

# THE DIVINE COMPULSION

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## ACTS 18:1-11

18:1 After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;

18:2 And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them.

18:3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers.

18:4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

18:5 And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. <sup>5</sup> When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews *that Jesus is the Christ.*<sup>NKJ</sup>

18:9 Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent;

18:10 for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."

18:11 And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

<sup>2 COR 5:14</sup> For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. <sup>15</sup> And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.<sup>NKJ</sup>

After Paul's sermon on Mars Hill, and his time in the city of Athens, Paul left that city of culture and religion and came to one of the most sinful cities of the world of that day, the city of Corinth, a city 48 miles southwest of Athens. Barclay, the New Testament Scholar, writes that Corinth was a byword for sin and debauchery. He points out that the Temple of Aphrodite sat atop the Acropolis and had 1,000 prostitutes that came down to the city every night to "ply their trade." Gallio, the brother of Seneca the philosopher ruled the city as procounsul. There in Corinth, Paul became friend and mentor to Aquila and Priscilla who shared the trade of tentmaker with Paul. Here, in Acts 18, we are told about that. Moreover we see clearly the motivation of the great Apostle. Paul was compelled to do what he did. He ministered the Gospel under Divine Compulsion.

He was **FIRST OF ALL COMPELLED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.** <sup>5</sup> When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews *that Jesus is the Christ.*<sup>NKJ</sup>

Jesus told His disciples that He would send them the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, to guide them in all their ways.

JN 14:25 All this I have spoken while still with you. <sup>26</sup> But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

Lk 12:12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.

This Divine Compulsion guided Paul's life and his ministry. The result of this Compulsion of the Holy Spirit resulted in Paul Testifying to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. Now the Holy Spirit who compelled Paul did not compel him to do anything stupid or wrong. He simply Testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. Paul gave his personal testimony of how he found the truth in Christ. He proved by Scripture, that Jesus is the very one spoken of in all the prophets and psalms and writings of the Old Testament, and that He is the true Messiah, the King who would sit eternally upon the Throne of David.

Now when we think of Compulsion we are likely to think of the mental disorder of obsessive/compulsive behavior, such as that portrayed by Monk, one of my favorite TV characters. Or, we think of the more violent compulsive/obsessive behaviors that result in violence. But even among some Christians there are compulsive/obsessive behavior problems. A friend of mine told me about a Christian teacher of his in high school who would break out in 'tongues speaking' during class. He was a fine Christian man, but his behavior scared the students pretty badly. When the principal learned about his behavior that teacher was replaced.

The Divine Compulsion is always good and always right. When the Spirit of God laid his hand upon Paul's shoulder, Paul could not say no. There was but one option, obedience to the Holy Spirit.

We too need to be obedient to the Holy Spirit. When he tells us to testify to someone that Jesus is the Christ we should gladly do so. <sup>Rom 8:14</sup> because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

The Divine Compulsion of the Holy Spirit will never lead us into wrong paths. When we are led by the Spirit of God we will always do the right thing.

One of the great examples of following the COMPULSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT is in the Christmas story by Doctor Luke:

LK 2:25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. <sup>26</sup> It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. <sup>27</sup> Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, <sup>28</sup> Simeon took him in his arms and praised God,

We find three things in Simeon's relationship to the Spirit's Compulsion: 1st the Holy Spirit was upon him; 2nd he received a revelation by the Holy Spirit; and 3rd he was Moved by the Holy Spirit.

When we follow the Divine Compulsion of the Holy Spirit we will Testify of Jesus, just as Simeon did, just as the Apostle Paul did. Jesus said that such was the Spirit's ministry!

THE APOSTLE PAUL NEXT WAS ALSO COMPELLED BY THE WORD OF GOD. Listen: <sup>Acts 18:9</sup> Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; <sup>10</sup> for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."

Things had gotten pretty bad for Paul. The Jews that he testified to about Jesus were quite upset: <sup>6</sup> "But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook *his* garments and said to them, "Your blood *be* upon your *own* heads; I *am* clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." This, however, did not keep Paul from preaching the Gospel. The Bible says, <sup>7</sup> "And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain *man* named Justus, [a] *one* who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. <sup>8</sup> Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized." He was under Divine Compulsion and would not, could not, stop telling the story of Jesus.

But, this incident with the Jews must have caused him concern, and caused him to wonder if he should stay in Corinth. In fact, Paul was afraid. But to be afraid is human; to overcome fear is divine. Therefore Paul needed a Divine Word. That night in a vision, God gave him that word: "Fear not! Speak! Do not keep silent!" That sounds good, but where is the assurance? "I am with you, and no one can hurt you. I have many people in this city." God gave Him the assurance He needed. He went in the Divine Compulsion of the Word of God! He was compelled by the Word!

