

Acts
“Jesus” The Sequel
III.) Chp. 13-28 “Witnesses to the end of the earth”
Chp. 15-18:21 Traditions and the road less traveled (2nd trip)
18:1-18a
“Abiding at Animal house”

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I.) Intro.

Athens' was home of the most prestigious of the three universities in the world at that time. One can only wonder what Paul thought as he entered Corinth only 53 miles away yet 10 times the size of Athens (200,000). When you read 1st and 2nd Corinthians you get a real good picture of what He had to deal with in Corinth as Paul wrote these two letters only 4 years after he founded the Church. **Athens was a university town and Corinth was the frat house!** The name Corinthian became synonymous with partying as in all of the Greek plays the Corinthian was always the drunken womanizer. Paul tells the Corinthians that upon arriving in their city that the unbridled sin caused him to be in *“weakness, fear and in much trembling.”* While in Corinth Paul wrote the letter to the Romans, where he describes the conditions of man kind apart from God, as *“given over to vile passions”* (Rom. 1:24-31) no doubt this was inspired by what he saw in Corinth.

How can we live in a world that celebrates wickedness? The answer is a walk of faith.

- **A pessimist sees the problems**

- **A optimist sees potential**
- **A person of faith sees potential in the problems**

There are **four things that strengthened Paul** while he lived in the “*Animal House*” called Corinth.

II.) Vs. 1-5 The fellowship of friends

Vs. 1 Corinth was a party town in part because of geography! If you look at a map of Greece you will see that Corinth lies right on an isthmus between the Aegean Sea and the Adriatic Sea, thus a two port town. Ships sailing with their cargo were faced with an option:

- a. Sail 200 miles around the very dangerous tip of Greece.
- b. Or unload the cargo and carry it across the 3½-mile isthmus. If it was a small ship they would take it out of the water and roll it across the land bridge on huge logs. (*Today there is a shipping canal there that Cesar Nero began in A.D. 67 but was not completed until 1893 by the same folks that built the Suez Canal.*)

All trade traffic passed through Corinth either on its way to Rome or away from Rome. The city also had a towering hill some 2,000 feet with a temple to Aphrodite on top. The Romans knew this idol as the goddess of love or Venus. They worshiped her as the goddess of sexual pleasure and every day at sun down over 1,000 temple prostitutes would come down to apply their trade to the citizens of Corinth. So you put together:

- **Prosperity**
- **Sailors**
- **Prostitutes**

The community was the Las Vegas of its time and it is here that Paul finds himself ready to start a Church. While in Corinth Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that, “*in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith.*” Apparently Paul was encouraged to hear that they were growing in the Lord while he was seeing nothing but the practice of sin.

Paul was strengthened while living in a world that **celebrates its sin by four things:**

1. **FELLOWSHIP:** Verses 2-5 tells us of **two groups** that encouraged him to keep going.
 - a. Vs. 2-4 **Aquila and Priscilla:** Luke gives us a brief back ground on this couple telling us that Aquila was born on the Black Sea and was Jewish while Priscilla was most likely a Roman woman of a higher social rank. Luke also tells us that the Emperor Claudius expelled them. What Luke does not say is that Claudius had done so because of the riots that were caused by the preaching of Christians of Jesus as the Messiah. Paul hooked up with this couple because he needed a job as every Rabbi had to have a trade besides serving in the temple and Paul’s trade was that of a tent maker or leather worker. Based upon Paul words in 1 Cor. 16:15 where he says that the household of Stephanas were his firstfruits in Achaia which would be Corinth I believe that they were already saved by this time. The context of this passage speaks first of Paul’s meeting Aquila and Priscilla before it says in verse 4 that he opened a dialogue with the Jews in the

synagogue. **Having fellow believers around Paul brought about boldness that he did not have at first.** When Paul found those who were like minded he realized that he was not alone and this led him to share with others.

- b. Vs. 5 Silas and Timothy: I like this because Paul then hooks up with his buddies who meet him in Corinth. Then we are told that not only did Paul share the gospel on the Sabbath but according to this verse he went full time. If you look at 1 Thess. 3:6, 2 Cor. 11:9 and Phil. 4:15 you will see what changed his ministry upon the arrival of Silas and Timothy. They brought with them *good news* from the Church at Thessalonica and *financial support* from Philippi. Saints, that is what the body of Christ will do for you, **encourage you and support you** which will lead you to “*testify that Jesus is the Christ.*” This shows us **the need for consistent Christian fellowship, to over come those that seek to celebrate their sin.**

III.) Vs. 6-8 Serving sinners and saints

Now we come to the 2nd way to combat discouragement over living in a world that celebrates its sin.

2. **SERVICE**: Verse 6-8 Paul’s service was two fold:
 - a. Vs. 6 Sinners: Paul went into the synagogue sharing that Jesus is the Christ and the opposition organized themselves against what Paul was teaching. If you combine verse 5 with verse 6 you prove the deity of Christ. You see it says that Paul “*testified to the Jews that Jesus is the*

Christ” and then Luke says that they got organized against Paul’s teaching about Jesus and “*blasphemed*”. You can only blaspheme against God! Paul directed his service towards sinners, evangelistically, until they totally rejected Jesus. Then in a gesture that the Jews would fully comprehend he shook the dust of the Synagogue off his garments. The Jews would do this the moment they got back into Israel from traveling through Gentile regions as a way of saying that they rejected the life style of the Gentiles. Paul is saying that since he shared the truth concerning Jesus and they rejected it then rejects their life style.

