

Message #2

Acts 18:1-18

If we were to construct a profile of a good place to start a church, it would not have been Corinth; it would probably have been Athens. But when Paul left Athens, as **verse 1** tells us he did, there was NO CHURCH started. You would think Athens would be the spot where God would want His church. After all, Paul clearly said that God was the One who was opening the hearts of people (Acts 16:40). One would think that God would want to open the hearts and minds of the philosophers in Athens, for it would seem logical that if you reached the leading thinkers of Athens, you could reach the world for God. But in Athens there was proud, intellectual arrogance and in Corinth there was a lot of godless sin.

If you honestly look around most churches, you will discover that most of the members are not scholars or philosophers, but most have been godless sinners (I Cor. 1:26-31).

GOD ESTABLISHES HIS CHURCHES IN HIS LOCATIONS AND HE DOES SO BY USING HIS CALLED AND GIFTED SERVANTS TO MINISTER IN UNUSUAL SITUATIONS AND CIRCUMSTANCES TO THOSE STEEPED IN SIN.

FACT#1 – God develops His church by sending His called and gifted servant to His location. **18:1**

Jesus Christ called Paul a “chosen instrument” (Acts 9:15). Therefore, when Paul came to Corinth, he was truly a called and gifted servant of the Most High God.

If a church is to develop, it **MUST** include those who have been called and gifted by God. A spiritual gift is not just an intriguing point for theological discussion; it is a mandatory requirement for ecclesiological development.

One of the things that I Corinthians will do is give us a knowledge of the subject of spiritual gifts (i.e. 12:1).

1) Stay faithful to God and stay highly committed to God’s local church.

Those who are not faithfully involved in the local church **WILL NEVER** discover their spiritual gifts. Paul’s gift was discovered in the church of Antioch (Acts 13:1-2).

2) Take advantage of every type of opportunity for service in the local church.

FACT#2 – God develops His church by leading His servants to His key people. **18:2-4**

Two of the finest people you will ever meet in the N.T. are Aquila and Priscilla. They were two business people who had been expelled by Claudius from Rome because they were Jewish (A.D. 49).

Paul obviously knew how to make these tents and Priscilla and Aquila gave him a job. In Corinth, Paul was alone, he was weak, he was afraid and he was broke (I Cor. 2:1-3). He would work during the week and minister on the weekends (**Acts 18:4**). When Paul left Corinth, these two went with him (**Acts 18:18**), and when they got to Ephesus, another key Pauline city, they ended up with a church in their spacious home (I Cor. 16:19; II Tim. 4:19). What God initially used to bring these two to salvation and eventual development was an occupation.

FACT#3 – God develops His Church by providing for His servants to minister to His people. **18:5**

When Silas and Timothy finally came to Paul from Macedonia, they brought a substantial offering, or to state it more plainly, they brought a good sum of money (II Cor. 11:8-9; Phil. 4:15). There is no question from even a surface glance of this passage that the primary ministry for one gifted to establish a church is that of preaching and teaching (**18:4, 5, 9, 11, 13**). In fact, in this verse God is clearly funding the preaching and teaching ministry He is providing for Paul.

FACT#4 – God develops His Church by allowing opposition to come against His servant and His Word. **18:6**

This opposition does two things:

- 1) It frees Paul from his responsibility.
- 2) It directs Paul to his ministry.

FACT#5 – God develops His Church by saving His people. **18:7-8**

FACT#6 – God develops His Church by comforting His servants doing His work. **18:9-11**

Notice carefully it is the preaching and teaching speaking ministry that God ORDERS Paul to continue (**18:9**). God comforted Paul by giving him three reasons for not fearing, three reasons why anyone truly doing God's will need never fear:

Reason #1 - Because God is with us. **18:10a**

The preposition “with” speaks of close association and companionship in the form of Divine help and guidance (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 286).

Reason #2 - Because God will protect us. **18:10b**

Reason #3 - Because God will use us. **18:10c**

There is nothing that pleases God more or that God will use more than an active teaching and preaching ministry. Sometimes, however, when most people are into gimmicks, entertainment, seminars and encounter groups, the preaching and teaching ministry can become very lonely and intimidating.

FACT#7 – God develops His Church by delivering His servants from difficulties. **18:12-17**

Paul was taken before the judgment seat (**18:12**) or Bema seat. This court scene was both intimidating and threatening. This is the image Paul uses when referring to the judgment seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10).

The verb “persuade” indicates Paul was intensely persuading people and winning them. As we paraphrase Mr. John Phillips: “In the filth capital of the world, God did some of his greatest work to build His church. There were many hungry hearts in Corinth. There were lonely people disillusioned by the empty pleasures of this world. There were sailors tired of their lives of drunkenness and debauchery. There were broken women, the castoff prostitutes of the temple who were tired of their sin. There were young people whose ideals had been polluted by a wicked society. There were people fed up with religion, fed up with hypocrisy, fed up with life. It was in this environment that God built His church.”

If God would establish and use a church in an environment like Corinth, He can and will establish and use the believer in any environment.