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The Journey To Corinth

We're studying Paul's epistles in the order in which they were inspired by God the Holy Spirit and we have arrived at 1 Corinthians. To introduce this epistle we reviewed the big picture of Paul's writings and missionary journeys and quickly introduced six reasons Paul went to Corinth. Today we want to start by reviewing those six reasons and then study Paul's journey to Corinth in Acts 18. To begin let's review. The first reason Paul went to Corinth was location, location, location. Corinth was strategically located on the main highway that crosses the isthmus that connected to the Peloponnesian peninsula. The ships, rather than taking their cargo 200 miles around the peninsula would haul it across the isthmus at the eastern port, Cenchraea, where Paul will establish a church, over to the western port of Lechaem. Corinth sat smack dab in the middle and so it was a major city of business, lots of commerce. Second, Corinth was a cosmopolitan city due to it's location; it's where East met West and therefore you had a melting pot of cultures in Corinth; Italian, Spanish, Egyptian, Asian and so forth. Corinth was where these cultures met and so it was a city where all the great ideas moved in and out. Since Paul carried the greatest ideas, the ideas that toppled Greek philosophy at Athens just weeks before, then at Corinth he would put the wisdom of God up against the wisdom of men. Third, population because it was strategically located. Corinth had a large population; 300,000 citizens and 460,000 slaves for a total population of about 750,000. That's a lot of people and Paul typically stuck to the major population centers, evangelized and trained there, and the new disciples could reach out into the surrounding villages and towns. Fourth, the Isthmian Games held in honor of the god Poseidon were attended by large crowds of people from all over the Roman Empire. This attracted Paul. Every 2nd and 4th years between the Olympics men and women would compete in foot racing, wrestling, boxing, long jumping, discus throwing, javelin hurling,

chariot racing and even poetry reading and singing. Emperor Nero is going to come to Corinth in AD66, (which was not the year of the Isthmian games but they moved it up a year on his account) and he entered the singing competition and won of course, he was the Emperor. Fifth, there was a synagogue and Paul always went to the Jew first to give them an opportunity to fulfill God's mission for the Jewish nation, which was to be a light to the Gentiles. Paul would go to the synagogue first. Sixth, and this is not a reason Paul went, but it is very important for the background of this book. Their chief goddess was Aphrodite whose temple towered ~2,000 feet above the city. There were one thousand religious prostitutes who dominated society and therefore there came to be a saying in the ancient world. One would go to Corinth "to Corinthianize," which was a technical expression that meant "to fornicate" with a religious prostitute. These were acts of worship and if you were called a Corinthian Girl, well, you were a prostitute.

So Corinth was a very licentious city, a city though in which the Lord had many elect people. So as we begin, recall that Paul is alone at Corinth. Previously at Athens he had sent both Silas and Timothy on missions; Silas to Philippi and Timothy to Thessalonica. So for the meantime they're not in the picture; they'll return in verse 5. But before they return some other people come into the picture, verse 1, **After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth. ²And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, ³and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers. ⁴And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.**

Now, as the Lord would have it when Paul arrives the Lord has strategically placed two outstanding people. These two people will become lifelong friends of Paul, a married couple, **Aquila** and **Priscilla**. The man, named **Aquila**, was from Pontus, on the southern coast of the Black Sea. We don't know much about this man except that there's another man named Aquila from Pontus about a century later who produced a highly literal Greek translation of the OT Hebrew under Rabbi Akiba, but it doesn't appear there's a link with this Aquila because the later Aquila was a proselyte to Judaism, while this man was a Hebrew Christian. But he comes from this area and God

picked him to come alongside Paul to encourage him. His wife was **Priscilla** we know more about. She comes from a very prominent family called the Prisci; the Prisci were a very wealthy family in Rome. History testifies that it was the Prisci family that bought, paid for and maintained the first public cemetery for Christians. That cemetery still exists outside the city of Rome today. And the catacombs testify to them which is perhaps why this woman's name sometimes appears before her husbands. And so apparently this woman was a member of the upper class, a very influential class, and I suspect she and her husband were already Christians before they met Paul. On the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 there were Jews from Pontus who had come to Jerusalem and it may have been that Aquila was converted on that day or soon after. In any case they were sent by God's providence to encourage Paul.

