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## II. PAUL AND CHRISTIANITY IN CORINTH

The apostle Paul came alone to Corinth from Athens in the autumn of A.D. 50.<sup>21</sup> His assistants Timothy and Silvanus, who were still occupied with the churches in Macedonia, arrived sometime later (1 Thess 3:1, 6; cf. Acts 18:5; 2 Cor 1:19).

Paul immediately attached himself to Aquila and Priscilla, who, along with other Jews, had been expelled from Rome in A.D. 49 by decree of the emperor Claudius.<sup>22</sup> He worked with them as a tentmaker<sup>23</sup> — a trade they shared — and he lived with them. It is probable, but not certain, that Aquila and Priscilla were already believers when they came to Corinth, and that they, with Paul, formed a nucleus of an *ekklēsia* in the city. They appear to have created a house church in other places as well (1 Cor 16:19; Rom 16:5).

The apostle spent a year and a half in this his first visit to the Achaian capital, a period that can be divided into two unequal parts.

At first he went to the synagogue<sup>24</sup> — composed of “Greeks,” that is, “God-fearers,”<sup>25</sup> as well as Jews (Acts 18:4). There he argued that the OT scriptures had been fulfilled by the Messiah Jesus (Acts 18:4, 5; cf. 17:2-3; 1 Cor 15:3-4; 2 Cor 1:19). At this time the God-fearer Titius Justus (who is probably the “Gaius” referred to elsewhere as “host to the whole church”<sup>26</sup>) accepted Paul’s message (Acts 18:7). If Stephanas, “the first fruits” of Paul’s ministry in Achaia (1 Cor 16:15; cf. 1:16), was a Jew or a God-fearer, then he, too, would have been converted in the context of Paul’s synagogue ministry. After Paul’s expulsion from the synagogue, Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, “believed in the Lord” (Acts 18:8; cf. 1 Cor 1:15). Shortly afterward members of the synagogue accused Paul before the newly arrived Pro-

21. C. J. Hemer, “Pauline Chronology,” 6-9.

22. Acts 18:1; Suetonius, *Claudius* 25.4.

23. According to Acts 18:3; see R. F. Hock, *Social Context*, 34-35. Paul alludes to this in 1 Cor 4:12.

24. An inscription “[Syn]agogue of the Heb[rews]” on a lintel, together with a post bearing a seven-branched menorah, has been found in Corinth. Although that synagogue is datable to later centuries, it is possible that a synagogue from Paul’s time was located on the same site. See Furnish, 26.

25. Acts 18:4. These were Gentiles who were attracted to the beliefs of Judaism and who, although not yet circumcised, attended the synagogue. In spite of being referred to in the Acts, their existence has been doubted by many scholars because of a lack of corroborating external evidence. The discovery of an inscription at Aphrodisias, datable to the 3d cent. A.D., has put the existence of the God-fearers on a much firmer foundation. See C. J. Hemer, *Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, 444-47.

26. Rom 16:23; cf. 1 Cor 1:14. For the identification Titius Justus = Gaius, see F. F. Bruce, *Pauline Circle*, 97-98.

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consul L. Iunius Gallio of promoting the worship of God contrary to the law, charges that Gallio dismissed.<sup>27</sup>

Paul's ministry to Gentiles, which was the second and longer ministry phase, appears to have been based in the house of Gaius. Regrettably we are unable to identify those who accepted Paul's message during this latter period. Other names are known to us — Chloe,<sup>28</sup> Fortunatus, Achaicus, Lucius, Jason, Sosipater, Erastus, Quartus, Tertius, and Phoebe from Cenchreae<sup>29</sup> — but we do not know whether they became believers while Paul was in Corinth or after his withdrawal.

From the passing references in the Acts and the letters of Paul we may reconstruct a partial picture of church life in Roman Corinth during the fifties.<sup>30</sup> We have an impression that, although Paul made the rhetorical disclaimer that “not many” of the believers were “wise by human standards . . . influential . . . of noble birth” (1 Cor 1:26), the reality was somewhat different. The tentmaking Jews Aquila and Priscilla are not merely humble artisans but, in all probability, traders who traveled to Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus (Acts 18:1-3, 18; 1 Cor. 16:19; Rom 16:3; 2 Tim 4:19). Gaius [Titius Justus?] was of sufficient means to own a villa large enough to accommodate the “whole church”<sup>31</sup> (Rom 16:23; cf. 1 Cor 14:23), while Crispus was “ruler” of the synagogue in Corinth, a sign of local eminence. Stephanas is said to have a “household,”<sup>32</sup> and it is probable that Fortunatus and Achaicus, whose names are bracketed with his, were freedmen who belonged to his retinue.<sup>33</sup> Chloe also has a “household” whose members travel from Corinth to Ephesus.<sup>34</sup> Phoebe is literally the “patroness”<sup>35</sup> of the church at Cenchreae — in all probability the hostess of the church — who is described in terms resembling

27. Acts 18:12-16. Gallio took up his twelve-month appointment as Proconsul July 1, A.D. 51.

28. 1 Cor 1:11. Chloe, however, may have been an Asian visiting Corinth.

29. 1 Cor 16:17; Rom 16:1-2; 16:22-23.

30. See generally G. Theissen, *Essays on Corinth*, 60-119; W. Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 51-73.

31. See below, nn. 48 and 49.

32. Gk. οἶκος (1 Cor 1:16); οἰκία (1 Cor 16:15).

33. That the members of wealthy Stephanas's household devoted themselves to “the service (διακονία) of the saints” (1 Cor 16:15) should be taken as a statement of social inversion in keeping with the servant status of the Lord Jesus.

34. 1 Cor 1:11. Literally “those of Chloe” (τῶν Χλόης).

35. προστάτις (Rom 16:2). That she is also called “a servant (διάκονος) of the church in Cenchreae” (Rom 16:1) may be another example of the inverting of titles. Cf. Stephanas (n. 29). The mention of the names of women like Chloe and Phoebe without the names of husbands suggests that they were widowed, divorced, or women with the requisite number of children to act *χωρίς κυρίου* according to the *ius liberorum*. See *New Docs.* 2.29-32.