

Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> May

## **Acts 18:1-16 Paul in Corinth**

After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, and, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them, and they worked together—by trade they were tentmakers. Every Sabbath he would argue in the synagogue and would try to convince Jews and Greeks.

When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with proclaiming the word, testifying to the Jews that the Messiah was Jesus. When they opposed and reviled him, in protest he shook the dust from his clothes and said to them, ‘Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.’ Then he left the synagogue and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshipper of God; his house was next door to the synagogue. Crispus, the official of the synagogue, became a believer in the Lord, together with all his household; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul became believers and were baptized. One night the Lord said to Paul in a vision, ‘Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no one will lay a hand on you to harm you, for there are many in this city who are my people.’ He stayed there for a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal. They said, ‘This man is persuading people to worship God in ways that are contrary to the law.’ Just as Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to the Jews, ‘If it were a matter of crime or serious villainy, I would be justified in accepting the complaint of you Jews; but since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves; I do not wish to be a judge of these matters.’ And he dismissed them from the tribunal.

**This passage raises a number of issues 2 of which I will quickly look at.**

### **1 - Who has the right to judge?**

To pass judgement is an onerous task; it carries with it a huge responsibility. Some of you will have sat as jurors at sometime in your life, or you may still get the call. I have never been asked and I believe as clergy I have a get out clause.

When I was in my previous appointment one of my Church members was on the jury of a difficult and not very pleasant case. She was not allowed to speak about it but I know from the length of the case and what she was able to share it was quite a harrowing experience.

In this passage we find Gallio removing himself from making a judgement in a situation of the Jewish community objecting to what Paul was about; he was a wise man. We also find Paul making a judgement on the people “when they opposed and reviled him, in protest he shook the dust from his clothes and said to them, ‘Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.’”

In the Scriptures there are a number of occasions when there are records of some form of trial and judgement being made. We have to make sure we do not picture the participants in gowns and wigs.

Pilate washed his hands when it came to Jesus; despite finding nothing for which Jesus could be punished “I find no basis for a charge against him” (Jn. 18:38) he did not stop the crowds forcing a judgement.

John 19:13 reads, “he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judges seat .... And Pilate said to the Jews, “Here is your King”

The Greek could be translated “he brought Jesus out and sat **HIM** down on the judges seat... And Pilate said to the Jews, “Here is your King”.

The crowd responded “Crucify him, we have no king but Caesar.”

Take that image into your mind, Jesus on the judge’s seat being judged by the crowd.

We can easily pass judgement on people without knowing the full situation; I know I have on many more than one occasion. Afterwards I have regretted it when I found out a bigger picture. Only God knows the full picture and he judges with fairness and mercy.

Are there ways in which we can be more careful in passing judgement?

How much does the media influence our judgement compared to the Word of God?

## **2 - Have you ever had to rethink the way you work?**

How relevant is this to our current situation?

Paul instead of working in the synagogue went to work from "home". Not his home but that of Titius Justus; working from "home" he was more effective in Corinth than working from the Synagogue; he stayed 18 months teaching the word of God amongst the people.

The last two months have been a very different experience for us all; no one has experienced previously what we are going through now. It is easy to be critical of how people have behaved and led and at times the questioning of actions and decisions has been appropriate and necessary, but for all it is an unprecedented times.

I am not in agreement with all the decisions which our government has made and at times listening to the briefings can sound like we are listening to a party political broadcast but they are trying to make decisions about the lives of 60+ million people living in a large area with different situations. When an election was held and a government was formed there was one big issue on the table and within a couple of months there was a whole new agenda; which has required all learning to live in different ways and many to work in different ways. I need to go back to point 1 and be careful how I make judgments, as I do not know the whole picture

How has being Church outside of a building influenced our thinking? Do we just want to go back to how things were with our Sunday morning fellowship and worship or do we need to look at doing things in new ways? Can we be more effective communicating in different ways from different places? Who wants to pass judgment on that one?