

Acts 18

Lesson 17

Finishing the Second Journey and Starting the Third

Outline

Finishing the Second Journey and Starting the Third

I. At Corinth (vv. 1-17)

- A. *Paul began his work in the city (vv. 1-4)*
- B. *His work continued with help and opposition (vv. 5-11)*
 - 1. Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia (v. 5)
 - 2. Opposition from the Jews (v. 6)
 - 3. Paul continued there a year and a half with success (vv. 7-11)
- C. *Paul before Gallio (vv. 12-17)*

II. Return Trip to Antioch (vv. 18-22)

- A. *From Corinth to Ephesus (vv. 18-21)*
 - 1. Priscilla and Aquila traveled with Paul as far as Ephesus (vv. 18-19a)
 - 2. Paul reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue (v. 19b)
 - 3. Paul left for Jerusalem (vv. 20-21)
- B. *From Ephesus to Jerusalem and on to Antioch (v. 22)*

III. Beginning the Third Journey (vv. 23-28)

- A. *Paul strengthened the disciples of Galatia and Phrygia (v. 23)*
- B. *Apollos at Ephesus (vv. 24-28)*
 - 1. Apollos came to Ephesus (vv. 24-25a)
 - a. Great speaker (v. 24)
 - b. Well versed in Scripture (vv. 24-25a)
 - 2. Taught well – but lacking in one area (v. 25b)
 - 3. Aquila and Priscilla corrected him (v. 26)
 - 4. Went to Achaia (vv. 27-28)
 - a. With recommendation of the Ephesians (v. 27)
 - b. Helped those who believe (v. 27)
 - c. Publicly refuted the Jews (v. 28)

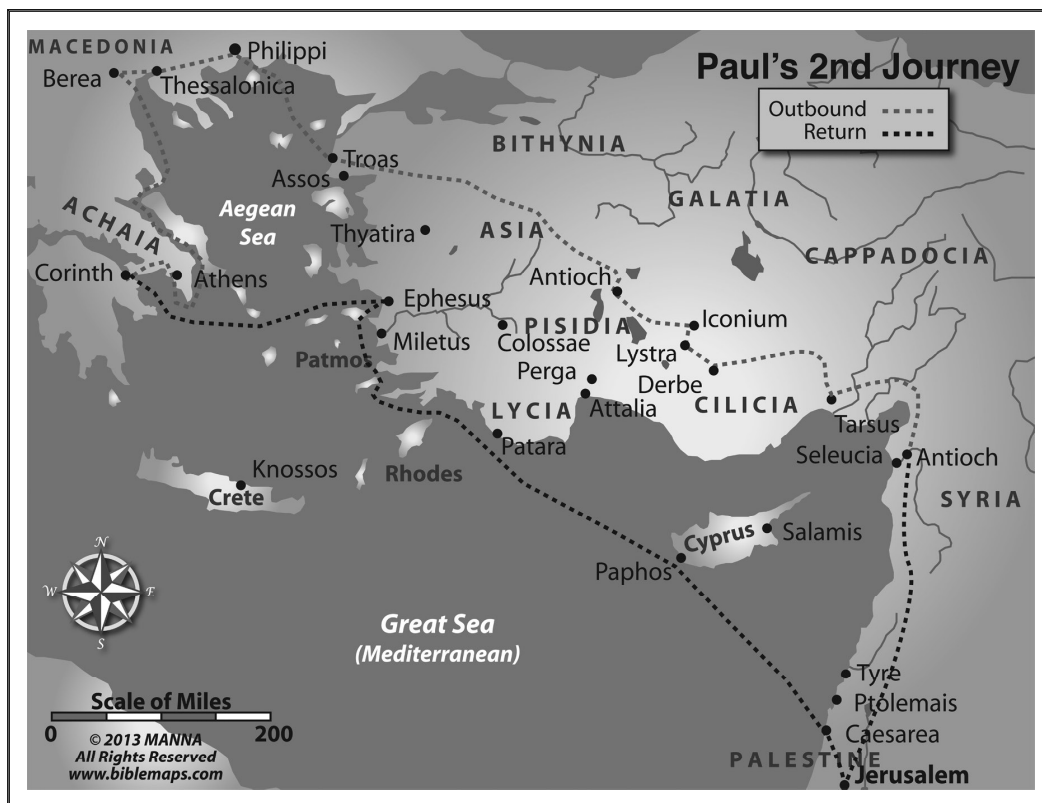
Key Verses that Summarize the Chapter

Acts 18:8, 11

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.

