach ideas to people... Put stories of the Bible into peoples heads.
    - These people [of the Bible] then become traveling companions through life.”
  
- So what I'd like to do here is share with you Acts 18 as a story, it is a story of our brother Paul and a very emotional time in his life and how God supported him through it.
- Then lets read through the text, I think it will speak to us differently.
- This story begins when Paul departs from Athens and travels to Corinth about 50 miles away.
  - ◇ He has just come from a series of let down as he gets deeper into the heart of the Greek culture.
    - In Thessalonica he was teaching and the Jews got all upset and grabbed his buddy Jason and throw him in jail for abetting a criminal.
    - Luckily they let him go after just extorting bail from him
      - > But this leads the group of believers there to send Paul off.
    - So, alright, he has had more tragic receptions before. So on to the next , Berea; his friends Silas and Timothy by his side.
    - Though received well the thessalonians catch up to them and drive him out of town again.
    - But this time, Silas and Timothy stay back. Paul is the target, they stick around to make make sure the new churches are heading in the right direction.
      - > Can't run from them forever.
      - > This takes Paul to Athens were he tells us...how the [NET] puts it...

- ◇ Athens
  - ... “His spirit was greatly upset because he saw the city full of idols. [NET]
  - He is a bit low, without his friends, kicked out of the last two towns.
  - He's making conversation in the market place and they called a babbling fool
  - Presents this beautiful logical and culturally relevant argument and is scoffed at and all but escorted off stage.
  - Something happens to him in this city – He can't even wait for his friends.
  - Walks the 50 miles, presumably alone, to Corinth
- ◇ Corinth
  - A rival to Athens, perhaps even larger than Athens at the time and even more sinful.
  - Temple of Venus (or Greek Aphrodite) there were a thousand “Corinthians whores”
    - > Popular goddess...wonder why
  - You can very well see where Paul gets the descriptive for the opening for Romans.
    - > Think of what he has seen in these last two cities.

**READ ROMANS 1:18-32**

- Now this is the atmosphere Paul is in.
- Gives me this sophisticated trapped feeling.
- [MAP] Corinth is on this little strip of land between two seas (Aegean and Ionean sea – inlet from Adriatic sea)
  - > Road between the two to move goods and small boats – reducing sailing time.
  - > Now there is a canal
- Paul is now trapped between two seas in what could be the most sinful place on earth.
- He writes about his state of mind in 1 Cor 2:1-5

**READ 1 COR 2:1-5**

- He is pretty down, the past few months have really taken a toll on his self confidence.
  - > Though sometimes I need that for a little humility correction.
- No matter what mood you're in you still need to eat, so Paul goes to work.
  - > His trade is a tent maker
  - > Conjecture that it is military tents so there is never lack of demand.
- ◇ Now we start seeing the behind the scenes work of God
  - Bringing in support for Paul in the form of relationship.

- Through the same trade of tent making God introduced a handy couple from Pontus.
  - > He meets Aquila and Priscilla. Husband and wife, from the region of Pontus,
    - △ Pontus known for smithing. There were plentiful metal recourses and Pontus exported many finished metal goods.
  - > But they were from Rome.
    - △ It is a conjecture that Aquila and Priscilla were freed slaves generations after Rome conquered the land.
    - △ The Hebrew ethnicity were quite emotional and cause many uprisings.
    - △ Due to this The emperor Claudius ejected all Jews from Rome.
    - △ This couple are Jewish and were kicked out of Rome due to the emperors decree.
    - △ So they were working their way back to their homeland.
    - △ But God had a little different plan.
- Then as Paul starts getting back his confidence back by teaching and converting Aquila and Priscilla; his buddies Silas and Timothy catchup. And they had brought an offering from the last several cities that chased Paul out of town.

**READ** Php 4:15-16

- ◇ Now I think Paul is back on his horse.
  - Seeing that even though there are many critics he is still being used by God.
  - So he heads back to the Synagogue.
    - > And sure enough the Jews throw insults at him.
    - > Our embarrassment in presenting God...
    - > Couple who said...we won't go.
  - But Paul shakes out his clothes, much like Nehemiah did when he was challenging the Hebrews to keep with the promises they had made.
 

**Neh 5:13** I also shook out my garment, and I said, "In this way may God shake out from his house and his property every person who does not carry out this matter. In this way may he be shaken out and emptied!"
- ◇ But God is there to support him.
- ◇ Paul has made friends, even gentiles, that want to hear him teach.
- ◇ So they set up a church in Titius Justus' house (quite possibly a a couple generations from the Roman rebuilding after Rome burnt Corinth to the ground 200 yrs prior)
  - Just happened to live next door to the synagogue. (quite a coincidence eh)

- ◇ Due to all these endeavors the head for the Synagogue, Crispus (meaning curly) becomes a believer.
  - I am betting the Paul now starts thinking, “here we go again”
    - > We got these angry Jews and the leader just turned on them.
    - > I am gonna get beat up again.
- ◇ But God brings a vision to Paul to comfort him.
 

"Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people."
- ◇ And sure enough the new synagogue leader reallies a group to drag Paul in front of Gallio the Proconsul of the region of Achaia.
  - They try the ol' “This man is persuading people to worship other then Rome” trick.
- Gallio
  - ◇ Now Gallio was a a very kind fair leader, at least that is what his brother of Seneca the philosopher said.
    - An inscription discovered at Delphi mentions Gallio and provides a date for his time in [Corinth](#) and so also for Paul's foundation of the Church there, 51–2 CE.
  - ◇ Official Roman Position with the Jews?
  - ◇ Claudius (4<sup>th</sup> emporer of Rome)
    - Declared emperor after Caligula's assassination, at which point he was the last adult male of his family.
    - At first Claudius reverted the intolerant policies of Augustus and Tiberius.
      - > largely due to the intimacy with Herod Agrippa
    - After Herods miserable death however. (Acts 12)
    - And constant Jewish uprisings Claudius decides to expel all Jews from Rome.
    - Gallio is trying to find the middle ground here between Claudius' changing position on dealing with the Jews.
      - > By the way...Claudius ended up being poisoned by his Wife Agrippina,
        - Δ Motivated to ensuring the succession of her son Nero (adopted) before Britannicus (son of Claudius third wife) could gain power.
    - So Gallio won't fall for the Jewish trick and takes a hands off position.
      - > Some of the Greeks are getting pretty tired of the Jews and decide to beat up Sosthenes for trying to start another uprising.
      - > By the way we find out that Sosthenes becomes a believer and is with Paul in Ephesus when he writes the letters to Corinth on his next journey.

- Paul has built up quite a base of friends here and ends up staying for a year and a half.
  - › We even find out that he Treasurer of the city, Erastus, befriends him.
  - › Payed for the Paving of a road in Corinth, inscription still visible.
  - › We here of Erastus (Acts 19:22, Rom 16:23, 1Tim 4:20)
- ◇ Recharged Paul set of to continue his mission.
  - He sets off to Ephesus.
  - But in Corinth's Aegean port city Cenchrea, before he get on the boat, Paul takes a Nazirite vow and shaves his head.
    - › Anyone Remember way back when we had a study on John the Baptist?
      - Δ He took a Nazirite vow, but not for a month like Paul, but for his life.
      - Δ Same as Samson
      - Δ Shave head, no wine, sometimes no meat, shave head at end of vow.
    - › Paul takes a vow, kind of like lent right now, a oath to God showing your dedication.
    - › Some say this was to prepare himself for an upcoming feast in Jerusalem.
      - Δ But what a wonderful way to end the stay at Corinth.
      - Δ He comes destitute and depressed.
      - Δ God brings him support in friend ships that last the rest of his life and in vision.
      - Δ And Paul gives back an outward expression of dedication.
  - ◇ Aquila and Priscilla go with Paul to Ephesus, quite possibly as the next leg back to Pontus.
    - But they are given their lives work there and make it home.
  - ◇ Paul enters back int the Synagogue and begins teaching.
    - Now if you remember he shook his coat off, and went to the gentiles. But only for Corinth. He just can't help himself. He has a heart for his Hebrew Brethren.
    - As we see in his writing in Romans.
 

**Rom 9:1-3** I am speaking the truth in Christ--I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit-- that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.  
For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.
  - And here in Ephesus he is finally well received by the Jews and asked to remain.

- But Paul has a party to catch so off to Caesarea and Jerusalem he goes.
  - > Aquila and Priscilla stay in Ephesus and become a pillar to the church their.
  - > Along with Sosthenes who either came with them or later.
  - > Aquila and Priscilla house Paul when he returns.
  - > They eventually go back and visit Rome when Claudius decree expires. This is where they are when Paul send his letter to the Romans.
  - > But are back in Ephesus with Timothy at the end of Paul's life. (2 Tim)
  
- ◇ Of course Paul can't stay put, with very little time passing he heads back up into Galatia to encourage the churches there and his third missionary journey begins.
- Meanwhile back in Ephesus.
  - ◇ This amazing speaker shows up from Alexandria.
    - Well educated Jew, but only knows of the teachings of John the Baptist.
    - He had not yet heard that Jesus had come.
  - ◇ This is Apollos. The Holy Spirit is ablaze in him.
    - After Aquila and Priscilla teach him of Jesus he is sets out to the region of Achaea, where Corinth lays. On a mission trip.
    - When her returns to Ephesus, Paul is there, and we will read about that next week.
    - Apollos becomes a strong voice for the Lord and helps Paul in his work.
      - > We read of him several times in 1 & 2 Corinthians.
      - > Paul says, "I planted, Apollos watered."
      - > Apollos baptized people in Corinth.
      - > He even carries the final letter to Timothy in Crete.
  - ◇ God continuing to build this team of believers.

**READ** Acts 18

- Pray

You are the coincidence.

You show us through Paul's journeys that it is people, friends and relationships that are your kingdom.

With our fear we are to bring you into all we do and trust you through all things.