

Acts 18:1-4

FOUNDING THE CHURCH AT CORINTH

Corinth :: Along with Ephesus, these were the two most important cities visited by Paul in the course of his missionary work. He stayed in each for a considerable period in order to establish churches which would then evangelize the surrounding area. Corinth, when Paul visited in the early 50s C.E. was well on the way to becoming the largest, most prosperous city in Greece. Julius Caesar, before his death, ordered that the city be rebuilt as a Roman colony. It was like Philippi (a city in which massive amounts of Roman troops were settled as payment for their military service during the Roman Civil War) in that its architecture; law and official language (Latin) all reflected the Roman dominance and control of the city during Paul's era. It was the crossroads between the West and East, a place of great commerce thanks to ports on the Mediterranean on either side of the Isthmus of Corinth. It hosted games (similar to the Olympics) that attracted huge crowds, many of whom would need tents for temporary shelter. It also was religiously pluralistic, housing temples and shrines to traditional Greek gods and goddesses, recently founded Roman cults, other religious of the Empire and Judaism. It was an ideal place for Paul to spend a long time sharing the gospel so that it might impact not just that city, but also a large area. (*B. Witherington III, Acts*).

Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome :: there was a long history of Roman rulers expelling adherents of "foreign" religions (like Judaism) from Rome. This occurred many times, as the Jews were expelled from Rome for various reasons including being a political threat because of their numerous population and suspicion of corrupting Roman morals through their own customs & practices. It happened in 139 B.C.E, 19 A.D., 31 A.D., 46 A.D., and here in 49 A.D. We see then that Aquila and Priscilla came not from Greece but from Italy.

Tentmakers :: this term also implies that they could also have been leather-workers, making cloth of goats' hair. They fabricated much needed items and so would have come into contact with a great many people without much effort.

EVERY SABBATH :: scholars think he was in Corinth for at least 18 months at this time, teaching every week: a considerable and adequate time for great change and the planting of a thriving church.

ARGUE IN THE SYNAGOGUE :: argue implies more of a persuasive form of rhetoric, trying to explain, justify and explicate so as to win another to one's own opinion.

¹After this Paul left Athens and went to **Corinth**. ² 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. ³ and, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them, and they worked together—by trade they were **tentmakers**. ⁴

EVERY SABBATH he would **ARGUE IN THE SYNAGOGUE** and would try to convince Jews and Greeks.

⁵ When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with proclaiming the word, testifying to the Jews that the Messiah was Jesus. ⁶ 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." ⁷ Then he left the synagogue and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God; his house was next door to the synagogue. ⁸ 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. ⁹ One night the Lord said to Paul in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; ¹⁰ 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." ¹¹ He stayed there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

¹² But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal. ¹³ They said, "This man is persuading people to worship God in ways that are contrary to the law." ¹⁴ 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; ¹⁵ 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." ¹⁶ And he dismissed them from the tribunal. ¹⁷ Then all of them seized Sosthenes, the official of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to any of these things.

1 Corinthians 1:10-18

FACTIONS IN THE CHURCH WHICH REPRODUCE A MYOPIC MESSAGE OF THE CROSS.

¹Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes,

²*To the church of God* that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴ I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵ for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— ⁶ just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— ⁷ so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸ He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

¹⁰ Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you **BE IN AGREEMENT** and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. ¹¹ For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. ¹² What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to **Apollos**," or "I belong to **CEPHAS**," or "I belong to Christ." ¹³ Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴ I thank God that I baptized none of you except **Crispus and Gaius**, ¹⁵ so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. ¹⁶ (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) ¹⁷ For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and **not with eloquent wisdom**, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power.

¹⁸ For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

To the church of God :: For Paul understands each church as a full representation of the larger Church, not just a part of it. The local church is the visible manifestation of an invisible reality: the sign of their heavenly citizenship. This is made visible each time that they gather for prayer and worship. This church has many problems (hence this letter), among them quarrels and divisions over sacraments, church practices and personal importance derived from social status. It seems that in this divided situation, Christ has been reduced to one leader among many hustling for followers. Their example reflects upon all of the Church.

BE IN AGREEMENT :: it seems as if the dissension and division they face in Corinth include diverse viewpoints and intellectual opinions, as well as social and cultural paradigms. They were multi-cultural, comprised of a Jewish minority and a Gentile majority. Curiously Paul doesn't demand that they all agree, but rather encourages it. Paul teaches that for the church to be the body of Christ, active in the world, it must first be at peace amongst itself. The word is used for the mending of fishing nets (Mark 1:19 & Mt 4:21), conveying the idea of restoration to a prior condition. How they are is not how they have been or have to be.

Apollos :: was a Christian preacher, who had ministered in Ephesus before coming to Corinth. He was a converted Jew, come from Alexandria (in Egypt) one of the great intellectual cities of the Empire like Boston or Berkeley for us today. It was one of the centers of philosophy, rhetoric and literature. He most likely then was highly educated in public speaking.

CEPHAS :: Aramaic name of the apostle Peter.

Paul asks a series of eye-opening rhetorical questions, to which the answer is to be "No - of course not!"

v. 16 Paul can't even really remember who he baptized. His comment conveys the triviality of the claim of spiritual importance from who baptized who.

Crispus and Gaius :: the ruler of the synagogue in Corinth converted by Paul (Acts 18:8) and entrusted with leadership by the apostle (with others) (1 Cor 16:16-17) probably because of his prominence. This idea comes from Romans 16:23 in which we're told he has a house big enough to welcome Paul and the whole Corinthian community. His leadership, while not invalid, may have been a simple reproduction of socioeconomic status, a capitulation to worldly hierarchy based on wealth in a diverse city.

not with eloquent wisdom :: Paul is referring to some Gentile philosophical traditions such as Sophism in which eloquence was seen as a proof of wisdom as opposed to content. Paul seems to have a simple and straight-forward approach (not eloquent), Cephas probably wasn't educated in these classical traditions as he was a fisherman.