

SERMON ~ BIBLE READING: ACTS 18:1-23

Introduction

In Acts of Apostles Luke tells us that just before he ascended to glory, Jesus gave this charge to his disciples: “You will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.” And in Acts of Apostles, Luke has been demonstrating how Jesus’ words to the disciples have been carried out. The Good News has been taken to Jerusalem; the Good News has been taken to all Judea and Samaria; and we are now on the final leg with Paul taking the good news to Rome, the centre and hub of the Roman empire.

Paul has always worked in teams and here we see some of his reasons.

Teams support each other

It is likely that, when Paul first met Aquila and Priscilla, they had not come to faith in Jesus, but Paul saw their potential and invested time in working with them. Working alongside them enabled him to explain the Christian message to them and also to train them for the work ahead. It meant too that there was additional income to support the work. When we work together, we provide support in many ways: emotional; financial; spiritual. When they were ready, they began to help him with the teaching.

And how grateful I am for all the emotional and spiritual support I have received over the years from the North Kirk team and that you’ve kept going with the offerings – ministers may not be in it for the money, but it does come in handy; and how privileged I have been to see members of the North Kirk team blossoming out in their faith and lives, to see them growing knowing Jesus and to see some now helping with the teaching and the worship and some now ministers ministering elsewhere. God has been and is so good, but let’s not forget that teams do support each other and how important that is.

Teams release people

When Timothy and Silas arrived Paul was able to give more of his time to preaching and teaching. No doubt they were able to pick up some of the other tasks that he had been involved in, as well as bringing a monetary gift from Christians elsewhere. One of the dangers with doing things on our own is that we end up having to do everything, including things that we are neither skilled at nor called to. We need to gather together with others so that together we can achieve more and do it in line with the gifts that God has given to us.

Teams consolidate the work

Paul did not have long in Ephesus; he was to spend more time there on his next trip. But he was quite happy to leave Priscilla and Aquila to build on what he had started. Some people are natural pioneers; others are more able to build on the foundation that others have laid. If the work of the kingdom is to go forward we need both.

Let me end with this quotation from the Chinese Christian, Watchman Nee:

‘Alone I cannot serve the Lord effectively, and he will spare no pains to teach me this. He will bring things to an end, allowing doors to close and leaving me ineffectively knocking my head against a wall until I realise that I need the help of the Body – the whole team – as well as of the Lord.’

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

‘Alone I cannot serve the Lord effectively, and he will spare no pains to teach me this. He will bring things to an end, allowing doors to close and leaving me ineffectively knocking my head against a wall until I realise that I need the help of the Body as well as of the Lord.’ (Watchman Nee)

GOING DEEPER

Questions on the Bible passages, Acts 18:1-23, and on the sermon for you to think about, either on your own or in a small group:

1. What do you think it would have been like for Paul without some of the other people who work with him in Acts 18:1-23?
2. Looking at the other people mentioned in Acts 18:1-23, and drawing on what else we know of them, what gifts and abilities do you think that they brought to the team?
3. Look at the various movements of people described in Acts 18:1-23. How do you see God bringing people into different places? What do we see them doing? What does that tell us about the way that God works?