

GOD'S PEOPLE IN CORINTH.

– AUGUST 1. – ACTS 18:1-11. –

"Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."
– 1 Cor. 3:11.

CORINTH as a city was almost the opposite of Athens. Corinth was as completely given over to commerce and sinful pleasures as Athens was given over to religious philosophy and idol worship. We have seen what poor success attended the gospel amongst the superstition-blinded philosophers of the religious metropolis; and we feel curious to know whether its effect will be more or less amongst the non-religious of Corinth. The Lord's testimony settles the matter. In a vision he encouraged the Apostle not to be afraid but to speak boldly, assuring him that he would be with him and protect him; adding, – "I have much people in this city."

Here we see the principle of the divine policy in respect to the sending forth of the gospel. The Lord knew the honest-hearted ones beforehand; and even tho they did not know him, and had not yet accepted of Christ, "the only name," God nevertheless spoke of things to come as tho they already were accomplished, and called the earnest ones who hungered and thirsted after righteousness *his people*. When we remember that the Lord specially directed the Apostle into Macedonia and suffered him to remain but a short time in the cities of Philippi, Thessalonica and Athens, and that his stay in Corinth was for a year and a half, and then note these words, – "I have much people in this city," it gives us the thought that the objective point of this missionary tour in the divine program was Corinth. And indeed, at the close of his ministry in Corinth the Apostle was sent nowhere else, but took his journey homeward, visiting enroute the Churches he had previously established in Asia-Minor. What a lesson we have here of the divine superintendence of his own Word and plan! what an illustration of the statement, "The Lord knoweth them that are his;" and

that our God is "the same yesterday, to-day and forever!" He still knows his own; he still superintends his work; he still sends through appropriate agents and at the proper season just such helps as are needful to his people.

Every laborer (every public and every private laborer in the vineyard) should mark the lesson which the Lord has here set before us. And each should the more carefully watch for the leadings of divine providence and realize that only as he is a co-worker together with God can he accomplish anything. As the Master said, "Without me ye can do nothing."

Every minister of the gospel (and this includes all who serve the Lord in any degree or capacity) can find in the Apostle Paul a most wonderful lesson of practical humility. Upon entering Corinth he did not look up some philosopher and endeavor to ingratiate himself with him as a fellow-philosopher and teacher, who could not dig and was ashamed to beg. He did nothing which would compromise the truth, and his influence or liberty as a servant of the truth. Like all Jews of that time he had learned a trade and he at once set to work to earn an honest living, while seeking the door of opportunity for his great life-work, the preaching of the gospel. His trade, tent-making, was a good one in the sense that it afforded employment in every **[R2191 : page 220]** seaport town; but a poor one in that not being difficult, it had much competition, and was poorly paid. Nevertheless, there is not the slightest intimation that the Apostle repined or in any degree rebelled against the leadings of divine providence, altho he probably queried why it was that the Lord, who had specially called and commissioned him to the work of the gospel, had so circumstanced him that it was impossible to give any but the fag-ends of his time to this service to which he had devoted himself, and to which he had been accepted. Under the leadings of divine providence he became acquainted with Aquilla and Priscilla, poor Jews, outcasts for their religion, who were earning their living by the same trade. Their troubles had no doubt mellowed their hearts and made them ready for the gospel of Christ,

and the Lord brought it first to their humble dwelling, and they became devoted servants of the Lord's cause.

The Apostle was fervent in spirit and not slothful in the great business to which his life was devoted; and hence he lost no opportunity of looking up the Jews of Corinth and attending the Sabbath services in **[R2192 : page 220]** their synagogue. Apparently, however, the difficulties and persecutions endured tended to make the Apostle cautious, if by any means he might improve upon the methods of the past, by the use of greater wisdom. We see how he left Thessalonica and then Berea as the persecution manifested itself; and we see that he studiously sought to avoid persecution at Athens; and now at Corinth apparently he did not start out to preach Christ boldly to the Jews, but rather reasoned with them, and with certain Gentiles who were feeling after God, for a number of Sabbath days, along general lines; as a preparation for the great message he had to deliver. He persuaded both Jews and Greeks with reference to the Law, its types and ceremonies and sacrifices; and with reference to the significance of the prophecies; but he avoided that which would awaken prejudice until he would first arouse faith and fervor in his hearers, and their confidence in his sincerity, and in his fidelity to the Lord's Word.

But when Silas and Timothy joined him, the opportune moment came: and the Apostle felt such a pressure of earnest desire to make known the Lord Jesus, as the grand hope of Israel and the world, that he could keep it back no longer and spoke it forth.

Then came the opposition and blasphemy which previous experiences had warned him to expect: but by this time he had made some impression, not only upon some of the Jews, but upon the religiously disposed Greeks, who had been interested in Judaism. Foreseeing that thereafter the Jews would consider him an intruder in their synagogue, he withdrew, accepting as a place for meetings the home of Justus, who apparently was a Greek convert first to Judaism, and now to Christianity. This change would make it more favorable to

all Greeks to come and hear, and at the time being near the synagogue would keep the gospel of Christ before the attention of the Jews. The result was that "much people," the Lord's people, were found by the truth, including the ruler of the synagogue and many citizens of Corinth.

Had the Apostle been either a cold or a lukewarm Christian and servant of the Lord, or one of the "fearful and unbelieving" kind, he might have attended the synagogue and for years kept his "light under a bushel;" and in such an event it probably would shortly have become extinguished, according to the divine rule; and he would have lost his place as a servant of the gospel and some one else who had a sufficiency of faith, love and zeal would have been permitted to do the work. But the Apostle never kept his light under a bushel, but lifted it high that all might see the glorious light of the goodness of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord, which had shone into his heart. He continually showed forth "the praises of him who had called him out of darkness into his marvelous light."

Judging from his past experiences, the Apostle might have expected persecution which would have permitted him to stay but a short time in Corinth. It was probably for his instruction in this particular that he was granted the vision, instructing him that God would protect him from persecution here, because he had much people to be reached by the truth. Nevertheless, it was necessary and the Lord's instruction, that he should speak the truth boldly and not hold his peace, nor expect that the Lord would work a miracle to reach his people in Corinth without a public testimony.

It was during this stay in Corinth that the Apostle received a loving contribution for his support from the converts at Philippi, which gave evidence that Luke, who remained with them, was performing a faithful ministry and stirring up their hearts with zeal for the Lord and his service. It was during this period, also, that he received through Silas and Timothy a good message from the Churches at Thessalonica

and Berea; and it was during this stay in Corinth also that the two letters were written to the Church at Thessalonica. Nevertheless, it is respecting this very period of his stay in Corinth that the Apostle subsequently wrote to the Corinthians (1:4; 2:3); in which he mentions his weakness (bodily sickness) and "fear and trembling;" probably the result partly of his weak physical condition and of the remembrance of the trying experiences already passed through.

Subsequently he writes apparently referring back to experiences at Corinth, – "Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; and labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat. We are made the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." – 1 Cor. 4:11-13.

Every servant of the truth to-day can find rich lessons in the experiences and faithfulness and perseverance of the great Apostle. In infinite wisdom the Lord permitted this his chiefest servant amongst men, next to the Lord Jesus, to preach the truth under unfavorable circumstances and with many drawbacks. Paul learned that the servant is not above his Master; and so must every other faithful follower learn the same lesson of faithfulness and endurance – overcoming self and difficulties in the name and strength of the Lord and his Word: upheld by loving zeal and by the exceeding great and precious promises of the Father's Word. In due time we shall reap the reward, if we *faint not* by the way.