Now not only does God send these two believers to Paul but He sends word through them that something has happened in Rome. In the Mediterranean Sea, the Italian Peninsula comes down and it looks like a boot kicking a rock. Paul is located 1000 miles east of Rome, that's as far west as the Christian message through Paul had gone and one might be tempted to think that this is as far as the witness of Christ had gone. But not so, for back on the day of Pentecost there were people who had come from as far as Rome, as far as Cyrene in N Africa, as far as Pontus by the Black Sea. And they had been won to Christ and had come back to their respective cities and planted churches. One church that was established was in Rome. This church was established by neither Paul nor Peter; it was established by Jewish converts from the day of Pentecost. And now the church had become so influential that a certain thing had happened in Rome.

The thing that happened is mentioned in verse 2, **because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome.** Now what's that got to do with Christianity? What it has to do with Christianity is that this expulsion of the Jews was caused by Hebrew Christians apparently. Here's how it happened. Claudius issued an edict which scholars believe occurred in AD50-51, and this, therefore, pins down the date of Paul meeting Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth. Apparently they were kicked out of Rome, Ramsay projects, about 7 or 8 months after the decree in 50-51AD. So Claudius obviously had a problem with the Jews and the problem was related by Suetonius, a Roman author, in his book, *Lives of the Caesars*, "Since the Jews constantly made

disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, [Claudius] expelled them from Rome.”¹ In other words, there was one riot after another occurring in the Jewish ghetto quarters of Rome and the Roman police would go in and restore law and order and walk out, there’d be another riot, they’d send the Roman police in again, squash it, go out, another riot, and so the Roman inspectors began to ask, what is the problem here, and they traced it back to a man by the name of Chrestus. Now it doesn’t take too much imagination to see who Chrestus is. That’s Christ. And what’s happened is Suetonius doesn’t understand; he doesn’t realize that Christ wasn’t actually present in the ghettos. There’s all this talk about the Christ going on in the ghetto. But Christ isn’t there. He assumes Christ is there. He assumes this Christ is causing riots. Christ, in a way, is causing the riots in that everywhere these converts from the day of Pentecost go they’re arguing that Jesus is the Christ, they’re trying to persuade their non-Christian Hebrew friends of this. So there was all this arguing in the Hebrew ghettos over Jesus Chrestus. And just think of it, if anytime you get two Jews in a disagreement you can have a riot, just think what can happen when you have 20,000! So Emperor Claudius finally had it, he says, that’s it, we’re not going to have this any more, this is Rome and we’re going to have law and order so he kicked them out of town. And it shows you, Christianity is making headway in Rome. Do you think that encouraged Paul? Paul hadn’t even been to Rome. The farthest Paul had traveled was Corinth. And now he hears the gospel has already gone 1,000 miles farther west. So encouragement number one is he has met Aquila and Priscilla and encouragement number two is Christianity is making headway ahead of Paul.

So Paul meets the two believers and in verse 3 **because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers.** He enters into a trade guild with them. The Jews had trade guilds in all their communities and Paul went down to the local Jewish trade guild (his father had trained him in tent-making) and two of the members of the tent-making guild were Aquila and Priscilla, they were Jewish, so he joined them. Actually the word for **tentmakers** refers to all kinds of leather work, so Paul’s skill were in the area of making leather goods; they could be tents, could be saddles, all kinds of leather goods. Nearby were the Isthmian games and in AD51 the games were held. And if you trot over to Isthmia there aren’t any hotel rooms, so the people would set up tents around the stadium and the hippodrome and so there may have been

a high demand for tents and Paul probably made and sold some of these tents to make some money. Paul was not wealthy despite the fact his father was apparently quite wealthy. But we gather from the NT that his father cut him off when he came home from rabbi school professing Jesus as the Christ and so he had to make money at various times making tents. Paul was not able at this time to reason daily with the Jews in the synagogue or with God fearing Gentiles in the market place. He was too busy making tents and this seems to have been a frustration but it will be relieved shortly.

