

Paul in Corinth: Acts 18:1-22

What city is considered “Sin City” in America?

Athens was dedicated to Athena, goddess of wisdom and war. It was the demonic wisdom of Greek philosophers that kept Athens in darkness for a long time. Corinth didn't have that problem. It was NOT an intellectual city. It was a rich commercial seaport 5X the size of Athens. In America, the equivalent of Athens would probably be Boston (famous universities), and the equivalent of Corinth would be Las Vegas. Paul had little success in Boston, but a lot in Las Vegas!

There was a temple to Poseidon, god of the sea and earthquakes, because Corinth had two seaports. It was built on an isthmus between two seas. All wealthy businessmen offered sacrifices to Poseidon for calm seas and the safety of their trading ships. The Isthmian games were held in his honor as the Olympic games were held in Athens.

There was a Temple of Aphrodite, goddess of love (Venus), on the acropolis above Corinth. 400 years before Paul arrived in Corinth 1000 prostitutes descended from the temple on the acropolis into the city to entertain the sailors and visitors. In Paul's day the temple was in disrepair and the prostitutes lived above the 33 wine bars in the city. Get drunk and get a prostitute. The Greeks created another verb for drunken sexual immorality - *corinthiazesthai* (*corinthianize for fornicate*). To counter this influence Paul preached holiness and sexual fidelity in marriage. Paul also wrote 1 Corinthians 13 about love.

There was a temple to Asclepius, the god of healing. I find this to be the most interesting. People seeking physical healing had the parts of their bodies they wanted healed made of terra-cotta (clay ceramic). So, a person would take the terra-cotta part of his/her body to the Asclepius temple as an offering. Then the god Asclepius would know which part of your body you wanted him to heal. The museum in Corinth displays these terra-cotta body parts. To counter this influence Paul preached the Gospel and practiced healing “signs and wonders” in the name of Jesus Christ.

I think Corinth was Paul's favorite church. I'm grateful for 1 & 2 Corinthians!

Aquila & Priscilla (A&P) fled Rome. Emperor Claudius (AD 49-50) declared an edict and expelled Jews from Rome. This was due to Jewish rioting as a result of the preaching of Christ. After Pentecost some Jews who believed in Christ as Messiah and were baptized in the HS shared the Gospel in Rome. Acts 2:5, 10-11: *Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven... visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes.*

After a discouraging response in Athens, Paul probably needed encouragement. He got it from fellowship with A&P, then S&T, and then a personal word from Jesus himself.

A&P were probably already believers in Christ. They were tentmakers or leatherworkers like Paul. (Tents were made of goat's hair or leather.) Paul was grateful to have some Christian companions before Silas and Timothy arrived. When S&T arrived, Paul was able to dedicate himself full-time to preach the Gospel. They probably brought financial support from Berean, Thessalonian, and Philippian churches.

Paul abandoned the synagogue and started a house church in the home of a God-fearing Roman named Titius Justus. (Paul refers to him as Gaius in his letters.) Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, and his entire household believed and were baptized. Many other Corinthians were baptized. (Crispus and Gaius Titius Justus were the only two believers baptized by Paul in Corinth: 1 Cor. 1:14.)

The conversion of Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and the house church next door to the synagogue would have created jealousy and anger among the non-believing Jews. Paul saw trouble brewing. Paul knew this always led to a riot. He was probably praying and ready to flee. "Lord, do you want me to stay here or not." Jesus spoke to Paul in a vision. This is Paul's third recorded vision (Jesus at his conversion and the man from Macedonia).

Paul's Vision

18:9-11: *The Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack*

you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.” And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Jesus said, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent.” I think of Paul as being fearless, but even he needed to have Jesus tell him not to be afraid. Jesus wouldn’t tell him not to be afraid unless he was afraid. Paul had reason to be afraid. Paul had been chased out of every city by angry mobs of Jews. He never stayed in one city or town very long. He had been beaten and thrown in prison. He had been stoned to death.

