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### **After A Good Start Run Into Problems**

#### **Under Good Teaching Acts 18:1-11**

*Acts 18:1 After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. 2 And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. 3 So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers. 4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.*

To the book of Acts chapter 18. Basically what I want to read with me there is what happened to the Apostle Paul in the city of Corinth. Acts chapter 18. This was on his second missionary journey. So just a few verses out of Acts 18. After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a certain Jew named Aquila born in Pontus who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla because Claudius, now that's Claudius Caesar, and by the way that helps us date rather precisely when this happened, when chapter 18 of Acts occurred. Because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome and he came to them, Paul came to them. By the way, Claudius commanded the Jews to depart. I'm telling you, that's putting it mildly. His edict was you either get out of Rome or you're going to die. And with that kind of motivation, would you believe, a number of people decided, you know, I think I'll just get on the boat and leave. They don't want me here.

So because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked. This is a little insight into how Paul supported himself. For by occupation they were tent makers, which tells us now Paul by trade is a tent maker. And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and persuaded both Jews and Greeks. The Greeks in the synagogue would be proselytes, you know, they were Greek by birth but they had converted to Judaism and worshipped at the synagogue. And believe me, if you were in Corinth with the pagan temples all around and all the hundreds and hundreds of religious -- well, I'm trying to find a nice word -- prostitutes, okay, religious prostitutes that were in those temples, you can see why at least these Greeks would be drawn to the Jewish religion. It didn't involve the filth that the pagan religions involved. So there were a lot of Greeks among the Jews there at the synagogue. Paul reasoned with them.

*5When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. 6But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." 7And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. 8Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.*

When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the spirit and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. He, in other words, was not only reasoning with them through Bible studies in the Old Testament, he now was bringing them up to date to the work of God in bringing Christ in fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies, bringing Christ in the flesh, and that Christ died in fulfillment of the need for sacrifice and that he was resurrected and alive. And so he was preaching a message that went beyond the Old Testament, showed the fulfillment of it, and at that point Jews started to become very irritated with him. But when they opposed him and blasphemed, I mean it became very, very hot in those meetings in the synagogue. He shook his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads. I'm clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

Now, writers of commentary on scripture come to this phrase and they realize that it was at this point that Paul, in a major way, stopped going regularly into the synagogues and seeking to persuade Jews, but felt his purpose that God had given him from the beginning, actually, was not only directed in a major way, but an exclusive way to reach the Gentiles. Because he said, "From now on I'll go to the Gentiles."

And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justice, one who worshipped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue, very strategically located. You know, okay, I'm not going to go to the synagogue, I'll just go next door. And he used that as his base for preaching Christ. Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, every synagogue had a chief rabbi, let's say, a chief ruler, believed on the Lord with all his household. That little phrase "with all his household" is not just to be taken lightly. It means this man believed in Christ and he wanted the witness of Christ to be put to his wife, his children, his servants, and in such a way that he truly, by endorsing it and

pleading with them, they too came to know Christ as Savior. You could say the whole household of Crispus was indeed Christian then.

And many of the Corinthians, hearing, in other words, hearing about Crispus, hearing about the advances of the gospel, believed and were baptized. Baptism follows faith. It is not a way to come to God. It is a testimony of one's faith in Christ. It follows believing in him.

*9Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; 10for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city." 11And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.*

Now, the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision. And by the way, this is one of the quotes from the Lord Jesus that you will not have in the gospels, obviously, and you have to pick up a few of these from Acts and from Hebrews. You will get some, and then the major amount that you get that remains will be in the book of Revelation. So the sayings of the Lord. But here's what he said to Paul. "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent. For I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you. For I have many people in this city." What an assurance that Paul got from the Lord.

Why did the Lord feel it necessary to come to him at night and give him this assurance? Well, I'm not going to do it, but if you went back through the earlier chapters in Acts, you would find out that he was imprisoned in Philippi. It took a miracle to get him out of that one. He was sought at Thessalonica. There were Jews who made riots at Thessalonica and followed up at other towns after that, like Berea and others. They dogged his heels. And by the way, when he was put in jail in Philippi, you read the scriptures. It tells you they whipped him. They put the lash on his back. Who knows how many times. Perhaps it was one of those times, 39 times, or 40 times, say one, 39 times that he speaks of in 2 Corinthians. But anyway, they lashed him. They beat him and then put him in jail.

