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a *Grace Notes* course

## **The Acts of the Apostles**

an expositional study  
by Warren Doud

Lesson 310: **Acts 18:1-13**

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## ACTS, Lesson 310, Acts 18:1-13

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## Acts 18:1-13

### Acts 18:1

**After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;**

We don't know how long Paul was in Athens, probably about three months or so. When Silas and Timothy caught up with him, they probably decided that they weren't having much success in Athens and decided to go to Corinth.

Corinth was situated on the isthmus that connects Peloponnesus to Attica; and was the capital of all Achaia, or the Peloponnesus. It was most advantageously situated for trade; for, by its two ports, the Lecheum and Cenchrea, it commanded the commerce both of the Ionian and Aegean Sea.

In going from Athens to Corinth, Paul came in contact with a very different society. Athens was the great seat of Greek philosophy, manners, and customs. Corinth was famous for its commerce, luxury, and decadence. In Athens, Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, was the main focus of worship; in Corinth, it was Venus, the goddess of love, who was revered.

Corinth had been completely destroyed in 146 BC, about the same time that Carthage had been destroyed. After lying in ruins for 100 years, Corinth was rebuilt by Julius Caesar and converted into a Roman colony (Colonia Laus Julia Corinthus). It rapidly regained its prosperity and became a very wealthy commercial city.

Corinth, however, was infamous for its licentiousness and debauchery, and impurity was so rampant that there was a well-known Greek epithet **korinthiasein** "to live like a Corinthian".

**Special Note:** it is in Corinth that Paul writes the first two of his epistles to churches, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians. It is very important, therefore, for you to read the account of Paul's activities and writing that is found in *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, written by W. J. Conybeare and W. S. Howson. This book is one

of the most thorough and definitive accounts of Paul's life, and it includes the Conybeare and Howson translations of all of the epistles.

TOPIC: CORINTH

TOPIC: PAUL IN CORINTH

### Acts 18:2

**And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them.**

Aquila and his wife Priscilla were Jews and natives of Pontus. Their occupation was tent making. They had fled from Rome to Corinth when the emperor Claudius had commanded all Jews to leave that city. When Paul came to Corinth, he found them and stayed with them for some time, working with them at the trade of tent making.

Later, when Paul was opposed by the Jews, and perhaps to remove any obstacle to his reception by the Gentiles, he left the house of Aquila and dwelled with a man named Justus.

It is not clear when Aquila and Priscilla became Christians, but it was certainly before Paul left Corinth, because they traveled with him to Ephesus. Paul was able to teach them a great deal about Christ in a short time, because we see Aquila and Priscilla giving instruction to Apollos in Ephesus (Acts 18). They appear to have been zealous promoters of the cause of Christ in Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:19).

**Acts 18:18** And Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila. In Cenchrea he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow.

**Acts 18:26** and he [Apollos] began to speak out 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.

Aquila and Priscilla later returned to Rome, and their home there was a place of assembly for believers. See Romans 16:3 and following verses.

Some years after that they seem to have returned to Ephesus, because Paul sends salutations to them there during his second imprisonment at Rome (2 Tim. 4:19), as being with Timothy.

Tiberius Claudius Drusus Caesar was the fourth Roman emperor (after Augustus, Tiberius, and Caligula). He reigned for over thirteen years (A.D. 41–54), having succeeded Gaius Caesar (Caligula).

The previous emperor, Caligula, had seriously altered the conciliatory policy of his predecessors regarding the Jews and, considering himself a real and corporeal god, had deeply offended the Jews by ordering a statue of himself to be placed in the temple of Jerusalem, as Antiochus Epiphanes had done with the statue of Zeus in the days of the Maccabees (2 Macc. 6:2).

Claudius reverted to the policy of Augustus and Tiberius and marked the opening year of his reign by issuing edicts in favor of the Jews (Josephus Ant. xix.5), who were permitted in all parts of the empire to observe their laws and customs in a free and peaceable manner. Special consideration was given to the Jews of Alexandria, who were to enjoy without molestation all their ancient rights and privileges. **The Jews of Rome, however, who had become very numerous, were not allowed to assemble there** (Dio Cassius Hist. lx.6.6), an enactment in full correspondence with the general policy of Augustus regarding Judaism in the West.

The edicts mentioned were largely due to the intimacy of Claudius with Herod Agrippa, grandson of Herod the Great, who had been living in Rome and had been in some measure instrumental in securing the succession for Claudius. As a reward for this service, the Holy Land had a king once more. Judea was added to the tetrarchies of Philip and Antipas; and Herod

Agrippa I was made ruler over the wide territory which had been governed by his grandfather.

Whatever concessions to the Jews Claudius may have been induced out of friendship for Herod Agrippa to make at the beginning of his reign, Suetonius records Claudius' expulsion of Jews instigated by "Chrestus" who were continually causing an uproar (Claudius 25), an event assigned by some to A.D. 50, though others suppose it to have taken place somewhat later. Among the Jews thus banished from Rome were Aquila and Priscilla, with whom Paul became associated at Corinth. With the reign of Claudius is also associated the famine foretold by Agabus (Acts 11:28).

Classical writers report that the reign of Claudius was, from bad harvest or other causes, a period of general distress and scarcity over the whole world (Dio Cassius lx.11; Suetonius Claudius 18; Tacitus Ann. xi.4; xiii.43).

TOPIC: CLAUDIUS

### Acts 18:3

**And because he was of the same craft, he stayed with them, and worked: for by their occupation they were tent makers.**

Aquila and Priscilla were tent makers. That trade was very much in demand in the Roman world, and there were many uses for that skill.

Roman soldiers used tents; the Latin phrase *sub pellibus*, meaning "under the skins" refers to sleeping in tents made of animal skins. Sometimes tents were made with linen canopies for shade from the heat of the sun. Other people used tenting materials made into tapestries, or hangings, which were made for theaters, palaces, or stately rooms in rich people's houses. Even some horse trappings were made of tenting materials.

Paul had learned tent making as a trade either as a young man with his parents, or during the time he was a rabbinical student in Jerusalem. It was mandatory that all scholars have a trade, profession, or business, by which they could

support themselves and their families. This is emphasized quite often in the Talmud and there is much discussion in Jewish literature about this.

There was no church in Corinth in those early days to support ministers, so Paul had to support himself. Paul thought it was proper for a minister to be maintained by a church, but even when the Corinthian church had grown larger, he continued supporting himself, lest false teachers claim that he was teaching for money.

#### Acts 18:4

**And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.**

Paul ministered to both Jews and gentiles. There may have been a number of synagogues in Corinth, but there seems to have been one that Paul went to most of the time. On the week days, Paul worked at his trade; no doubt, though, tent making put him in contact with many people to whom he could witness.

#### Acts 18:5

**And when Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.**

Paul had left Silas and Timothy in Berea, with instructions to follow him to Athens. Timothy, however, had been sent to Thessalonica to strengthen the church there (1 Thess. 3:1,2). Because of this delay, they did not rejoin Paul until he was in Corinth.

#### Paul was pressed in the spirit

Undoubtedly Paul's soul was filled with trouble and sorrow when he saw the unbelief and immorality all around him in Corinth. Add to that the contradiction and blasphemy he faced from the majority of the Jews (verse 6). In spite of these things, he continued to preach, from the Law and the Prophets, that Jesus was Messiah.

#### Acts 18:6

**And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.**

It was the majority of the Jews who were in opposition to the gospel, as Paul and all the apostles experienced wherever they went.

"Blaspheme" means "slander"; the Jews slandered both Christ and the apostle. They ridiculed the doctrine he taught and used him in a reproachful manner.

#### he shook his raiment

NIV, "he shook out his clothes in protest". This was an act showing that he resolved to have nothing more to do with them; it expressed the fact that God would reject them if they did not repent.

**Matthew 10:13,14**, "If the house is worthy, give it your blessing of peace. But if it is not worthy, take back your blessing of peace.

"Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet."

**Acts 13:50,51**, But the Jews incited the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.

But they shook off the dust of their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium."

**Nehemiah 5:13**, I also shook out the front of my garment and said, "Thus may God shake out every man from his house and from his possessions who does not fulfill this promise; even thus may he be shaken out and emptied." And all the assembly said, "Amen!" And they praised the LORD. Then the people did according to this promise.

#### your blood be on your own heads, I am clean

"The guilt of your destruction is your own; you and only you are the cause of the punishment

that is coming upon you. I am not to blame for your destruction; I have done my duty." The gospel message had been fairly offered and deliberately rejected, and Paul was not to blame for their ruin.

### henceforth I go to the Gentiles

**Acts 14:36**, "Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.

This was a turning point in Paul's ministry; he intends now to devote himself to reading the Gentiles. However, he does not stop preaching to Jews, wherever he can; he preached to Jews in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-10) and in Rome (Acts 28:23-28).

