

Study 5: Acts 13 - 18

DO NOT SKIP OVER THIS STUDY. IT SETS THE SCENE FOR A LOT OF THE REST OF PAUL'S LETTERS.

As we continue through the book of Acts, the focus moves to Paul's ministry and the growth of the church "...in the rest of the world..." particularly amongst the Gentiles. In this study we see the first two of Paul's missionary journeys as the gospel spreads around the Roman Empire. With the Jerusalem conference, we see how the major issue of the time was resolved.

Introduction

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Homework and preparation for next week:

- Read the notes as a review of the study
- What was the major issue of the time in the churches?
 - Who did it affect?
 - How was it resolved?
 - How does this set the pattern for resolving issues in the church today?
- Skim-read Acts chapters 19- 28
 - Who are the major players in this part of the book?
 - What period of time is covered by these chapters?
 - What are the major events that happened in these chapters?

Notes for study 5: Acts 13 - 18

Introduction

The focus moves to Paul's ministry, and the growth of the church "...in the rest of the world..." particularly amongst the Gentiles. In this study we see the first two of Paul's missionary journeys as the gospel spreads around the Roman Empire.

Chapter 13 – Antioch, First Journey Commences, AD 45

Antioch was an important city in the first century world, and some writers say that it was the third largest city in the Roman world (Rome, Alexandria, Syrian Antioch, Ephesus, then Corinth), although this does not count for Byzantium (later known as Constantinople, and now Istanbul).

"...The Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them'..." (13:2 NKJV). The work of evangelising to the rest of the world was to be a part of the work in Antioch, which they did by sending Paul out on his three journeys, and maintaining a life-long relationship with him. They appointed Barnabas and Saul by laying their hands on them, and sending them out on their first journey.

The first part of their journey was to Cyprus, which was probably selected because it was Barnabas' home (4:36), and familiar territory. They took John Mark with them, who was Barnabas' nephew (Col 4:10).

They began by first going to the Jewish synagogues, as the gospel was to be taken to the Jews first (13:46; Rom 1:16), because they were people who understood Jehovah God, knew that He was the true and living God, and understood the Old Testament. However they did not understand the fulfilment in Christ, and needed to have that explained to them. If anyone was going to be receptive to the gospel, surely it would have been those who had their sights turned towards God. At the very least, they deserved the first opportunity to hear about the promised Messiah who had now come and fulfilled the prophecies about Him.

After starting in Salamis they moved across the island "...Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos..." (13:6 NKJV), which is about 150 km from Salamis. There they found a Jewish sorcerer, which should be of great surprise, since any kind of sorcery was forbidden to God's people (Dt 18:9-13). His name was Bar-Jesus (son of Joshua), or Elymas who claimed that his "magic powers" were from God.

Sergius Paulus was the proconsul of the island under the Roman government. This helps us date the first missionary journey, and places it after Herod's death in AD 44, and some time between AD 46 and AD 48 (the likely dates for Sergius Paulus Proconsulship). Sergius was the most important man on the island, and he summonsed to Barnabas and Saul "...to hear the word of God..." (13:7 NKJV). When Elymas tried to stop him from hearing them, Paul worked a miracle and had him struck blind. The miracle had a profound effect on Sergius Paulus, and "...he believed..." (13:12). "...when he saw what was done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord..." So, when Sergius saw what was done, he listened to the things that Paul had to say.

This is a turning point, and the last time that Luke refers to him as Saul, and afterwards calls him Paul, a Gentile name which Paul himself adopted. Also, from here on we also have a change of status, and rather than "Barnabas and Saul", it is now "Paul and Barnabas", or "...Paul and his companions..." (13:13) as they continue on their journey. They enter the region of Galatia, and begin in Perga, the capital city in the province of Pamphylia. At this point, John leaves them and returns to Jerusalem. Paul writes to the churches in Galatia that it was because of an illness that he first came and preached to gospel to them (Gal 4:13 –15). This tends to give the idea that Paul may have become sick (some think possibly from malaria) in Perga, and moved on quickly into

the highlands to seek some relief, and it may have been because of this illness that John returned to Jerusalem.