Paul wrote he came to Corinth in fear and trembling (1 Cor. 2:1-5): *And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.*

Jesus said, “I am with you, and no one will attack or harm you.” (This is not always the Lord’s will for missionaries. Many have been attacked and killed. There are many martyrs for the faith. This is a specific word to Paul in Corinth.) Paul could continue to preach the Gospel without fear of retaliation. This reminds me of God’s promise to OT Israel, Isaiah 54:17 (taken out of context): *No weapon formed against you will succeed, and you will refute any accusation raised against you in court. This is the heritage of the Lord’s servants, and their righteousness is from Me.” This is the Lord’s declaration.* This promise can be applied to the NT church. No weapon formed against Christ’s church will succeed. Jesus will refute any accusation raised against his church in court. Jewish accusations failed before Gallio’s court. No weapon formed by the liberal CA governor will succeed against the churches opening up for indoor services. Accusations against CA churches will be refuted in court.

Jesus said, “I have many in this city who are my people.” Jesus was referring to those who already believed in him and those who didn’t believe yet but would believe when they heard the Gospel. Dr. Luke wrote Acts 13:48: *When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.* Here’s

my paraphrase of what Jesus meant: “Some are saved. Some are not saved yet but they will be because I have chosen them. I choose who believes in me. So, Paul I want you to stay in Corinth and boldly proclaim the Gospel because those whom I have chosen will respond to the word and believe.”

Gallio's Decision

The example of Jesus protecting Paul is before the judgment seat of Gallio. This was a Roman 8:28 event.

When Gallio became the new governor of Achaia the Jews tried to bring a case against Paul. The Jews brought Paul to Gallio's judgement seat and accursed him: “This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law.” It's not likely the Jews were referring to Jewish ceremonial law, the law of Moses. Gallio wouldn't care about that. They were referring to Roman civil law.

Judaism was a *religio licita* or legal religion in the Roman Empire. Jews were exempt from emperor worship. The Jews were hoping to have Gallio see the difference between Judaism and “Christianity” and declare it a *religio illicita* or illegal religion and NOT exempt from emperor worship. Gallio saw it as a dispute over Jewish ceremonial law and he didn't want to get involved. Gallio didn't know anything about the Jewish law of Moses and didn't care. He said, “I'm here to prosecute crimes against Roman law. I don't know anything about Jewish ceremonial laws. Get out of my courtroom!” Gallio's decision was very important. The Jews' attempt to have “Christianity” declared illegal backfired. It gave Christianity legal protection as a sect of Judaism, at least for 10 to 15 more years before Jews finally convinced Roman government that it was not a sect of Judaism and Roman emperors enforced worship of themselves. This enabled Paul to freely preach the Gospel and the Corinthian church grew to become one of the largest churches in the first century. Paul wrote two letters to the church.

The angry Jews seized Sosthenes, the new leader of the synagogue (after Crispus resigned) and beat him up. It isn't clear why they beat him up. Probably because he became a believer in Jesus Christ as the Messiah. 1 Cor. 1:1: “Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes.” The synagogue lost its second leader. Gallio didn't consider

beating Sosthenes a crime because the Jews probably gave him 39 lashes for apostasy.

Paul stayed for a year and a half to disciple the First Corinthian Church. He wrote letters to Thessalonian and Philippian churches. Paul travelled to Ephesus and preached the Gospel. When he left, he said, "I will return to you again if God wills." This is always what we should say about wherever we want to go.

Application: Do Not Fear

Satan does everything he can to stop the sharing of the Gospel.

Satan does it through intolerant governments - Muslim and Communist governments and secular "tolerant" Western democracies.

Satan does it through intolerant social groups (LGBTQ) and militant anarchist groups (e.g. BLM-ANTIFA Marxist rioters) targeting churches.

Satan has a new tactic and we are experiencing it now.

Satan's two weapons to stop the growth of the church are LIES and FEAR. Jesus called Satan a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44).

When Satan attacks with lies a church will change its beliefs in the inspired word of God and become an apostate church. [A young pastor with a famous name and a large church (Andy Stanley) said several surprising comments. He said Jesus never commanded believers to come together for worship and Jesus never "played the God card." (I think he meant Jesus never openly claimed to be God.) He seems to have a problem with the authority of Scripture and that will eventually lead to apostasy.]