Are you compelled by the Word of God? Do you believe God's Word? Are you risking your life and especially your soul upon the Word of God? Does the Divine Compulsion of the Word push you out of your comfort zone and into a world of danger and fear? Paul had never read the Great Commission, but this was his commission, to preach to the world that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. We, however, have read the Great Commission. It says, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. And Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." <sup>Mt. 28:18-20</sup>

When William Carey read these words his heart burned within him. He went to a meeting and preached these words. An older preacher, Dr. John Rylands who had baptized Carey, said to Carey, "Young man, sit down. If God wants the Gospel preached to the heathen, He will do it Himself. He doesn't need you." Carey felt differently. Just a shoe cobbler, he went! Look what he did. He translated the entire *Bible* into six languages, and parts of the *Bible* into more than a score of others. He started over 100 schools for children in India, started the Semaphore College, started the first Indian newspaper, started the first farmer's bank for Indian farmers, and helped put an end to the practice of burning widows upon the funeral pyres of their dead husbands.

Another great missionary, David Livingstone, heard a returned missionary from Africa tell about the smoke of a thousand villages in Africa where people had never heard of Jesus.

Livingstone felt the Divine Compulsion of the Word and went to Africa, giving his life for that great continent, buried in St. Paul's Cathedral, with his heart buried in Africa. When someone asked Livingstone if he wasn't afraid journeying alone so much of the time, he answered, "Jesus said, I am with you always, and Jesus will keep His word, for Jesus is a Gentleman and a gentleman always keeps his word." The Word was enough for Livingstone! The word was enough for William Carey! The Divine Compulsion of the Word of God was enough for the Apostle Paul! The Divine Compulsion of the Word of God should be enough for us!

We read: <sup>18:11</sup> And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

**COMPELLED BY THE LOVE OF CHRIST.** Why would the great preacher from Tarsus spend 18 months in Corinth, this great wicked city, the longest stay in any city during this second missionary journey? He tells us in II Corinthians: <sup>2COR 5:14</sup> For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. <sup>15</sup> And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.<sup>NKJ</sup> Paul stayed in Corinth because, through the Love of Christ, he was under **DIVINE COMPULSION.**

Having written I and II Thessalonians in Corinth during his first missionary journey, Paul visited Corinth for a "second benefit" (see II Corinthians 1:15), and remained for three months, according to Acts 20:3. During this second visit in the spring of '58 it is likely the Epistle to the Romans was written."

The Divine Compulsion of Love, for Paul, that made him stay in Corinth for 18 months, was based on the fact that **JESUS DIED FOR HIM.** But he also knew that Jesus died for Jew and Gentile. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Later he would say, "In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female; we are all one in Christ Jesus." Paul realized that Jesus not only died for the Jews, but also for every human being who lived upon the face of earth, and every human being that would ever live upon the face of earth. To Paul the Pharisee that was a real revelation which he often referred to as the 'mystery of the ages' and 'the plan of the ages.' The mystery and the plan was that in Christ the entire Gentile world was by faith a part of the covenant that God established with Abraham and the Patriarchs, with Moses, and with David and his seed. God's eternal plan was to use the Jews to bring salvation to all human kind. That happened in Christ. Christ died for all mankind. "We love Him because He first loved us and gave Himself for us." "There is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female; for we are all one in Christ Jesus."

That Jesus had to die was proof that the human race was lost in sin, away from God. When God came in Christ it was not the Jews who killed Him, it was not the Romans who killed Him, it was the human race who killed Him. The human race killed the only perfect member of the human race. The human race sought to kill God by murdering Jesus. Such is the extent of our sin. We are become the enemies of the very God who created us in His own Image, after His own Likeness.

But how could God have such love for the human race that He would come in Christ and accept the abuse and corruption of man? He did it for love. God sent His Son to redeem us back to Himself. “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself...”

But the Love that sent Christ to the cross did not die! Jesus arose from the dead! Love was forever vindicated, the love of the Father for the Son, the love of the Son for those who followed Him and believed in Him.

The DIVINE COMPULSION for Paul was the very Love he found in Christ Jesus the Lord, the Love that loved him despite his sin, the Love that forgave him despite his persecution of the Christians. To Paul this was not some theological proposition, but the reality of meeting the Risen Christ on the Damascus Road, the reality of hearing Christ’s words of forgiveness, and the reality of being given a Spirit of Love for all the lost as Jesus sent him out into the world to be His warrior.

This DIVINE COMPULSION must be ours today. Although we cherish his words and thoughts, Paul is no longer with us. But Jesus is! “Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world.” We are compelled by the HOLY SPIRIT. We are compelled by the WORD OF THE HEAVENLY FATHER. We are compelled by THE LOVE OF CHRIST THE SON. That is the DIVINE COMPULSION.