They make their way to Antioch in Pisidia, about 150 km north from Perga. This city was a Roman stronghold with a considerable Jewish population. Luke uses the singular to describe the synagogue, suggesting that there was only one in the city. Luke gives a concise description of the synagogue worship, from which the pattern of worship for the church followed:

- The reading of the Law
- The reading of the Prophets
- A word of exhortation

Paul gives a sermon that provides a concise history of the Jews, and ends with the establishment of Jesus as the Messiah. He warns that the condemnation of Habakkuk applies to everyone who rejects Jesus as the Messiah. The choice was up to them what they were going to do about it. He recounts the events of Jesus' death, and he was obviously very familiar with the details. At that time, none of the New Testament had been written, and many of the events with which we are so familiar would most likely have been presented to many of these people for the very first time. Paul's knowledge of these events came by direct revelation from God (Gal 1:11-12).

On the one hand, they get some negative response, but on the other, "...many of the devout Jews and Proselytes followed (them)... and (were) persuaded to continue in the grace of God..." (13:43 NKJV). The reaction from the Gentiles could hardly have been better: they begged them to come and preach to them! The Greek language conveys the idea that they kept begging them. The next Sabbath day, almost the whole city came to hear the word of God.

With a strong multitude gathered to hear Paul and Barnabas, the Jews were angry and envious. A large crowd was drawn to these people, when the regular leaders of the synagogue were only able to draw a few people along. It is most probable that their *contradictions* were along the lines that Paul was saying that salvation was available to everyone through Jesus, whilst the Jews were teaching that it was only available through the Law of Moses and by becoming a Jew. Paul and Barnabas turn to the Gentiles, and eventually they shake off the dust from their feet, and go to the city of Iconium (13:51).

Chapter 14 – First Journey Concludes, AD 47-48

At Iconium "...Paul so spoke that a great multitude of both the Jews and Greeks believed..." (14:1) - more than just a *few*, and more than *many*, but a *great multitude*. They believed because of what they heard "Paul so spoke that..."

The pattern of evangelism was set – they would go into a city, and go firstly to the synagogue. As Jews, they had the credentials – certainly Paul was a "*Hebrew of the Hebrews*", who had studied under Gamaliel. He would have found many opportunities to speak in the synagogues. Barnabas was the "*son of encouragement*" (4:36) – the great reconciler. His natural personality must have been charismatic and like a magnet.

After establishing a smallish group of believers from the Jews and Proselytes, the gospel spread to the rest of the community, building on the core group. Sometimes their stay was (as this case) "*a long time*", and sometimes only a very short time (as we will see in Thessalonica).

"...a great multitude of the Jews and Greeks believed..." (14:1 NKJV). The Jews who did not believe stirred up those who did, and also the believing Gentiles. They embittered the Gentiles "...poisoned their minds against the brethren..." (14:2NKJV). The whole city became divided between Paul and Barnabas, and the Jews. As a result of the positive and strong growth of the church, and the external attack from the Jews, Paul and Barnabas therefore stayed "*a long time*

there". It must have been several months, as Paul and Barnabas arrived, began preaching, established a church with "*great multitudes*".

As time passed, the Jewish rulers (the elders and rulers of the synagogue) rounded up many of the Gentiles in the city into a "lynch party" to bring physical violence against the Christians. Paul and Barnabas heard of the plot, and decided that the best course of action was to leave.

Lystra was about 30 km to the south of Iconium, and the home city of Timothy, his mother, and grandmother (16:1). Whilst some Jews were there, (Timothy's relatives for example), there is no mention of a synagogue, so there must have been less than 10 Jewish families in the city.

After Paul healed a lame man in Lystra, the crowd immediately recognised the miraculous nature of this event, and they thought that Paul & Barnabas were the gods from the temple of Zeus (just outside the gate of the city) who had come down looking like men. "*...they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude...*" (14:14 NKJV). They cried out to the crowd that they ought not to do these things, because they are just ordinary men like the listeners.