**Romans 1:14-16**, I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.

So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

### Acts 18:7

**And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Titus Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.**

Titus Justus (**Titiou Ioustou**) was a proselyte who had become a convert to Christ. There is no indication here that Paul moved out of Aquila's home to live with Justus. His home was near the synagogue at which Paul had been preaching. As a Gentile, Justus would be free to invite Paul to minister in his home.

### Acts 18:8

**And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all**

**his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.**

Both Jewish and Greek Christians attended the worship services in the house of Justus. The first converts in Corinth were Stephanas and his household. Luke reports here that the ruler of the synagogue, Crispus, and his entire household also became followers of Jesus Christ. (In Acts, Luke often uses the term household, which usually refers to a man's wife, sons and daughters, close relatives, and servants [see 11:14; 16:15, 31-34].)<sup>1</sup>

Crispus was a prominent figure in the Jewish community. His conversion to Christianity proved to be decisive to the growth of the local church. His successor or colleague in the synagogue, Sosthenes (v. 17), in time became a believer (1 Cor. 1:1).

All of these persons, except Sosthenes, were baptized by Paul himself (1 Cor. 1:16; 16:15), although, according to his own testimony, he normally did not baptize converts. It is possible that Stephanas, Crispus, Gaius, and the members of their families were baptized before Silas and Timothy arrived in Corinth and before the break with the Jews occurred.

Paul continued his work of preaching in the home of Justus. Many Corinthians, both Jews and Greeks, listened to Paul's instruction and believed. Among the members of the Corinthian church were Erastus, the city treasurer, and a person named Quartus (Rom. 16:23).

### Acts 18:9,10

**Then the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not your peace:**

**For I am with you, and no man shall set on you to hurt you: for I have many people in this city.**

<sup>1</sup> These paragraphs are taken from: Baker New Testament Commentary on Acts 18:8.

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Paul was probably discouraged and fearful in Corinth at this time. He admits to this in one of the letters he wrote to the Corinthians.

**1 Cor. 2:3**, I was with you in a state of weakness, fear, and much trembling.

The Jews want him to stop teaching the people about Jesus, and the threat to his personal safety is always present. The seemingly endless opposition to Paul's ministry had begun to have a depressing effect on his spiritual life.

TOPIC: FAITH REST

**for I have many people in this city**

There was a lot of positive volition in Corinth, among both Jews and Greek, as witnessed by the size and prominence to which the church attained. This is a great encouragement to Paul; the Lord is guaranteeing that his efforts in Corinth will bear fruit.

God Himself appoints his people to eternal list (Acts 13:48) and opens their hearts to the gospel message (Acts 16:14). God calls Jews and Gentiles to be his own people and builds the church at Corinth (2 Cor. 6:16).

**Acts 18:11**

**And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.**

Luke doesn't write much about the missionary activity in Corinth, so we have to glean data from Paul's epistles.

We know that God blessed Paul's ministry, because there were believers throughout the province of Achaia (2 Cor. 1:1). In the harbor city of Cenchrea some believers founded a church in which Phoebe was a deaconess (Rom. 16:1). And Paul mentions by name some other believers in Corinth itself: Chloe and her household (1 Cor. 1:11), Fortunatus and Achaicus (1 Cor. 16:17), and Tertius (Rom. 16:22).

In 1 Corinthians Paul also describes the Corinthian worship services and notes that the

church enjoyed "a variety of highly diversified ministries: there were apostles, prophets, teachers, miracle workers, healers, helpers, 'governments,' speakers with tongues." The Corinthian church continued to expand and develop in the period after Paul's departure and the time he wrote his letters. But in light of the Lord's assurance that he had many people in Corinth, we dare say that Paul saw encouraging growth in the year and a half he spent in that city.

**Acts 18:12,13**

**And when Gallio was the governor of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat,**

**Saying, This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.**

**When Gallio was the governor of Achaia**

"Governor" is (**anthupatos**) meaning "deputy" or "proconsul".

Gallio was the Roman deputy or PROCONSUL of Achaia before whom Paul was brought by his Jewish accusers. According to historical sources the original name of Gallio was Marcus Annaeus Novatus, but this was changed when he was adopted by the rhetorician Lucius Junius Gallio. He was born at Cordova, but came to Rome during the reign of Tiberius. He was the son of Seneca the rhetorician and brother of Seneca the philosopher. An inscription from Delphi makes it probable that he acceded to the office of proconsul of Achaia ca A.D. 52. Early in Nero's reign he returned to Rome, having been granted a substitute consulate. He and his brother (who had earlier been Nero's tutor) lost their lives as a result of their participation in a conspiracy against Nero.

Paul's trial was not of long duration. Although Gallio extended his protection to the Jewish religion as one of the religions recognized by the state, he contemptuously rejected the claim of the Jews that their law was binding upon all. In the eyes of the proconsul, the only law

universally applicable was that of the Roman code and social morality, and under neither was the prisoner chargeable; therefore, without even waiting to hear Paul's speech in his own defense, he summarily ordered his accusers to clear the court.

Even the subsequent treatment meted out to Sosthenes, ruler of the synagogue, was to him a matter of indifference. Gallio has often been described as typical of one who is careless or indifferent to religion; yet in the account given of him in Acts, he merely displayed an attitude characteristic of that with which Roman governors regarded the religious disputes of the time (such as LYSIAS; FELIX; FESTUS). He refused to judge the squabbles of what he regarded as an obscure religious sect, whose law was to him a subtle quibbling with "words and names."<sup>2</sup>

#### TOPIC: ROMAN PROVINCIAL SYSTEM

### Paul in Corinth

When St. Paul went from Athens to Corinth, he entered on a scene very different from that which he had left. It is not merely that his residence was transferred from a free Greek city to a Roman colony; as would have been the case had he been moving from Thessalonica to Philippi. His present journey took him from a quiet provincial town to the busy metropolis of a province, and from the seclusion of an ancient university to the seat of government and trade.

<sup>3</sup> Once there had been a time, in the flourishing age of the Greek republics, when Athens had been politically greater than Corinth; but now that the little territories of the Levantine cities were fused into the larger political divisions of the empire, Athens had only the memory of its pre eminence, while Corinth held the keys of commerce and swarmed with a crowded

<sup>2</sup> Baker, Acts 18:12,13

<sup>3</sup> A journey in the first century from Athens to Corinth might almost be compared to a journey, in the eighteenth, from Oxford to London.

population. Both cities had recently experienced severe vicissitudes, but a spell was on the fortunes of the former, and its character remained more entirely Greek than that of any other place, while the latter rose from its ruins, a new and splendid city, on the Isthmus between its two seas, where a multitude of Greeks and Jews gradually united themselves with the military colonists sent by Julius Caesar from Italy,<sup>4</sup> and were kept in order by the presence of a Roman proconsul.

The connection of Corinth with the life of St. Paul and the early progress of Christianity, is so close and eventful, that no student of Holy Writ ought to be satisfied without obtaining as correct and clear an idea as possible of its social condition, and its relation to other parts of the Empire. This subject will be considered in the succeeding chapter. At present another topic demands our chief attention. We are now arrived at that point in the life of St. Paul when his first Epistles were written. This fact is ascertained, not by any direct statements either in the Acts or the Epistles themselves, but by circumstantial evidence derived from a comparison of these documents with one another.

Such a comparison enables us to perceive that the Apostle's mind, on his arrival at Corinth, was still turning with affection and anxiety towards his converts at Thessalonica. In the midst of all his labors at the Isthmus, his thoughts were continually with those whom he had left in Macedonia; and though the narrative tells us only of his tent making and preaching in the metropolis of Achaia, we discover, on a closer inquiry, that the Letters to the Thessalonians were written at this particular crisis.

<sup>4</sup> At the close of the Republic Corinth was entirely destroyed. Thus we find Cicero travelling, not by Corinth, but by Athens. But Julius Caesar established the city on the Isthmus, in the form of a colony; and the mercantile population flocked back to their old place; so that Corinth rose with great rapidity, till it was a city of the second rank in the Empire.



It would be interesting, in the case of any man whose biography has been thought worth preserving, to find that letters full of love and wisdom had been written at a time when no traces would have been discoverable, except in the letters themselves, of the thoughts which had been occupying the writer's mind. Such unexpected association of the actions done in one place with affection retained towards another, always seems to add to our personal knowledge of the man whose history we may be studying, and to our interest in the pursuits which were the occupation of his life. This is peculiarly true in the case of the first Christian correspondence, which has been preserved to the Church. Such has ever been the influence of letter writing, its power in bringing those who are distant near to one another, and reconciling those who are in danger of being estranged; such especially has been the influence of Christian letters in developing the growth of faith and love, and binding together the dislocated members of the body of Our Lord, and in making each generation in succession the teacher of the next, that we have good reason to take these Epistles to the Thessalonians as the one chief subject of the present chapter. The earliest occurrences which took place at Corinth must first be mentioned: but for this a few pages will suffice.

