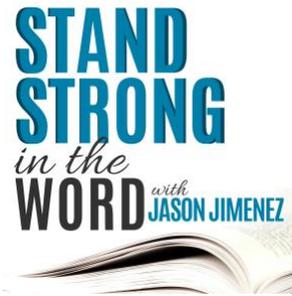


“GOD’S MIGHTY PROTECTION OVER PAUL” (Acts 18:1-28)

Paul is well into his second missionary journey (AD 51-52), just coming from Athens and now settling in Corinth—and about to expand his ministry into Ephesus. Thus far, Paul has written Galatians (AD 49) and before the end of this journey, he will write 1 and 2 Thessalonians (AD 51) while staying in Corinth.

I. Paul Meets Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth (18:1-4)

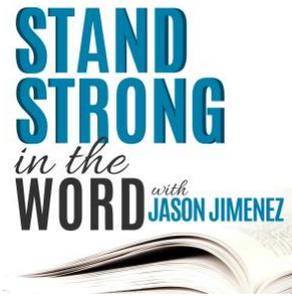
1. ***After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.*** Corinth, the political capital in Achaia, was the largest city in Greece (200,000 people) with a rich culture and extensive commerce that reached into the east-west trade. Julius Caesar turned it into a Roman colony in 44 BC. The metropolitan area was filled with prostitution and idolatry and housed the temple of Apollo and Aphrodite (the goddess of love). A common phrase used in those days was, “To act as a Corinthian,” a synonym for all kinds of sexual sin.
2. ***² And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them,*** Aquila and Priscilla become close ministry partners with Paul (see Rom. 16:3; 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Tim. 4:19). ***Commanded all the Jews to leave Rome***—The Roman historian Suetonius explains why the Jews were kicked out of Rome. “As the Jews were indulging in constant riots at the instigation of Chrestus, he [Claudius] banished them from Rome.” Although “Chrestus” is a misspelling of “Christ,” it seems the Jews are causing havoc over the expansion of the Christian church.
3. ***³ and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade.*** Jewish rabbis didn’t charge people for their teaching, so they relied on a trade to make money. Paul, a tentmaker (leather work) came from Cilicia, a region known for a certain cloth that came from goats’ hair used for tents. Throughout his letters, Paul talks about how hard he worked so that he wasn’t a burden to anyone (see 1 Cor. 4:12; 9:12; 1 Thess. 2:9). In 2 Thess. 3:8-10, Paul writes, “We never accepted food from anyone without paying for it. We worked hard day and night so we would not be a burden to any of you. We certainly had the right to ask you to feed us, but we wanted to give you an example to follow. Even while we were with you, we gave you this command: “Those unwilling to work will not get to eat.”



4. ⁴ **And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.** Paul uses apologetics to prove to Jews and God-fearing Gentiles that Christ is the Messiah.

II. God Protects Paul's Ministry in Corinth (18:5-11)

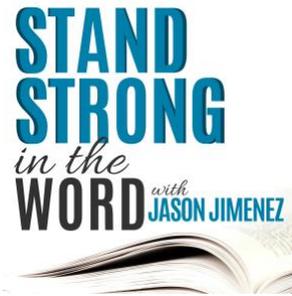
1. ⁵ **When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying** ("to make a serious declaration on the basis of presumed personal knowledge") **to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus.** Silas and Timothy reportedly brought with them a financial gift from the churches in Macedonia (2 Cor. 11:8-9; Phil. 4:14-15).
2. ⁶ **And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."** Paul went to the Jews first because it was his people that God made a covenant with and who were the first to receive Jesus as Savior and receive the Holy Spirit (see Rom. 1:16; 3:1; 9:4-5). **Your blood be on your own heads**—Paul condemns the crowd for rejecting the message of Christ (see Matt. 27:25).
3. ⁷ **And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue.** This was probably the first house church in Corinth. Titius Justus was also called Gaius (Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 1:14).
4. ⁸ **Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.** No doubt having a high-powered ruler converting to Christianity sent shock waves throughout the whole city. It was Paul who baptized Crispus (1 Cor. 1:14).
5. ⁹ **And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid** ("Stop being afraid"), **but go on speaking and do not be silent,** ¹⁰ **for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people."** Paul describes how he came to Corinth in "weakness and with much fear and trembling" (1 Cor. 2:3). He was solely dependent on the Holy Spirit for strength and guidance just like Moses (Ex. 3:2-12) and Jeremiah (1:5-10) relied on God to accomplish the ministry He called them to do. **For I have many in this city**—God was already moving in Corinth before Paul arrived and will lend him support from people devoted to spread the gospel. **One night in a vision**—Paul had many visions of Jesus (9:4-6; 22:17-18; 23:11; 1 Cor. 15:8).



6. ¹¹ ***And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.*** Paul would also go into the region of Achaia to teach (2 Cor. 1:1).
- A. *NIV Application Commentary*, “While Paul was doing this work, his colleagues Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia with great news of how the church there was thriving under persecution (v. 5a; 1 Thess. 3:6-10). They probably brought gifts from Macedonia for support of his work (2 Cor. 11:8-9; Phil. 4:15-16), and as a result he was able to devote “himself exclusively to preaching” (v. 5b). While this probably means that he gave up his tentmaking to go into full-time evangelism, the word translated “devoted” (*synecho* can also be translated “began to be engrossed,” which may suggest that the arrival of his colleagues with such good news acted as a shot in the arm to Paul and thus propelled him into more intense ministry. Robertson translates this word with the next phrase in the Greek (to *logo*: “in reference to the word”) as “was constrained by the word” and adds the comment: “The coming of Silas with gifts from Macedonia ... set Paul free from tent-making for a while so that he began to devote himself ... with fresh concentration to preaching.”