The Jews from (Pisidian) Antioch and Iconium heard about the events in Lystra. In Iconium the city was divided, and the Jews from there and Antioch came down to Lystra. They sought permission to finally put an end to their troubles. They must have received a positive response, as Paul was stoned, and taken out of the city and left for dead. Paul later reflected on this event as one of the greater persecutions that he suffered (2 Cor 11:25; 2 Tim 3:10-12), and it is almost certain that a young Timothy was a witness to the event, as Paul writes "*...that you have fully known...the afflictions which came upon me at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra...*" (2 Tim 3:10-11).

Paul rapidly recovered, and left the town the next day and walked around 70 km to Derbe about 70 km to the east of Lystra. It was at the extreme end of the Lycaonian plain, and bordered on the region of Cilicia. It was the first city at which a traveller would arrive after passing through the narrow mountain pass known as "The Cilician Gates", and consequently had an important trading role. They probably stayed 4 to 6 months for the winter. It might seem logical to have continued on through the Cilician Gates to Paul's home city of Tarsus and then to have made their way back to Syrian Antioch. However they now "double back" and go and revisit the cities where churches were established. They return to the places where they were persecuted and Paul was stoned. Paul & Barnabas were "*...strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith...*" (14:22 NKJV). Following this, Luke adds that they appointed elders in every church – churches which had only been established less than a year before.

They retraced their steps and came back to Syrian Antioch, and recounted the whole journey, and how God had worked with them. They stayed "*...a long time...*" (14:28), probably several years.

Chapter 15 – Jerusalem, AD 51

The church leaders in Jerusalem heard about the Mission to the Gentiles, and expressed their concern about converting them to Christianity without having become Jews. It was time to resolve once and for all the necessity to be a Jew if you want to be a Christian. This was a central and repetitive issue in the early church, and permeates most books of the New Testament.

Some Jews came to Antioch from Jerusalem. Not surprisingly, they were Pharisees (15:5), and would have been eager to ensure that every last "*jot and tittle*" of the Law was being kept. They would have been concerned that the new Christians were associating with Gentiles, and "corrupting themselves". Their solution to the problem was to ensure that the Christians became Jews first – requiring them to be circumcised according to the Law of Moses.

They purported to have come with the full authority of the Apostles, but that was not the case. This appeared to put Paul in a position that was different than the rest of the apostles.

As an apostle, Paul taught with God's authority, and his teaching should have been accepted by the brethren because of his authority and position. The fact that it was not suggests two things:

- Firstly that those from Jerusalem were not backing down on claiming to be teaching what the 11 other apostles were teaching. This would put Paul clearly against the majority, and hence the difficulty to determine who (and more importantly, *what*) was right.
- Secondly, it reinforced that Paul was not one of the original apostles (he was not a *real* apostle, like the others – so “*if it's Paul vs the others, then we're with the others*”).

Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem to discuss the issues with the Apostles and Elders. This was Paul's third visit to Jerusalem since his conversion – the first in 9:26, and the second in 11:30. In the Galatian letter, Paul makes no mention of the second visit, but does refer to this one.

“...Fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. ² I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain ...”
(Gal 2:1-2 NIV)

The issue between Jews and the Gentiles had arisen on several previous occasions. To put it succinctly, “*Christianity is OK, but it is really just another sect of the Jews. Therefore if you are going to become a Christian, you firstly have to keep the Law of Moses*” One specific implication of this is whether or not circumcision should be practiced by those becoming Christians.

The outcome of the meeting was clear, and the apostles agreed with Paul's position. There should have been no doubt, as the Holy Spirit would not guide one apostle in one direction and the other apostles in the opposite direction! However the meeting was important, not for the sake of the apostles who knew that their teaching came from God, but for those who had contact with them – there was demonstrated absolute agreement and unity between them. After Peter had spoken, Barnabas and Paul spoke concerning their work amongst the Gentiles, describing how God had demonstrated His approval to their work by working miracles amongst the Gentiles.