So the Lord wanted to give him this confidence, this assurance. Okay, Paul, I'm not going to let them hurt you. I'm going to stop this for right now. Now, it wasn't forever. You know, things happened to Paul after this that were terrible. But for the time, the Lord said no, no more hurts right now. I just want you to be bold with your preaching and teaching. Now, you might wonder why he would do that. Well, because if he allowed riots to develop, like they did in Thessalonica and Berea and so forth, other places where they followed Paul, his time to be there to minister would have to be cut short. Like at Thessalonica, I think the scripture says he was only there four Sabbaths, which take a week

here. You know, if he came the day after Sabbath and he left the day before Sabbath, you might stretch it out that he was there six weeks. You know, and when you study the book of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, it's amazing how advanced the doctrine is that he taught to those people in the few Sabbaths that he was there. So that when the riots broke out, he had to move on. He couldn't stay. Well, why would God tell him this? I'm going to tell you. Because he wanted him to be there for a while.

Look at verse 11. And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. And so God said, no, no, I'm going to stop the pain. I'm going to stop the riots. I'm going to stop the beatings and the jail, the in jailing. Is that a word in jail? Whatever. I'm going to stop that so that you have this period of time for these people to teach for a year and six months. What a blessing for a church to have and a city to have the apostle Paul for a year and a half. And for God, by the power of his hand to suppress the violent upheavals that could come and would come after that. You would think that a church that had that special blessing that if it wasn't perhaps for the church at Antioch, you would say no other church had. Certainly these people were well taught, right? By the apostle Paul. Certainly they saw a marvelous example, the apostle Paul. Certainly they saw the power of God demonstrated through Paul, the apostle, who tells us that he wasn't behind in any of the gifts of God. God brought miracles through him over and over and over. What a blessing.

### **Problems Soon Begin 1 Cor. 1:4-18**

The problem is when you go to the book of 1 Corinthians, and I wish you'd turn to that with me, the problem is things didn't go well. It isn't that God wasn't faithful. He opened the door for a year and a half of ministry for Paul. It isn't that they weren't well taught. They had the very best. But something went wrong. And I think it's good that God gives us the record of what went wrong so that we can examine our own hearts.

*1 Cor, 1:4I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, 5that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, 6even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, 7so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Now, first of all, above everything, there had to be laid down a rock solid foundation. Paul would have to bring to them the one foundation that they needed. And in 1:4, he says this about these people of Corinth, "I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Jesus Christ." His thanks was for what God had given them. Do you know what grace is? What God has supplied according to his love for them. What God has supplied richly, not according to what they deserve, but according to what God's heart of love wanted for them. He supplied in his grace that they should have the message of the gospel brought to them from the apostle Paul for a year and a half. Great outpouring of God's grace on these people. And then he says that you were enriched in everything by him, in all understanding and in all knowledge.

Now some, I think, wrongly understand that verse. They were enriched, yes, in everything in him, in Christ, in so far as all understanding and all knowledge is concerned. And let me tell you, that wasn't in them. It was in Christ and it was through Paul. They were enriched in what Paul could bring to them. What Paul could bring in utterance and what Paul could bring to them in knowledge. The banquet was set for them. The apostle Paul was God's instrument to give them this banquet. This rich banquet of spiritual truth. Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you. Now that's simply in a way of saying they not only heard these truths, they put their faith in Christ. It was confirmed in them. Means the proof was there that they had received Christ. They came to the banquet table of truth. They were sitting under the teaching of the great apostle Paul. They heard the power of God's word and they received Christ as savior. What a blessing.

And then he says, so that you came short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. God didn't spare anything for these people. He didn't spare anything. The Holy Spirit worked through the apostle Paul in a demonstrating of all the gifts of the spirit. Both the gifts of ministry, the gifts of the outward showing of love and all the sub points under love, as well as all the sign gifts. They were all there. How richly displayed. And what they were waiting for, of course, and they were brought to this through receiving Christ, through having the word of God declared so wonderfully for them, for seeing all the powers of God displayed before their eyes, their eyes started to focus on what they should have focused on. And they did. The revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, of course, there are three words used to speak of what commonly would be called the coming of the Lord. But this one is revelation. The revelation

of our Lord Jesus Christ. And this one is apocalypse. (αποκαλυψις) And if you know how the Catholics titled the last book of their Bible, the apocalypse, you understand that it comes from this Greek word, apocalypse. That word means visibility, means revelation. It means that visibly the Lord's return would be seen. There's going to come a moment, this word is saying, when the Lord Jesus would visibly appear. And that's what they waited for. And quite properly so.