- b. Vs. 7-8 Saints: Paul did not travel far after leaving the Synagogue he goes next door to Titus Justus’ house which shared a common wall with the Synagogue and started a Bible study in. It appears that putting a Bible study next door to the Synagogue worked as Crispus (Curly) the ruler of the Synagogue gets saved along with his house. **It is always a good place to start a Church right next door to religion.**

Luke goes on to tell us that “*many of the Corinthians after hearing the Word of God believed.*” The “*many*” mentioned here are further described in Paul’s words in 1 Cor. 1:26 where he describes them as “*not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.*” In other words they were the common folk. Paul served sinners and saints as he “*preached Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are*

*called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” That’s how you combat discouragement over living in a world that celebrates its sin, **SERVICE!** Folks, **when you are busy about the things of God you won’t have time to get all down about the things of the world!***

IV.) Vs. 9-11 Presence and promises

So far we have seen that Paul combated his discouragement against a world that celebrated its sin by **FELLOWSHIP** and **SERVICE**. But in these next verses we will see that Paul also had some thing else that brought about encouragement.

3. **WORD OF GOD:** In verses 9-11 we are told of three things that reading God’s Word will do for us when we are wiped out because we live in a world that celebrates its sin. Being in the Bible daily will give you three reasons to keep going.
 - a. Vs. 9 **Perspective:** Look carefully at what the Lord says to Paul here as the Lord says, “*stop being afraid!*” He knows Paul is afraid and then He says don’t stop talking about Me. We are prone to stop doing things when they are no longer pleasurable to us. What is the most common items in the best condition at garage sales? Exercise equipment! We pay all kinds of money for some thing that after only a few times using it we put it out side in the garage because it is no fun and the results did not happen in a day. Reading God’s Word gives us perspective. God tells Paul, “*Hey, stop being afraid and start talking*

about me!” Because we are to share Jesus not because it’s fun but because He told us too!

- b. Vs. 10a **Presence**: The 2nd great thing that reading God’s Word will bring to you is the truth that He is with you no matter where you are at. Paul was living in a city that celebrated its sin and no doubt he was thinking of Corinth as a “*God forsaken*” community! But God had not forsaken Corinth they had forsaken Him and He wanted to change that by working through Paul. What an encouragement to hear from the Lord that He is with you!
- c. Vs. 10b **Promises**: The last thing the Word of God will give you to keep you going is promises. Herbert Lockyer in his book published called “*All the promises of the Bible*” gives several numbers as to how many promises there are in the Bible. There are 31,173 verses so some say that 30,000 of those are promises. He goes on to quote an article in a 1956 Time magazine that cited the work of schoolteacher Everet Storm, which he compiled after his 27th reading of the Bible. It took him 1-½ years to compile the figures of 8,810 promises but that did not include the 3,376 promises that make up Psalm’s and Proverbs. So if you add it all together you come up with 12, 186 specific promises of which 7,487 of them are from God to us! The Lord gave Paul two of those promises in this verse.
1. **Protection** Paul was not free from difficulties or attacks but God promises that those things won’t harm you. “*If it doesn’t*

kill ya it'll only make ya stronger!" They brought charges against them but they amounted to nothing.

2. **People:** The second promise was that God promised to give him people that would respond to the message of Jesus. It's kind of like knowing your going to win as long as you stay in the race.

Vs. 11 The outcome of Paul being in the Word of God was that his perspective stayed right, the presence of the Lord was with him, he held onto the promises of God and this produced consistency in the ministry in Corinth. Paul stayed in this city that celebrated its sin for over a year and a half, teaching the word of God. Paul needed **FELLOWSHIP**, **SERVICE** and **THE WORD OF GOD**. It is no mystery why then satan will do all he can to get us off of those three things.

V.) Vs. 12-18a Victory, a great vaccination

There is one last thing that will strengthen you while living in a world that **celebrates its wickedness**. But the truth is if you don't stay the course through the first three you will never make it to the last one.

4. **VICTORY**: In verses 12-18a Luke records for us two ways in which victory was achieved:
 - a. Vs. 12-16 **Words**: Luke records for us the charges brought against Paul for preaching the gospel. They bring the charges to Gallio (Gal-i-o) whose older brother Seneca was busy tutoring the young Nero whom Paul one day appears before. This guy was quite fair as he makes Christianity an offshoot of Judaism thus legal to be proclaimed.

Victory was achieved in the courtroom of the world by words of a non-believer. The wicked went to the world and were defeated and Paul did not even get to open his mouth!

- b. Vs. 17-18a **Works**: Lastly, victory came in tangible ways as well. After Crispus got saved the Jews instated Sosthenes (Sos-the-nees) as the ruler of the Synagogue and when their court case did not go as planned they took him out and beat him. All of this would not mean much unless you read 1 Cor. 1:1 where Paul address the letter and says that, “*Sosthenes their brother*” was with him as he wrote to them. Wow, we are not sure when it happened but Sosthenes becomes a brother in the Lord. Hey folks, **sometimes it takes the world beating on us to turn us to Jesus doesn't it?** I wonder if after the world beat him up if Paul and Crispus came over with some TLC?

Victory is a great vaccination against the blues of living in a world that celebrates sin.

But you will never get that far if you abandon **FELLOWSHIP, SERVICE** and the **WORD**. Oh I pray that the Lord spoke to our hearts this morning giving us **PERSPECTIVE, PROMISES** and most important His **PRESENCE**.