The apostles and elders concluded that they write to the Gentiles concerning the controversy. James concluded “*...that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood...*” (15:20 NKJV). A general letter was written to Gentile brethren everywhere (including us!!!), and those in Antioch in particular.

Silas and Judas returned to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, and they reported to the congregation. Judas went back to Jerusalem, but Silas decided to stay in Antioch.

It was most likely during this time in Antioch that Peter came to visit, and was corrected by Paul for his inconsistency (Gal 2:11-14). This was the very thing that had just been resolved at the Jerusalem meeting. No wonder that Paul's rebuke was strong – not only was Peter wrong, but it followed so soon after the issue had been resolved, and was in direct contradiction of the decree.

Paul took the lead to begin the second journey, and we see his concern for the work that he had begun. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them, however Paul was absolutely against it. They resolved the issue by agreeing to go in different directions. Barnabas went back to Cyprus with John Mark – Barnabas' own country, and the part of the trip that Mark had undertaken with he and Paul. Paul took Silas and headed off in a somewhat different direction – overland to his home Tarsus, and then through the Cilician Gates to pick up the former path at Derbe.

Chapter 16 – The Second Journey, AD 52

Coming to Lystra, he met Timothy again, who by this time had a good reputation amongst the Galatian churches. Although Timothy's mother was a Jew, his father was a Greek, and so he had not been circumcised. Paul then circumcised him. This had nothing to do with his religion (Paul Piecing together the New Testament by Graeme Offer

steadfastly refused to circumcise Titus; Gal 2:3), and was introduced as a covenant with Abraham 430 years before the Law of Moses (Gal 3:16-17). It had everything to do with his Jewish nationality. Paul and Silas then took Timothy with them on their journey.

As they went throughout the regions visiting the churches, they ensured that the letter from the apostles in Jerusalem was read and understood (and most likely copied), and they “...*strengthened the churches...*” (16:5). This was Paul’s third visit to them (twice on the first journey, and then this time on the second journey. It will be followed by another visit on the third journey, and perhaps a final visit on Paul’s fourth missionary journey (not recorded in Acts)).

Luke is scant about where they went next, except to say that it was through the region of Galatia, and then through Phrygia. It is likely to be the area of Southern Galatia, since they were revisiting the areas that they had previously laboured in.

They next passed through Mysia, which is at the western end of the Galatian region. At this time, Paul would have been heading to Ephesus, which was the fourth largest city in the world at that time and in the region known as “Asia Minor” or just “Asia”. However, they were explicitly “...*forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia...*” (16:6 NKJV).

Since going to Asia (presumably Ephesus) was not possible, “...*they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them...*” (16:7 NKJV). Bithynia was to the north. They were *trying to work out* where to go next, and God was limiting their actions. Eventually they came to Troas.

During the night, a vision appeared to Paul, of a man in Macedonia pleading with them to come over and help. “... *After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them...*” (16:10 NIV). Paul and Silas had to *work out for themselves* what the vision meant. They had to *consider the evidence* and draw a conclusion. Based on the evidence that they had before them, the conclusion that they drew was that the Holy Spirit wanted them to go to Macedonia, and not into Asia (Paul would have most likely headed for Ephesus had he had his own way). Here we have an important example of the Holy Spirit communicating with the apostles during their work. The communications were not explicit, but provided sufficient information for them to consider the facts and draw a conclusion. They were then able to act on that conclusion with confidence, knowing that they were following the divinely given direction. This is exactly the same situation in which Peter found himself, after being freed from prison in Jerusalem (12:11-12).

In exactly the same way, we have in the writings of the apostles, not (usually) explicit commands, but those that provide us with *sufficient information* on which to *consider the facts* and draw a conclusion. We are able to act on that conclusion with confidence, knowing that we are following the divinely given direction that we have received from God through the Holy Spirit and the apostles and prophets. In precisely the same way then, we are guided by the Holy Spirit just as the apostles and prophets were in the first century!