Acts 18:4, **And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.** ⁵**But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul *began* devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.** So Paul started reasoning with the Jews in synagogue just like he always did. Paul always went to the Jew first. And we have evidence of a synagogue by an inscription, "Synagogue of the Hebrews" that is possibly from this time period. But even if it's from a later period there was a synagogue there. And Paul was in the synagogue each **Sabbath** reasoning with Jews and Greeks, trying to persuade them. And the way he tried to persuade them was reasoning through the OT Scriptures. What it means is Paul took the OT and he put the OT Messianic prophecies on one side and he took the life of Jesus and laid it out on the other side and he went boom, boom, boom right through them - Micah predicted Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Isaiah predicted Messiah would be born a virgin, Jesus was born of a virgin, David predicted Messiah would be resurrected, Jesus was resurrected. Messianic prophecy after Messianic prophecy would point this out. And observe that Paul was limited at the time to reasoning on **Sabbath**, he had to work every other day of the week making tents and so he couldn't teach every day. And we know how he felt about it from parallel passages which we'll see in just a moment. Paul was discouraged, he was limited in his teaching ministry, he wanted to do more.

But he's had two encouragements, Priscilla and Aquila and the advance of Christianity in Rome. Now the third encouragement comes. Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia and now Paul began **devoting himself completely to the word**. What does this mean? It means Paul dedicated himself to full time teaching of the word of God. So Paul obviously stopped making tents when Paul and Silas arrived. Why? Because they had brought

financial gifts from other believers. Paul can stop making tents, Paul can start preaching every day. Let's see how he did this.

Turn to 2 Cor 11:9; we'll show you these texts so that when you read the NT epistles you'll learn to relate it to what we're reading in Acts, get a little background. And also you can see that the apostles faced frustration and discouragement in life. They weren't immune from the same kinds of things believers today face. Just watch. Paul says, "and when I was present with you and was in need," he's talking about financial need, when "I was in need I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia, that's Silas and Timothy, "they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so." Paul didn't burden these believers at Corinth for money. Why not? Because they just became believers. Paul didn't want to be supported by new believers. He wanted them to thoroughly learn what grace was. And once they thoroughly understood grace, then he'd accept it, but not from new converts, if he had to he would rather support himself by making tents than take money from new believers. That was part of Paul's philosophy of ministry.

Let's go to Phil 4:15. Remember Philippi; that was the first church he had gone to in Macedonia; after he crossed the Aegean, he entered up north at Philippi. It was that city he went to first, and then he came down to Thessalonica, Berea and eventually to Athens and Corinth. In Phil 4:15, "You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;" So now we can locate the exact local church that gave Paul financial support. It was the Philippian church.

But Silas and Timothy coming from Macedonia brought him more encouragement than just finances. For that turn to 1 Thess 3:6. From Philippi came money; from Thessalonica came something else, verse 6, "But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you." So the second thing they brought was good news about the Thessalonians. That encouraged Paul because he didn't really know how they were doing at all. He had to leave in the middle of the night. So were they staying strong in the faith and in love? Yes, they were. So Silas

brings financial support from Philippi and Timothy brings good news from Thessalonica.