The reasons which determined St. Paul to come to Corinth (over and above the discouragement he seems to have met with in Athens) were, probably, twofold. In the first place, it was a large mercantile city, in immediate connection with Rome and the West of the Mediterranean, with Thessalonica and Ephesus in the Aegean, and with Antioch and Alexandria in the East. The Gospel once established in Corinth, would rapidly spread everywhere. And, again, from the very nature of the city, the Jews established there were numerous. Communities of scattered Israelites were found in various parts of the province of Achaia, in Athens, as we have recently seen, in Argos, as we learn from Philo, in Boeotia and Euboea. But their chief settlement must necessarily have been in that

city, which not only gave opportunities of trade by land along the Isthmus between the Morea and the Continent, but received in its two harbors the ships of the Eastern and Western seas. A religion which was first to be planted in the synagogue, and was thence intended to scatter its seeds over all parts of the earth, could nowhere find a more favorable soil than among the Hebrew families at Corinth.

At this particular time there was a greater number of Jews in the city than usual; for they had lately been banished from Rome by command of the Emperor Claudius.<sup>5</sup> The history of this edict is involved in some obscurity. But there are abundant passages in the cotemporary heathen writers which show the suspicion and dislike with which the Jews were regarded. Notwithstanding the general toleration, they were violently persecuted by three successive Emperors<sup>6</sup> and there is good reason for identifying the edict mentioned by St. Luke with that alluded to by Suetonius, who says that Claudius drove the Jews from Rome because they were incessantly raising tumults at the instigation of a certain Chrestus.

Much has been written concerning this sentence of the biographer of the Caesars. Some have held that there was really a Jew called Chrestus, who had excited political disturbances, others that the name is used by mistake for Christus, and that the disturbances had arisen from the Jewish expectations concerning the Messiah, or Christ. It seems to us that the last opinion is partially true; but that we must trace this movement not merely to the vague Messianic idea entertained by the Jews, but to the events which followed the actual appearance of the Christ.

We have seen how the first progress of

<sup>5</sup> Acts 18:2

<sup>6</sup> Four thousand Jews, or Jewish proselytes, were sent as convicts by Tiberius to the Island of Sardinia. The more directly religious persecution of Caligula has been mentioned in Chapter 4.

Christianity had been the occasion of tumult among the Jewish communities in the provinces<sup>7</sup>; and there is no reason why the same might not have happened in the capital itself.<sup>8</sup> Nor need we be surprised at the inaccurate form in which the name occurs, when we remember how loosely more careful writers than Suetonius express themselves concerning the affairs of the Jews. Chrestus was a common name; Christus was not: and we have a distinct statement by Tertullian and Lactantius<sup>9</sup> that in their day the former was often used for the latter.

Among the Jews who had been banished from Rome by Claudius and had settled for a time at Corinth, were two natives of Pontus, whose names were Aquila and Priscilla.<sup>10</sup> We have seen before (Chapter 8) that Pontus denoted a province of Asia Minor on the shores of the Euxine, and we have noticed some political facts which tended to bring this province into relations with Judea. Though, indeed, it is hardly necessary to allude to this: for there were Jewish colonies over every part of Asia Minor, and we are expressly told that Jews from Pontus heard St. Peter's first sermon (Acts 2:9) and read his first Epistle.<sup>11</sup> Aquila and Priscilla were, perhaps, of that number. Their names

<sup>7</sup> In Asia Minor (Chapter 6) and more especially in Thessalonica and Berea (Chapter 9).

<sup>8</sup> Christianity must have been more or less known in Rome since the return of the Italian Jews from Pentecost (Acts 2).

<sup>9</sup> See the passages quoted by Dean Milman (Hist. of Christianity, I, p. 430), who remarks that these tumults at Rome, excited by the mutual hostility of Jews and Christians, imply that Christianity must already have made considerable progress there.

<sup>10</sup> Acts 18:2

<sup>11</sup> 1 Peter 1:1

have a Roman form;<sup>12</sup> and we may conjecture that they were brought into some connection with a Roman family, similar to that which we have supposed to have existed in the case of St. Paul himself. We find they were on the present occasion forced to leave Rome; and we notice that they are afterwards addressed (Rom. 16:3) as residing there again; so that it is reasonable to suppose that the metropolis was their stated residence. Yet we observe that they frequently traveled; and we trace them on the Asiatic coast on two distinct occasions, separated by a wide interval of time. First, before their return to Italy (Acts 18:18, 26; 1 Cor. 16:19), and again, shortly before the martyrdom of St. Paul (2 Tim. 4:19), we find them at Ephesus. From the manner in which they are referred to as having Christian meetings in their houses, both at Ephesus and Rome, we should be inclined to conclude that they were possessed of some considerable wealth. The trade at which they labored, or which at least they superintended, was the manufacture of tents,<sup>13</sup> the demand for which must have been continual in that age of traveling, while the *cilicium*, or hair cloth, of which they were made, could easily be

<sup>12</sup> From the mention of Priscilla as St. Paul's 'fellow-laborer,' and as one of the instructors of Apollos, we might naturally infer that she was a woman of good education. Her name appears in 2 Tim. 4:19 (also, according to the best MSS., in Rom. 16:3), under the form 'Prisca.' So, in Latin authors, 'Livia' and 'Livilla,' 'Drusa' and 'Drusilla,' are used of the same person. Prisca is well known as a Roman name. It is well worthy of notice that in both cases St. Paul mentions the name of Priscilla before that of Aquila. This conveys the impression that she was the more energetic character of the two.

<sup>13</sup> Many meanings have been given by the commentators to the word – weavers of tapestry, saddlers, mathematical instrument makers, rope makers. But nothing is so probable as that they were simply makers of those hair-cloth tents, which are still in constant use in the Levant [19<sup>th</sup> Century. wd]. That they were manufacturers of the cloth itself is less likely.

procured at every large town in the Levant. A question has been raised as to whether Aquila and Priscilla were already Christians, when they met with St. Paul. Though it is certainly possible that they may have been converted at Rome, we think, on the whole, that this was probably not the case. They are simply classed with the other Jews who were expelled by Claudius ; and we are told that the reason why St. Paul came and attached himself to them (Acts 18:2) was not because they had a common religion, but because they had a common trade. There is no doubt, however, that the connection soon resulted in their conversion to Christianity.<sup>14</sup> The trade which St. Paul's father had taught him in his youth was thus the means of procuring him invaluable associates in the noblest work in which man was ever engaged.

No higher example can be found of the possibility of combining diligent labor in the common things of life with the utmost spirituality of mind. Those who might have visited Aquila at Corinth in the working hours, would have found St. Paul quietly occupied with the same task as his fellow laborers. Though he knew the Gospel to be a matter of life and death to the soul, he gave himself to an ordinary trade with as much zeal as though he had no other occupation. It is the duty of every man to maintain an honorable independence; and this, he felt, was peculiarly incumbent on him, for the sake of the Gospel he came to proclaim.

He knew the obloquy to which he was likely to be exposed, and he prudently prepared for it. The highest motives instigated his diligence in the commonest manual toil. And this toil was no hindrance to that communion with God, which was his greatest joy, and the source of all his peace. While he "labored, working with his own hands," among the Corinthians, as he afterwards reminded them, in his heart he was

<sup>14</sup> They were Christians, and able to instruct others, when Paul left them at Ephesus on his voyage from Corinth to Syria.

praying continually, with thanksgiving, on behalf of the Thessalonians, as he says to them himself (1 Thess. 1:2; 2:13; 2 Thess. 1:11) in the letters which he dictated in the intervals of his labor.

This was the first scene of St. Paul's life at Corinth. For the second scene we must turn to the synagogue. The Sabbath was a day of rest. On that day the Jews laid aside their tent making and their other trades, and, amid the derision of their Gentile neighbors, assembled in the house of prayer to worship the God of their ancestors. There St. Paul spoke to them of the "mercy promised to their forefathers," and of the "oath sworn to Abraham," being "performed." There his countrymen listened with incredulity or conviction; and the tent maker of Tarsus "reasoned" with them and "endeavored to persuade both the Jews and the Gentiles who were present, to believe in Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah and the Savior of the World.

While these two employments were proceeding, the daily labor in the workshop, and the weekly discussions in the synagogue,<sup>15</sup> Timothy and Silas returned from Macedonia.<sup>15</sup> The effect produced by their arrival seems to have been an instantaneous increase of the zeal and energy with which St. Paul resisted the opposition, which was even now beginning to hem in the progress of the truth.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Acts 18:5. We may remark here that Silas and Timothy were probably the "brethren" who brought the collection mentioned, 2 Cor. 11:9, cf. Phil. 4:15.

