



Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 61 “Partners in Ministry” Pt. 1 Answers for Difficult Min.
By Pastor Jody May 01/07/2024

Acts 18:1-17 ESV

Paul in Corinth

18 After this Paul left Athens and went to **Corinth**. ²And he found a Jew named **Aquila**, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife **Priscilla**, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, ³and because he was of the same trade he **stayed with them and worked**, for they were tentmakers by trade. ⁴And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.

⁵When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. ⁶**And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”** ⁷And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue. ⁸Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized. ⁹And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, ¹⁰for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.” ¹¹And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

¹²But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, ¹³saying, “This man is persuading people 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 wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. ¹⁵But since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these things.” ¹⁶And he drove them from the tribunal. ¹⁷And they all seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to any of this.

[READ THE TEXT]

[PRAY]

[INTRO]



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Have you ever gotten to the end of the rope with someone, where it felt like no matter what you said, or how you tried to help them, they would just not listen? It's not that they did not listen, I mean it went in one ear and out the other. They heard you and they even seemed to like what you said, but after nodding their head, and thanking you for the talk, they went on and did something completely different.

Maybe you have had that friend that would always complain to you about their job, or you had that person in your life that seemed like dating only meant bad news, or an old roommate that never seemed to have enough money at the end of the month to cover rent, but they did have a sob story to explain why. And if you have not had that experience yet just wait there are plenty of people like that to go around, you'll get one eventually. And you know it's true because many of us were that person, until God finally got our attention, let us hit our wall, and by grace planted the seed of the Gospel in a fertile spot in our heart (see parable of the *Fertile Soil* Mat 13).

That story happens a lot to a pastor. It is one of the sad things about my calling. I discover people that seem like they want to change, but after counseling with them, sometimes many times, I can watch the seed of the Gospel I tried to plant in their life, dry up because it hit the rocky ground. Many times, people **want your sympathy but not your empathy**; they like it when you believe them and emote with them, but they don't want your hand up. They **covet your prayers but not your advice**; they want to treat you like an OT priest and see if you can get God to listen to them. They want to **find hope in bad decision making**, instead of seeking the source of hope before making those decisions. I bring all this up today to explain what we are seeing in the Paul's life, he has hit the wall, he's had enough, he no longer wants to waste his time with difficult ministry for those he called brothers and sisters.

⁶And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”

Paul is quoting from the prophet Ezekiel.



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Ezekiel 33:1-5 ESV

Ezekiel Is Israel’s Watchman

33 The word of the LORD came to me: ²“Son of man, speak to your people and say to them, If I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from among them, and make him their watchman, ³and if he sees the sword coming upon the land and blows the trumpet and warns the people, ⁴then if anyone who hears the sound of the trumpet does not take warning, and the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. ⁵He heard the sound of the trumpet and did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But if he had taken warning, he would have saved his life.

By Paul’s admittance, he knows he has spoken enough that they should have been warned, the trumpet has been sounded, and their persecution of him lets him know they have heard him, but they are not going to listen to him. Why? Well, we know the essence of his sermon now from Chp. 17: Repent and believe in Jesus the Messiah for your Salvation!

This morning I want to **recognize a tension** we should be feeling in this room. We are witnessing in our culture the rejection of Christianity for one of two things: 1st the replacement of DEI (Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion) which is religion because it has its’ own morality, laws and demands, and a way for social salvation. 2nd the replacement of traditional doctrine by Liberal Theology where man’s modern interpretation of scripture trumps the original meaning of God’s Word in its’ original context forming more of a Pagan Ideal Religion, incorporating much of westernized evangelical traditions and denominations.

From all of that I know it makes me after preaching God’s Word for years now, after watching people flock to liberal minded churches on purpose, I want to be like Paul and say that’s it I am shaking out my coat. Perhaps you are no longer feeling the call to have discussions with your friends and family because they want to believe what they want to believe and they ignore the truth, so like me you are ready to wash your hands. Well as much as I would like to, we can’t do that, there is another warning here in Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 33:6 ESV



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⁶But if the watchman sees the sword coming and **does not blow the trumpet**, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any one of them, that person is taken away in his iniquity, but **his blood I will require at the watchman’s hand.**

Wow! So as much as it pains me, one of the calls of the Christian is to endure with your culture even when they don’t want to hear it, because God is holding us accountable. **But PJ there has got to be a point where enough is enough, right?** Your absolutely right, “⁶And when they opposed and reviled him”. We have not reached that level yet, we have not felt what Paul has, we have not felt yet what the Apostles did, we have not yet stood like Christ in front of our accusers, **we haven’t**, and therefore it is not time to shake the dust off our clothes yet and move on. Along with that Bill did start us off on the right foot last week and set our theme for the year with this passage from Philippians.