After bringing that it says in Acts that he began to constantly teach. Day after day after day he would go into the synagogues of the Jews and follow his standard operating procedure, testify that Jesus was the Messiah. So he would present the historical framework of what God had done in the nation of Israel's history, then inside that framework he would present OT verse after OT verse after OT verse that related to the Messiah. And by doing this he was building a Messianic profile of what the Messiah would be like, and then he would plug Jesus into the profile. This went on and on until verse 6 and finally, as usual, what happened? The Jews **resisted and blasphemed**, the Greek text says they lined up in battle array against Paul. And we can tell from the rest of the verse that Paul was pretty bent about it. Every town I go to I get resistance from my own people and Paul had a heart for his own people. But his own people keep pushing him away, forcing him to leave town after town after town, and here we go again. I went to the Jew first, I've given them ample opportunity, now I've had it. I turn to the Gentiles. But in this case, as in Acts 13:51, he's extremely bent and Paul goes through this very exasperating gesture. **he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."** You can tell he's had it with the Jews there. He gave them a shot, he went over the verses and over the verses and over the verses and finally you come to the point, these people don't want the word of God. And when you're with people and they show absolutely no interest in the word of God there's only one response. Leave. Don't waste your time. Paul said, you don't want the word of God, fine, there are plenty of other people who do want the word of God, I'll go to them. And so Paul does. But watch how he does it.

V 7 Paul sets up shop in someone's house, look at this, look at the location of the house, **Then he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue.** That word means "built against it." Justus' house and the synagogue were touching. So, you guys don't like the word of God; fine I'll set up camp on your doorstep, how do you like that? Paul was bold. And this situation doesn't last too long before someone from the synagogue is won to Christ and lo and behold, who should be won to Christ but the chief ruler of the synagogue. Acts 18:8, **Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed**

in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized. Crispus, a Roman name, so a Roman citizen but apparently a Jew was the head of the synagogue. What a strategic person to win to Christ, the chief of the synagogue. And not only did he win this man, he won his family. Men particularly ought to notice in the middle of verse 8, when the man of the house believed it was common for his whole house to believe. You see that with the Philippian jailer, you find it again later in the book of Acts. That doesn't mean that the husband makes a decision for the wife or the father makes a decision for the children. What it means is that these men function as the spiritual leaders of their home and when they believe the gospel their wives and children follow them in believing, if of course the children are at an age where they can believe. The point here is that the structure of divine institution #2 and 3, marriage and family were being respected and when the men responded to spiritual things, the wife and children followed. And so with the house of Crispus and others this is what happened and you see, end of v 8 a tremendous response to the gospel, many believed and that encouraged Paul.

But v 9, Paul senses a storm is rising. Now the chief of the synagogue just defected from Judaism, so the tension is rising. Is Paul going to be killed? Is he going to be run out of town on a rail? But notice verses 9 and 10, **And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid *any longer*, but go on speaking and do not be silent; ¹⁰for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.** Now, the crux of this encouragement from the Lord Jesus Christ is verse 10, the words, **I am with you.** Maybe you remember where this tradition began in the OT. Where was the first place the Lord God said the words "I AM"? Where did He say those words? In the burning bush to Moses, Exod 3:14. Was that an encouragement to Moses? What was Moses commission? You go back to Egypt Moses and let My people go. What? said Moses. I'm an outlaw in Egypt. I'm not going to walk in before Pharaoh, he'll chop my head off. Go ahead Moses, I AM with you. No one's going to touch a hair on your head Moses. So go ahead. That's where this tradition originated. And here you see it crop up again with Paul, don't worry Paul, I am with you. Now people get, yeah, yeah, that's the omnipresence of Jesus, Jesus is in all places at all times. Yes, He is, but that's not all this is talking about. It's talking about I am with you and I'm working with you. What Christ talks to

Paul about, verse 10, is not new; it's a reiteration of an OT theme that was given again and again and again down the corridors of history to encourage spiritual leaders. Spiritual leaders get discouraged and this promise **I am with you** is there to lift their spirits.

Hold your place here and turn to Jer 1:8. Here's another example of this promise. Jeremiah was a prophet who had to go out and preach the word of God to a rebellious people. And yet here's a promise in the midst of it. "Do not be afraid of them, For I am with you to deliver you," declares the LORD." That verse depicts what I am with you is all about. When He commissions you to a task don't be afraid, God is with you to deliver you from danger. Every context of "I am with you" is given in an environment of danger. But don't worry.

