

Fact Sheet for **“The Weakest Link”**
Acts 18:1-17

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ESV ¹ ¶ After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.

Athens and Corinth were 50 miles apart. Athens was noted for its culture and learning. Corinth was noted for its commerce and immorality. Corinth was located just south of a narrow isthmus that connected it with the mainland in the north. Land trade moving north and south went through Corinth, as did sea trade moving east and west. The sea to the south was dangerous for ships, so their cargo was transported by land across the isthmus. Corinth was a center for the worship of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, who promoted immorality in the name of religion. Politically Corinth was a Roman colony and the capital of the province of Achaia, which included Athens.

² And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, ³ and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade.

Pontus was a province in northeast Asia Minor south of the Black Sea. Aquila and Priscilla had been living in Rome. Claudius was emperor from A.D. 41-54. Suetonius, a biographer of Roman emperors, referred to the constant riots of the Jews in his *Life of Claudius*.

⁴ And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.

⁵ ¶ When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus.

Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea were in Macedonia. With the arrival of Silas and Timothy Paul now had the finances to devote himself exclusively to preaching (2 Cor. 11:9; Phil 4:15).

⁶ And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." ⁷ And he left there 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 ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized. (See 1 Cor. 1:14)

Take a good look at the next two verses!

⁹ And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, ¹⁰ for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people."

This was direct revelation from God. "I am with you" was the reason for his safety. It is interesting that God used the term "my people", a term usually used for the Jewish People (see 2 Chron. 7:14).

¹¹ And he stayed 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 saying, "This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law."

Verses 12-17 are a critical point in Luke's narrative because Gallio was the Roman proconsul of Achaia, and any judgment pronounced by him would establish legal precedent. He was also a brother of Seneca, a philosopher of great influence in Rome.

Tribunal – civil court

"contrary to the Law" – Rome did not permit the propagation of new religions. Judaism was an established belief. The Jews opposing Paul were saying in essence that Christianity was a different religion. Gallio saw it differently. To him Christianity fell under the umbrella of Judaism, and this was not a matter to be settled in civil court. This decision was crucial, for it was tantamount to legitimizing Christianity in the eyes of Roman law.

¹⁴ But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. ¹⁵ But since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these things." ¹⁶ And he drove them from the tribunal. ¹⁷ And they all seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to any of this.

Sosthenes had evidently become ruler of the synagogue in place of Crispus. The gentiles in Corinth wanted nothing to do with the Jews' contentions so they beat Sosthenes in front of the civil court. Gallio was apparently unconcerned about this. This Sosthenes may have later become a Christian (see 1 Cor 1:1).

Go back to those two verses I highlighted earlier (acts 18:9-10). God had a purpose for this encouragement that went far beyond Paul. Paul got to know the Corinthian church well. He spent 1½ years there. Two of Paul's letters are very often quoted today... 1st and 2nd Corinthians. *Go through 1st and 2nd Corinthians and look at verses.*

God planned Paul's extended stay in Corinth for generations of Christians to come. The Bible is one of God's expressions of love for us. It is God's instruction manual for humanity.

Let me give you the five links from God's heart to our hearts. One of them is the most problematic. (1 – Revelation / Inspiration, 2 – Transmission, 3 – Translation, 4 – Interpretation, 5 – Application)

Be certain to pay attention to that 5th link! It is the weakest link!