*10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. 11 For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you.*

But you know, even with all that said, some things can go wrong in a Christian life and in a Christian family. You can be a Christian, you can try to lead your family as a Christian, but things can still go wrong. And they went wrong at Corinth. Some things to watch out for. Go down to verse 11 with me. For it had been declared, it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household. By the way, sometimes we like to say, you know, I've heard such and such about you. And we would say, well, who told you that? And we're reluctant to disclose our source. Paul is not. If he's going to tell them that he heard something, he's not unafraid. I mean, he is not unafraid to tell them what the source is. He is not afraid to tell them what the source is. House of Chloe. That there are contentions among you. Things were going wrong. And so, you know, in reading this book, you say, well, things went wrong at Corinth.

What are we to watch out for? Well, one main thing that Paul puts his finger on is contentions. Contentions are disagreements. Differing opinions of what the standard should be in the family or in the relationship. What the rules should be. You know, how to do something. Who's supposed to be the leader? How much each person should be left to do as they please without submitting to those rules. What the goals are. And I think it comes down to this, too. What sacrifices each person should be expected to make for the sake of the good of that relationship or that family. Have you ever heard a little kid say something like this? Oh, you don't know how terrible I have it at home. I have to take the garbage out every week. You know. Oh, it's hard to believe, isn't it? That parents would put such a burden on their own flesh. So what sacrifices should each one make for the good of the whole? You know what contingents can lead to? Divisions. Yeah, it's been reported to Paul that there were contentions and that can lead to divisions.

*12 Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." 13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*

Verse 12. Now I say this that each of you says, I'm Paul, I'm of Apollos, I'm of Cephas, or I'm of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you or were you baptized in the name of Paul? You see, each person has their own ideas. And if each one thinks that their way or their ideas are best, you're going to have contentions. And that's what was going on here. These people were actually saying to one another, you know, I have the best outlook on the Christian life. I know best because I'm a part of a more superior outlook. Yours isn't so good. And they would elevate themselves over one another.

But the truth is, he puts it very bluntly to them, then you've heard this phrase, there is only one way. There's only one way. You know John 14.6.<sup>1</sup> It's only one way. And so when he said is Christ divided, was Paul crucified for you or were you baptized in the name of Paul? He's trying to point them back to the only one way there is.

Look at verse 17. "For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel. Not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect." The gospel. What is that? That's the story or the telling of the facts or the truth of the works of Christ to make atonement for our sins. To please the father with his own life's blood sacrifice for us to die in our place and being maltreated and buried that on the third day God would raise him from the dead to prove that his sacrifice was accepted and that there was hope beyond the grave for those who put their faith in him. That's the gospel. That is the one way. The work of Christ fulfilled on the cross. And what does he say of the cross?

18 "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing." That means the sinners who don't know him yet. "But to us who are being saved" and I like that being saved. You see when you receive Christ you are saved. You truly are forgiven of all your sins past, present and future. But you're still in this world and God sending his Holy Spirit into you seals you with the Holy Spirit of God claiming you as his own. And so that saving work of God is going on each moment of your continued life here in this world. He is saving you. He is sealing you with the spirit but he's bringing you through whatever time you have left here on this earth. And he will deliver you to himself. And so he says, "it's the power of God" that does this. "It's foolishness to those who

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<sup>1</sup> 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

are perishing but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” That's how we're saved, how we are being saved and how we shall be saved. Not by what we've done, not by our merit, not by the wisdom of men but by God's working in Christ by the power of God.