Back to Acts 18:9. We could go to others but do you think that kind of encouraged Paul a bit? A personal message from the I AM Himself, Paul, don't fear, I know and you know the plots of the Jews, **but go on speaking and do not be silent; ¹⁰for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.** What an encouragement to Paul. Finally, some peace and quiet for awhile so he can concentrate on what he wants to do, which is preach the word of God. And so Paul is going to get some room to breathe. Why? Verse 10 **for I have many people in this city.** The Lord Jesus Christ has certain individuals in Corinth. And Paul is the instrument through which Christ will call them forth. So there are two things going on here. One is God has His elect and two is Paul is the instrument through which God is going to call them forth. And so Paul's going to be there for a prolonged period of time to reach these people for Christ. Now some people don't like the doctrine of election, but you can see it implied in v 10. God has people in the city of Corinth. God picks and chooses. People don't like that but that's the word of God. The real question people never seem to ask is "Why does God have any people in any city?" God didn't have to choose anyone. He would be perfectly just to condemn everybody. He certainly didn't look down and say, now I've just got to choose you, you're just so wonderful, I'm just so attracted to you. God never said that of me, God never said that of you, God only said that of One Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. But of me - what a dirty, rotten, stinker. So election is by grace. It's gracious that God said, I choose to take dirty rotten stinkers and make them instruments for My use. Why? Why does God do it? We've already said

it's not because of anything in us. So it must be because of something in Him. And the thing in Him is His love. God loves this one and God loves that one. Why does God love this one and that one? Because He does, that's why. But why? Because He does. We don't know anymore than that. All we can say is that God is love and He pours out a specific love on His elect and it doesn't have anything to do with who we are. He loves us because of who He is. And so His love is going to win certain people in that city to Himself as Paul preaches the word of God fearlessly. So don't get discouraged Paul, I'm protecting you, you're under divine protection, go preach the word of God and just watch, people are going to come to My Son, I've already got them in my eternal counsels, now just go call them out. So the other side is the human responsibility of gospel preaching. Gospel preaching is what will call them forth, and gospel preaching is necessary, don't ever think that because God has His elect it is therefore not important to preach the gospel. It is absolutely necessary because it is the means by which God creates the elect in history. And without it, we would say, they would not be created.

So we see the results in vv 11-17. **And he settled *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.** So for a year and a half Paul is going to get real familiar with Corinth. But this extended teaching does cause a problem. As it always does, when the word of God is taught and more and more people defect out of Satan's kingdom, Satan is threatened and you will see him lash out to block evangelism, to increase the pressure, anything to slow the advance of the gospel. Paul is going to be threatened by the Jews so let's see if Paul gets hurt in the attack or if the divine I AM with you promise of Christ remains true. Verse 12, **But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat,** ¹³saying, "This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law." ¹⁴But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to put up with you; ¹⁵but if there are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters." ¹⁶And he drove them away from the judgment seat. ¹⁷And they all took hold of Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and *began* beating him in front of the judgment seat. But Gallio was not concerned about any of these things.

Now, what an interesting story this makes in the course of Western history. If this event didn't happen this way world history would be radically altered. Here's why. The year is AD52 and there is a certain man in charge called **Gallio, proconsul of Achaia**. The proconsul was a man high up in the Roman administration. This man has more authority than a politarch or some other local authority. Paul had stood before local authorities, but now he's going to stand before the **proconsul**, and whatever verdict is passed in his province is going to be legal precedent for every other province in the Roman Empire. So the man of the hour is **Gallio** and this man, what was he like? Well, his brother Seneca said of him, "no mortal is so pleasant to any one person as Gallio is to everybody."ⁱⁱ In other words, Gallio is the nicest guy in the whole Roman Empire. But that's not all. We have an inscription at Delphi that indicates that he was appointed directly by Emperor Claudius in the year 51AD, July 1, to be exact. So Paul had been preaching for several months, he got the I AM promise of protection and Gallio came to be proconsul. So who is divinely situated in the office of proconsul to handle Paul's case? The nicest guy in the Roman administration. Now is that by chance or by divine providence? What did Jesus say to Paul, I am with you, you may be attacked but no harm is going to come to you. I control history and I control Emperor Claudius and I'm going to have him appoint the kindest man in all the Roman Empire to handle your case. And once he decides your case Paul it will be the *status quo* for all provinces in the entire Roman Empire. So let's see how it happens.