For the second time in the narrative (16:10; the first time was at 11:28 in some manuscripts), Luke uses the pronoun “we”, showing that he was now travelling with Paul, Silas, and Timothy.

They came to Philippi, a leading city in that part of Macedonia, and a Roman colony. It was located on the major Roman road – the Egnation Way – connecting Rome with Byzantium (now Istanbul). There must have been less than 10 Jewish families in the city, since Paul’s usual method of evangelism was to go first to the synagogue. When the Sabbath day arrived the Jews were gathered together outside of the city down by the river side. At this meeting there were many women, but no mention of any men. One of those was Lydia, a seller of purple dye, and from the city of Thyatira (one of the seven churches of Asia addressed in the Revelation letter Rev 2:18-29). After hearing the gospel, she was baptised, along with *her household*. Nothing here implies that anyone was baptised who did not *believe* the things that were spoken by Paul.

Paul healed a demon possessed girl, and her masters were troubled by their loss of income, rather than being happy for her relief. Paul and Silas were arrested, and brought before the magistrates.

The accusations raised the anger of the citizens and magistrates of the city against Paul and Silas. They were taken and beaten and then cast into prison. Paul discusses this “*shameful treatment at Philippi*” in 1 Thess 2:2, and Luke concurs by telling us that they had “...*many blows inflicted upon them...*” (16:23). The Jailer was commanded to keep the prisoners securely, and consequently their feet were fastened in the stocks. If that was not punishment enough, we need to remember that they received a severe beating for something that they had not done!

In prison, they sang hymns of praise to God, and prayed! The other prisoners heard them – and must have wondered how these men could rejoice in such a time of tribulation. At midnight, there was a great earthquake. The whole prison was shaken – and the noise and rumble awakened the prison keeper. The prison doors flew open, and everyone’s chains fall off and they became free from restraint. Theoretically, they could have just walked out. The jailer’s reaction was to kill himself, because the punishment for losing a prisoner was to himself bear the punishment that was to be meted out to the prisoners. Paul cried out with a loud voice not to do that – for all of the prisoners were still there! The Jailer got a light and came to see for himself – hardly believing that this could be possible. He was faced with the reality that these were no ordinary men, and they must be who they claimed to be – as the demonic girl had said – servants of the Most High God.

The Jailer asked “...*What must I do to be saved?...*” and after hearing the gospel was baptised that very night. The Magistrates must have reflected on the circumstances, and been influenced by the earthquake, and most likely by the Jailer. Paul’s response was that as Roman citizens, they were entitled to a trial, and that the Magistrates had subverted Roman justice by their punishment. Paul called for the Magistrates themselves to come and release them, rather than have their messengers do it! The Magistrates had broken the Roman law, and could have been severely punished had Paul and Silas pressed charges. The Magistrates could not demand Roman citizens to leave the city, but they *asked* them to leave – probably to ensure that peace was maintained.

From here, Luke changes the pronoun that is used from “we” to “they”, and it appears that Luke stayed in Philippi whilst Paul, Silas and Timothy continued their journey to Thessalonica (17:1). It appears that Luke remained in Philippi for about 5 years, as he does not appear again in the narrative until chapter 20:5-6, where he is either still (or again) found in Philippi.

Chapter 17 – The Second Journey, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, AD 52

Silas went with Paul (17:4), and Timothy went at least as far as Berea (17:14). Paul later uses him as his envoy to the Thessalonians, and with the communication that was occurring between Philippi and Thessalonica.

Thessalonica had a Jewish synagogue, which gave Paul the ideal base to begin to evangelise. The population included a large Roman element and a Jewish colony, with some estimates of a population of 200,000 at the time of Paul’s visit.

