

PARTNERSHIPS AND PROFITS

Acts 18:1-22

Notes

We are called to partner together, using our gifts, to advance the gospel to the nations.

Often, we think we must go through this life on an island, living, working, even trying to live for Jesus on our own.

We think that if we rely on someone or try to get help, we will be seen as weak or ineffective. We so desire to be perceived as confident and competent that we rarely rely on others; we rarely partner with others for life, much less for the advancement of the gospel.

The Bible's big picture is about Jesus. From the front to the back, Genesis to Revelation our attention is drawn to Jesus. The OT points to Jesus and the NT points us to have a relationship with Jesus.

And the way people have a relationship with Jesus is to place their faith in him.

How do they go about placing their faith in him? They must hear of him. How will they hear of him? We will tell them.

God has designed his church, that is you and I, all believers, so that we all build off one another, we partner together; one is strong where another is weak; we each strengthen one another so that we partner together for the advancement of the gospel and the discipleship of the body.

We are called to partner together, using our gifts, to advance the gospel to the nations.

In our passage today in Acts 18 we will see that partnerships in the gospel produce a profit of glory for individuals, churches, and the beyond.

When we last left the Apostle Paul in Acts 16, he just began his second missionary journey; split with Barnabas; picked up Silas and Timothy; revisited churches from his first mission trip; went to Philippi; cast out a demon from a slave girl; was beaten and miraculously released from prison.

In Chapter 17 Paul visits Thessalonica, preaches and plants churches; left Thessalonica and went to Berea where they saw a great harvest, but had to leave from persecution; went to Athens and preached to the Jews and Greeks

Now we arrive at Acts 18

After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth. ² And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, ³ and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tentmakers. ⁴ And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

⁵ But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. ⁶ But when

they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." ⁷ Then he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue. ⁸ Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized. ⁹ And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; ¹⁰ for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city." ¹¹ And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

¹² But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat, ¹³ saying, "This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law."

¹⁴ But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to put up with you; ¹⁵ but if there are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters."¹⁶ And he drove them away from the judgment seat. ¹⁷ And they all took hold of Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and began beating him in front of the judgment seat. But Gallio was not concerned about any of these things.

¹⁸ Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila. In Cenchrea he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow. ¹⁹ They came to Ephesus, and he left them there. Now he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. ²⁰ When they asked him to stay for a longer time, he did not consent, ²¹ but taking leave of them and saying, "I will return to you again if God wills," he set sail from Ephesus. ²² When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and went down to Antioch.

PARTNERSHIPS ARE IMPORTANT FOR THE CHURCH AND THE GOSPEL

Paul now finds himself in Corinth.

Corinth was the largest metropolitan city of Greece.

Corinth was the Greek center for east-west trade.

In Paul's day it was a reprobate town as well.

It was actually a new city, the most Roman city of Greece.

The temple of the goddess of love Aphrodite was at the center of the city perched on a 1,900-foot hill so that all who came to the city saw her.

Inside the city, stood the temple of the sun god Apollo as well as a temple to Asklepius, the Greek god of healing and it had elaborate canals and reservoirs to different healing pools around the city.

From this, roamed hundreds to thousands of temple priestess (prostitutes).

Paul arrives in the city between the middle of AD 49 and early AD 50.

He arrives in Corinth, which was a completely different city than Athens, where he just came from.

While Athens was not a Christian town, there was at least a sense of religious devotion and nobility of thought and deed.

None of this was present in Corinth. This city of 80,000 was a carnal town, fueled by commerce and sensuality.

Corinth worshipped Caesar, practiced Roman rule, participated in international trade, loved the games, and thrived on slavery.

Corinth was a combination of Las Vegas and New Orleans regarding its level of debauchery.

When Paul arrived, he did so quietly, with humility, and meekness. He enters this new city, with all its vices and knows no one.

In 2 Cor. 2:1-5 Paul describes his initial impression in Corinth as difficult, even being frightened by the city.

Paul comes to the city, and he is in need of help, of assistance. And the Lord miraculously provided.

Paul meets Aquila and his wife Priscilla who were believers from Italy run out of the city by Caesar.

Paul arrives in Corinth after them and lived and worked with them making tents. They provided Paul a place of employment and a place to live.

Silas and Timothy arrive from Macedonia (v. 5).

Timothy brought financial support from the church in Philippi.

He was able to partner with them and together they worked on sharing the gospel.

Paul taught at synagogue like usual but was run out.

Paul goes right next door to the synagogue and leads Titius to Jesus and from here they begin an evangelistic effort that leads many to Jesus.

Many believed

Apparently, all the strike and turmoil was taking its toll on Paul as God sent him a vision to "Don't be afraid."

With this encouragement and a great team Paul spent 18 months in Corinth.

This caused an uproar, as Paul continued to convert people, Jews and Gentiles to Christ.

People got mad and the new synagogue leader brought him to the new proconsul, Gallio and instead of Gallio punishing Paul, he releases him, the crowd got stirred up and beat the synagogue leader up.

After 18 months, Paul ends his 2nd missionary journey and heads back to Antioch through Ephesus.

During Paul's time in Corinth, Luke records for us Paul partnering with:

- Aquila
- Priscilla
- Silas
- Timothy
- Titius
- Crispus

At least 6 different people, probably more, partnered with Paul to work and serve in the gospel ministry.