Philippians 2:1-4 ESV

Christ’s Example of Humility

2 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ²complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others **more significant than yourselves.** ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Here’s the Joy of the Gospel, here’s what will make you happy that you have treated others more significant than yourself.

Jams 5:19-20 ESV

¹⁹My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, ²⁰let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

HCC, we have work to do this year, there are some wanderers that need to be found, and while people don’t deserve the Grace of the Gospel, **it is the calling**



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of HCC to convey it! So, while we may not be getting reviled yet like Paul, I recognize that our culture is not an easy mission field, whether they are lost in the religion of DEI or they are wandering in the fields of liberal theology, but here in Chapter 18 there is help for how we should move forward. Verses 1-17 contain three different answers to help the spread of the Gospel, even in a land of people who did not want to hear it.

- Partners for Ministry (vs.1-4)
- Predestination for Evangelism (vs.5-11)
- Protagonists for Zeal (vs.12-17)

Now let’s go back to vs. 1-4 and let’s see what God provided for a Hard Mission field.

Paul in Corinth

18 After this Paul left Athens and went to **Corinth**. ²And he found a Jew named **Aquila**, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife **Priscilla**, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, ³and because he was of the same trade he **stayed with them and worked**, for they were tentmakers by trade. ⁴And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.

Here we meet some famous folks, **Aquila and Priscilla**, and I will show you in a moment that Hard ministry ‘IS’ possible because this new couple was sent by God to Paul. Because of this gracious delivering he would experience success in ministry through new Gospel Partnerships. If I had to give us a main point this morning, I am going to straight up steal this from John Maxwell (2002).

MAIN POINT:

TEAMWORK MAKES THE DREAM WORK

“Teamwork makes the dream work, but a vision becomes a nightmare when the leader has a big dream and a bad team.”

John Maxwell

Ministry was getting harder for Paul, because the Jews are becoming more obstinate, so the synagogue was becoming less helpful, so God incorporates



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lay leadership in the form of married couples, into Paul’s strategy and church planting model. This married couple now becomes the model for the backbone of the church, and by keeping the vision of Jesus’ Kingdom first this couple was unified in their work together, so they are going to live out for us what it looks like when **Teamwork makes the Dream Work**.

First off, what was this new place that Paul had gone to, where he will spend the longest amount of time in his 2nd missionary journey. It will help us understand the necessity of this new model of ministry partnerships:

Corinth was the recently rebuilt center of trade sitting 46 miles due west of Athens. The city lies between Greece and Asia Minor, and as we said she is the political capital in this area of the world, ruling over Achaia and was offered special privileges as a Roman colony. It had been rebuilt by Julius Cesar in 44 BC and still had direct ties to Roman leadership through her proconsul Gallio. She is very influential but also very corrupt.



Their main god of worship was Aphrodite, and that had an effect on her because Corinth was known for her sexual licentiousness (see Paul’s warning in 1 Cor 6:12-20). “In fact, the word Corinth (*korinthiazesthai*) came to mean to live immorally. I discovered a helpful analogy this week by the late Timothy Keller who said that: Athens was like Boston, and intellectual center; Corinth was like New York City, a commercial center; Ephesus was like Los Angeles, a popular culture and occult center; and Rome was like Washington, DC; it was the political center of the nation.¹ Imagine trying to start a church in a place

¹ Tony Merida, *Christ-Centered Exposition/Exalting Jesus in Acts* (Holman Press: Nashville, TN, 2017), 263.



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like New York City where everyone is busy trying to make a living, and trying to placate their lives with the lust of the flesh, this is Corinth.

And yet, in this place that ministry would be very hard to do, Paul stays here, longer than anywhere else on his 2nd missionary journey, for 1.5 years. During this time, he has a very fruitful ministry, he writes his 2 letters to the Thessalonians, and becomes very connected to this church for he writes to them more than anybody else in the NT. It seems for Paul they become the poster child for trying to make a church work in a culture that wants nothing to do with the church. And it happened because of God’s influence and desire to save, and it all started with the Dream Team of Aquila and Priscilla.

There are three things I want us to see about this dynamic duo today: they are detached from this world, they are Hospitable to a fault, and they are diligent for the Kingdom.

