

“The Church Established at Corinth”
(Acts 18:5-11)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. Last week, Paul arrived at Corinth from Athens.
 - a. The first thing he did, since he was on his own, was to seek out the fellowship of other believers.
 - (i) He found it in Aquila and Priscilla, two Jews – presumably converted – who had been expelled from Rome by Claudius, because of the turmoil of the Jews over Christ.
 - (ii) They were tent-makers.
 - b. Because Paul was of the same trade, he also began to work with them.
 - (i) To provide for his own needs and not burden the already burdened churches, and to take another excuse away from the Jews to accuse him.
 - (ii) This was simply another way to further the Gospel.
2. But knowing hard work was only part of the equation in bringing the Gospel to others, he did the other as well: he evangelized.
 - a. Our personal testimony/conduct is an important element in getting the Gospel out: people won't listen to us if we don't live consistent with our testimony.
 - b. But without communicating the content of the Gospel, our example won't convert anyone.
 - (i) Our lives are epistles known and read by all men (2 Cor. 3:2).
 - (ii) But it is the Gospel the Spirit makes the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16-17).
 - c. And so Paul went to the synagogue:
 - (i) He reasoned with the Jews and God-fearers, trying to persuade them that Jesus was the Messiah.
 - (ii) He didn't just tell them who He was, but argued his point from the Scripture.
 - (iv) Argument is important (not arguing):
 - (a) We must argue for the validity of Scripture and then bring its message home with conviction.
 - (b) There are times when we simply declare the truth – especially when our audience already knows a great deal about it.
 - (c) But there are times when we must give reasons for it, especially when we have an audience as Paul did at Athens.

B. Preview.

1. Now we see with the coming of Silas and Timothy, Paul was freed up to devote his whole time to the ministry of the Word.
 - a. He continued with the Jews and God-fearers who had attached themselves to the synagogue.

- b. But when, for the most part, they rejected the Gospel, he turned to the Gentiles, offering them eternal life through Jesus Christ.
 - c. The result was that many Gentiles were converted and a church was established.
2. This morning, let's consider two things necessary for the work of Christ to advance: an exhortation and an encouragement.
- a. First, the exhortation: we must be faithful to do whatever the Lord calls us to no matter what the opposition: Paul continued to preach the Gospel to a people, who for the most part, would not receive Christ.
 - b. Second, the encouragement: if we are faithful to our calling, we can be assured of the Lord's continued work with us in that calling so that we don't need to be afraid: The opposition made even Paul afraid, but the Lord's promise to protect him encouraged him to press on.

II. Sermon.

- A. First (the exhortation), we again see the need for faithfulness in the work: whatever the Lord calls us to do, we must be faithful to do no matter what the opposition.
1. Paul now gave himself fully to the ministry of the Word: "But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul *began* devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ" (v. 5).
 - a. Tent-making is an acceptable way of doing missionary work; but it's best when the missionary can devote himself entirely to the ministry of the word.
 - b. Paul now did so, continuing first with the Jews:
 - (i) Remember, the Gospel was first to be preached to the Jews – the Lord was gathering them out before He brought judgment (AD 70).
 - (ii) The work with them was easier in some ways because of their background – he just needed to prove Jesus was the promised Messiah from Scripture – but more difficult in others – they had already formed opinions about who Jesus was.
 2. When the Jews rejected the Gospel, he turned to the Gentiles: "But when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, 'Your blood *be* on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles'" (v. 6).
 - a. Not all, but many of the Jews rejected the Gospel and blasphemed God, probably through vocalizing their opinions about Jesus.
 - b. NB: For this, they would be destroyed, but their blood – the responsibility for their death – would be on their own heads, not Paul's.
 - (i) Since Paul had told them the truth, and they rejected it, the loss of their souls would be their own fault.
 - (ii) If there is something we can or should do to save someone from hell, but don't, we become partly (not fully) to blame for their damnation (Cf. Ez. 33:8-9).
 - (iii) But if we do all we can to save them, and they still won't listen to us, then they will die, but the fault will be all their own.
- c. At this point, Paul turned to the Gentiles since the Lord sent him to preach to them as well.
- (i) He entered the house of a God-fearer and was welcomed there: "Then he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God,

whose house was next to the synagogue” (v. 7). Paul must have known that this man had received Christ, and he was ready to go to him if the Jews should reject the Gospel.

