

# ***FPFWC Christian Development***



## **The Call of Women**

February 2021

Winter Quarter

**February 20, 2021**

**Lesson #3 –Called to Explain**

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Acts 18:1-3, 18-21, 24-26; Romans 16:3-4

***Key Verse- Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.—Romans 16:3–4***

**ICE BREAKERS-**

- 1. What methods can we use to encourage and teach other Christians to be more effective?***
- 2. When is correction helpful?***

**LESSON BACKGROUND –**

The book of Acts begins in Jerusalem and ends in Rome. The military and political center of the first century, Rome had a significant Jewish population. Christianity came to Rome early, likely within a few months after the resurrection of Christ. On the Day of Pentecost, visitors from Rome heard the gospel preached, and undoubtedly some of them were baptized (Acts 2:10, 41). Then they returned home to spread Christianity in the imperial city.

That spread seems to have been confined to Jews for many years. As a result, Christians of Jewish background coexisted with unbelieving Jews in tight urban spaces, jockeying for control of various synagogues. Tensions grew; violence resulted.

Rather than sort out the instigators, Emperor Claudius expelled all Jews from the city, whether Christian or non-Christian, in AD 49. Jews were not readmitted to the city until the death of Claudius in AD 54.

These events form the backdrop of Paul's meeting two Jews from Rome, Priscilla and Aquila, in Corinth in about AD 51. In the meantime, Christians of Gentile background in Rome established house churches (Romans 16:5, 10–11, 14–15), a development that caused some tension when Jewish Christians returned to the city.

**LESSON COMMENTARY –**

**18:1.** Corinth was infamous for more than its commerce. It was a city of great wickedness. The Acropolis, a high hill about a mile from the city center, dominated Corinth, and the temple of Aphrodite had been built on the Acrocorinth. At one time a thousand cultic priestesses served in the temple as sacred prostitutes and came into the city in the evening to sell sexual services. This was not the case of "New Corinth," Corinth as it existed in Paul's day,

though it was morally corrupt for numerous other reasons during the first century (see the Introduction to the commentary on 1 Corinthians). Barclay quotes a Greek proverb that reads, “Not every man can afford a journey to Corinth” (William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles [Daily Study Bible]*, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1955, 145). Yet in Corinth, Paul witnessed the triumph of God’s grace over greed and lust. For more on the background and location of Corinth, see the “The City of Corinth” in the Introduction to the commentary on 1 Corinthians.

**18:2–3.** Paul sometimes worked as a tent-maker to support himself (1Th 2:9), so it is not surprising that he met **Aquila** and **Priscilla**, who were also Jewish and **tent-makers**. They had been forced to leave Rome because of the edict of Claudius, issued in AD 49, expelling all Jews (whether believers or not) from Rome for causing a civil disturbance because of their dispute about Jesus.

**18:18.** While it is impossible to be certain regarding the details and motivation, Paul had apparently taken a temporary vow, possibly a Nazirite vow (see Nm 6:1–21) as a symbolic act of his ongoing service to God and for Israel, even while he evangelized in predominantly Gentile regions. Usually the Nazirite vow was taken within the city of Jerusalem, but was allowed elsewhere if the individual subsequently went to Jerusalem (see *m. Nazir* 1:1–9:5). For the period of the vow, he did not cut his hair, did not drink wine or anything made from the fruit of the vine, and did not touch anything that was dead (cf. Nm 6:1–21). Now that he was at the end of the vow, he got his hair cut at Cenchrea, close to Athens, before leaving for Jerusalem to offer his hair and the prescribed sacrifices on the altar in the temple. Making the sacrifices would also be a way of thanking God for the spiritual victories of God’s grace while at Corinth. Though now a follower of Christ, Paul did not see this as contradicting his Jewish identity, and he never abandoned his Jewish cultural and religious practices (cf. Ac 28:17).

**18:19–22.** On the way to Jerusalem, Paul stopped briefly in Ephesus. After making his case for Christianity in the synagogue, he left for Antioch via Caesarea and Jerusalem, but he promised to return **if God wills**. Luke’s account of Paul’s travels demonstrates that he was a Spirit-filled man who made his plans but always submitted his plans and their timing to God’s will.