<sup>16</sup> There are some difficulties and differences of opinion, with regard to the movements of Silas and Timothy, between the time when St. Paul left them in Macedonia and their rejoining him in Achaia.

The facts which are distinctly stated are as follows.

(1.) Silas and Timothy were left at Berea (Acts 17:14) when St. Paul went to Athens. We are not told why they were left there, or what commissions they received; but the Apostle sent a message from Athens (Acts 17:15) that they should follow him

with all speed, and (Acts 17:16) he waited for them there.

(2.) The Apostle was rejoined by them when at Corinth (Acts 18:5). We are not informed how they had been employed in the interval, but they came from Macedonia. It is not distinctly said that they came together, but the impression at first sight is that they did.

(3.) St. Paul informs us (1 Thess. 3:1), that he was 'left in Athens alone,' and that this solitude was in consequence of Timothy having been sent to Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3:2). Though it is not expressly stated that Timothy was sent from Athens, the first impression is that he was.

Thus there is a seeming discrepancy between the Acts and Epistles; a journey of Timotheus to Athens, previous to his arrival with Silas at Corinth, appearing to be mentioned by St. Paul, and to be quite unnoticed by St. Luke.

Paley, in the *Horae Paulinae*, says that the Epistle 'virtually asserts that Timothy came to the Apostle at Athens,' and assumes that it is 'necessary' to suppose this, in order to reconcile the history with the Epistle. And he points out three intimations in the history, which make the arrival, though not expressly mentioned, extremely probable: first, the message that they should come with all speed; secondly, the fact of his waiting for them; thirdly, the absence of any appearance of haste in his departure from Athens to Corinth. 'Paul had ordered Timothy to follow him without delay: he waited at Athens on purpose that Timothy might come up with him, and he stayed there as long as his own choice led him to continue.'

This explanation is satisfactory. But two others might be suggested, which would equally remove the difficulty. It is not expressly said that Timothy was sent from Athens to Thessalonica. St. Paul was anxious, as we have seen, to revisit the Thessalonians; but since he was hindered from doing so, it is highly probable that he may have sent Timothy to them from Berea. Silas might be sent on some similar commission, and this would explain why the two companions were left behind in Macedonia. This would necessarily cause St. Paul to be 'left alone in Athens.'

Such solitude was doubtless painful to him; but the spiritual good of the new converts was at stake. The two companions, after finishing the work entrusted

to them, finally rejoined the Apostle at Corinth. [We should observe that the phrase is "from Macedonia," not "from Berea." That he 'waited for them' at Athens need cause us no difficulty, for in those days the arrival of travelers could not confidently be known beforehand. When he left Athens and proceeded to Corinth, he knew that Silas and Timothy could easily ascertain his movements, and follow his steps, by help of information obtained at the synagogue.

But, again, we may reasonably suppose, that in the course of St. Paul's stay at Corinth, he may have paid a second visit to Athens, after the first arrival of Timothy and Silas from Macedonia; and that during some such visit he may have sent Timothy to Thessalonica. This view may be taken without our supposing that the First Epistle to the Thessalonians was written at Athens. Schrader and others imagine a visit to that city at a later period of his life; but this view cannot be admitted without deranging the arguments for the date of 1 Thess., which was evidently written soon after leaving Macedonia.

Two further remarks may be added:

(1.) If Timothy did rejoin St. Paul at Athens, we need not infer that Silas was not with him, from the fact that the name of Silas is not mentioned. It is usually taken for granted that the second arrival of Timothy (1 Thess. 3:6) is identical with the coming of Silas and Timothy to Corinth (Acts 18:5); but here we see that only Timothy is mentioned, doubtless because he was most recently and familiarly known at Thessalonica, and perhaps, also, because the mission of Silas was to some other place.

(2.) On the other hand, it is not necessary to assume, because Silas and Timothy are mentioned together that they came together. All conditions are satisfied if they came about the same time. If they were sent on missions to two different places, the times of their return would not necessarily coincide. [Something may be implied in the form of the Greek phrase, 'Silas as well as Timothy.']

In considering all these journeys, it is very needful to take into account that they would be modified by the settled or unsettled state of the country with regard to banditti, and by the various opportunities of travelling, which depend on the season and the weather, and the sailing of vessels. Hindrances connected with some such considerations may be referred to in Phil. 4:10.

The remarkable word which is used to describe the "pleasure" which he experienced at this moment in the course of his teaching at Corinth, is the same which is employed of our Lord Himself in a solemn passage of the Gospels, (Luke 12:50) when He says, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." He who felt our human difficulties has given us human help to aid us in what He requires us to do. When St. Paul's companions rejoined him, he was reinforced with new earnestness and vigor in combating the difficulties which met him. He acknowledges himself that he was at Corinth "in weakness, and in fear and much trembling (1 Cor. 2:3) but "God, who comforteth those that are cast down, comforted him by the arrival" (2 Cor. 7:6) of his friends. It was only one among many instances we shall be called to notice, in which, at a time of weakness, "he saw the brethren and took courage." (Acts 28:15)

But this was not the only result of the arrival of St. Paul's companions. Timothy had been sent, while St. Paul was still at Athens, to revisit and establish the Church of Thessalonica. The news he brought on his return to St. Paul caused the latter to write to these beloved converts; and, as we have already observed, the letter which he sent them is the first of his Epistles which has been preserved to us. It seems to have been occasioned partly by his wish to express his earnest affection for the Thessalonian Christians, and to encourage them under their persecutions; but it was also called for by some errors into which they had fallen. Many of the new converts were uneasy about the state of their relatives or friends, who had died since their conversion.

They feared that these departed Christians would lose the happiness of witnessing their Lord's second coming, which they expected soon to behold. In this expectation others had given themselves up to a religious excitement, under the influence of which they persuaded themselves that they need not continue to work at the business of their callings, but might claim support from the richer members of the Church.

Others, again, had yielded to the same temptations which afterwards influenced the Corinthian Church, and despised the gift of prophesying (1 Thess. 5:20) in comparison with those other gifts which afforded more opportunity for display. These reasons, and others which will appear in the letter itself, led St. Paul to write to the Thessalonians. <sup>17</sup>

The strong expressions used in Thessalonians concerning the malevolence of the Jews, lead us to suppose that the Apostle was thinking not only of their past opposition at Thessalonica, but of the difficulties with which they were beginning to surround him at Corinth. At the very time of his writing, that same people who had "killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets," and had already driven Paul "from city to city," were showing themselves "a people displeasing to God, and enemies to all mankind," by endeavoring to hinder him from speaking to the Gentiles for their salvation (1 Thess. 2:15, 16). Such expressions would naturally be used in a letter written under the circumstances described in the Acts (18:6), when the Jews were assuming the attitude of an organized and systematic resistance, and assailing the Apostle in the language of blasphemy, (cf. Matt. 12:24 31) like those who had accused our Savior of casting out devils by Beelzebub.

Now, therefore, the Apostle left the Jews, and turned to the Gentiles. He withdrew from his own people with one of those symbolical actions, which, in the East, have all the expressiveness of language, and which, having received the sanction of our Lord Himself (Mark 6:2), are equivalent to the denunciation of woe. He shook the dust off his garments, (Acts 18:6) and proclaimed himself innocent of the blood of those who refused to listen to the voice which

<sup>17</sup> For the Conybeare and Howson translation of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, refer to Conybeare, W. J. and Howson, J. S., *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, Chapter 11.



offered them salvation. A proselyte, whose name was Justus,<sup>18</sup> opened his door to the rejected Apostle; and that house became thenceforward the place of public teaching.

While he continued doubtless to lodge with Aquila and Priscilla (for the Lord had said (Luke 10:6,7) that His Apostle should abide in the house where the "Son of peace" was), he met his flock in the house of Justus. Some place convenient for general meeting was evidently necessary for the continuance of St. Paul's work in the cities where he resided. So long as possible, it was the synagogue. When he was exiled from the Jewish place of worship, or unable from other causes to attend it, it was such a place as providential circumstances might suggest. At Rome it was his own hired lodging (Acts 28:30) ; at Ephesus it was the School of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9).

Here at Corinth it was a house "contiguous to the synagogue," offered on the emergency for the Apostle's use by one who had listened and believed. It may readily be supposed that no convenient place could be found in the manufactory of Aquila and Priscilla. There, too, in the society of Jews lately exiled from Rome, he could hardly have looked for a congregation of Gentiles; whereas Justus, being a proselyte, was exactly in a position to receive under his roof indiscriminately, both Hebrews and Greeks.

Special mention is made of the fact, that the house of Justus was contiguous to the synagogue. We are not necessarily to infer from this that St. Paul had any deliberate motive for choosing that locality. Though it might be that he would show the Jews, as in a visible symbol, that" by their sin salvation had come to the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy," (Rom. 11:11) while at the same time he remained as near to them as possible, to assure them of his readiness to return at the moment of their repentance. Whatever we may surmise concerning the motive of this choice, certain

<sup>18</sup> Nothing is known of Justus; his name is Latin.

consequences must have followed from the contiguity of the house and the synagogue, and some incident resulting from it may have suggested the mention of the fact.

