



August 9th 2020
Reflection Two
on Acts 18:1-17 1-35:
Corinth and God's People.

From Athens to Corinth. From a place full of human wisdom supporting idolatry to one full of sensual love supporting immorality. Corinth was dominated by a temple to Aphrodite, otherwise known as Venus, the goddess of love. A 1000 females served in her temple, who, every night roamed the city streets selling their bodies for money. It was to this town that the Lord brought Paul, and through that not only brought many people to faith, but provided in Paul's subsequent letters to the church there, that great word on true love – the love of God – which lasts forever, which has blessed bride and groom and many others in its being read & preached on at the weddings of a man and a woman. But we get ahead of ourselves.

We are going with Paul on his first visit to Corinth, where he came to preach the gospel. In going there he seems to reflect back on his experience in Athens, for later he would write in 1Corinthians 1 “We preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” *[see v18 to 31. It was also to the Corinthians that Paul wrote on the resurrection of Christ and ourselves, C15. See the blessing God brings out of the Athenians sneering!]*

In Corinth, Paul meets Aquila and Priscilla. This is a providential action of God. They were Jewish Christians who had been expelled from Rome by Claudius due to the Jewish community there being disturbed by the gospel of Christ. *[That probably happened in AD 49-50.]* God draws together these three people, who share a faith and trade, tent-making, [though that could have been the wider work of leather-craft], to meet and form a gospel hub in Corinth. So the Lord acts for His purposes, drawing His people together, setting up a household church, which Paul can use as a base for his reaching out to the synagogue *[and to their customers]*, trying to persuade the Jews and Greeks of the good news in Christ.

Priscilla and Aquila later move back to Rome, for Paul writes in Romans 16, “Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.” They are not just faithful individuals, they were house church leaders. “Greet also the church,” Paul goes on to say, “that meets at their house.” And as leaders they were teachers. Later we read in Acts 18 that they went with Paul to Ephesus, and there, on hearing Apollos “speak boldly in the synagogue about Jesus … they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.” *[see v24-26]*

Church is not a Sunday thing. Church is not a rest day activity. Church is who you are, where you are - in your work, in your house, in church/house church worship, in your home town, in a foreign town. Wherever God has led you to be, He has led you to be there for His purpose. In this city of immoral love two Christians shared God's way of love, opening their home, sharing their work, and risking their lives for Paul. Praise the Lord for all His Priscillas & Aquilas in the world, then and now.

Then Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia. They presumably brought some funding with them. Paul writes in 2Corinthians 8 that the Macedonian Church was generous in its giving, even in extreme poverty due to their joy in the Lord. *[those who have little are often more willing to share even the little they have than those who possess much, who rather tend to cautiously protect the much that they have, forgetting Christ's word that "it is more blessed to give than to receive"]* *Acts 20:25* The Macedonians not only giving to the famine-struck faithful in Jerusalem but also to Paul, in keeping with God's will. Perhaps here he refers to money they gave to Silas and Timothy to support Paul, funding that now allowed him to devote himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

But, sadly, as happened too often the Jews oppose Paul. So he turned from them to the Gentiles. He had done what he could. But he is clear of his responsibility. If they did not listen theirs would be the consequences, not his. *[Paul's reference here to their blood being on their own heads, surely going back to Ezekiel 33:7-9 and also 3:17-21]*

Then Luke goes on to tell us something wonderful. Firstly that ‘many of the Corinthians who heard [Paul] believed and were baptised’, which is an introduction to something every Christian and every preacher may desire to experience: **One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: ‘Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.’** And though some Jews did try to stir up trouble against Paul, they didn't get anywhere. He was able to stay in Corinth for some 18 months.

Here is a question we can ask ourselves. Though it's a question we cannot answer. ‘Does the Lord have many people in our communities? We do not know. Only the Lord does. But like Paul, though without the benefit of his vision, we can trust that when we are not afraid, when we keep on speaking, when we do not fall silent, the Lord will bring His people to faith. This is our hope, this is our calling, this is our purpose. May the Lord gather to us people from many different places to be with us here. People to help us build up the Lord's Church, in the sharing of the gospel in this community. May we all act together in Christian love and gifting to enable the gospel to be spread, from our church embassy may we be Christ's ambassadors to the many people He has in our communities. In the name of Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God our Father, Amen.