What is it that keeps me as God's child? The power of God? What is it that keeps me from losing my salvation? Is it my faithfulness? No, it's the power of God. If I were to keep my salvation based on what I am and what I do I wouldn't keep it very long. But if I keep it on the basis of the power of God with God as Gabriel said to Mary,<sup>2</sup> “For with God nothing will be impossible.” In other words, there's nothing impossible. There is no greater power. There is no greater power. In fact, when you look at us, we're nothing. This section that really shows you how much a big nothing we are, you have to review every now and then. In this chapter, starting at verse 26, "For you see your calling, brethren, and not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called." When Queen Victoria read that, not many noble, she said, "Thank God it doesn't say not any." She was a believer and she knew that as a noble person, God didn't exclude her. "Not many noble are called, but God has chosen,"

Now here's his compliment to you, "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise. God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty, and the base things of the world and the things which are despised, God has chosen, and the things which are not to bring to nothing the things that are." Do you feel complimented? Well, that's the truth about us, that no flesh should glory in his presence, but of him, you're in Christ Jesus who became for us wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Everything you have before God is in Christ, not in you. You're not the source of your redemption. You're not the source of your righteousness. You're not the source of your sanctification. It's all in Christ. "That as it is written, 'He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.'" Christ is your all in all.

### **1 Cor. 3:1-11 Carnal Believer**

Corinthians needed to know that before they became contentious with one another, before they were on the road to tearing down the work of God among them. That thing of a Christian living like the world is called carnality. Carnality is the world. You can live that way like the world, though you are a Christian, though you're born again. God would have something to say to you. Here in chapter 3, he talks about this. He says, "And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people, but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ." Now, a

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<sup>2</sup> Lk. 1:37

carnal Christian is somebody that's never really grown. They've received Christ, but they haven't grown. Babies here means really they're just at the very, very beginning of the Christian life in terms of putting anything into their life that God has provided in Christ.

Saved, yes. But are they walking in faith? Are they walking in joy? Are they walking in peace? Are they walking in love? No. No. Carnal, they're walking like the world. "I fed you with milk and not with solid food." That's the way you feed a baby. You give a baby milk. You don't give a baby a steak. Kind of interesting how it reverts in old age, isn't it? Nowadays, we have false teeth, but years ago, when these people lost their teeth, they had to give up steak. Had to go back to mush. That has nothing to do with this. "I fed you with milk and not with solid food, for until now you were not able to receive it." Even now, you're still not able. He means spiritual food. He means the truths of the Word of God. You see, if I teach you some of the advanced truths of the Word of God, and you don't have the basics, you're not going to do very well.

You're going to say, "I don't know what Pastor Rains was teaching this morning. I haven't the slightest idea." That's why I was so delighted last year, in September, I said, "We're going to study the book of Romans in our Bible Institute on Monday nights. We're going to study Romans, because I like to go back to Romans. It's so filled with the basic principles of Christianity, of faith in Christ, of the Christian life. What are the basics? Romans is it. Fantastic book.

How many of you have taken calculus? Okay. If I put all of you in a beginning calculus class, I mean the absolute basics of calculus, and I started talking with you about the principles of calculus, do you realize that if you didn't have all the foundation you needed in other forms of math, you would not make it through the basics of calculus? When I went into college, one of my first courses was called physics chemistry. As we call it, phys chem. Physics chemistry. As freshmen, we had no idea what physics chemistry was going to throw at us. I had taken physics, I had taken chemistry in high school, so I thought, "I know physics chemistry. I know what that's all about. No problem." Oh yeah? Oh yeah.

Well, I'm going to tell you, there are times when you are awakened out of a deep sleep, and rudely so, when you have somebody come at you and throw your whole year of chemistry at you in two weeks, and then take you into your whole year of physics and give that to you in about two weeks, and then say, "Okay, now we're going to study calculus." And I thought, "What? I looked around the room and you're going to study calculus in this course?" Now fortunately, I had taken calculus in high school. They didn't offer it, but they had

an elective class you could take after school was out. You could stay and take calculus, you know, for all those who didn't know how to stop hitting themselves on the head. I went into that, and I took calculus. And I thought, "Oh, I might need it someday." Well, boy, did I need it first semester of college. And I looked around the room, and all these fellows, maybe two or three, like I had one hand here or two, all except one or two, had their mouths open, you know, down there. They took us to calculus all right. They shoved it down our throats faster than you can understand. And I could see that these fellows were not happy with their progress in phys. chem. For the physics chemistry book had a high sulfur content in its pages. Just whoever manufactured it used that kind of paper. And I can tell you to this day, I can remember the smell of that book. I would at night, I would put that book open in front of me, and I would study it with determination. And then I would wake up, and it was 3am. And I would go at it again, and I would study, and then I'd wake up, and it was 6am. And what I found out was, if I ever wanted to go to sleep, all I had to do was open that book and smell it, and I would go to sleep.