The Jewish and Christian congregations would often meet face to face in the street ; and all the success of the Gospel would become more palpable and conspicuous. And even if we leave out of view such considerations as these, there is a certain interest attaching to any phrase which tends to localize the scene of Apostolic labors. When we think of events that we have witnessed, we always reproduce in the mind, however dimly, some image of the place where the events have occurred. This condition of human thought is common to us and to the Apostles. The house of John's mother at Jerusalem (Acts 12.), the *proseucha* by the water side at Philippi (Acts 16.), were associated with many recollections in the minds of the earliest Christians. And when St. Paul thought, even many years afterwards, of what occurred on his first visit to Corinth, the images before the "inward eye" would be not merely the general aspect of the houses and temples of Corinth, with the great citadel overlooking them, but the synagogue and the house of Justus, the incidents which happened in their neighborhood, and the gestures and faces of those who encountered each other in the street.

If an interest is attached to the places, a still deeper interest is attached to the persons, referred to in the history of the planting of the Church. In the case of Corinth, the names both of individuals and families are mentioned in abundance. The family of Stephanas is the first that occurs to us; for they seem to have been the earliest Corinthian converts. St. Paul himself speaks of that household, in the first Epistle to the Corinthians (16:15), as the first fruits of Achaia. Another Christian of Corinth, well worthy of the recollection of the Church of after ages, was Caius (1 Cor. 1:14), with whom St. Paul found a home on his next visit (Rom. 16:23), as he found one now with Aquila and Priscilla.

We may conjecture, with reason, that his

present host and hostess had now given their formal adherence to St. Paul, and that they left the synagogue with him. After the open schism had taken place, we find the Church rapidly increasing. Many of the Corinthians began to believe, when they heard, and came to receive baptism. (Acts 18:8.) We derive some information from St. Paul's own writings concerning the character of those who became believers. Not many of the philosophers, not many of the noble and powerful (1 Cor. 1:26) but many of those who had been profligate and degraded (1 Cor. 6:11) were called. The ignorant of this world were chosen to confound the wise; and the weak to confound the strong. From St. Paul's language we infer that the Gentile converts were more numerous than the Jewish. Yet one signal victory of the Gospel over Judaism must be mentioned here, the conversion of Crispus (Acts 18:8), who, from his position as "ruler of the synagogue," may be presumed to have been a man of learning and high character, and, who now, with all his family, joined himself to the new community. His conversion was felt to be so important, that the Apostle deviated from his usual practice (1 Cor. 1:14-16), and baptized him, as well as Caius and the household of Stephanas, with his own hand.

Such an event as the baptism of Crispus must have had a great effect in exasperating the Jews against St. Paul. Their opposition grew with his success. As we approach the time when the second letter to the Thessalonians was written, we find the difficulties of his position increasing. In the first Epistle the writer's mind is almost entirely occupied with the thought of what might be happening at Thessalonica: in the second, the remembrance of his own pressing trial seems to mingle more conspicuously with the exhortations and warnings addressed to those who are absent.

He particularly asks for the prayers of the Thessalonians, that he may be delivered from the perverse and wicked men around him, who were destitute of faith (see notes on 2 Thess. 3:2). It is evident that he was in a condition of

fear and anxiety. This is further manifest from the words which were heard by him in a vision vouchsafed at this critical period (Acts 18:9,10). We have already had occasion to observe, that such timely visitations were granted to the Apostle, when he was most in need of supernatural aid. In the present instance, the Lord, who spoke to him in the night, gave him an assurance of His presence,<sup>19</sup> and a promise of safety, along with a prophecy of good success at Corinth, and a command to speak boldly without fear, and not to keep silence. From this we may infer that his faith in Christ's presence was failing, that fear was beginning to produce hesitation, and that the work of extending the Gospel was in danger of being arrested.<sup>20</sup> The servant of God received conscious strength in the moment of trial and conflict; and the divine words were fulfilled in the formation of a large and flourishing church at Corinth, and in a safe and continued residence in that city, through the space of a year and six months.

Not many months of this period had elapsed when St. Paul found it necessary to write again to the Thessalonians. The excitement which he had endeavored to allay by his first Epistle was not arrested, and the fanatical portion of the church had availed themselves of the impression produced by St. Paul's personal teaching to increase it. It will be remembered that a subject on which he had especially dwelt while he was at Thessalonica,<sup>21</sup> and to which he had also alluded in his first Epistle (1 Thess. 5:1-11), was the second advent of Our Lord. We know that our Savior Himself had warned His disciples that "of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven,

<sup>19</sup> Compare Matt. 28:20.

<sup>20</sup> Observe the strong expressions which St. Paul himself uses (1 Cor. 2:3) of his own state of mind during this stay at Corinth.

<sup>21</sup> As he himself reminds his readers (2 Thess. 2:5), and as we find in Acts 17:7.

but the Father only;" and we find these words remarkably fulfilled by the fact that the early Church, and even the Apostles themselves, expected their Lord to come again in that very generation. St. Paul himself shared in that expectation, but being under the guidance of the Spirit of Truth, he did not deduce there from any erroneous practical conclusions. Some of his disciples, on the other hand, inferred that, if indeed the present world were so soon to come to an end, it was useless to pursue their common earthly employments any longer. They forsook their work, and gave themselves up to dreamy expectations of the future; so that the whole framework of society in the Thessalonian Church was in danger of dissolution. Those who encouraged this delusion, supported it by imaginary revelations of the Spirit (2 Thess. 2:2): and they even had recourse to forgery, and circulated a letter purporting to be written by St. Paul, in confirmation of their views. To check this evil, St. Paul wrote his second Epistle. In this he endeavors to remove their present erroneous expectations of Christ's immediate coming, by reminding them of certain signs which must precede the second advent. He had already told them of these signs when he was with them; and this explains the extreme obscurity of his description of them in the present Epistle; for he was not giving new information, but alluding to facts which he had already explained to them at an earlier period. It would have been well if this had been remembered by all those who have extracted such numerous and discordant prophecies and anathemas from certain passages in the following Epistle.

### Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians

Timothy had been sent, while St. Paul was still at Athens, to revisit and establish the Church of Thessalonica. The news he brought on his return to St. Paul caused the latter to write to these beloved converts; and, as we have already observed, the letter which he sent them is the first of his Epistles which has been preserved to us. It seems to have been occasioned partly by

his wish to express his earnest affection for the Thessalonian Christians, and to encourage them under their persecutions; but it was also called for by some errors into which they had fallen. Many of the new converts were uneasy about the state of their relatives or friends, who had died since their conversion.<sup>22</sup>

They feared that these departed Christians would lose the happiness of witnessing their Lord's second coming, which they expected soon to behold. In this expectation others had given themselves up to a religious excitement, under the influence of which they persuaded themselves that they need not continue to work at the business of their callings, but might claim support from the richer members of the Church. Others, again, had yielded to the same temptations which afterwards influenced the Corinthian Church, and despised the gift of prophesying (1 Thess. 5:20) in comparison with those other gifts which afforded more opportunity for display. These reasons, and others which will appear in the letter itself, led St. Paul to write to the Thessalonians as follows:

### First Epistle to the Thessalonians.<sup>23</sup>

#### I THESS. 1

Salutation. PAUL, and Silvanus, and Timothy,  
TO THE CHURCH OF THE  
THESSALONIANS, in God our Father, and  
our Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace be to you and peace.

I give continual thanks to God for you all, and make mention of you in my prayers without ceasing; remembering, in the presence of our God and Father, the working of your faith, and

<sup>22</sup> This article is from Conybeare, W. J. and Howson, J. S., *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul, Chapter 11.*

<sup>23</sup> translation by Conybeare and Howson



the labors of your love, and the steadfastness of your hope of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>24</sup>

Brethren, beloved by God, I know how God has chosen you; for my Glad tidings came to you, not only in word, but also in power; with the might of the Holy Spirit, and with the full assurance of belief. As you, likewise, know the manner in which I behaved myself among you, for your sakes.

Moreover, you followed in my steps, and in the steps of the Lord; and you received the word in great tribulation, with joy which came from the Holy Spirit.

And thus you have become patterns to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For from you the word of the Lord has been sounded forth, and not only has its sound been heard in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place the tidings of your faith towards God have been spread abroad, so that I have no need to speak of it at all. For others are telling of their own accord, concerning me, what welcome you gave me, and how you forsook your idols, and turned to serve God, the living and the true; and to wait for His Son from the heavens, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus our deliverer from the coming wrath.