1. Detached from the World. (v.2)

²And he found a Jew named **Aquila**, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife **Priscilla**, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them,

This **DT** (Dream Team) had a life before we ever get caught up with them here in Acts. They had left Rome and had moved to Corinth not by their free will but because they were driven out by decree. All Jews were kicked out of Rome by the emperor Claudius (AD 41-54)², over the seemingly ongoing disturbances of them arguing over someone named Chrestus.³ In short theologians and historians believe Chrestus was most likely slang or a bad interpretation for the word *Christ*. It doesn’t mean that our DT were

² <https://www.history.com/news/8-things-you-may-not-know-about-emperor-claudius>

³ Luke takes the opportunity to link his narrative about Corinth with a well-known event in Roman history (*because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome*). The imperial edict banning Jews from Rome is recorded by the historian Suetonius (*Claud.* 25.4) in these terms: ‘since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus (Lat. *impulsore Chresto*), he expelled them from Rome’. Chrestus may be a corruption of Christus, meaning that the Jewish community in Rome had become seriously divided over Christian claims about Jesus. Peterson, D. G. (2009). *The Acts of the Apostles* (p. 507). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.



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Christians yet before meeting Paul, but it does mean they were at least aware of the debate.

Well Paul meets them, it says he meets Aquila first, whether through the synagogue or through the marketplace we don't know, but Paul goes and meets the DT. Now let me let you in on a little **piece of encouragement and advice**, if you want help in your goals and aspirations, if they are for the Lord, most likely you will have to have the help of others. Paul has been in this position before, so he is open to the leading of the spirit. Let it be known right now many of you want to make changes and set goals for the New Year, if you are not open to help you are probably missing out on God's help on your behalf. God helps His people through biblical relationships not in spite of them. Maybe 2024 should be the year where you invite yourself over to someone's house like Paul, and be like "help me" - be humble...

Well, they hit it off and that would mean they love Jesus, that is how Paul builds his relationships, around the life and goals of Christ. You are not going to get your name mentioned by Paul in his letters unless you mean something to him and that means Christ means something to you. They **build such a strong and lasting relationship** because this couple had determined that they would live in such a way that they would not be held down by the things or concerns of man.

They work with Paul as tent makers in Corinth, and then for a year and a half they work tirelessly in the church. When Paul leaves finally, he goes to Antioch, and he loves them so much, he doesn't want to break up the DT so he takes them to Antioch, **Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila (18:18)**. He leaves them and seems to point them to Ephesus they go there ahead of him and in the last part of Acts 18, they meet Apollos, and as a team correct his theology, preparing him to be one of the main speakers for the 1st century church.

Now listen, it is fine for a woman to correct a man in his theology but please be aware of the context, in their home, and Priscilla did it under the guidance and authority of her husband. God's plan from the beginning was to make



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every God-fearing couple a DT when it came to spreading the good news. Dad's it's not your wife's job to do devotions with the kids, and wives it is not your husband's job to always initiate it, you are a team, and the responsibility lies on both of you to make it happen. Guys take the lead and ladies support it, and both of you count the other as more significant than yourself.

Then in **Rom. 16:3**, Paul mentions them again, meaning they moved back to Rome even under the threat of punishment for they weren't supposed to be there by the emperors' decree. That goes to show you that **there is a time to reject your governments' authority** WHEN the law of Christ needs to prevail! Then we find out something radical, they were so detached from this world whether from where they lived, to the man-made laws needing to be ignored listen to what Paul says this about them,

Romans 16:3 ESV

³Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ⁴who **risked their necks** for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but **all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well.**

They were so detached from this world they risked their own necks for Paul, and he says that if not for them, what we have in the NT, as the letters and the works of Paul, that if it were not for them, it wouldn't have happened.

Teamwork makes the dream work and when you have a DT, the things of God even in harsh ministry climates get done! **[CHALLENGE]** Let me ask you are you available like this for God, could you pick up and move if God called on you to do so, do you view your home and life as a temporary luxury to be abandoned if Jesus so requests?

Then lastly, when Paul is at his lowest and is basically writing his last will and testament to Timothy from a jail cell in Rome, he tells Timothy in 2 Tim 4:19, in the final lines to greet the DT, as they are now again in Ephesus with Timothy helping to keep that church alive and help this new elder guide that church.

The point is they didn't see home as a physical point on a map but as a moving target wherever God's people were building their church, that was their home! This detachment reminds me of the words of Jesus.



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Matthew 5:20 ESV

And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”

They have been transformed to be like Jesus, to live as sojourners in a foreign land. What is keeping our feet planted in 2024 where perhaps our automatic response to help build the church is always a ‘maybe’, ‘I can’t’, or ‘I’m busy’?