11 And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

In this chapter, Paul finishes his second missionary journey and begins his third. He leaves Athens and this chapter opens with his arrival in Corinth. From there he moves to Ephesus. Then he heads to Jerusalem (intending to make it there for Pentecost) landing at Caesarea. From Jerusalem he goes back to Antioch and starts over again with the third journey.



At Corinth (vv. 1-17)

Paul began his work in the city (vv. 1-4). When Paul got to Corinth he found Aquila¹ and Priscilla who apparently were already Christians. They had recently come from Italy due to Claudius (the Roman Emperor) driving all the Jews from Rome.² They came to Corinth, then went to Ephesus (v. 18) and back to Rome at some point (cf. Rom. 16:3). Paul stayed with them as he did his preaching in the city. They shared the same trade – they were tentmakers (v. 3).

Paul went to the synagogue every Sabbath and reasoned with Jews and Greeks (v. 4).

His work continued with help and opposition (vv. 5-11). Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia (v. 5). They had been left in Berea (17:14). Timothy came to Paul in Athens

- 1 Aquila was born in Pontus which was just east of Bithynia on the Black Sea in Northeastern Asia Minor.
- 2 We cannot be sure what caused Claudius to expel the Jews.

and was sent by Paul to Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3:1-5)³. So, Silas came from Berea and Timothy from Thessalonica.

When they arrived, Paul was “compelled by the Spirit” (v. 5, NKJV).⁴ This means that he devoted all his time to spreading the word. Notice the connection between the coming of his fellow workers and his being “constrained in the Spirit”. When Timothy and Silas came from Macedonia they brought financial support for Paul (2 Cor. 11:6-8). This may have reference to his devoting full time to preaching (because of the support) in contrast to having to make tents prior to this (v. 3).

The message that Jesus is the Christ (v. 5) was opposed to the point that Paul shook his garments in a dramatic gesture to renounce them and said, “Your blood be upon your own heads, I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles” (v. 6).⁵ He left the synagogue and moved his work of teaching to the house of Justus⁶, next door to the synagogue (v. 7).

Paul’s work was effective. Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, was converted along with his family. Many in Corinth heard, believed, and were baptized (v. 8). We can appreciate the impact of the gospel when some of those being converted had been adulterers, fornicators, homosexuals, thieves, and drunkards (1 Cor. 6:9-11). What an amazing progress report.

The opposition was not surprising. Paul faced the same in every city. The Lord appeared to Paul in a vision telling him not to be afraid but keep preaching (v. 9). Paul was assured that no one would harm him, for the Lord had many people in that city (v. 10).⁷

Paul continued his work at Corinth for a year and a half (v. 11). Did that time include the “good while” of verse 18? What we do know is that Paul stayed at least 18 months if not longer.

Paul before Gallio (vv. 12-17). Those who opposed Paul’s teaching took him before Gallio’s judgment seat, charging that he “persuades men to worship contrary to the law” (v. 13). The “law” may have had reference to the law of Moses (for these Jews believed that Paul’s doctrine was opposed to Moses’ law). More likely it referred to the Roman law. “The Jews were saying, Paul is preaching a new religion – not like the Jewish religion – a religion not recognized by the laws of Rome. Josephus tells us that the Jews had been granted permission by the Romans to worship according to their own law. The Jews deliberately word the charge they make against Paul so that it could be taken with a double meaning, and are trying to tell Gallio that Paul’s doctrine was the introduction of something other than

3 When Paul gets word from Timothy about how the church at Thessalonica is doing, he writes the 1 Thessalonian letter. The second letter was written from Corinth about a year later.

4 Other translations: “pressed in the spirit” (KJV, YLT), “occupied in the word” (ESV), “constrained by the word” (ASV), “pressed in respect to the word” (Darby), “Paul began devoting himself completely to the word” (NASV), and “devoted himself exclusively to preaching” (NIV).

5 Jesus taught that his disciples should not cast pearls before swine (Matt. 7:6). Paul is here following that principle.