## I THESS 2

For, you know yourselves, brethren, that my coming amongst you was not fruitless; but after I had borne suffering and outrage (as you know) at Philippi, I trusted in my God, and boldly declared to you God's Glad tidings, in the midst of great contention. For my exhortations are not prompted by imposture, nor by lasciviousness, nor do I speak in guile.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Paul is referring to the time when he first visited and converted the Thessalonians, the "hope" spoken of was the hope of our Lord's coming.

<sup>25</sup> In this and the following verses we have allusions to the accusations brought against St. Paul by his Jewish opponents. He would of course have been

But as God has proved my fitness for the charge of the Glad tidings, so I speak, not seeking to please men but God, who proves our hearts. For never did I use flattering words, as you know; nor hide covetousness under fair pretences (God is witness) ; nor did I seek honour from men, either from you or others; although I might have been burdensome, as Christ's apostle.<sup>26</sup> But I behaved myself among you with gentleness; and as a nurse cherishes her own children, so in my fond affection it was my joy to give you not only the Glad tidings of God, but my own life also, because you were dear to me.

For you remember, brethren, my toilsome labors; how I worked both night and day, that I might not be burdensome to any of you, while I proclaimed to you the message which I bore, the Glad tidings of God. Ye are yourselves witnesses, and God also is witness, how holy, and just, and unblameable, were my dealings towards you that believe. You know how earnestly, as a father his own children, I exhorted, and entreated, and adjured each one among you to walk worthy of God, by whom you are called into His own kingdom and glory.

Wherefore I also give continual thanks to God, because, when you heard from me the spoken word of God, you received it not as the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the word of God;

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accused of imposture, as the preacher of a miraculous revelation; the charge of impurity might also have been suggested to impure minds, as connected with the conversion of female proselytes; the charge of seeking to please men, was repeated by the Judaizers in Galatia (cf. Gal. 1:10).

<sup>26</sup> One of the grounds upon which St. Paul's Judaizing opponents denied his apostolic authority, was the fact that he (in general) refused to be maintained by his converts, whereas, our Lord had given to His apostles the right of being so maintained. St. Paul fully explains his reasons for not availing himself of that right in several passages, especially 1 Cor. 9; and he here takes care to allude to his possession of the right, while mentioning his renunciation of it. Cf. 2 Thess. 3:9.

who Himself works effectually in you that believe. For you, brethren, followed in the steps of the churches of God in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus, inasmuch as you suffered the like persecution from your own countrymen, which they endured from the Jews; who killed both the Lord Jesus, and the prophets, and who have driven me forth [from city to city] <sup>27</sup>; a people displeasing to God, and enemies to all mankind, who would hinder me from speaking to the Gentiles for their salvation: continuing always to fill up the measure of their sins; but the wrath [of God] has overtaken them to destroy them.

But I, brethren, having been torn from you for a short season (in presence, not in heart), sought very earnestly, to behold you [again] face to face. Wherefore I, Paul (for my own part), desired to visit you once and again; but Satan hindered me. For what is my hope or joy? what is the crown wherein I glory? what but your own selves, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His appearing. Yea, you are my glory and my joy.

### I THESS 3

Therefore, when I was no longer able to forbear, I determined willingly to be left at Athens alone; and I sent Timothy, my brother, and God's fellow worker in the Glad tidings of Christ, that he might strengthen your constancy, and exhort you concerning your faith, that none of you should waver in these afflictions; since you know yourselves that such is our appointed lot, for when I was with you, I forewarned you that affliction awaited us, as you know that it befell.

For this cause, I also, when I could no longer forbear, sent to learn tidings of your faith; fearing lest perchance the tempter had tempted you, and lest my labor should be in vain. But now that Timothy has returned from you to me, and has brought me the glad tidings of your faith and love, and that you still keep an

<sup>27</sup> Referring to his recent expulsion from Thessalonica and Berea.

affectionate remembrance of me, longing to see me, as I to see you I have been comforted, brethren, on your behalf, and all my own tribulation and distress has been lightened by your faith.

For now I live, if you be steadfast in the Lord. What thanksgiving can I render to God for you, for all the joy which you cause me in the presence of my God? Night and day, I pray exceeding earnestly to see you face to face, and to complete what is yet wanting in your faith. Now, may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus, <sup>28</sup> direct my path towards you. Meantime, may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love to one another and to all men; even as I to you. And so may He keep your hearts steadfast and unblameable in holiness, in the presence of our God and Father, at the appearing of our Lord Jesus, with all his saints.

### I THESS 4

Furthermore, brethren, I beseech and exhort you in the name of the Lord Jesus, that, as I taught you how to walk that you might please God, you would do so more and more. For you know what commands I delivered to you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. This, then, is the will of God, even your sanctification; that you should keep yourselves from fornication, that each of you should learn to master his body, <sup>29</sup> in sanctification and honour; not in lustful passions, like the Heathen who know not God; that no man wrong his brother in this matter by transgression. All such the Lord will punish, as I forewarned you by my testimony. For

<sup>28</sup> The word for "Christ" is omitted by the best manuscripts, both here and in verse 15.

<sup>29</sup> The original means, to gain possession of; to acquire for one's own use. The use of 'vessel' for body is common, and found 2 Cor. 4:7. Now a man may be said to gain possession of his own body when he subdues those lusts which tend to destroy his mastery over it. Hence the interpretation which we have adopted.

God called us not to uncleanness, but His calling is a holy calling. Wherefore, he that despises these my words, despises not man but God, who also has given unto me His Holy Spirit.

Concerning brotherly love it is needless that I should write to you; for ye yourselves are taught by God to love one another; as you show by deeds towards all the brethren through the whole of Macedonia. But I exhort you, brethren, to abound still more; and be it your ambition to live quietly, and to mind your own concerns; and to work with your own hands (as I commanded you); that the seemly order of your lives may be manifest to those without, and that you may need help from no man.

But I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you sorrow not like other men who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also will God, through Jesus,<sup>30</sup> bring back those who sleep, together with Him. This I declare to you, in the word of the Lord, that we who are living, who survive to the appearing of the Lord, shall not come before those who sleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with the shout of war, the Archangel's voice, and the trumpet of God; and first the dead in Christ shall rise; then we the living, who remain, shall be caught up with them among the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall be for ever with the Lord. Wherefore comfort<sup>31</sup> one another with these words.

#### I THESS 5

But of the times and seasons, brethren, you need not that I should write to you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the

<sup>30</sup> This connection is more natural than that of the Authorized Version.

<sup>31</sup> This verb, originally "to call to one's side," thence "to comfort," more usually "to exhort," must be translated according to the context.

Lord will come as a robber in the night; and while men say Peace and Safety, destruction shall come upon them in a moment, as the pangs of travail upon a woman with child; and they shall find no escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that The Day should come upon you as the robber on sleeping men;<sup>32</sup> for you are all the children of the light and of the day.

We are not of the night, nor of darkness; therefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober; for they who slumber, slumber in the night; and they who are drunken, are drunken in the night; but let us, who are of the day, be sober; putting on faith and love for a breastplate; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. For not to abide His wrath, but to obtain salvation, hath God ordained us, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep we should live together with Him. Wherefore exhort one another, and build one another up, 1 even as you already do.<sup>33</sup>

I beseech you, brethren, to acknowledge those who are laboring among you; who preside over you in the Lord's name, and give you admonition. I beseech you to esteem them very highly in love, for their work's sake. And maintain peace among yourselves.

<sup>32</sup> There is some authority for the accusative plural – "as the daylight surprises robbers;" and this sort of transition, where a word suggests a rapid change from one metaphor to another, is not unlike the style of St. Paul. We may add that the AV, in translating the word "thief", both here and elsewhere, gives an inadequate conception of the word. It is in fact the modern Greek which denotes a "bandit", who comes to murder as well as to steal.

<sup>33</sup> The full meaning is, "build one another up, that you may all together grow into a temple of God." The word is frequently used by St. Paul in this sense, which is fully explained in 1 Cor. 3:10-17. It is very difficult to express the meaning by any single word in English, and yet it would weaken the expression too much if it were diluted into a periphrasis fully expressing its meaning.

POSTSCRIPT [ADDRESSED TO THE PRESBYTERS (?)].<sup>34</sup>

But you, brethren, I exhort; admonish the disorderly, encourage the timid, support the weak, be patient with all. Take heed that none of you return evil for evil, but strive to do good always, both to one another and to all men. Rejoice evermore; pray without ceasing; continue to give thanks whatever be your lot; for this is the will of God, in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not [the manifestation of] the Spirit; think not meanly of prophesying;<sup>35</sup> try all [which the prophets utter]; reject the false, but keep the good; hold yourselves aloof from every form of evil.<sup>36</sup>

2a Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body together be preserved blameless, at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you; He will fulfill my prayer.

