

Paul had a great love for his fellow Jews and was in the habit of visiting the synagogue first after arriving in a new city in order to try to see Jews come to faith in Jesus Christ. However, Paul seems to have given up trying to reach Jews in Corinth when the Jews there strenuously opposed his preaching. He then turned his focus toward the Gentiles, who were more receptive to the gospel.

1 After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;

“After these things Paul departed from Athens” – “These things” refers to Paul being given the opportunity to preach Jesus Christ to the intellectual elites of Athens on Mars Hill. He had been able to see some men believe while others ridiculed the idea of resurrection. After the encounter on Mars Hill, Paul apparently felt it was time to leave Athens and bring the gospel to another city. **“and came to Corinth”** – Corinth lay around 50 miles SW of Athens and was the largest city in Greece at the time. Its strategic location near a land bridge connecting the northern and southern regions of Greece meant that virtually all traffic between the two regions had to pass through Corinth. This fact made the city a trade center and host to a multitude of travelers from various lands. It also was the location of the temple of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love. One thousand temple prostitutes practiced their trade at the temple, fostering an atmosphere of sensuality and exploration of carnal pleasures in the city.

2 And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them.

Paul meets a Jewish couple named Aquila and Priscilla. Aquila had been born in Pontus, a district in the northern area of Asia Minor. We are not told where Priscilla was born but she was likely from the same area. The couple had traveled far from home because they had been in Rome until recently when Claudius Caesar had banned Jews from the capital city. Aquila and Priscilla were now living in Corinth and apparently had already become believers in Jesus Christ since Paul quickly befriended and associated with them.

3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers.

Aquila and Priscilla earned a living making and selling tents. Since Paul possessed the skills required for this trade, he decided to stay with them while he was in Corinth and helped out. Paul likely did not want to be a financial burden to his hosts and therefore “wrought” (worked) with them to help pay for his room and board.

4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

Paul worked through the week making tents and on the sabbath he went to the synagogue to “reason” (discuss; to converse; to argue) with those there concerning the truth of Jesus being the Christ. God was giving him success since Jews and Greeks were being persuaded by the gospel.

5 And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews *that Jesus was Christ*. 6 And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook *his raiment*, and said unto them, *Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.*

“And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia” – Paul had left Macedonia when he came to Athens, which was in Achaia. Paul had sent word for Silas and Timothy to join him in Athens (Acts 17:15) and apparently they must have done so before he came to Corinth, although we have no explicit record of their arrival. However, Paul seems to have sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to minister to the church there (1 Th. 3:1-2 “Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith”). Silas may have accompanied Timothy or it’s possible that Paul may have sent Silas to another city in Macedonia (such as Philippi), but now both of them have rejoined Paul in Corinth.

“Paul was pressed [to hold together; fig. to be compelled] in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ” – Now that Silas and Timotheus had rejoined him, perhaps Paul realized that with their assistance he could devote more time to evangelizing the Jews. He felt compelled to intensify his efforts to proclaim to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ foretold by the OT prophets.

“And when they opposed themselves [to set oneself in battle array], and blasphemed [to speak evil of]” – Instead of receiving Paul’s testimony of Jesus, the Jews began actively opposing Paul and his preaching. The Greek word for “blaspheming” means “to speak evil of” but it’s unclear whether they were speaking evil of Paul, Jesus, or (most likely) both.

“he shook his raiment” – A symbolic act similar in meaning to the act of shaking the dust off one’s shoes. When Jesus had sent the disciples out two by two to preach the gospel of the kingdom, He commanded them to shake the dust off their shoes anywhere they were rejected (Matt. 10:14 “And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet”). The shaking symbolically removed anything pertaining to these people from the shaker’s person.

“and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean [pure]: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles” – Paul had done his best to prove to these Jews that Jesus was the Christ and they actively resisted and refused to believe. Since he had done his best to declare to them the way of eternal life and they had refused it, he was not responsible for their spiritual demise. They would die in their sins and God will not hold Paul accountable for it. Since the Jews refused to listen to the gospel, Paul would now proclaim the gospel to those who would willingly receive it: the Gentiles. Paul and Barnabas had made similar remarks while in Antioch in Asia Minor when the Jews there rejected the gospel (Acts 13:46 “Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles”).

