

After being driven out of three cities (Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea) and coolly dismissed in another. Paul arrives in Corinth, all battered and bruised (1 Cor.2:3). Corinth was a large and booming centre of commerce. It was a bustling metropolis, the trading hub of ancient Greece, and it had a famous tourist destination: the temple of Aphrodite with a thousand sacred prostitutes who serve visitors and citizens, “*welcome to sin city*”. Corinth was sin city, but the authorities there protected Paul from violence, so he was able to spend a year and a half establishing the church. Ironically, the churches of Philippi and Thessalonica, which suffered persecution and where Paul was unable to stay long, later Paul gave joy, while the prosperous Corinthian church was repeatedly a headache.

It was during his time in Corinth that Silas and Timothy rejoin Paul with good news from Thessalonica. The encouragement that Paul receives from this news (1Th.3:6-10) seems to be the trigger for Paul to move to full time gospel preaching. And we see an interesting development with the Jewish reception of this that should not surprise us. In Corinth the people were wicked and degraded. Yet in the midst of all this God spoke clearly to Paul’s heart; “*I have many people in this city.*” It was Paul’s secret communion with God, and his faith in what God said that sustained him in those depraved settings. Visions are not granted just for the sake of it. A quiet lesson we are taught by Acts as it goes along, *you tend to get the guidance you need when you need it, not before, and not in too much detail.* Paul stayed with his friends Aquila and Priscilla, who because of the persecution of the Jews, had been forced to leave Rome. They were tentmakers as Paul was and this showed people that Christianity had a very practical side.

It is comforting to realise that Paul apparently was at times afraid. He knew from past experience that stoning, beating and humiliation often preceded or followed blessing. The Lord did not rebuke him for being afraid but comforted him with His own word. He said to Paul in effect: “*Do not be anxious by what is to come, there are great things going on which you do not even realise.*” Be encouraged as you do the Lord’s work, amid all that may dishearten you, His plans are being worked out for our greater good and the good of others.

In Acts 18:23 we see the beginning of Paul’s third missionary journey. Once more he revisited the centres he had established on his earlier journey, wanting to build up and strengthen the believers in their faith. Paul realised the importance of nurturing new Christians and establishing them in their faith so that they will grow. He sets a great example in this. How are you involved in nurturing others to grow in their faith?

1) Share anything helpful from the last lesson?

2) Acts 18:1-11; Contrast the response of the Jews in Corinth (vv.4-6) to that of Crispus and his household (vv.7-8)?

Paul arrived in Corinth feeling weak. What did God do to encourage him there?

How was his ministry affected by God’s words (v.11)?

3) When has the Lord given you confidence to stay in a situation even though it was difficult?

4) Acts 18:12-28; what accusations are brought against Paul in vv.12-13?

What is the reaction of the proconsul Gallio?

5) What do you learn about Paul's relationships in vv.18-23?

Paul's second missionary journey. What was most memorable for you?

What route did Paul take when he began his third missionary journey from Antioch?

6) Describe Apollos vv.24-26?

Apollos knew about the baptism of John for the forgiveness of sins. What apparently did Apollos not know or understand?

7) What is the "way of God" explained to Apollos by Priscilla and Aquila (v.26)?

What is your own practical method of explaining the "way of God" to others?

8) What were the results of Priscilla and Aquila's personal attention to Apollos (vv.27-28)?

9) How do you need to develop, build and nurture relationships that will contribute to your spiritual growth and outreach?

Who have been your mentors or guides in the faith? Who are you now mentoring?

10) Do you think God's promise to Paul in Acts 18:9-10 has any implications for us?

Do you think it is arrogant to be confident about going to heaven?