

Acts 18 and 1 Corinthians

Paul had gone from Thessalonia to Berea, Athens and finally to Corinth

Acts 18:1-3 The edict of Claudius that came in 49 AD

The Roman historians Tacitus and Suetonius tell us

- there were riots in the Jewish quarter in Rome over a man named “Chrestus” Christ.

Priscilla and Aquila were Jews converted to Christianity, who were forced to leave Rome and they settled in Corinth

Paul goes to Corinth in the same year – 49 AD.

18:4-5 Paul the Apostle, Super-Evangelist, Mystic, Saint

- worked a full time secular job
- used the rest of his time well
- We, in the same position have no reason not to
 - Lead deep lives of prayer
 - To give time to relationships that lead people to God
 - It is not a matter of time
 - It is a matter of love and priority

18:5-7 From now on I will go to the Gentiles

- “Worshipper of God” a Gentile convert to Judaism

18:8-11 “I am with you. Do not be afraid.”

- This is the LORD’s message to Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David...The Apostles in Matthew 10 and His

last words to us before He ascends into Heaven in Matthew 28, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the close of the age.”

- Paul stays for 18 months

18:12-17 The Jews try to stir up a trial against Paul

In Thessolonia, they said Paul was turning the world upside down proclaiming a king other than Caesar

But here the Jews say Paul is teaching contrary to the Mosaic Law

- And the proconsul couldn't care less

18:18-23 Paul goes to Caesarea in Cappadocia (Asia Minor or Turkey), then through the region of Galatia.

18:24 Apollos who ends up going to Corinth at the beginning of chapter 19

Alexandria had a very large and well established Jewish population

After the Exile the prophet Jeremiah is taken to Egypt to Alexandria with many of the Jews who fled the Babylonian Conquest in 586 B.C.

This is where the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament, was done in about the 2nd or 3rd century B.C.

So this is a very ancient and important city for Jews

Apollos is a Jew who is well educated that comes from Alexandria

18: 24-28 “The Way” is Christianity

1st Corinthians

Show them on the map where Corinth is

Corinth was northern port city on an isthmus with the southern port city being Cenchreae

It was very dangerous to go south around Achaia after Octover so the merchants would drop their goods at Cenchreae, take them overland through Corinth to go north to Italy and vice versa.

First and Second Corinthians are letters we should be able to relate well to

1. Since the culture of Corinth was similar to that of America
2. And because the Christians in Corinth faced many of the same temptations and struggles we face today

Corinth was a first world culture

- Financially prosperous
- Educated
- A culture filled with arts, entertainment, fine dining, sports, politics

Corinth was infamous for its promiscuity

- In Athens a comedian named Aristophanes, coined a new term for fornication – to Corinthianize

One of the temples dedicated to Aphrodite (goddess of love and beauty) was reported to have a 1000 temple prostitutes

Eating out was a big thing in Corinth

There were pagan temples everywhere and restaurants connected to every temple

- The problem was they would partake of the sacrifices offered to the pagan gods
- And they would partake of the temple prostitutes as well

Now I know this is going to be a cultural disconnect for us but Corinth was a city crazy about **sports**

- I know this is hard for you to imagine

Corinth was famous for the **Isthmian games** that took place every two years

- Second only to the Olympics in popularity in the Roman Empire

Every two years the city nearly quadrupled in size for these games

Tent cities had to be erected to house all of the spectators

This is why Priscilla and Aquila go to Corinth because they were tentmakers

And we learned in Acts 18 that Paul supported himself as a tent maker in Corinth for 18 months

Later on in 1 Cor 9, Paul will use the image of running a race and an analogy to the spiritual life

- Seeking an imperishable crown
- Running so as to win
- The Corinthians could immediately connect to this because of their love for these Olympic games

1 Corinthians 1:1-3

Sosthenes (Acts 18:17),

- the ruler of the synagogue who converted
- and was beaten in front of the tribunal
- is now traveling with Paul

1:4 – 9 “who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul is speaking about the return of Christ and the Last Judgment

But he is also sneaking in the fact that

- we will all die
- and face our particular judgment

Death puts an end to human life as the time open to either accepting or rejecting the divine grace manifested in Christ...

