

OCCUPIED WITH THE WORD

Acts 18.1-17

When Silas and Timothy rejoin Paul in Corinth, we learn that the Apostle was “occupied with the Word”. This phrase has been variously translated over the years, including “completely devoted to the Word” or even “constrained by the Word”.

The implication is that the Gospel message holds the mind of the faithful. It’s not that we grip the Word, but the Word grips us.

Paul targets strategic (and challenging) locations

Corinth was a large, influential city of commerce. It was the capital of the Roman Province of Achaëa rebuilt by Julius Caesar in 46 BC. Given its location on “two seas”, the city carried all the things that go with a pagan port city. Corinth was associated with pride and immorality. To behave like a “Corinthian” is synonymous with sexual libertinism.

“Then I saw in my dream, that when they were got out of the wilderness, they presently saw a Town before them, and the name of that Town is Vanity, and at the Town there is a Fair kept, called Vanity Fair. It is kept all year long; it beareth the name Vanity Fair...because all that is there sold, or that cometh thither, is Vanity” (Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*).

Paul would later write to the Corinthians that “I was with you in weakness and in fear, and much trembling” (1 Corinthians 2.3).

Paul preaches Christ-crucified and self-denial.

We can all give testimony to God’s faithfulness

We have seen many different verbs for what the early church did with words (reason, prove, persuade, explain, preach). Here, Paul is “testifying” to what Jesus did in His life.

There is always a “congregation” for our testimony. Sometimes the best way to evangelize is to say what Jesus did in your life.

Did Paul witness to Aquila and Priscilla while making tents (Acts 18.3)? We can form healthy, Christ-centered relationships in the marketplace.

God draws those who are His by His Word

God strengthens Paul with a vision saying that he must continue preaching because God had many people in the city (Acts 18.9-10).

This shapes what we think we are doing as a church.

We are not using man-made means to have a large group meeting. We are bearing witness in a local place that God might draw those who are His to Himself.

Gallio's indifference amounts to rejection

As a Roman proconsul, Gallio wanted peace. He sees the identity of Jesus as something irrelevant. That he “paid no attention to any of this” is a fitting phrase for a widespread response (Acts 18.17). May we see that this indifference is a rejection of Jesus' Lordship.

Gallio is the opposite of being “occupied with the Word”.

Key Point: Let's be a church “occupied with the Word”.

Application Questions:

Survey Acts 16-18.17 and note instances where rejection in one area has led to Gospel opportunities in other areas. How does this help us handle rejection?

To what extent does God's promise of safety to Paul apply to our local church (Acts 18.10)?

What is Gallio's mistake in judgment? What can we learn from his response?

What do you think of the statement that all conversions are equally miraculous, but some are more influential than others? How might the conversion of Crispus have impacted Corinth?