Brethren, pray for me. Greet all the brethren with the kiss of holiness. I adjure you, in the name of the Lord, to see that this letter be read to all the brethren.

<sup>34</sup> It appears probably, as Chrysostom thought, that those who are here directed "to admonish" are the same who are described immediately before (verse 12) as "giving admonition." Also they are very solemnly directed (verse 27) to see that the letter is read to all the Christians in Thessalonica; which seems to imply that they presided over the Christian assemblies. At the same time it must be admitted that many of the duties here enjoined are duties of all Christians.

<sup>35</sup> We know, from 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, that this warning was needed in the early church. (see 1 Cor. 14). The gift of prophesying (i.e., inspired preaching) had less the appearance of a supernatural gift than several of the other charismas; and hence it was thought little of by those who sought more for display than edification.

<sup>36</sup> Not "appearance," but *species* under a *genus*.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

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The strong expressions used in this 2 Thessalonians concerning the malevolence of the Jews, lead us to suppose that the Apostle was thinking not only of their past opposition at Thessalonica, but of the difficulties with which they were beginning to surround him at Corinth.

At the very time of his writing, that same people who had "killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets," and had already driven Paul "from city to city," were showing themselves "a people displeasing to God, and enemies to all mankind," by endeavoring to hinder him from speaking to the Gentiles for their salvation (1 Thess. 2:15, 16). Such expressions would naturally be used in a letter written under the circumstances described in the Acts (18:6), when the Jews were assuming the attitude of an organized and systematic resistance, and assailing the Apostle in the language of blasphemy, (cf. Matt. 12:24 31) like those who had accused our Savior of casting out devils by Beelzebub.

Now, therefore, the Apostle left the Jews, and turned to the Gentiles. He withdrew from his own people with one of those symbolical actions, which, in the East, have all the expressiveness of language, and which, having received the sanction of our Lord Himself (Mark 6:2), are equivalent to the denunciation of woe. He shook the dust off his garments, (Acts 18:6) and proclaimed himself innocent of the blood of those who refused to listen to the voice which offered them salvation. A proselyte, whose name was Justus,<sup>37</sup> opened his door to the rejected Apostle; and that house became thenceforward the place of public teaching. While he continued doubtless to lodge with Aquila and Priscilla (for the Lord had said (Luke 10:6,7) that His Apostle should abide in the

<sup>37</sup> Nothing is known of Justus; his name is Latin.

house where the "Son of peace" was), he met his flock in the house of Justus. Some place convenient for general meeting was evidently necessary for the continuance of St. Paul's work in the cities where he resided. So long as possible, it was the synagogue. When he was exiled from the Jewish place of worship, or unable from other causes to attend it, it was such a place as providential circumstances might suggest. At Rome it was his own hired lodging (Acts 28:30) ; at Ephesus it was the School of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9).

Here at Corinth it was a house "contiguous to the synagogue," offered on the emergency for the Apostle's use by one who had listened and believed. It may readily be supposed that no convenient place could be found in the manufactory of Aquila and Priscilla. There, too, in the society of Jews lately exiled from Rome, he could hardly have looked for a congregation of Gentiles; whereas Justus, being a proselyte, was exactly in a position to receive under his roof indiscriminately, both Hebrews and Greeks.

Special mention is made of the fact, that the house of Justus was "contiguous to the synagogue." We are not necessarily to infer from this that St. Paul had any deliberate motive for choosing that locality. Though it might be that he would show the Jews, as in a visible symbol, that "by their sin salvation had come to the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy," (Rom. 11:11) while at the same time he remained as near to them as possible, to assure them of his readiness to return at the moment of their repentance.

Whatever we may surmise concerning the motive of this choice, certain consequences must have followed from the contiguity of the house and the synagogue, and some incident resulting from it may have suggested the mention of the fact. The Jewish and Christian congregations would often meet face to face in the street ; and all the success of the Gospel would become more palpable and conspicuous. Even if we leave out of view such considerations as these, there is a certain

interest attaching to any phrase which tends to localize the scene of Apostolic labors.

When we think of events that we have witnessed, we always reproduce in the mind, however dimly, some image of the place where the events have occurred. This condition of human thought is common to us and to the Apostles. The house of John's mother at Jerusalem (Acts 12.), the *proseucha* by the water side at Philippi (Acts 16.), were associated with many recollections in the minds of the earliest Christians. And when St. Paul thought, even many years afterwards, of what occurred on his first visit to Corinth, the images before the "inward eye" would be not merely the general aspect of the houses and temples of Corinth, with the great citadel overtopping them, but the synagogue and the house of Justus, the incidents which happened in their neighborhood, and the gestures and faces of those who encountered each other in the street.

If an interest is attached to the places, a still deeper interest is attached to the persons, referred to in the history of the planting of the Church. In the case of Corinth, the names both of individuals and families are mentioned in abundance. The family of Stephanas is the first that occurs to us; for they seem to have been the earliest Corinthian converts. St. Paul himself speaks of that household, in the first Epistle to the Corinthians (16:15), as "the first fruits of Achaia. Another Christian of Corinth, well worthy of the recollection of the Church of after ages, was Caius (1 Cor. 1:14), with whom St. Paul found a home on his next visit (Rom. 16:23), as he found one now with Aquila and Priscilla.

We may conjecture, with reason, that his present host and hostess had now given their formal adherence to St. Paul, and that they left the synagogue with him. After the open schism had taken place, we find the Church rapidly increasing. Many of the Corinthians began to believe, when they heard, and came to receive baptism. (Acts 18:8.) We derive some information from St. Paul's own writings concerning the character of those who became



believers. Not many of the philosophers, not many of the noble and powerful (1 Cor. 1:26) but many of those who had been profligate and degraded (1 Cor. 6:11) were called.

The ignorant of this world were chosen to confound the wise; and the weak to confound the strong. From St. Paul's language we infer that the Gentile converts were more numerous than the Jewish. Yet one signal victory of the Gospel over Judaism must be mentioned here, the conversion of Crispus (Acts 18:8), who, from his position as "ruler of the synagogue," may be presumed to have been a man of learning and high character, and, who now, with all his family, joined himself to the new community. His conversion was felt to be so important, that the Apostle deviated from his usual practice (1 Cor. 1:14-16), and baptized him, as well as Caius and the household of Stephanas, with his own hand.

Such an event as the baptism of Crispus must have had a great effect in exasperating the Jews against St. Paul. Their opposition grew with his success. As we approach the time when the second letter to the Thessalonians was written, we find the difficulties of his position increasing. In the first Epistle the writer's mind is almost entirely occupied with the thought of what might be happening at Thessalonica: in the second, the remembrance of his own pressing trial seems to mingle more conspicuously with the exhortations and warnings addressed to those who are absent. He particularly asks for the prayers of the Thessalonians, that he may be delivered from the perverse and wicked men around him, who were destitute of faith (see notes on 2 Thess. 3:2).

It is evident that he was in a condition of fear and anxiety. This is further manifest from the words which were heard by him in a vision vouchsafed at this critical period (Acts 18:9,10). We have already had occasion to observe, that such timely visitations were granted to the Apostle, when he was most in need of supernatural aid. In the present instance, the Lord, who spoke to him in the

night, gave him an assurance of His presence,<sup>38</sup> and a promise of safety, along with a prophecy of good success at Corinth, and a command to speak boldly without fear, and not to keep silence. From this we may infer that his faith in Christ's presence was failing, that fear was beginning to produce hesitation, and that the work of extending the Gospel was in danger of being arrested.<sup>39</sup>

The servant of God received conscious strength in the moment of trial and conflict; and the divine words were fulfilled in the formation of a large and flourishing church at Corinth, and in a safe and continued residence in that city, through the space of a year and six months.

Not many months of this period had elapsed when St. Paul found it necessary to write again to the Thessalonians. The excitement which he had endeavored to allay by his first Epistle was not arrested, and the fanatical portion of the church had availed themselves of the impression produced by St. Paul's personal teaching to increase it. It will be remembered that a subject on which he had especially dwelt while he was at Thessalonica,<sup>40</sup> and to which he had also alluded in his first Epistle (1 Thess. 5:1-11), was the second advent of Our Lord. We know that our Savior Himself had warned His disciples that "of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but the Father only;" and we find these words remarkably fulfilled by the fact that the early Church, and even the Apostles themselves, expected their Lord to come again in that very generation. St. Paul himself shared in that expectation, but being under the guidance of the Spirit of Truth, he did not deduce therefrom any erroneous practical conclusions.

<sup>38</sup> Compare Matt. 28:20.

<sup>39</sup> Observe the strong expressions which St. Paul himself uses (1 Cor. 2:3) of his own state of mind during this stay at Corinth.

<sup>40</sup> As he himself reminds his readers (2 Thess. 2:5), and as we find in Acts 17:7.

