

Acts 18:1-18 Paul establishes church at Corinth during second missionary journey

The ancient city of Corinth had been utterly laid in ruins when Rome subjugated Greece in the middle of the 2nd century BC.

46 BC Caesar had caused it to be rebuilt and colonized in the Roman manner, and during the century that had elapsed it had prospered and grown enormously.

Population at this time has been estimated at between 600,000 and 700,000, by far the larger portion of whom were slaves. (Dothan = 68,000; Birmingham = 200K; Miami = 450,000; DC = 693,000)

Two harbors - Cenchrea and Lechaëum, opening to the commerce of East and West.

The reputation of the city was bad.

The worship of Aphrodite, with its hordes of hierodouloi, was dominant.

"to behave as a Corinthian" was a proverbial synonym for leading a low, shameless and immoral life.

*The message of the cross belongs here.

[Mat 9:11-13 NKJV] 11 And when the Pharisees saw [it], they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 12 When Jesus heard [that], He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. 13 "But go and learn what [this] means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

Written by the apostle Paul toward the close of his nearly three-years stay at Ephesus (third missionary journey) (Acts 19:10; 20:31)

Why - to address reports of sharp, pronounced division, disputes on how the holy spirit relates to the believer, sexual immorality, marriage, how we ought to observe communion, giving, the reality of the resurrection, and other things that commonly affect the church today. Things which, all people feel uniquely qualified to opine on apart from instruction in God's word. Essentially all people trying to logic their way through matters of tremendous gravity with a half understanding of the eternal implications and the spiritual impact that these matters have on our lives and our relationships (with God and others). Sound familiar? What do we expect - baby christians coming out of a lifetime of deception and wickedness. May God help us to be new creations.

This is the scene we enter:

v.1-Paul - you remember Paul, also known as Saul of Tarsus, a jewish believer who was quite literally arrested by Jesus while on a sanctioned mission to arrest Christians and have them thrown in jail or worse.

he sees the the resurrected, and very alive, Jesus Christ, the Lord of these people he is persecuting, and struck with blindness - he is drafted into service by the Lord Jesus Christ and is sent out to glorify God. He goes on to be one of the most dogged, tenacious, soul winners in God's kingdom. He wrote 13 out of the 27 NT books. He becomes and Apostle.

Sosthenes - maybe some body with the same name but probably the same from Acts 18, with Paul in Ephesus.

v.2-to you guys!

Jesus Christ sanctifies - he sets us apart, he calls us to that condition of being set apart, AND we are not alone in exclusivity - our faith is a big faith - ALL who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ - interesting since we know that Paul is going to address the sin of division among the church.

v.3-God is the best gift giver - (especially on mother's day) - grace to you, peace. Don't we all want some of that?

v.4-7-Paul's affection for the church - I thank my God always concerning you - for what - God worked in their lives - Paul had seen that with his own eyes, that grace from Christ had radically invaded their lives but now here a couple of years down the road its almost as if he is reminding them of this, knowing what struggles they've endured.

v.8-Christ does the work to the end, that you may be blameless - we will stand as one spotless and flawless before Jesus Christ because of the ongoing work He is doing in our lives.

v.9-If we doubt this we are reminded that it is God who is faithful, even as Paul writes to Timothy further on -

[2Ti 2:13 NKJV] 13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

He finishes this thought by reminding them that they are brought into fellowship by God alone. He is the author of this whole deal. No matter how good I speak or how sound my apologetics, or rhetoric are I can never compel anybody to enter into fellowship. I can invite them, I can love them, I will certainly endeavor to fulfill the command of our Lord to make disciples but it is God who calls, and prepares the hearts of men to respond to His call.

v.10 - it gets serious - all of that hype to get ready to drop the hammer -

I plead with you - begging - this is important to Paul, and it's important to the Lord. It is distressing that Paul has heard that this church his being torn apart at the seams. Paul's heart is for these people, not to be the regulator but to love them like a father, to love them like Christ. At times, love requires correction, better to endure short term chastisement to remain steadfast then to go off the rails because nobody was strong enough to correct our errors.

I thank God that we have this book, it is a tremendous help in our day when Bible teachers and Pastors are confronted with the same things that the early church was. We have a leg to stand on besides our own opinion - God's word.

speaking the same thing, don't be divided, be perfectly joined together in the same mind and same judgment.

[Jhn 17:20-23 NKJV] 20 "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 "that they all may be one, as You, Father, [are] in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22 "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: 23 "I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

v.11-Paul had received word about the goings on at Corinth - how do you think that made him feel? Probably made his head spin, probably made him feel physically ill, no doubt he was upset...mad enough to write a letter. As this letter develops we will see how fired up Paul was. But by the leading of the Holy Spirit he corrected the church rightly, first by acknowledging their place in God's kingdom as saints! Second, by admonishing them for their error. And, finally, committing them to God's grace and care as each person hearing these words would make a decision to either get right or else turn from the faith - not an uncommon experience for the believer today. When we are confronted with correction or doctrine that conflicts with our own worldview how do we respond? Paul, having a deep love for these people, laid it all out there for them in the chapters to come and was no doubt subject to the same thoughts as all Bible teachers - wondering if the hearer, being challenged by God's word, will abandon the fellowship or will they

grow through the experience. It's moments like these we pray that God will grant us boldness by His grace, along with compassion.

So Paul is the spot where it's time to give some instruction, on some very difficult subject that will in all likelihood cause some alienation if the hearers heart is not soft to God's word.

v.12-each of you says - everybody had picked a side

1. Paul - the original church planter, old hands, the people who came when nobody else did
2. Apollos - the next best thing, well spoken, smart - the new hotness
3. Cephas - Peter's people, probably from Jerusalem preaching adherence to the law - the religious people
4. Christ - better than everybody else, smarter than everybody else, who needs a teacher

People had gotten caught up in tying their identity to a leader, or a persona - even those who said "I am of Christ" were alienating others.

This is a danger we face today. Aside from the plethora of flavors among the churches Paul is addressing division INSIDE the local church. This happens! May our Lord protect us from division in our body. These things creep in because somebody pushes a pet doctrine, or somebody gets bent out of shape because they are mightily challenged by a Sunday morning sermon and decides to undermine the teacher, or somebody comes into the body who is self-seeking and desires that they should be the center of

attention - lots of reasons for this type of behavior. We know it exists, We know we ought to be on guard for division. It is a weapon of our enemy to destroy the Body. How many churches have been torn apart by unhappy boards or members simply by division?

[Jas 4:1-3 NKJV] 1 Where do wars and fights [come] from among you? Do [they] not [come] from your [desires for] pleasure that war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend [it] on your pleasures.

v.13-the simplicity of tearing down this doctrine - Is Christ divided? NO! Was Paul crucified for you? NO! Were you baptized in the name of Paul? NO!

This is a reminder - Christ is not divided, as we just read in John 17 -

[Jhn 17:21 NKJV] 21 "that they all may be one, as You, Father, [are] in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

[Mat 12:23-28 NKJV] 23 And all the multitudes were amazed and said, "Could this be the Son of David?" 24 Now when the Pharisees heard [it] they said, "This [fellow] does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons." 25 But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and

every city or house divided against itself will not stand. 26 "If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? 27 "And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast [them] out? Therefore they shall be your judges. 28 "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Be of the same mind, and same judgment church, fight against division not against one another - let Christ be our champion. Be the kingdom here on earth, and by our unity let the world know the certainty of our faith just as Christ promised.