Each person will be rewarded immediately after death in accordance with his works and faith

Paul is saying to them

- “You are waiting for that Day
- and you want to be found blameless – right?

In Chapter 5:1 we see how blameless they have been while waiting for this Day.

1:10-17 Here is the reason for my letter – we’ve got a problem!

- Dissension is the same word for schisms.
- there is quarreling among you

Paul is subtle – he doesn’t just come out and say

- O.K. I've heard the way you have been living and you are going to hell!

He's warning them about their death and their judgment

- They have been given many gifts
- There will be a reckoning at the end of each of their lives.
- He is warning them to use their freedom and gifts for good
- Or they risk hell

1:18-19

I'm going to put the wisdom of the world on its head

1:20-24

To those who are called by God,

- they are going to see the wisdom of the world as folly
- and they will embrace the wisdom of the cross

He sets them up

- To identify themselves as ones who are called
- Then he defines what it means to be called

1:25

He just told them the world's wisdom is bunk

But worldly wisdom is what Corinthians prided themselves on

1:26-29

Paul just insulted the entire congregation

What has this worldly wisdom gained for you in the end?

- Nothing.

- You're just a bunch of wanna-be's

You want to be:

- beautiful- desirable – wanted by all men
- wealthy
- powerful
- comfortable and secure

And yet – all this is a false-identity

Paul is challenging them not to become ASSIMILATED to the culture surrounding them

We must avoid two extremes

1. Assimilation – where our lives look just like those who do not believe
2. Isolation – where no one can relate to us

Last week Paul challenged us with Hope

This week Paul challenges us not to assimilate to the culture

If we are to be disciples of Christ – then our lives ought to look different than those who are not disciples of Christ

If our lives look the same as non-believers then something is wrong

Why?

Think of a financial investment

You tell me you have a fantastic new product

- I believe you and invest my money in your company
- If I find out your claims were false
- I will be both angry and embarrassed
- Because I invested something in your company

Being a disciple of Christ requires an investment

Christ tells us that He is the Good we desire

But it requires an investment

1. Knowledge
2. Time and Relationship with Him in prayer
3. Regular participation in the sacraments that give us grace
4. We must Quit the practice of sin and vice
5. Practice the virtues
6. Renounce ourselves,
7. take up our cross
8. and live a life of service and generosity to those in need

If you do not believe in Christ,

- nor what he has to offer
- and do not want to be his disciple
 - i. then you are not going to do these things
 - ii. And most of the culture does not do these things

If you want to be His disciple

- then you must invest and do these things

The first Christians at Corinth faced this question:

1. How do I live in this culture without becoming just like this culture

It was the question of assimilation, isolation or holiness

Because to become a saint means

- neither assimilation to the culture
- nor isolation from it

We must live in the culture, in the world

- and become a leaven and a light to the world.

What should our lives look like then, practically speaking?

Plan of life

To be fulfilled (happy) our human nature needs certain goods

God wants you to pursue the human goods in a balanced way.

Physical goods

- Exercise
- Good food and drink
- Rest

Knowledge

Achievement

- Use your gifts for the good of the world

Beauty

- Books, Music, Art, Ocean, Mountains, trees, flowers, sporting events

Friendship

There are not enough to make us happy

- Because we were made for union with God

Sacraments – we need God’s life in our soul

- Frequent the Eucharist

Prayer – Friendship with God

- Vocal prayer, meditation, contemplation
- 30 minutes of meditation each day

Nightly examination of the conscience

- What vices do I have?
- What virtues must I practice?
- Ask the people you live with

Service to others

- Life has meaning only to the extent that it becomes a free gift for others
- What good can I do for others
- Prayer and suffering is the greatest good

But you can do more

How can I live a life a great generosity?

Do not live a life of busyness, entertainment and distraction!