Verse 12, **the Jews of one accord rose up against Paul**, so you can see it was planned, probably for months they planned how to get Paul. And they brought him where? **before the judgment seat**. Now the judgment seat, or *bema*, was where cases would be heard and judged on. They were held in the marketplace and on the south side was the *bema* and this is where Paul was taken before Gallio. And in the letter this is the imagery behind Paul's teaching later about the *bema* seat of Christ where believers will stand before Christ and our works will be evaluated, whether they be wood, hay and stubble, works of the flesh or gold, silver and precious stones, or works of the Spirit we'll be rewarded accordingly. Keep this encounter with Gallio in mind because when we get to the judgment seat later we'll recall this image that Paul uses of the judgment seat of Christ that we must all stand before. So everyone is in place. The Jews are bent at Paul, he moved in next door at the house of Titius Justice, the leader of the synagogue, Crispus, has defected

from Judaism, they've had enough, and they take him to Gallio, verse 13 **“This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.”** The charge is Paul is promoting an illegal religion. In Rome there was a list of legal religions and those were authorized but if you introduced a new religion, one not on the approved list, then you would be punished and prohibited from propagating that religion. So the stakes are high here. If Paul is found guilty of introducing a new religion then he will be punished and prohibited from preaching the gospel. And so the future of Christianity is on the line. Is the Christian gospel going to continue being propagated in the Roman Empire or is this the end of Christianity in Rome? Verse 14, **But when Paul was about to open his mouth,** here's Paul, I've got to defend myself so Paul's all ready to give his defense, the defense is already in his head, all he has to do is open his mouth and let it out but before he does **Gallio** opens his mouth and says **to the Jews, “If it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to put up with you; ¹⁵but if there are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters.”** So he refuses to judge this matter. And what's his reason? From Gallio's standpoint this is not a debate over a new religion, this is a debate within Judaism. So at this time Christianity was still viewed by many as a sect within Judaism. So he says I'm not even going to judge on it, get out of here, you guys go fight it out amongst yourselves, you guys are arguing over technical issues within your own religion, questions about words and names and your own law, that's Jewish law, so I refuse to judge. So what is this decision going to do? It's going to stand as legal precedent that these issues are within Judaism and not to be judged by Roman authorities. At least not for awhile. Later it will clearly have separated from Judaism and then the issue will resurface. But at this time Christianity is given free reign.


And the conclusion, verse 16-17, **he drove them away from the judgment seat.** Paul got off scott free, but he drove away the Jews, get out of here, you're wasting my time. ¹⁷**And they all took hold of Sosthenes,** they apparently being the Gentile audience, **they took hold of Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and began beating him in front of the judgment seat. But Gallio was not concerned about any of these things.** And what we have here is some evidence of early anti-Semitism in the Roman Empire that will lead up to AD70, the Destruction of Jerusalem. Remember v 2, Emperor Claudius had expelled 20,000 Jews from Rome, well,

it didn't stop there. A lot of Gentiles were turning anti-Semitic in the first century and so they took Gallio's impatience with the Jews as an opportunity to attack their leader, the Jew **Sosthenes**.