A cursory reading of Acts 17, would suggest that Paul only stayed in Thessalonica for three weeks “...*for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures...*” (17:2 NKJV). However some events of Paul’s visit are also recorded for us in Paul’s letters to the Thessalonian and Philippian churches.

Paul developed a reputation as an example to the church as well as to the Gentiles (1 Thess 1:5, 9). This could scarcely have happened in three weeks. Further, he praises the Philippians for “...*time and again sending to support me whilst I was in Thessalonica...*” (Phil 4:16). Given the communication processes of the day, and that it was not just *once* that they sent support, but rather (it would seem) many occasions, then it is more likely that Paul was in the city for several months. The time had to be long enough for the Philippian brethren to hear of Paul’s need, for the

support to have been collected and then sent to him. The *three weeks* then, was the time that he was teaching the Jews in the *Synagogue*. We also know that whilst he was in the city he worked to support himself (probably at his trade of tent making; 2 Thess 3:8). It is more likely that Paul spent perhaps three months in Thessalonica, for it would be difficult to have achieved the things he did in establishing the church there, in less duration.

Paul found some success at Thessalonica, and consequently the Jews became jealous, particularly since many *Proselytes of the Gate* had walked away from their conversion towards Judaism, and became Christians, “...*joining with Paul and Silas...*” (17:4) The Jews reacted by rounding up a vigilante rent-a-crowd to help them force Paul and Silas out of the city. They accused Paul of treason, by teaching that there is another King apart from Caesar (ie treason) in the person of Jesus (17:5-7). They came to the house of Jason where Paul and Silas were staying.

The rest of the brethren were aware of the threats, and “...*immediately sent Paul and Silas away in the night to Berea...*” (17:10 NKJV). The Berean Jews were “...*more noble minded than those in Thessalonica because they received the gospel readily and searched the scriptures daily to see if the things that Paul was saying were really so ...*” (17:11). However, the Jews from Thessalonica came down and stirred up the Jews against Paul, so he left Silas and Timothy at Berea and was escorted by some of the brethren to Athens (17:13-15).

Paul sent a message back with them for Silas and Timothy to come and join him in Athens. Whilst alone in the city he was disturbed by all of the idolatry (17:16), and he had discussions with the Jews in the Synagogue as well as in the marketplace. During this time he made his famous *Mars Hill Speech*. Timothy and Silas came and joined Paul whilst he was still in Athens, and Paul sent them both straight back to Thessalonica to see how the church was doing (1 Thess 3:1-2, 5). We do not know how long Paul stayed in Athens, but it is of the order of a few months.

Chapter 18 – The Second Journey, Corinth AD 52

Paul departed Athens and went to Corinth (18:1), which was the leading city in Greece at that time, and greatly overshadowed Athens.

Geographically, Corinth was (and is) strategically located at the top of the Peloponnese, on a narrow peninsular between the Adriatic Sea on the western side and the Aegean sea on the east. It had two harbours with Cenchrea 14 km away located at the eastern harbour, and Lechaion to the West. At the narrowest point, the isthmus was about 5 km wide. Much trade would pass through the city as a “short-cut” between the two seas, rather than making the difficult sea journey around the lower part of Greece. Several attempts were made to build a canal between the two seas, making a much shorter journey from Athens to Rome, avoiding the uncertainties of weather associated with sea journeys in the Mediterranean. Nero commenced one of these attempts around the time of Paul’s visit; however it was abandoned after a very short distance. The canal was in fact completed in 1893.

In Paul’s time, a railway with wooden rails 6 km long was used to transport fully laden small ships (boats) from one sea to the other. Slaves would haul the ships for this journey, and whilst they were undertaking the task, the sailors would have shore leave in Corinth. This greatly contributed to the vice and immorality in the city. Corinth was renowned for its immorality, with the temple of Aphrodite – the goddess of love – placed just above the city, and with it the associated temple prostitution. The Corinthian games were held at least every two years. In Paul’s day, the city probably numbered around 400,000 people, and was a Roman Colony.