Partnerships are important for the gospel and the church.

When Paul arrived what did he find? Aquila and Priscilla. They met him, fell in love with him, gave him a home, and a job.

When the evangelism was getting more intense, what did God provide? He sent Silas and Timothy (5) from Macedonia with a financial gift which allowed Paul to concentrate fully on preaching and ministry.

I think it is partly from Paul's ministry partnerships in Corinth that he writes in his letter, 1 Cor. 12 about the importance of each person using their spiritual gift to support and grow the body.

He reckons each person in the church as a part of a healthy body. As each part works, the body thrives and grows. As each person in the church, in the body of Christ uses their gift, the church grows and thrives.

Notice his words in chapter **12 of 1 Cor.** Verse 7, *"A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other."*

And again, in verse 12, *"The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ."*

We all work together. And it reasons, that if we continue to work together, each serving, each using the gifts God has given, the body will be healthy, thrive, grow, and be able to do what we are called to do.

The inverse is also true. If only part of the body serves and uses their gifts, the body will never operate at full capacity. We can never reach all that we are able. The workload will eventually overload those who are serving and cause burnout and failure of the body.

That is why God built his church the way he did, so that each person functions and uses what he gave them to build and grow the church, but to also build and grow one another.

You never know how your gifts or your serving impacts others.

And we build partnerships by:

BUILD GOSPEL PARTNERSHIPS BY:

Centering Your Relationship on the Gospel

Everything Paul did, all his relationships, flowed out of his mutual love for Jesus.

Relationships centered on the gospel can prosper and grow.

Relationships not centered on the gospel turn prideful and tearful.

They begin to have a risk/rewards point of view.

Our relationships should strengthen our walk with Jesus.

When relationships consistently pull us away from the gospel, we must decide on whether the relationship is more important than our relationship with Jesus.

Partnerships are also built by not being afraid to be present.

Don't Be Afraid to Be Present

Encourage

Priscilla and Aquila encouraged Paul when he came to Corinth and helped him get his start. They were right beside him in the beginning of this ministry and stayed beside him to help him when it was difficult.

We are here partly to encourage and build one another up for good works in Christ.

In writing to the Galatians Paul says that we are to "bear one another's burdens." We can't bear burdens without being present.

Part of bearing burdens means we encourage one another in good works.

Support

When Timothy and Silas came from Macedonia, they brought a financial gift to Paul. Not only did they serve, but they allowed an entire church to support Paul.

Part of being in a godly relationship is supporting when needed.

When you examine your relationships and you see that you never give, you never support, but are the one always needing support, you may want to ask forgiveness of this and ask God how he may help you not take advantage of others.

Throughout Paul's ministry he was supported and supported others.

When we are in Christ-centered relationships we mutually support one another.

Hold Accountable

Part of being present means we also hold each other accountable.

When we are not moving to Christ, we call each other out, lovingly, and seeking to get them back to Jesus.

While we do not see this in our immediate story, we see this principle of healthy relationships in other areas of Scripture.

We see Paul hold Peter accountable when Peter came to Antioch and did not want to eat with the Gentiles when his Jewish friends were around. Paul recounts this story in Gal. 2:11-14 and shows us the importance of helping one another by holding each other accountable.

Serving

We also build partnerships by serving with and for one another.

When we serve alongside one another we learn and grow in ways we could not do otherwise.

Paul and each of the individuals who were present with him in Corinth served alongside him making the ministry a success.

Aquila and Priscilla gave him a job and place to stay. Silas and Timothy brought financial support. Titius provided a base of operations.

Each person used what God had given them to support one another in the church and in doing so, they expanded the reach of the ministry.

When we each use our gifts in coordination with others, we can impact our world for Christ in ways much more powerful than simply working alone.

Pointing One Another to Jesus

Finally, when we are present in one another's lives we are to be pointing one another to Jesus.

We build healthy, Christ centered relationships by pointing one another to Jesus.

Are you pointing your spouse, parent, friends, classmates, or coworkers to Jesus?

This is the most important aspect of all our relationships, especially those with brothers and sisters in Christ.

If you are not encouraging, supporting, holding accountable, serving to and alongside, and pointing people you have relationships with to Jesus, why have relationships with them?

The goal of all our relationships should be to glorify God and point others to him.

What in your relationships do you need to change so they focus on and lift up Jesus?

I want to bring our message to a close this morning by providing a few suggestions on how you can build or strengthen your relationships, so they are gospel-centered and Christ honoring.

PRACTICAL POINTS TO PARTNERSHIP

- Attend Small Groups
- Serve With Others
- Eat Together
- Pray Together
- Study the Word Together
- Text Verses, Prayers, and Encouragement

CONCLUSION

How are you partnering with others for the gospel?

For our members and attenders this morning:

Are you building gospel partnerships?

Are you seeking to encourage, support, serve, hold accountable, and point others to Jesus?

Are you seeking to build others up in Christ?

Have you partnered with Christ's church to begin a partnership?

Membership

Baptism

Serving on a ministry team

I want to encourage you today to decide to step out and step up to serve. We have many wonderful places to serve Christ.

Children, youth, GA, RA, men's ministry, women's ministry, S.S., bus, greeter, courtesy team, one of our school ministries, and giving.

Don't limit the reach and impact of the church by not partnering with us.

When you partner with us to serve, you help us expand the impact of the gospel in our community.