So let's recall our doctrine of anti-Semitism or the Jew. The Jew in history has been the subject of vitriolic attack because of the promises of God in the Abrahamic Covenant that this people would bring salvation to the world. So numerous attacks, obviously inspired by Satan, were made throughout the OT to try to destroy the Messiah; the attempted rapes of Sarah and Dinah, Pharaoh's attempt to kill all the baby boys, Saul's attempted murders of David, Queen Athaliah's attempt to murder King Josiah, the royal line on into the NT where Herod the Great killed the baby boys around Bethlehem. But because of Satan's failure to kill the Messiah at His birth he was left with the only possibility of killing Him as an adult, he thought he was successful at the cross. But actually the cross was a defeat for Satan because Jesus was sinless and therefore not under the penalty of sin and so death could not hold Him, so He preached to the spirits in prison and we don't know what He said but apparently it was along the lines that He was successful and their doom was sealed, then He was resurrected to life. After forty days of very convincing proofs He ascended on high, passed through the heavenly places and sat down at the right hand of the Father. Now He is no longer in reach of Satan and so who does Satan turn his anger against but the people who brought Jesus Christ into historical existence, the Jewish people. Why? Because if he can destroy the people to whom the promises were made then he can break the promises of God and show God unfaithful. So we're seeing Satan's anti-Semitic vitriol rise in Corinth, a vitriol that has been waged against the Jewish people thorough the whole church age, usually at the hands of Christendom, because when the early church became increasingly Gentile they rejected literal interpretation and turned to allegory and what this caused was a Replacement Theology, the Church replaces Israel and Israel has no more place in the plan of God and so they were maligned and persecuted and tortured as the Christ killers. Everywhere the Jew went there was the ghetto and he was accused of every plague, he was convicted of blood libel at the time of Passover and so forth. The Jew is the most hated people in history. Believer and unbeliever alike recognize this. Why? Why is he the subject of hate? Because Satan himself, the ruler of this age, is waging a war to destroy him. And the hate continues to our own day. The Jews are supposedly the problem and if we could just get rid of the Jew. But actually

the Jew is the key to world peace. Because you can't get to world peace apart from the Jewish nation believing in her Messiah which is one thing we pray for, a thing that is coming. But here we are seeing anti-Semitism on the rise in Rome and it's going to lead to AD70, the destruction of Jerusalem. And it's going to increase till 135 the Bar Kochba revolt where they are scattered even more. So here they are beating Sosthenes but now turn to 1 Cor 1 for the surprise ending. **Crispus** had been the head of the synagogue, he became a believer, they fired him, **Sosthenes** replaced him as the head of the synagogue, he led the charges against Paul, Gallio didn't care, and the Gentiles took it as an opportunity to beat him. And who do you read about in 1 Corinthians 1:1? **Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,** ²**To the church of God which is at Corinth,** Sosthenes? Sosthenes had become a Christian? Yeah, he had. How did that happen? That's a story for next week. But here we are, five years later, Sosthenes is with Paul at Ephesus. And Sosthenes is going to help Paul write this letter. Sosthenes knew Corinth better than anyone else and so Paul says, I Paul and Sosthenes our brother. So one of the people God had at Corinth was Sosthenes. So don't ever count anyone out, we don't know who God's people are, but we preach the gospel and God calls them out, one by one to Himself.

And in concluding we're going to see in the coming weeks that God called out many Corinthians and as new Christians they faced the pressures of a very worldly society; they prized human wisdom, they prized rationalism but Paul prized God's wisdom which is Christ; they prized rhetorical ability, the ability for an orator to put his spin on things but Paul prized the gospel of Jesus Christ; they prized athletes who won the perishable crown of glory at the local Isthmian Games but Paul prized the imperishable crown of glory issued at the judgment seat; they prized their freedom, turning it into license to fornicate, Paul warns them of discipline if they allow this behavior to go unchecked; they prized their liberty in eating, turning it into license to cause brothers to stumble and to hinder the gospel, but Paul says it's not worth it to flaunt your freedom if it hinders the gospel witness, so quit; they prized flashy spiritual abilities like speaking in tongues but Paul is going to say that what matters is faith, hope and love; they turned the Lord's Supper into a drinking party but Paul says it is a time of remembrance of the cross, of sober remembrance; and they had rejected the doctrine of the resurrection but Paul says it is central to their Christian faith and without it there is no salvation.



So with that said let us turn our attention to the Lord's Supper and sober remembrance of His cross work for us.

ⁱ Seutonius, *Claudius*. 25:4.

ⁱⁱ *Natural Questions, vol iv a, Preface, 11*

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