Corinth seemed to be a highly improbable source of fertile ground for the gospel. Yet God assured Paul “...*I have much people in this city...*” (18:10). Paul says “...*I came to you...in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling...*” (1Cor 2:1-3 NKJV).

Initially Paul was alone in the city, and hooked up with two Jews who (like him) were tentmakers, named Aquila and Priscilla (18:2). They had “...*recently come from Italy...because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome...*” (18:2 NKJV).

The Roman historian Seutonius records the edict for all Jews to depart from Rome, but gives no date. Claudius was Emperor from 41 to 54 AD. It is likely that the Jews were rising up in conflict with the Christians, and the Emperor saw Christianity as another Jewish sect, and *had them all thrown out* of the city.

Silas and Timothy returned from Macedonia (18:5; specifically Thessalonica, but probably also Berea), with news from the churches. They also brought many questions which prompted Paul to write the first letter to the Thessalonian church (1 Thess 3:6), and sent it via Timothy again. It is likely that Timothy and Silas also brought some money for Paul’s support from the churches in Macedonia (2 Cor 11:9), which allowed him to spend less time at his secular work, and “...*devote himself completely to the word...*”. Upon his return with another report and many more questions, Paul immediately wrote the second letter, probably sending Timothy back again to deliver it.

This is the first that we know of Paul’s letter writing, and almost certainly the first letters of the New Testament to be written. (Although some say James was written before this.)

The Lord appeared to Paul in a vision. Up to this time he had been apprehensive, which is not surprising since almost everywhere Paul had been up to now resulted in persecution and physical harm at the hands of the unbelieving Jews. Jesus said – “...*do not be afraid to speak, and do not keep silent...*” (18:9 NKJV). The encouragement was so strong, that Paul stayed in Corinth for a period of 18 months, and perhaps even two years.

The Jews continued to stir up a fuss, and brought their grievance to the new Roman official “...*Now when Gallio was proconsul...*” (18:12). The proconsul was appointed for a period of two years, and an inscription found at Delphi has him in the office of proconsul in Corinth in AD 52.

Paul remained a good while longer – resulting from Gallio’s favourable response. He had further opportunities to teach almost unrestrained, and left Corinth by way of the eastern seaport of Cenchrea, taking Priscilla and Aquila with him. This was before “...*the coming feast in Jerusalem...*” (18:21), probably Passover or Pentecost, making the his departure early AD 54.

On the return to Jerusalem, he finally comes to the great city of Ephesus, where he drops off Aquila and Priscilla. He has a good reception from the Jews “...*they asked him to stay a longer time with them...*” (18:20). which enticed him to return on the third journey.

Upon landing at Caesarea, Paul went up to Jerusalem and greeted the church there, and then immediately went to Antioch – the church that had sent him out on his journeys. He had left experienced workers in the places where he had been so that the church might grow. Luke stayed in Philippi, Timothy went back and forth to Thessalonica, Silas stayed in Berea for a time, then (probably) stayed in Corinth after Paul left. Paul himself stayed in Corinth for about 2 years, and Aquila and Priscilla were left in Ephesus. The journey had taken three years – AD 51 to AD 54. He had visited the churches in southern Galatia, and started new churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus. As part of Paul’s life-long relationship with the church that sent him out, he came “home”, and “...*spent some time there...*” (18:23).

Apollos was a Jew, “...*an eloquent man and mighty in the scriptures...*” (18:24). He must have memorised a great portion of the Old Testament to have such a grasp of it. He “...*had been instructed in the way of the Lord...*” (18:25), but “...*he taught accurately the things of the Lord but was only acquainted with John’s baptism...*” (18:25). His knowledge was incomplete. Perhaps he had only known of Jesus earthly life, and was fully convinced of who Jesus was by the evidence of the miracles (c/f Jn 3:2). Aquila and Priscilla took Apollos aside and taught him privately “...*and explained to him the way of God more accurately...*” (18:26). Apollos then departed to Achaia and Corinth, but left behind some disciples in Ephesus.