- (ii) This was a part of God’s strategy to save some of the Jews through jealousy: “I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation *has come* to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them” (Rom. 11:11-14).
- (iii) Not only do we read that some Jews believed, but also a great number of Gentiles, and they were baptized: “Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized” (v. 8).
 - (a) Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, received Christ, along with his whole household – the opinion of the head of house makes a great difference in the outcome of the family.
 - (b) Many Corinthians (probably the pagans Gentiles who were neither Jews nor God-fearing Gentiles) also heard, believed and were baptized.
 - (c) The Gospel was making a great deal of progress, unlike in Thessalonica and Athens.
- (iv) This was not an easy road for Paul.
 - (a) The more diligently he worked, the more the opposition increased, but the more fruit was produced.
 - (b) Through his faithfulness, he became a means of salvation to many and not part of the reason for their destruction.
 - (c) This stands as an example to us.

B. Second (the encouragement), one major obstacle to faithfulness is fear, but if we are faithful to our calling, we can know that the Lord will continue to work with us so that we don’t need to be afraid. “And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, ‘Do not be afraid *any longer*, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.’ And he settled *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them” (vv. 9-11).

1. The Lord encouraged Paul to press through his fears with the promise of safety and fruitfulness.
 - a. The Lord appeared to Paul in a vision of the night. His statement to Paul indicates that Paul was afraid (stop being afraid; action already begun).
 - (i) Sometimes we might think that Paul wasn’t afraid of anything.
 - (ii) He wasn’t paralyzed with fear – he had a healthy desire to preserve his life (even Jesus prayed that the cup of His suffering might pass).
 - (iii) But he overcame his fear: It is said that courage is not a state of fearlessness, but overcoming your fear to do what is necessary.

- b. Jesus didn't rebuke Paul for his fear, but encouraged him and allayed his fear by three considerations:
 - (i) He would be with him. He promised He would be with His disciples to the end of the age (Matt. 28:20).
 - (ii) No one would attack him so as to bring him harm (they might verbally attack, but no physical attacks on his life or arrests; not indefinitely, but for now):
 - (a) We need to remember Jesus is in control of the hearts of all men.
 - (b) Sometimes He restrains and sometimes not, depending on His purposes, realizing He has the right to use us as He wills (though taking into account the fact He loves us).
 - (iii) Jesus also had many people in the city – those already gathered in, and those yet to be gathered in.
 - (a) Jesus knows who are His before they come to faith:
 - (1) As the eternal Son of God, He knew who they were before entering into covenant with His Father, before laying down His life for them: He knew His reward.
 - (2) There were still many of them to be gathered in.
 - (b) These, added with those already gathered in, would provide a barrier against persecution.
 - (1) If a movement is large and powerful it tends to intimidate the opposition (there is strength in numbers): This one of the reasons why Christianity had greater influence earlier on in this nation.
 - (2) If more stood up for righteousness today, it would cause the forces of darkness to fall back, but with so few standing up for what is right, they continue to advance.
 - (3) Consider this as you vote in the upcoming primary.
 - (iv) With this assurance, Paul settled there for 18 months laboring to bring the elect to faith and to disciple those gathered in. The church was established now in Corinth.
2. The Lord's promise to be with Paul applies equally to us.
- a. When we do His work, He is with us, strengthening us, protecting us.
 - b. Who can harm us if we are zealous in doing what is good (1 Pet. 3:13)?
 - c. He often protects our lives, but always protects what is most important to us: our souls.
 - d. Even if He should ordain that we lay down our lives for Him, we will lose nothing, but gain everything.
 - e. And so let's strive to be faithful and no longer be afraid: the Lord is for us, what difference does it make who is against us (Rom. 8:31)?
 - f. The Lord also provides a table to nourish our faith so that we can further take hold of this promise. Let's prepare to meet Him there now. Amen.