

Sabbath School Lesson #1 – Paul’s Ministry in Corinth – 27 June-3 July 2026

Christ confirmed Paul’s ministry in Corinth. When Paul had come to Corinth, and was labouring at his trade of tent making for his support, and preaching every Sabbath to the people, the Jews raised a tumult against him, so that he was obliged to adjourn his meetings to the house of Justus, close by the synagogue. To outward appearance it all looked as if his way was hedged up. Then, to strengthen Paul’s ministry in Corinth, Christ spoke to Paul. “Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city” (Acts 18:9-10). The efforts of the Jews, shortly after, to defeat the work of Paul, and how they were defeated by the speech and course of Gallio, as recorded in verses 12-16, is a confirmation of what was told Paul in that “night vision.”

Sunday: Paul, a God-called Apostle of Jesus – Read 1 Corinthians 1:1 and Romans 1:1; what two elements of Paul’s ministry are emphasised in these passages (see also Galatians 1:1)? In these texts and in many of his writings, Paul declares himself to be “an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus” (Titus 1:1). One more text: “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:1). An apostle is one who is sent. Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ, and of God, the Father, who raised Him from the dead. He had good backing. A messenger’s confidence is in proportion to the authority of the one who sends him, and to his confidence in that authority and power. Paul knew that he was sent by the Lord, and he knew that the power of God is the power that raises from the dead. Now “he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God” (John 3:34). Thus, it was that Paul spoke with authority, and the words which he spoke were the commandments of God (see 1 Corinthians 14:37). So, in reading this epistle, or any other in the Bible, we have not to make allowance for the writer’s personal peculiarities and prejudices. It is true that each writer retains his own individuality, since God chooses different men to do different work solely on account of their different personality; but it is God’s Word in all, and nothing need be taken off from the authority of the message, and set down to the score of natural bias or prejudice.

Monday: From Athens to Corinth – Read Acts 17:16-34; where was Paul before going to Corinth, and what did he do there? Paul was in Athens; his spirit was stirred, agitated powerfully, because he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Athens was then the metropolis of the world, the seat of all learning and art. It no doubt had more in it to attract the eye than all the rest of the world. Paul was educated and refined; he doubtless had an eye for the beautiful, both in nature and art. But his was the true culture and refinement – the culture that comes from an acquaintance with God. The vanities of Athens had no attraction for him. He could think only of the one thing – that all these were leading from God. How many Christians are there at the present time who, like Paul, are agitated over the wickedness that abounds, rather than attracted by and lost in admiration for the splendour that is often only a covering for vice? In this age of the world especially the Christian has something far greater to attract the attention than mere sight-seeing. We should not fail to notice the adroitness and skill with which Paul introduced his subject. The philosophers had said, “He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods” (Acts 17:18). Now the Athenians were very jealous of the worship of their gods. It is thought that they greatly surpassed all others in their zeal for religion. It was dangerous for anyone to speak against their idol worship. About 400 years before, Socrates, one of their own philosophers, the wisest and most highly esteemed of any among them, had been put to death because they thought he was unsettling the minds of the young, and teaching disrespect for the gods. Now if Paul had introduced this subject bluntly, it is doubtful if he would have been allowed to speak at all. Thus he would have defeated his own purpose. So he took them on their own ground. He said, “I perceive that ye are somewhat superstitious” (verse 22). The word “superstitious,” as used here, means ‘excessively religious.’ He had seen an altar with the inscription, “To an unknown God;” so he said, “Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.” They could find no fault with him for teaching them more perfectly concerning a god whom they professed to worship. But this means he was able to preach to them further, “Jesus and the resurrection.”

Paul showed on this occasion the wisdom of the serpent, in winning souls to Christ, as the apostles had been commanded. Those who labour in these last days would do well to learn a lesson from the preaching of Paul. Yet, how many are there who would not compromise the truth should they be placed in Paul's circumstances, and attempt to do this as he did?

Tuesday: The City of Corinth – Read Acts 18:1-3, 1 Corinthians 5:9-11, and 1 Corinthians 8:4; what do we learn here? Sending Paul to the wicked city of Corinth, the Lord said, "be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:9-10). With most of the world's population living today in the cities, the Lord calls us to preach the warning message to the cities. Must Seventh-day Adventists live in wicked cities in order to preach? We must practice country living to preach the cities. "The cities are to be worked from outposts. Said the messenger of God, 'Shall not the cities be warned? Yes; not by God's people living in them, but by their visiting them, to warn them of what is coming upon the earth'" {CL 30.2}.

Wednesday: "Many in This City" – Read Acts 18:4-8; what were the results of Paul's preaching? The Jews, leaders, opposed Paul. We are told: "Though Paul had a measure of success in Corinth, yet the wickedness that he saw and heard in that corrupt city almost disheartened him. The depravity that he witnessed among the Gentiles, and the contempt and insult that he received from the Jews, caused him great anguish of spirit. He doubted the wisdom of trying to build up a church from the material that he found there" {AA 250.1}. "As he was planning to leave the city for a more promising field, and seeking earnestly to understand his duty, the Lord appeared to him in a vision and said, "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city." Paul understood this to be a command to remain in Corinth and a guarantee that the Lord would give increase to the seed sown. Strengthened and encouraged, he continued to labor there with zeal and perseverance" {AA 250.2}.

Thursday: Paul's Letters to the Corinthians – Read 1 Corinthians 1:13, 1 Corinthians 5:1; how do these passages help us understand why Paul wrote letters to the Corinthians? Paul wrote letters to correct and encourage the Corinthians. These letters "written aforetime were written for our learning" (Romans 15:4). The letters could be read repeatedly; a written message is not so readily subject to errors that creep in when a message is transmitted orally. Let us now take lessons from 1 Corinthians 1:13. The question is asked, "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you?" (1 Corinthians 1:13), the answer obviously being in the negative. In that Christ is given to every man, each person gets the whole of Him. The love of God embraces the whole world, but it also singles out each individual. A mother's love is not divided up among her children, so that each one receives only a third, a fourth, or a fifth of it; each one is the object of all her affection. How much more so with the God whose love is more perfect than any mother's, and who Himself is love! Isaiah 49:15. Christ is the light of the world, the Sun of Righteousness. But light is not divided among a crowd of people. If a room full of people be brilliantly lighted, each individual gets the benefit of all the light, just as much as though he were alone in the room. So, the life of Christ lights every man that comes into the world, and in every believing heart Christ dwells in all His fullness. Sow a seed in the ground, and you get many seeds, each one having as much life as the one sown. So, Christ, the true Seed, whence everything of worth comes, gives to all the whole of His life. Next, let us also take lessons from 1 Corinthians 5:1. Paul says to the Corinthian brethren that "it is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles" (1 Corinthians 5:1). Someone must have told Paul, for he says, "it is reported." The reporter was not just gossiping, else would have been rebuked by Paul who warns them of "backbitings" (2 Corinthians 12:20) but must have had the interest of the church at heart to report the matter to Paul. "A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak" (Ecclesiasts 3:7). The reporter must have believed Paul was appointed by the Lord. Paul himself says, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:1-2). That the report was accurate, Paul acted upon it, "For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed" (1 Corinthians 5:3).