

WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY- Acts Chapter 18

Verse 1- When he left Athens, the city where people worshipped anything and almost everything, Paul went to Corinth, the city known for the absence of worship and for its total disregard for morality. During Paul's time, this Greek city was famous for its materialism, heavy drinking, and sexual decadence. In fact, the name became synonymous with leading an immoral life. This is probably why this one verse stands alone. Luke is emphasizing that Paul left the "bad" and went to "worse."

Verse 2-3- We know from the beginning of chapter 17 that Paul had been away from his traveling companions, Timothy and Silas, for some time. So, while he was still waiting for them to join him, he met a couple, Aquila and Priscilla, who served as his friends. They found common ground in their occupation and their status as outcasts. Paul lived with them during this time. Given the fact that Luke mentions them at the beginning of this chapter, we can assume that he felt this friendship was important. Paul later described what they meant to him in his letter to the Romans. (Romans 16:3-4, ESV 1052)

Verse 4-6- These verses explain why Paul's friendship with this new couple was necessary and possibly why we should not believe their meeting was a coincidence. God declared our need for each other from the beginning. (Genesis 2:18, ESV 2) The friendship of this couple helped Paul to continue teaching in the synagogue every Sabbath both to Jews and Greeks, even though many of them did not respond as he had hoped. By the time Silas and Timothy came to join him, Paul was frustrated with the Jews and their lack of acceptance of Christ. The Greek word for "pressed in the spirit" is "synecho" (soon-ekh'-o) which means to be held together with constraint as if to keep from falling apart. So, Paul was struggling to keep it together as he continued to try to persuade the resistant Jews about Jesus and His resurrection. Paul got so disturbed by their resistance and irreverence that he shook his clothes at them. This action meant something in that time. It symbolized that Paul was tired of dealing with the unbelief. It was a "testimony against them" similar to when Jesus told the apostles to shake the dust off their feet when they encountered resistance. (Luke 9:5, ESV 960) It also symbolized a warning to those who did not repent and return to God's ways. (Nehemiah 5:10-13, ESV 441-442) Like Nehemiah, Paul warned them "Your blood is on your own heads!" He wanted them to know that there would be consequences for their disbelief, but it was not his fault because he had done what God told him to do. Then, he declared he would move on, speaking to the Gentiles, a more willing audience.

Verse 7-8- Paul left the synagogue after his warning to them, but he did not go far. In fact, he went next door. And even though, he left probably dejected by the stubborn unbelievers, there were some people who were saved and baptized, including Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue and his household. Though it was hard for him to see at that moment, Paul's work was not in vain. Looking back at this experience later probably led to his declaration in 1 Corinthians 15:58. (ESV 1065)