III. The Jews Attack Paul (18:12-17)

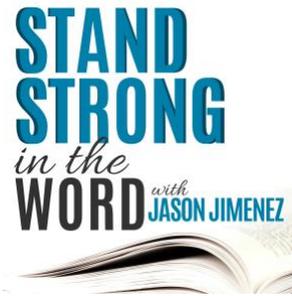
1. ¹² ***But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia*** (southern Greece), ***the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal*** (*Bema*; judgment seat), ¹³ ***saying, “This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law.”*** An inscription of Gallio was discovered in Delphi marking his proconsulship to be from 51-52 AD. ***United attack***—The Jews were attempting to strip Christianity of its privileges within Judaism (a “legitimate” religion”) which was allowed to function under Roman occupancy. ***Contrary to the law***—Referring to Roman law.
2. ¹⁴ ***But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, “If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. ¹⁵ But since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these things.” ¹⁶ And he drove them from the tribunal.*** Gallio, a secularist and brother of the philosopher Seneca, refuses to get involved in religious affairs between Jews and the newfound faith, Christianity. In Gallio’s mind, Christianity is a protected religion (*religio licita*) and Christians weren’t breaking Roman law. However, this view of Christianity changed in the 60s under Nero and mass persecution broke out.



3. ¹⁷ **And they all seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to any of this.** The Jews see Sosthenes as a failure and beat him in front of Gallio's judgement seat. Perhaps Sosthenes turned to Christianity after this beating because he is mentioned alongside with Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:1. **Gallio**—Ironically, Gallio will later be killed by Emperor Nero, whose personal tutor was Seneca.

IV. Paul Strengthens the Churches (18:18-23)

1. ¹⁸ **After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae** (northern Aegean port of Corinth) **he had cut his hair, for he was under a vow.** Paul was accompanied by many companions: Priscilla, Aquila, Sosthenes, Crispus, Stephanas, and Gaius. **Cut his hair**—Paul takes a Nazarite vow to seek God and show the Jews he was still committed to the Scriptures (Num. 6:1-21). In the Mishnah, a Jew had to cut his hair prior to offering a sacrifice in the temple. This makes sense because Paul was on his way to Jerusalem (v. 22). Luke points out Paul's Jewishness to demonstrate that Christianity wasn't a new religion but the fulfillment of Judaism. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 11:22, "Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I."
2. ¹⁹ **And they came to Ephesus** (leading city of the province of Asia Minor), **and he left them there, but he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.** Previously, Paul attempted to go to Ephesus but the Holy Spirit prevented him (16:6). But now, upon his arrival Paul was eager to share Christ with the Jews in the synagogue. In time, Aquila and Priscilla will establish a house church (1 Cor. 16:19) before returning to Rome (Rom. 16:3-5). Luke offers no explanation as to why Silas and Timothy are not mentioned.
3. ²⁰ **When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined.** ²¹ **But on taking leave of them he said, "I will return to you if God wills," and he set sail from Ephesus.** Although Paul would have liked to have remained in Ephesus ministering to the Jews, he felt it more important to fulfill his vow by traveling to Jerusalem. **I will return to you if God wills**—God would eventually send Paul back to Ephesus to perform some of his greatest work.
 - A. *NKJV Chronological Study Bible*: "Ephesus was a chief city of the west coast of Asia Minor, situated at the mouth of the Cayster River. Paul visited the city on the return part of his second missionary journey, staying only briefly (Acts 18:19–21). He returned on his third

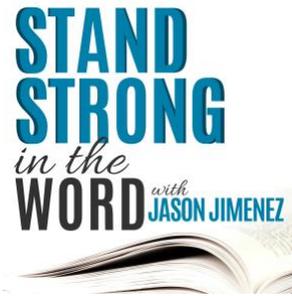


journey to spend more than two years strengthening the church (Acts 19). The letter to the Ephesians was also intended to strengthen them, making them more conscious of their oneness in Christ.”

4. ²² ***When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch.*** After two and a half years (AD 50-52) and traveling two thousand miles, Paul wraps up his second missionary. ***He went up***—This phrase used by Luke refers to Jerusalem because of its elevation. It was sixty five miles southeast to Jerusalem from Caesarea. Afterwards, Paul heads back to his sending church, Antioch (15:36-18:22).
5. ²³ ***After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.*** Paul’s visit to Ephesus is a prelude or commencement to his third missionary journey (18:23-21:17). He will spend over three years in Ephesus to reach the providence of Asia (19:10; 20:31). ***Galatia and Phrygia***—Paul travels back to the southern part of Galatia to check on the churches (chs. 13 & 14). In just verses 22-23, Luke condenses Paul’s travels that consisted of over fifteen hundred miles. ***Strengthening all the disciples***—Paul will minister in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Antioch, and Ephesus.

V. Apollos Challenges the Jews (18:24-28)

1. ²⁴ ***Now a Jew named Apollos (Apollonius), a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent (mighty) in the Scriptures.*** ²⁵ ***He had been instructed (catechized—formally trained) in the way of the Lord. And being fervent (boiling) in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.*** In 18:24-28, Luke puts in an interlude to introduce a new convert, Apollos arriving in Ephesus. ***Though he knew only the baptism of John***—According to Luke, Apollos, a Hellenistic-Jew, was a firm believer in Christ as Messiah; yet, unfamiliar with the resurrection and Pentecost. Therefore, it seems Apollos’s knowledge is limited in scope (Isa. 40:3-5; Lk. 3:4-6).
2. ²⁶ ***He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.*** Priscilla and Aquila instruct Apollos further in the



death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ and inform him of the Holy Spirit's indwelling in believers.

3. ***27 And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, 28 for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.***
The Holy Spirit used Apollos mightily in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:12; 3:4-6, 22; 4:6).