

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Acts 18:1-5 | Session 47 | Working and Persuading in Corinth

A.D. 54

We have been working with the assumption that in the book of Acts there are two gospels being preached. One, we have called the kingdom gospel or national gospel (to the circumcision/Jews) and the other the gospel of grace or the individual gospel (to the uncircumcised/Gentiles); regardless of which gospel was preached the foundation was the resurrection. Both gospels are dependent on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Luke does not record Paul going any deeper into either gospel message. As Paul prepared to leave Athens, it was the point of the **resurrection** that *discomfited* some in the crowd and they **mocked**, and the meeting was over, but others said **we will hear thee again. And some believed. So Paul departed** (Acts 17:33). There is no record of Paul starting a church in Athens, and he never wrote a letter to the Athenians.

Chapter 18:1—

Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth. We might assume that Paul is traveling by himself, or maybe some of those in Athens who believed left with him. **Corinth** is a city in Achaia, about 65 miles west of Athens. The ruins of the city are visible today. Corinth was a multicultural metropolis. It had been restored in 44 B.C. as a Roman colony by Julius Caesar. Some think Corinth was the Roman empire's third largest city after Rome and Alexandria. It was a wealthy city and had a theater that seated 14,000. A port was located nearby which made it a fast moving, busy trade center. Sailors and ship captains squandered their money in Corinth while on shore leave which led to it becoming a notoriously immoral place that Paul addresses in his letters to the Corinthians written later (A.D. 59).

Verse 2—

And found a certain Jew...with his wife. Where or how he found **Aquila and Priscilla** we don't know. But the reason they were in Corinth was due to religious persecution in Rome. The expulsion of Jews from Rome (probably in the early 50's) is confirmed by the Roman writer Suetonius who lived from A.D. 70-130;

*He banished from Rome all the Jews, who were continually making disturbances at the instigation of one Chrestus.*¹ (Chrestus could be a reference to Christ).

Why they came to Corinth may have been because of their occupation. Paul **found them and came unto them.**

Verse 3—

Because he was of the same craft, he abode with them. We find out Paul too was a **tentmaker**. The Greek word **tentmaker** is a compound word *skene* (sounds like skin) and *opoios* (which is to work or bring forth). They were workers of skins which may account for going to Corinth, a port city, where not only would tents be a needed commodity, but also ship's sails. Paul does whatever it takes to preach the gospel, including supporting himself in a job that would have seemed menial to the city's elite Jews. Elitists today do the same. They walk over the worker doing menial tasks and yet it is the so-called little people who keep an economy going. This may be the back story to Paul's

statement to the Thessalonians, "If a man does not work, he should not eat." It is believed Paul wrote to the Thessalonians while he was in Corinth.

Verse 4—

What did Paul do on the weekends? On the Sabbath (Saturday) **he reasoned in the synagogue...and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.** This is Paul's preaching strategy, to go to the Jew first. Though Paul is the apostle to the nations his heart is heavy for his own nation (Romans 1:16; 9:2,3). That this was a overwhelmingly *Jewish* assembly is confirmed in this verse. The word **Jews** is *iousiouds* from the root *iouda* which translates Judah. The word **Greeks** is *Hellen*, which here probably pertains to Greek speaking and Greek cultured Jews. **Persuaded.** This should be our goal too--It is certainly a pastor's goal; to persuade others to believe in salvation by grace through faith and not of works.

Verse 5—

And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia. Again we recall Paul had been waiting for Silas and Timothy while in Athens. He left for Corinth before they showed up. We find here that they join him in Corinth. In 2 Corinthians 11:9 Paul mentions *the brethren which came from Macedonia* who brought money or supplies. It may be because of that financial support that **Paul was pressed in the spirit.** There are a couple of things to consider. The KJV does not capitalize the word spirit, which means we have to decide is Paul speaking of his own spirit, or the Holy Spirit. The NKJV capitalizes the word Spirit indicating the translators believed he was referring to the Holy Spirit. The Greek word translated in the KJV and NKJV is *pneuma*; it is the word spirit. The second issue is that all modern translations have a completely different word in their texts. The Greek text they use has the word *logos* and not *pneuma*. *Logos* is often translated as **word**. Therefore, modern versions say Paul was **occupied by the word** (ESV); **devoting himself completely to the word** (NASB); **devoted himself exclusively to preaching** (NIV). Spirit, or Word, which is it? Again, we have a textual difference between the majority text or the received text and the critical text.

But here is the issue. If we believe the Bible contains the exact words of God then we have to deal with this issue. Paul either was *pressed in spirit* (*pneuma*) or he was *occupied by the word* (*logos*). One of them is correct and one is incorrect. I think the answer lies with the word *pressed*. The Greek word is *synecho* and it is written in the passive voice which indicate indirect action. The subject is the recipient of the verb's action. In the active voice it is the subject (in this case Paul) who acts upon the verb. In other words, this is something that was done *to Paul*. Something *pressed his spirit*. The NASB as an example is translating from the same Greek word but they translate it as **Paul began devoting himself to the word**. They have taken a passive word and translated it into an active. My contention would be, when the money came via Silas and Timothy, Paul could scale back his tentmaking and spend more time **testifying to the Jews that Jesus was Christ**. It was Silas and Timothy's arrival and the gift they brought with them that pressed Paul's spirit; "Okay, now it's time to get to work!" In the end it is what Paul did that matters insofar as the result and that is he **testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ** (and on this point all the English versions agree).

¹ C. Suetonius Tranquillus. [Suetonius: The Lives of the Twelve Caesars; An English Translation, Augmented with the Biographies of Contemporary Statesmen, Orators, Poets, and Other Associates](#). Ed. Alexander Thomson. Medford, MA: Gebbie & Co., 1889. Print.