

“THE WORK OF A FAITHFUL MAN OF GOD”

Acts 18:18-23

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INTRODUCTION

Paul was anxious to preach in “the regions beyond” Corinth—a phrase when spoken in II Cor. 10:16 that likely had Rome in view, but that certainly can apply even in this situation to the need back to the East in Ephesus. Paul had not forgotten his earlier intent on visiting and ministering in Ephesus (16:6). Not he had the opportunity; however, because it had been so long since he had been in Jerusalem, and since he had been so long away from Antioch—the two churches that were Paul’s major contact with the Jewish and Gentile wings of Christianity, he could only make a cursory stop there at this time. We sense Paul’s rush to return to Ephesus in the way Luke constructs the text in this section—hurriedly passing over all other places and details in order to get Paul back to Ephesus—even though considerable time and distance was covered in this brief account. Although Paul had his sights bent on Rome for some time (Rom. 1:13), he first had to open the Gospel ministry in the very significant province of Asia. But Paul visits Jerusalem and Antioch first so as to “maintain the unity of the churches in the east and the west” (Rackham, 332). Then he revisits the first churches planted in Galatia who had been experiencing some spiritual struggles and needed strengthening.

Like Paul, the Lord gives us work to do for Him; we must be faithful, and we must trust Him to guide us and enable us to carry out His plans;

PUT YOUR LIFE AND WORK IN THE HANDS OF THE LORD AND TRUST HIM TO DIRECT YOU!

I. LEAVING THE MINISTRY AT CORINTH IN GOOD HANDS (18)

Likely Silas and Timothy—at least for at time

- He remained “many days longer”—until the work was in good shape.
- There was no rush now that they had received a favorable verdict from Gallio and since the Lord’s promise of safety was fulfilled.
- Part of the 1 ½ years or additional time?
- Finally he had to “separate himself”—say farewell—and move on to the next ministry—**but not until he knew the church was in good shape and in good hands!**
- Set sail for Syria—then why land at Caesarea?
- Traveling companions—Aquila and Priscilla—her name listed first here as often.

II. KEEPING HIS SPIRITUAL COMMITMENTS TO THE LORD (18b)

- Nazirite vow—Numbers 6
- Commencement or end of vow? Either way, Jerusalem was the place where the required sacrifice and burning of the hair must occur.
- Purpose—thanks for safety? Gratitude for renewal of health? Seeking blessing upon the new undertaking?
- Place—Cenchrea—eastern seaport of Corinth where a church was also established—I Cor. 16:1-2.

III. DISCIPLING NEW WORKERS—Priscilla and Aquila

- Paul had been training this couple during his long stay in Corinth.
 - Paul left them there to continue the work he would now start.
- IV. STARTING A NEW CHURCH (19b-21)
- A. Preaching and reasoning in the synagogue—just as at Thessalonica, Berea, etc.
Evidently this was a very brief period—maybe only one Sabbath—tense of verb.
 - B. Refusing to stay for a more extended time (20)
 - C. Separating himself once again (departing) with a promise to return
 - D. Committing himself to **the will of God** (21)
- V. KEEPING PEACE WITH THE BRETHREN IN JERUSALEM
- “Went up”; “went down” is established phraseology for going to and from Jerusalem.
 - “The church” without further explanation must be the Jerusalem church.
 - One could not be said to “go down” from Caesarea to Antioch.
- A. Paul solidified relations with this church on his fourth visit following his conversion.
 - B. Paul likely also completed the requirements for his vow.
- VI. MAINTAINING ACCOUNTABILITY WITH HIS “HOME CHURCH” AT ANTIOCH
- A. Surely he shared his experiences just as he had done after his first journey—14:26-28.
 - B. He spent “some time” there in fellowship (23a).

*Now begins what we often refer to Paul’s **third** missionary journey—with hardly a notice in the text! An arduous journey of 1500 miles and several months is covered with **one verse**. It is obvious that Luke in his style here shows us what was important to Paul and to himself—getting to Ephesus and establishing a strong church there that would affect all of the Roman province of Asia. Did Paul have any traveling companions? We are not told.*

- VII. STRENGTHENING THE DISCIPLES IN GALATIA (23b)
- A. Note the importance of Edification of those who are believers.
 - B. Note that churches experience spiritual and doctrinal struggles—**see the book of Galatians**.
 - C. Note the orderly and conscientious work carried out by Paul.

CONCLUSION

Long ago the Lord had forbidden Paul from going to Ephesus (16:6). Now at long last he arrives there—but only to stay for a few days! For, his ship was departing to take the pilgrims to Jerusalem—likely to observe a feast—possibly Passover. **But, in the will of God he would come back.**

We can make our plans, but it is God who determines what is best and the best time!

PUT YOUR LIFE AND WORK IN THE HANDS OF THE LORD AND TRUST HIM TO DIRECT YOU!

Keep the work in good shape and in good hands; keep your spiritual commitments to the Lord; disciple and train new workers for the Lord’s work; keep peace with believers in other ministries of like faith and practice; maintain personal accountability with those who have trained you and prayed for you; strengthen believers who are struggling in their faith and in their lives.