**The basics.** Christ is all in all. He's our everything. And God has taken us as we are, and he has looked at us and he said, you know what, in yourself you are nothing but carnal. You are babies in Christ. And in carnality there are three steps toward the bottom.

These three steps are right here. Verse 3, "For you are still carnal for where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you. Are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?" **Step one is envy.** You start to want what other people have. In your Christian life, or in life around you, or you go back to the world and start wanting what the world wants, envy. **Second step is strife.** It shows up in a family, it shows up in a marriage, it shows up in a church. When different people have different ideas about what is best, you get strife. So you have envy, then you get strife, and **the last step is this one, divisions.** After strife, you get people striving, and the next thing is they split. I have had enough of this, and they will leave. It happens in marriages, it happens even with parents and their children, it happens in churches, and it happens in the Christian life.

There is only one foundation. Verse 11, "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." There is no discussion about this, folks. There is no grounds for discussion, there is no grounds for contentions, there is no grounds for people to have different ideas. There is only one way, there is only one foundation. You either surrender to this, or you are the one that is wrong. You are on the outside looking in. This is absolute. One

foundation, one way, and what you need to do in your Christian life is going to be tested by God.

And he goes on in this chapter to tell you what you do with your Christian life, are you going to build it with straw, wood, hay, and stubble, or precious stones? Because God is going to test it and see what you have to be rewarded for. Your salvation is not in question. Now, over here, let me read this verse for you, verse 15, just to show you your salvation is not an issue. "If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." You take the worst case of a Christian living the worst kind of life, and then coming before God with having really nothing to show for what he did with his Christian life to the glory of God, and God says, "Okay, it's worthless, but you're still saved." What a God. What a Savior.

And so he pleads with us, "Don't do that. Use your life to the glory of God. Set your purpose above the things of the world. Put the values of the world behind you. Don't take them up. Don't try to look like the world, smell like the world, talk like the world, act like the world," or anything, any other verb you want to put in there. Put the world aside. Seek to act like Christ, look like Christ, speak like Christ. Are you going to come into contentions with those who don't want that? Well, yes, but it takes two to make a contention. You just say, "No, I'm not going to contend with you. This is it. This is the way. Christ is the all and all for me." You'd be surprised how quickly they submit to that.

There's a little statement in 1 Corinthians 13 coming up where Paul says, "**When I was a child,**" you know, I spake as a child, basically saying I played as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things. When you're in the world, when you're unsaved, you act like that. When you become a Christian, ah, take a look again, folks. Don't act like the world. It's time to act like a child of God, like a mature person, not like a baby. If you wanted to read one book that just cuts away everything and gets down to the very bone on the issues of trying to play along with the world and act like the world, it's this book, 1 Corinthians. I'm going to tell you something. It sickens God. He hates it and he says, "I'm going to destroy it. I'll burn it up." Whatever you do, like the world, has no place to be remembered in heaven. I don't want it remembered in heaven. I'll have nothing to do with it. I'll purge you of it. You'll still get there. Thank God. You're not going to bring that trash along with you.

Don't you love Psalm 139<sup>3</sup> where David says, "Search me, see if there be any wicked way in me. Lead me in the way everlasting." Sometimes we need to do that. We need to come before God and say, "Okay, God, I give you

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<sup>3</sup> Ps. 139:23, 24

permission. Turn the light on me. Search me. See if there's any wicked way in me, Lord. Whatever there may be there, show it to me so that I can turn away from it and let you be seen."

Let's pray. Father, thank you for Jesus, our only hope, our only salvation, our life. Search us, O Lord. If there's something in us that you're trying to talk to us about, something that speaks of the world, take it from us. We humbly would yield it to you. Teach us to walk with you, to walk like you, to talk like you, to love like you. Put your finger on whatever it is you're displeased with, Lord. Help us admit it, ask forgiveness for it, turn from it, and yield to you working through us to be glorified, we ask in Jesus' name, amen. Amen.