6 Many think this is the same man identified as Gaius (1 Cor. 1:14; Rom. 16:23). Reese quotes Ramsay who suggests that his full name was Gaius Titius Justus (Gareth L. Reese, *Acts*, 643-644). We cannot be sure if this is the same man.

7 This simply means that God knew that, given the opportunity, many would obey.

old-time Judaism. Verse 15 will show that Gallio understood them to be more interested in defending their own law than Roman law.”⁸

As Paul was about to speak and defend himself against a false charge, Gallio dismissed the proceedings saying that if this were a matter of some crime he would hear it, but since it seemed to be a matter of their own law, they should see to it themselves (vv. 14-15). He then drove them out (v. 16).

When that happened, Sosthenes (the ruler of the synagogue)⁹ was beaten (v. 17). Who beat him is a question based on manuscript differences. The KJV and NKJV say the Greeks beat him. If that was the case, they might have been bystanders who used the occasion to vent their hatred for the Jews. Other translations do not mention the Greeks but say “they all” laid hands on him and beat him. If this was the case, the Jews who accused Paul might have beaten Sosthenes (their leader) for not representing them well before Gallio. Whoever did it, Gallio ignored it.

Return Trip to Antioch (vv. 18-22)

From Corinth to Ephesus (vv. 18-21). After staying a good while in Corinth, Paul started his trip toward Syria, taking Aquila and Priscilla with him. Before setting sail, they came to Cenchræa (less than 10 miles from Corinth). There Paul¹⁰ had his hair cut off, for he had taken a vow.¹¹

When Paul arrived at Ephesus, he entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews (v. 19). His work was received, for they asked him to stay longer (v. 20). However, he left saying that he was trying to get to Jerusalem for the coming feast (v. 21).¹² Why he felt the need to be there we are not told.

Before he left he told the brethren that he would return again to them “God willing” (v. 21, cf. Jas. 4:13-15). He left Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus (v. 19).

From Ephesus to Jerusalem and on to Antioch (v. 22). From Ephesus Paul sailed to Caesarea then went up to greet the church. This most likely refers to the church at Jerusalem since he was headed to Jerusalem (v. 21). Also, consider the language of going “up” to the church and then “down” to Antioch. His second missionary journey was completed.

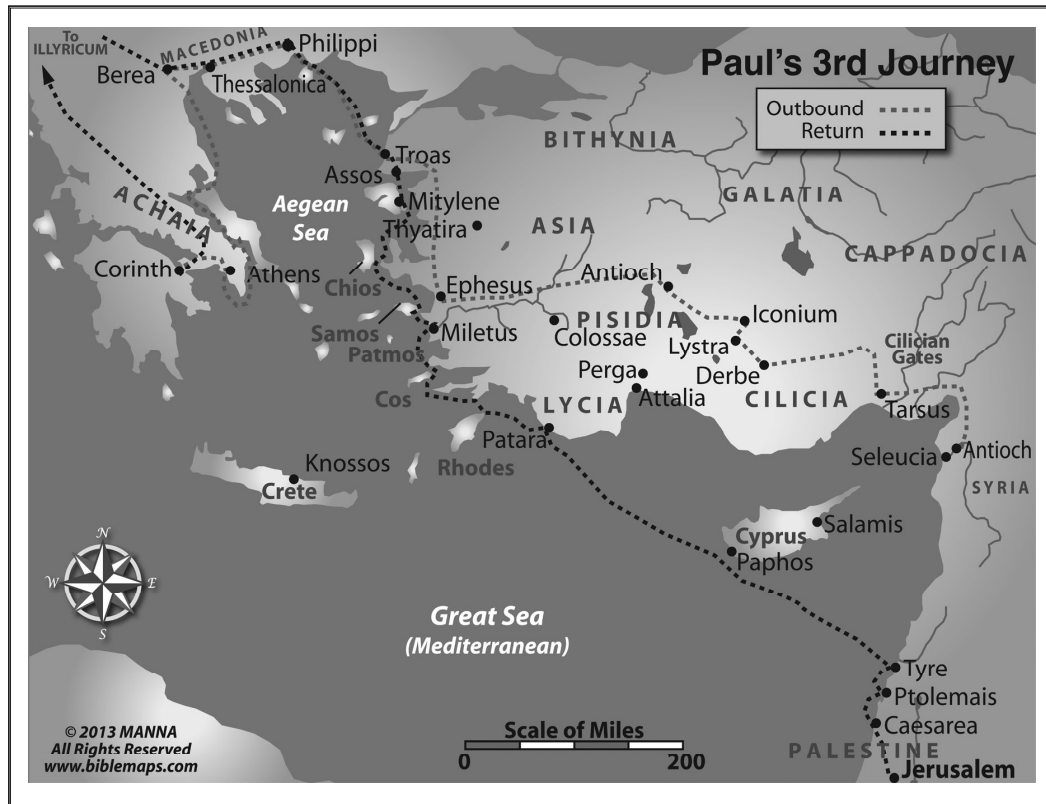
8 Gareth L. Reese, *ibid*, 648.