7 And he departed thence, and entered into a certain *man's* house, named Justus, *one* that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.

“And he departed thence” – Paul departed from the synagogue and apparently did not preach there any more.

“and entered into a certain *man's* house, named Justus, *one* that worshipped God” – Paul likely still resided with Aquila and Priscilla while he was at Corinth. He may have used Justus' house as a substitute for the synagogue, preaching in a place where Gentiles would be welcome. Some manuscripts supply the name “Titus” and since Romans had three names, some commentators suggest that this man's name may have been “Titus Justus” or even “Gaius Titus Justus.” If so, they suggest this man may be the Gaius that Paul mentions in Rom. 16:23 and **1 Cor. 1:14** “*I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius.*”

“whose house joined hard [adjoined; shared a border] to the synagogue” – Justus' house was apparently next door to the synagogue, making it a very convenient alternative for the Gentiles who would normally be going to the synagogue.

8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.

“And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house” – Paul was not totally unsuccessful with the Jews (v. 4). Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed the gospel along with his entire household and was apparently baptized by Paul (1 Cor. 1:14). Crispus may have been ousted from his position of being leader of the synagogue after professing faith in Christ since another man is later described as being the leader of the synagogue in v. 17.

“and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized” – Leaving the synagogue did not diminish the gospel's effectiveness. While preaching at the house of Justus, Paul was able to win many Corinthians to Christ. Apparently after baptizing Crispus and Gaius, Paul turned over the responsibility of baptizing to someone else while he was at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:14).

9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: 10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.

“Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace” – Paul had been run out of town in other cities by unbelieving Jews, most recently at Thessalonica and Berea (Acts 17:5-10, 13, 14). Perhaps Paul was concerned that the same thing was going to happen in Corinth after seeing the resistance he had already encountered (v. 6). The Lord chose to speak to Paul in a night vision (a dream) and encourage him to preach the gospel without fear.

“For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee” – The Lord assures Paul that He is with him and will not allow anyone to hurt him while he is in Corinth. The Lord wants Paul to accomplish some things before leaving Corinth.

“for I have much people in this city” – Commentators are divided on what the Lord meant by this statement. Some believe that He is saying that there are already many believers in Corinth that will support Paul's preaching and help sway public opinion in his favor. These believers would need to be educated and encouraged in their faith and thus Paul needed to remain in the city in order to help them. Other commentators believe that the Lord is referring to “much people” in Corinth who had not yet come to faith and would do so in response to Paul's preaching over the coming months. The Lord considers these people to already be His. This latter view seems more likely, especially considering the next verse.

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

Encouraged by the Lord, Paul remains in Corinth for another 18 months, preaching and teaching the word of God to anyone who would listen. No doubt he was able to see many converts, seeing that the Lord told him that He had “much people in this city.”

Verses 12-28: Sometime during the 18 months that Paul was at Corinth, the Jews stirred up trouble again and brought Paul to Gallio, the governor of Achaia, and accused him of teaching people to worship God contrary to the Mosaic law. However, Gallio was not interested in enforcing Jewish customs and laws and so he sent them away from his judgment seat (vs. 12-17). Paul eventually leaves Corinth, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila (v. 18), and begins a journey to Jerusalem to keep a Jewish feast there (v. 21). He sails across the Aegean Sea and lands at Ephesus in Asia Minor, going into the synagogue there and reasoning with the Jews. Leaving Ephesus (and Priscilla and Aquila there), he sails to Caesarea and from there travels to Jerusalem where he greeted the church there. Afterward, he returned to his home church in Antioch. After resting for a time at Antioch, Paul apparently begins his third missionary journey by returning to Galatia and Phrygia, regions in Asia Minor (v. 23). Luke then introduces us to Apollos, a Jewish preacher who was from Alexandria but had arrived in Ephesus when Priscilla and Aquila were there. The man loved God and taught others to do so but he only knew of the baptism of John. When they heard him preaching in the synagogue, Priscilla and Aquila took him aside and taught him “the way of God more perfectly” (that Jesus was the Christ). Armed with a better understanding of the ways of God, Apollos felt led to travel to Achaia and so the brethren at Ephesus wrote a letter for the churches in Achaia saying that they should accept Apollos. Once in Achaia, Apollos ministered to the believers there and became a mighty evangelist, winning many Jews to Christ.