I must apply this to our current situation with coronavirus. There have been other plagues and pandemics in the history of the church, but the response for Christians then was simply "Love your neighbor" and do good works. This COVID-19 pandemic has become so politicized it's hard to know the truth.

Satan is using the virus and more than the virus itself, FEAR of the virus, and LIES about the virus to stifle the growth of the church.

We were lied to about the lethality of COVID-19 from the very beginning - 2.2 million back in March based on a computer model. The "cure" (i.e. lockdowns and stay-at-home orders) has become much worse than the disease. Small business bankruptcies, lost jobs, and an increase in depression and suicides are all effects of the cure. People have died

because other medical tests and procedures were not considered essential and delayed until the “flattening of the curve.” Numbers can be manipulated. The CDC has admitted that only 6% of the 200,000 deaths are directly attributable to COVID-19 which is only about 12,000. If a person dies of a drug overdose or a car accident or a heart attack and tests positive, he/she is counted in the number of Coronavirus deaths.

Now I hear commercials telling us to get the annual flu shot!

We are being lied to about masks. I watched a YT video about size of the virus. The average paper or cloth mask cannot block anything less than 1.25um-microns. A Coronavirus is 0.1um-microns (a bacteria is 0.5um) or (0.0005mm). (Imagine a bacterium as a hotdog. A virus would be the size of pea.) It is like a BB shot from a BB-gun passing through a chain link fence. The virus goes in and out through the mask. Masks are also a “bacterial zoo” and should not be worn more than 30 minutes. So, a mask is a placebo.

It is Satan’s work of lies and fear to stop the Gospel and the proclaimer of the Gospel, the true Church faithful to the Word of God!

Whatever Satan uses to his advantage tends to backfire. Satan means the virus for evil, but God means it for good.

Steve Gaines at Bellevue said he knew of a pastor in Middle Tennessee that normally has around 150 people attend his services, but the online stream has averaged over 1500 people in views. Gaines said, “I can only imagine that that’s being replicated exponentially across America. I believe God uses these things in ways that we don’t know about.”

The Holy Spirit is active and growing the church.

The churches in CA are leading the fight against fear and government tyranny and the attempt to take away our First Amendment. Calvary Chapel Chino Hills CA just baptized over 975 people. I heard testimony from a man who visited John MacArthur’s Grace Community Church in LA and said the church had several thousand inside, and hundreds more in every classroom and tents outside. MacArthur received a standing ovation when he entered the pulpit! He’s ready for jail ministry. His church has a good relationship with the LAPD and they will not carry out any orders from the county.

It isn't just CA churches. Churches around the world are closed because of the virus. Every secular government that doesn't like the church is using coronavirus to stop services.

Listen to Todd Starnes on KWAM "theMighty990AM radio" (107.9FM) interview with Rev. John MacArthur, Grace Community Church.

Todd interviewed John MacArthur leading the fight against Governor Newsome and LA county health officials who declared church non-essential. MacArthur said in the court case it was stated that there is 1 chance in 19.1 million to die of COVID-19 in CA. It's not about the virus anymore; it's about social control and conditioning us to accept it. Wearing masks, taking temperature, contact tracing, and the vaccine are all conditioning people for something worse described in Revelation. You can say this is a crazy conspiracy theory but wait and see. (This is TAME compared to real crazy conspiracy theories I heard on YouTube!)

Do not fear COVID-19 and the governors, mayors, and unelected county health officials who try to stop indoor or outdoor worship services.

The Lord said to a pastor and a church one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid of the virus or government officials, but go on speaking, go on preaching the Gospel, go on meeting indoors, outdoors and online, and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, no virus will harm you, for I have many in this city, county, state, and country who are my people. They are my people who have yet to hear the Gospel and be saved before the coming judgment."

Proverbs 3:25: Do not be afraid of sudden fear nor of the schemes of the wicked when they happen; for the Lord will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught in a trap.