9 He either replaced Crispus when he was converted or was a ruler at the same time

10 There is some question as to who the “he” who had his hair cut is. Some think it refers to Aquila. However, Paul is the subject being discussed in verse 18. He remained a good while. He took leave. He sailed. Aquila and Priscilla were with him. He had his hair cut.

11 What was this vow? Luke does not tell us. It could have been the Nazarite vow (Num. 6:1-21). However, the text does not say. It was some type of voluntary vow made to God. We are not told here its purpose. It may have been in connection with thanksgiving for the deliverance from troubles or (if it is the Nazarite vow) an effort to influence the Jews.

12 This is probably Pentecost rather than the Passover. Reese argues for this saying, “There was no sailing on the Mediterranean until after Passover” (Gareth L. Reese, *ibid*, 655).



Beginning the Third Journey (vv. 23-28)

Paul strengthened the disciples of Galatia and Phrygia (v. 23). After spending some time at Antioch, Paul started his third journey (Acts 18:23 – Acts 21). He visited the churches established on the first journey. His work here was to strengthen the brethren.¹³

Apollos at Ephesus (vv. 24-28). Meanwhile as Paul started his third trip, Apollos came to Ephesus (vv. 24-25). He was an eloquent man, a great speaker (v. 24) and well versed in Scripture (vv. 24-25a).

He did his job well in teaching (v. 25a). He was fervent (zealous) in spirit. He spoke with boldness (v.26). However, he was lacking in one area – he knew only the baptism of John (v. 25b). He must have understood and taught what John preached about Jesus being the Messiah that was promised. However, he was still practicing the baptism of John even though the New Covenant was underway.¹⁴

¹³ Building up the saints (teaching them to observe all things – Matt. 28:18-20) is just as important as converting the lost.

¹⁴ The difference in the baptism of John and the baptism of the Great Commission will be seen in the next chapter.

When Aquila and Priscilla heard him speak, they took him aside and taught him the way of God more accurately (v. 26)¹⁵. He was willing to learn and stood corrected. Though the text does not say here, we can safely assume that he was baptized in the name of Christ at this point. Evidence of that would be in the next chapter when others who only knew the baptism of John were baptized in the name of Christ (Acts 19:1-7).

Apollos decided to go to Achaia where Corinth was located. The Ephesian brethren wrote a letter of recommendation for those in Achaia to receive him.¹⁶ When he arrived, he helped those who believed (those already converted at Corinth). Perhaps this is what Paul was talking about when he said he planted and Apollos watered (1 Cor. 3:6). Additionally, he publicly confronted the teaching of the Jews, refuting their error by showing that Jesus is the Christ (v. 28).

Questions

1. What progress reports are given in this chapter? _____

2. What does "constrained in the spirit" (v. 5, NKJV) mean? _____

3. How effective was Paul's work at Corinth? _____

4. In what way did Aquila and Priscilla help Paul in his work at Corinth? _____

5. Where had Aquila and Priscilla lived? _____

15 Here is a case of a woman teaching – even teaching and correcting a man. Yet she did so without violating the principle of teaching over a man (1 Tim. 2:11-12).

16 See comments in lesson 9 on Acts 9:26-28 about churches accepting members.

6. Why did Gallio dismiss the proceedings? _____

7. What kind of reception did Paul have at Ephesus? _____

8. Why did Paul not stay in Ephesus when the Jews asked him to stay? _____

9. What did Aquila and Priscilla correct in Apollos' teaching? _____

10. What do we learn about women teaching from Priscilla's dealing with Apollos? _____

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