Some of his disciples, on the other hand, inferred that, if indeed the present world were so soon to come to an end, it was useless to pursue their common earthly employments any longer. They forsook their work, and gave themselves up to dreamy expectations of the future; so that the whole framework of society in the Thessalonian Church was in danger of dissolution. Those who encouraged this delusion, supported it by imaginary revelations of the Spirit (2 Thess. 2:2): and they even had recourse to forgery, and circulated a letter purporting to be written by St. Paul, in confirmation of their views.

To check this evil, St. Paul wrote his second Epistle. In this he endeavors to remove their present erroneous expectations of Christ's immediate coming, by reminding them of certain signs which must precede the second advent. He had already told them of these signs when he was with them; and this explains the extreme obscurity of his description of them in the present Epistle; for he was not giving new information, but alluding to facts which he had already explained to them at an earlier period. It would have been well if this had been remembered by all those who have extracted such numerous and discordant prophecies and anathemas from certain passages in the following Epistle.

## Second Epistle to the Thessalonians. <sup>41</sup>

### 2 THESS 1

PAUL, and Silvanus, and Timothy, TO THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS, in God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

I am bound to give thanks to God continually on your behalf, brethren, as is fitting, because of the abundant increase of your faith, and the overflowing love wherewith you are filled, and every one of you, towards each other. So that I myself boast of you among the churches of God, for your steadfastness and faith, in all the persecutions and afflictions which you are bearing. And these things are a token that the righteous judgment of God will count you worthy of His kingdom, for which you are even now suffering. For doubtless God's righteousness cannot but render back trouble to those who trouble you, and give to you, who now are troubled, rest with me, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with the angels of His might, in flames of fire, taking vengeance on those who know not God, and will not hearken to the Glad tidings of our Lord Jesus Christ. And from <sup>42</sup> the presence of the Lord, and from the brightness of His

<sup>41</sup> It is evident that this Epistle was written at the time here assigned to it, soon after the first, from the following considerations:

(1) The state of the Thessalonian Church described in both Epistles is almost exactly the same. (a) The same excitement prevailed concerning the expected advent of Our Lord, only in a greater degree; (b) The same party continued fanatically to neglect their ordinary employments. Compare 2 Thess. 3:6-14 with 1 Thess. 4:10-12, and 1 Thess. 2:9.

(2) Silas and Timothy were still with St. Paul. 2 Thess. 2:1. It should be observed that Timothy was next with St. Paul at Ephesus; and that, before then, Silas disappears from the history.

<sup>42</sup> The preposition here has the sense of *proceeding from*.

glorious majesty, they shall receive their righteous doom, even an everlasting destruction; in that day, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all believers; [and you are of that number], for you believed my testimony. To this end I pray continually on your behalf, that our God may count you worthy of the calling wherewith He has called you, and mightily perfect within you all the content of goodness<sup>43</sup> and the work of faith. That the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and that you may be glorified<sup>44</sup> in Him, according to the grace of our God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## 1 THESS 2

But concerning the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to meet Him, I beseech you, brethren, not rashly to be shaken from your soberness of mind, nor to be agitated either by spirit<sup>45</sup>, or by rumor, or by letter attributed to me, saying that the day of the Lord is come. Let no one deceive you, by any means; for before that day, the falling away must first have come, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposes himself and exalts himself against all that is called God, and against all worship; even to seat himself in the temple of God, and openly declare himself a God. Do you not remember that when I was still with

<sup>43</sup> The same word is used in the sense of *good will, good pleasure, satisfaction*, in Luke 2:14 and Rom. 10:1. The AV here would require a word to be supplied.

<sup>44</sup> The glory of our Lord at His coming will be manifested in His people (see v. 10); that is, they, by virtue of their union with Him, will partake of His glorious likeness. (Cf. Rom. 8:17-19) And, even in this world, this glorification takes place partially, by their moral conformity to His image. See Rom. 8:30 and 2 Cor. 3:18.

<sup>45</sup> I.e., any pretended revelation of those who claimed inspiration.

you, I often told you this? And now you know the hindrance why he is not yet revealed, in his own season. For the mystery of lawlessness<sup>46</sup> is already working, only he, who now hinders, will hinder till he be taken out of the way; and then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of His mouth,<sup>47</sup> and shall destroy with the brightness of His appearing. But the appearing of that lawless one shall be in the strength of Satan's working, with all the might and signs and wonders of falsehood, and all the delusions of unrighteousness, for those who are in the way of perdition; because they received not the love of the truth, whereby they might be saved. For this cause, God will send upon them an inward working of delusion, making them believe in lies, that all should be condemned who have not believed the truth, but have taken pleasure in unrighteousness.

But for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, I am bound to thank God continually, because He chose you from the first unto salvation, in sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth. And to this He called you through my Glad tidings, that you might obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, be steadfast, and hold fast the teaching which has been delivered to you, whether by my words or by my letters. And may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us, and has given us in His grace a consolation that is eternal, and a hope

<sup>46</sup> The proper meaning of the Greek here is *one unrestrained by law*; hence it is often used as a *transgressor*, or, generally a *wicked man*; but in this passage it seems best to keep to the original meaning of the word.

<sup>47</sup> This appears to be an allusion to (although not an exact quotation of) Isaiah 11:4, "With the breath of His lips He shall destroy the impious man." Some of the Rabbinical commentators applied this prophecy (which was probably in St. Paul's thoughts) to the Messiah's coming, and interpreted "the impious" to mean an individual opponent of the Messiah.



that cannot fail, comfort your hearts, and establish you in all goodness both of word and deed.

## 2 THESS 3

Finally, brethren, pray for me, that the word of the Lord Jesus may hold its onward course, and that its glory may be shown forth towards others as towards you; and that I may be delivered from the perverse and wicked; for not all men have faith. But the Lord is faithful, and He will keep you steadfast, and guard you from evil. And I rely upon you in the Lord, that you are following and will follow my precepts. And may the Lord guide your hearts to the love of God, and to the steadfastness of Christ.

I charge you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to withdraw yourselves from every brother who walks disorderly, and not according to the rules which I delivered. For you know yourselves the way to follow my example; you know that my life among you was not disorderly, nor was I fed by any man's bounty, but earned my bread by my own labor, toiling night and day, that I might not be burdensome to any of you, And this I did, not because I am without the right [of being maintained by those to whom I minister], but that I might make myself a pattern for you to imitate. For when I was with you I often gave you this rule: "If any man will not work, neither let him eat." Whereas I hear that some among you are walking disorderly, neglecting their own work, and meddling with that of others. Such, therefore, I charge and exhort, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to work in quietness, and eat their own bread. But you, brethren, notwithstanding, be not weary of doing good. If any man be disobedient to my written word, mark that man, and cease from intercourse with him, that he may be brought to shame. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. And may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace in all ways and at all seasons. The Lord be with you all.

The salutation of me Paul with my own hand, which is my token in every letter. Thus I write.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

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Such was the second of the two letters which St. Paul wrote to Thessalonica during his residence at Corinth. Such was the Christian correspondence now established, in addition to the political and commercial correspondence existing before, between the two capitals of Achaia and Macedonia. Along with the official documents which passed between the governors of the contiguous provinces <sup>48</sup>, and the communications between the merchants of the Northern and Western Aegean, letters were now sent, which related to the establishment of a "kingdom not of this world," and to "riches" beyond the discovery of human enterprise.

The influence of great cities has always been important on the wider movements of human life. We see St. Paul diligently using this influence, during a protracted residence at Corinth, for the spreading and strengthening of the Gospel in Achaia and beyond. As regards the province of Achaia, we have no reason to suppose that he confined his activity to its metropolis. The expression used by St. Luke (Acts 18:11) need only denote that it was his headquarters, or general place of residence. Communication was easy and frequent, by land or by water, with other parts of the province. Two short days' journey to the south were the Jews of Argos, who might be to those of Corinth what the Jews of Berea had been to those of Thessalonica. About the same distance to the east was the city of Athens, which had been imperfectly evangelized, and could be visited without danger. Within a walk of a few hours, along a road busy with traffic, was the sea port of Cenchrea, known to us as the residence of a Christian community. (Rom 16:1) These were the "Churches of God" (2 Thess. 1:4), among whom the Apostle boasted of the patience and

<sup>48</sup> Cicero's *Cilician Correspondence* furnishes many specimens of the letters which passed between the governors of neighboring provinces.

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the faith of the Thessalonians, the homes of" the saints in all Achaia" (2 Cor. 1:1), saluted at a later period, with the Church of Corinth, in a letter written from Macedonia. These Churches had alternately the blessings of the presence and the letters, the oral and the written teaching of St. Paul. The former of these blessings is now no longer granted to us ; but those long and wearisome journeys, which withdrew the teacher so often from his anxious converts, have resulted in our possession of inspired Epistles, in all their freshness and integrity, and with all their lessons of wisdom and love.

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