**18:24–25.** Apollos was from Alexandria, a city that was highly regarded as an educational center. That helps explain why he was well educated (**eloquent**), including a strong biblical background (**mighty in the Scriptures**). The expression **fervent in spirit** (v. 25) is ambiguous. If the phrase **being acquainted only with the baptism of John** means that Apollos was ignorant of the coming and baptism of the Spirit (not a certainty given the contents of the passage), then it is unlikely that **fervent in spirit** refers to the Holy Spirit. More than likely, it describes Apollos’s heartfelt enthusiasm about his work. He was not guilty of teaching error but was merely lacking in knowledge of the full details of the events associated with Pentecost. Since he taught **accurately the things concerning Jesus** and

spoke out “boldly in the synagogue” (v. 26), it is unlikely that he was an unbeliever. It seems reasonable to think that he was saved in an OT sense, or more precisely, a “pre-Pentecost” sense, and that Luke included the episode about him, and about the 12 disciples of John in chap. 19, to indicate that believers caught up in this transitional matrix between the era of law and the age of grace would embrace their Messiah Jesus when they heard of Him and then receive the full new covenant blessings promised to those who had faith in the Messiah. His knowledge appears to have been deficient in matters related to the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost and the baptism of the Spirit associated with it, not the details of Jesus’ ministry and death. After all, he **had been instructed in the way of the Lord and was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus**. What happened with Apollos and the disciples of John may have been replicated in numerous other settings, though there are no other indications of this in Acts.

**18:26–28.** After hearing him speak, Priscilla and Aquila recognized his deficiency but also his potential. Not wanting to embarrass him, they privately informed him of **the way of God more accurately**, providing him with the complete story of the Messiah, which undoubtedly included the gift of the Spirit. Luke again took the opportunity to emphasize the role of women in the early church by listing Priscilla first. She may have been the primary instructor of Apollos. But even if she were, there is no clear indication that Luke was using her as a paradigm for women having the freedom to teach men in a corporate church setting. The instruction to Apollos was not conducted in a church setting, and the word **explained** (*ektithemi*, “to convey information by careful elaboration” [BDAG, 310], “to lay out something”), used also in 11:4 and 28:23, does not carry an authoritative or exhortational sense befitting the kind of teaching that was to typify church settings (see the comments on 1Tm 2:12).

Once he had a complete grasp of all that Jesus had done, Apollos became an even more effective apologist. The “brothers” encouraged him to go to Achaia, where he instilled greater confidence in believers and was even more effective in convincing Jewish people that Jesus is Israel’s Messiah. It was probably on this occasion that Apollos spent time in Corinth, in the region of Achaia (see the comments on 1Co 3:5ff.).

Romans **16:1–4.** Tucked away in what seem to be “ancillary” verses concluding Romans are other exhortations that would strengthen the church so it could be more effective in its evangelism. The word **greet** (*aspazomai*) (v. 3) does not mean “to say hello.” It means “to pay one’s respects,” “to salute” (Mk 9:15; for the noun, cf. Mt 23:7), and as an imperative verb, Paul expected the Roman believers to *do* this. Paul named 25 people (17 men; 8 women; two unnamed women, vv. 13, 15, and two households, vv. 10, 11). A possible common denominator for at least some of them was that they distinguished themselves in their service to the Lord and the church (cf. vv. 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 12 twice). Paul urged the church to recognize and appreciate them for the work they did. How would Paul have known so many people from a church he had not yet visited? Under emperor Claudius, all the Jews, both believers and non-believers, were expelled from Rome around AD 49 (cf. Ac 18:2). It was under these conditions that he met Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth, and

probably the others mentioned in chap. 16. One of the people the church should salute was **Phoebe** (v. 1), a resident of **Cenchrea**, about seven miles southeast of Corinth, but who was apparently on her way to Rome, possibly bearing Paul's letter. Paul called her a **servant** (*diakonos*, "deacon"?) and **helper** (v. 2), and some conclude from these labels that she was one of the pastors of the church. But this is unlikely. Paul was not discussing those in formal church offices, and *diakonos* often has the non-technical sense of "servant" (cf. Mt 20:26). But even if she were a "deacon" in the technical sense, deacons were not entrusted with the primary leading or teaching ministry of the church. **Helper** sometimes meant "ruler," "leader," "chief," but often meant "patron, one who supports another from his or her resources." The latter sense is preferable here, for it is unlikely that Paul would call anyone other than Jesus his ruler.

**LESSON NUGGET** – Paul built a local church by teaching the converts the Word of God. In fact, he followed the commission of Matthew 28:18-20. Paul was a builder.

**Sources:** *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary and Wiersbe Expository Outlines on the New Testament*