Let’s all be a little better about detaching from this life and the pursuit of worldly joy this year and **let’s experience the joy of living for Christ together**, let us look after the interests of each of us in the room, as good as we look after our own interests.

2. Hospitable to a Fault (v.3)

³and because he was of the same trade he **stayed with them and worked**, for they were tentmakers by trade.

Now when I say hospitable to a fault, I mean exactly that, they were so hospitable that they constantly practiced it, but never sinned in their intentions of it, they were never faulty with their hospitality. I believe every Christian DT has the capability of doing this. You are not going to overplay your hospitality for reaching people for Jesus, **because scriptures promises us that whatever we need for the work of the gospel He provides** (Phil 4:19). Here’s what I have discovered, the more my family practices hospitality the less hard it becomes and the weirder it seems to be when we don’t practice it, as if we have missed the point of the week.

The scripture seems to allude that neither Paul nor this DT made the request, but it seemed like the right idea to both of them. Paul came and because he was doing the work of the gospel they just stayed together. **How many of you are ready to start housing interns and other young couples if they came to grow our church?** Home life and hospitality is such an important part of church life, in 18:24 the DT didn’t just talk to Apollos after church or over a coffee, **they brought him home!** They opened up their house so he would be relaxed and then they shared the gospel with him, and they counted him more significant than themselves.



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When you look up our DT in the rest of the NT do you know what we find? After Paul tells everyone, hey this DT put their necks out for me, in Romans 6:5 he says, ⁵*Greet also the church in their house*. The same happens in 1 Cor 16:19 and 2 Tim 4. This DT along with being unattached to the world had developed that view that whatever they had was something to be stewarded for God, so it became the meeting place for the church.

Family this is where we can shine for Jesus in our culture, because nobody invites people over their homes anymore. I mean God forbid if someone rings our doorbell unexpected, we all dodge, duck, dive, dip and dodge, just not to be seen! The world wants to scream at us through news, social media, and tik tok shorts about you should be living **BUT** the Christian should want to invite others home to lovingly care for, feed, and speak the soft invite of the Gospel into their lives. Hard ministry environments requires us to be more hospitable not less, for it will speak volumes in actions about Grace, when we can demonstrate **they have to do nothing first in order to be treated with care. Teamwork makes the dream work** and the dream should be for us all to have a significant increase in our hospitality this year.

3. Diligent for Kingdom Causes (v.4)

⁴And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.

The results of staying together and working together is so that we can **put effort and intentionality into trying to build God’s church**. It’s about hard work. The goal of their weekly work, the goal of their weekly living in community together, was to get the opportunity to spread the Gospel AND experience corporate worship together.

[CHALLENGE]

In our current culture and the pressure to be more like them and less like Christ let me list several areas that we have to challenge ourselves if we want



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to be good ministry partners with each other if we want to be a part of the DT.⁴

- **Overcommitment** – If we have filled our calendars every week to the point we don't have time for each other then we have missed the point of our existence. Start saying 'No' to the push of cultural business and say 'Yes' to living in community with those here.
- **Intentional Isolation** – If we have filled our calendars only to seek isolation away from others, not including work, let's repent and start giving a couple of nights a month to interaction with church family.
- **Addiction to Comfort** – If our calendars are built around rest and entertainment, maybe we have fallen into the trap of ease and comfort which happens to everyone during the cold months. Perhaps something on the calendar that screams **uncomfortable** needs to be the thing you put first into your calendar.
- **Selfishness** – If your calendar is showing you that you are spending a lot of time vacationing and enjoying your toy money, well that may be a sign of intense personal interests. Go back to Phil. 2:4 and ask yourself am I accomplishing the act of looking out for the interests of others.
- **Pride & Wanting Recognition** – If your calendar shows a lot of time with people, but it is always with people that make you feel good about yourself because they like to give you praise, it might be a sign of idolatry. Perhaps in your calendar you need to mark time with someone that needs your encouragement and practice humility.

In all these things challenge yourself through the lenses of that calendar and make 2024 a different year. Let us strive to be like the DT of Aquila and Priscila who became known synonymously with the call of Christ. May our community watch HCC become synonymous with Teamwork that makes the dream work of fruitful ministry in a hard to cultivate land.

[PRAYER]

[COMMUNION]

⁴ Medina, 267.



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[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, that desires for us to work intentionally for the Gospel, and has predetermined the people of this room to do it together.

Go in the name of the Son, that set the example of living to the point of others reviling Him, by loving them unwaveringly with Grace and Truth.

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, that will remind us when the calendar needs to be challenged and will empower us to live on mission in unity with each other.