

Acts 18:1-17  
Feilding Baptist  
6.10.24

[Call to Worship](#)

Welcome to worship at Feilding Baptist Church!

Psalm 131  
A song of ascents. Of David.

- 1 My heart is not proud, Lord,  
my eyes are not haughty;  
I do not concern myself with great matters  
or things too wonderful for me.
- 2 But I have calmed and quietened myself,  
I am like a weaned child with its mother;  
like a weaned child I am content.
- 3 Israel, put your hope in the Lord  
both now and for evermore.

Father, thank you for this time to gather, to worship together. Please help us to worship with humble hearts. Holy Spirit, please warm our hearts, please bless this time and this space, Amen.

[Message - Apprentices Part 2](#)

If we're feeling displaced or even persecuted, Jesus wants to encourage us that we are not alone, Jesus is there with us and for us.

It was a clever marketing campaign by the then Dunedin mayor, Dave Cull, pointing out that everyone else is getting refugees, why are we in Dunedin being overlooked? New Zealand was taking 750 refugees a year, but none ever came to Dunedin. In righteous and parochial anger the people rose up, and cried out, we want refugees!

It was a bit of a strange thing for Dunedin to be excited about receiving refugees. For these refugees were very different from us, Syrian, and Muslim. They had been displaced because of the violence and atrocities of ISIS.

Church leaders played a big part in the preparation and welcoming of these new families. In 2015 I attended several meetings as plans were put in place to make sure these new people to town would be cared for well. And they were. Actually, they were looked after surprisingly well. And I believe their arrival has enabled Dunedin to have a wider view of the world than the city boundary.

So it was this sort of setting that I imagined when I read the start of Acts 18. It appears that the Jews have been evicted from Rome, kicked out of Rome, a sort of ethnic cleansing, suddenly becoming refugees. And I imagined that they would have been feeling very insecure as they relocated, looking for new places of welcome.

But actually that's not the case at all. It appears that in Rome news of Jesus had arrived, and the Jewish community did not take to this news particularly well. In fact there was significant ruffling of

feathers, to the extent that the Mayor, the Governor of Rome had had enough, and told them to leave. Ah, but actually, not all of them had to go, just the Jesus Jews. Government support was for the old institution, the way of the synagogues. It was the new way that had to leave.

Two of those who had to leave were a couple called Aquila and Priscilla. They left Rome and settled in Corinth, which is where Paul ventured to after Athens. And they meet up. Now, we think of Athens and imagine somewhere powerful and big. Back then Athens wasn't even as big as Feilding, less than 10 000 people. Ephesus was big with half a million people, but the modern city of Corinth, this was the big player and state capital, with around three quarters of a million people (Stott, 293). It was modern as it had been rebuilt by Julius Caesar after being destroyed by Romans.

And it is no surprise that it was big, look where it was located. Not an island, as it appear. [PPT]

Corinth had not one, but two ports. And the Corinthians had devised a method of dragging ships, on a slipway, overland for six kilometres, to save sailing the 350km's around some really rough coastline. Hence the two ports. So a huge amount of trade. And plenty of work.

An aside, there is now a canal, completed in 1893, 25 metres wide at the bottom, but even in the early days, the canal's narrowness, caused navigational problems. And there were closures to repair landslides from its steep walls. So it failed to attract the level of traffic expected by its operators. It is currently of little economic importance and is mainly a tourist attraction.

So you have here two thousand years ago, a hive of industry, ready access to the world of exports, and the Corinthians had some special things like brass that they did export profitably.

Anyway, time to read, people have arrived from being displaced from Rome, Paul arrives, and news of Jesus is being preached. Let's see what happens in Corinth.

Acts 18:1-17 (NIV - UK)

#### In Corinth

1 After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. 2 There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, 3 and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. 4 Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

5 When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. 6 But when they opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, 'Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent of it. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.'

7 Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshipper of God. 8 Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptised.

9 One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: 'Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. 10 For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.' 11 So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.

12 While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews of Corinth made a united attack on Paul and brought him to the place of judgment. 13 'This man,' they charged, 'is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law.'

14 Just as Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to them, 'If you Jews were making a complaint about some misdemeanour or serious crime, it would be reasonable for me to listen to you. 15 But since it involves questions about words and names and your own law - settle the matter yourselves. I will not be a judge of such things.' 16 So he drove them off. 17 Then the crowd there turned on Sosthenes the synagogue leader and beat him in front of the proconsul; and Gallio showed no concern whatever.

#### v1-4 Tentmaking

So here we have these displaced Jews from Rome in Corinth, establishing a new way of life, and seemingly doing quite well. Paul as a tentmaker, a leather worker, is self supporting, as were evangelists back then. As are many of our missionaries today. People go overseas and work, often in difficult places, supporting the church at the same time.

#### v5-11 A Message

The difference between the Syrians arriving in Dunedin and the Jews from Rome arriving in Corinth, was that there were already Jews in Corinth. So the new arrivals in Corinth, bring news of Jesus. You can see the Rome situation about to repeat.

And then Silas and Timothy arrive from Macedonia with a financial gift for Paul, enabling him to evangelise full time. This really ups the ante. The old school becomes rude, the word blasphemy is used in the NASB, so things were being said about Jesus that resulted in Paul saying blow you, shaking out his robes, and taking the message of Jesus to the Gentiles. Which happens to be where, next door to the synagogue, so 'in your face!'

As the tension continues to escalate, Paul receives a vision from God, v9&10, that assures him, and gives him confidence. You can imagine Paul being even more bold and courageous after hear from God, from the Lord. Which only adds fuel to the fire.

#### v12-17 Backing

Verse 12, the Jews rise up together against Paul, and take him to the Mayor of Corinth.

Now, you don't send Mr Bean to referee the World Cup Final. Nor would Rome send a similar person to govern one of their biggest settlements. Here, this mayor like person, was someone very influential, very capable, and very powerful. And he says to the new Jews, I can't be bothered with this nonsense. Sort yourselves out!

These were not trivial matters at all, these were matters of Jesus, of whether Jesus was the Messiah. The governor didn't see the significance, thought it was some minor religious tiff. This matter of Jesus was of extreme value and priority.

Instead of banning the church as happened in Rome, this Roman governor gives permission for the church! This was hugely helpful to the spread of the gospel of Jesus in that province. And quite likely the reason that Paul stayed for 18 months, longer than he stayed anywhere else. It's like he had state backing!

And the church in Corinth did flourish from there.

#### Application

So, is this simply a nice historical story, or is there some application for us?

Well, we've got two provincial capitals, very powerful provincial capitals, big players in the world. We've got two mayors, or governors, one who evicts, and one who embraces. We've got Corinth, and its two ports, with a slipway in between. And we've got people squabbling - no, to be fair, there were riots and other antisocial behaviours. This was disruptive, and destructive, things a city could do without.

If we're feeling like we're a following of Jesus in Rome, feeling displaced or even persecuted, Jesus wants to encourage us that we are not alone, Jesus is there with us and for us.

Or if we're feeling like a follower of Jesus in Corinth, we state backing, but people close to us niggling us, remember verses nine and ten as well. Don't be afraid, don't be silent, be confident that Jesus is with you.

Remember the lines from the great hymn;  
Join with all nature in manifold witness  
to Thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love.