



**“Such Were Some of You”**  
**‘Jesus Saves’ Series**  
**Kevin Presley**

Our series on conversions in **the Book of Acts** brings us to **Acts 18** to a new city with new challenges for the apostle Paul. So far, we’ve seen the conversion of many types of people: devout Jews on the Day of Pentecost, people duped by false miracle workers in Samaria, a bloodthirsty leader of the Pharisees, an honest and pious Gentile, a wealthy businesswoman, and a blue-collar jail guard in the city of Philippi. Today in our study, Paul takes on what most preachers would see as a great challenge: establishing a church in the wicked, pagan city of Corinth.

Corinth was an important city in Greece in the first century. Its very name was associated with rampant immorality. Its people worshipped the Greek goddess, Aphrodite, where immorality was committed in the very temple itself. It is said that there were some 1,000 prostitutes in the temple in Corinth. Nearly every sin one can imagine was common in Corinth and as I said, many preachers might shrink from even going to such a place, thinking that the gospel could never take hold in such a city. But we should learn an important lesson about the power of the gospel. We tend to focus our efforts in places where people are at least somewhat moral and religious. But Paul dared to go to some of the most vile and wicked places on earth to preach repentance and the saving message of Jesus Christ.

We should take heart and be challenged today as we look at our present world. It’s very easy for preachers and other Christians today to despair at the moral condition of the world and think that the gospel can have little success in such an age. But perhaps it’s an even greater opportunity than it is a challenge. Our wicked world today needs the gospel of Christ as badly as the ancient city of Corinth did and Paul went there. He persevered, he preached, and he won people to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We’ll spend our time today in **Acts 18**, but I want to begin with a passage in Paul’s first letter that he sent back to Corinth sometime later. Paul had a successful work for about two years, and he left a growing church behind, but that church would face challenges, as you might imagine, coming from the background they came from. Paul would have to write and correct a number of problems and errors that arose. He writes these words of warning and reminder to them.

**I Corinthians 6:9-11 “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”**

Paul’s list of sins indicates that the Corinthians were living in a very evil environment. It’s easy to see why the church struggled with sin, but the gospel is a powerful thing. It made holy people out of those whose lives had been steeped in sin and wickedness. Today, the gospel can do the same thing for you, no matter who you are, where you’ve been, or what you’ve done. We’ll look at the conversion of the Corinthians in our series *Jesus Saves* today.

As we’ve studied through **the Book of Acts**, since the Day of Pentecost, we have seen the rapid spread of Christianity throughout the first-century world. It is now spreading throughout the Roman Empire. We’ve seen the words of Jesus spoken to His apostles in **Acts 1:8** fulfilled as the gospel has been preached first beginning in Jerusalem, then throughout Judea, on to Samaria, and now the church is spreading to the uttermost parts of the earth. As the gospel continues its invasion of the Roman Empire, Paul and his traveling companions are encountering the pagan world of idolatry and immorality, but nothing thus far surpasses the moral depravity they would encounter in the city of Corinth.

When we left Paul last week, he was in the city of Philippi where a wonderful church was established. But he had to leave that city eventually, going on to Thessalonica and Berea and meeting resistance from the leaders of those cities. So, leaving Silas and Timothy behind, he goes alone to the city of Athens where he preaches his famous sermon on the Areopagus on Mars Hill. All along the way, the Bible tells us that some believed Paul as he preached and indicates that they became converts from Paul’s preaching. As we saw last week, the term *believe* means much more than just mere *mental assent* or *trust*. It envelops all of the steps of obedience that are outlined in the gospel. In other words, when people believed, they acted upon the teachings of the gospel in obeying its conditions, such as repentance, being willing to confess the Christ, and being baptized in obedience to Christ’s command. This is, after all, what Jesus said in the great commission.

**Mark 16:15-16 “And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.””**

So, belief in the gospel includes obedience to the gospel. We can have every confidence when the Bible says these people from place to place and city to city *believed*, it means they embraced the gospel. They obeyed its teaching, including being immersed for the remission of their sins. That’s the pattern that we’ve seen over and over again in our studies over the past several weeks. We’ll see this idea of belief and baptism being inextricably joined play out again in our study today as we follow Paul to the city of Corinth.

Paul was a tentmaker by trade and when he left Berea and came to Corinth, he met a wonderful couple there who were already believers in Christ. A man named Aquila and his wife, Priscilla. They, too, were tentmakers and their shared vocation brought Paul and this couple together. In fact, Paul was invited to stay with them for a time and a great friendship and fellowship in the gospel came about. This godly couple were not only dear to Paul personally through the years, they were nearly indispensable in the work of the early church, in Paul’s ministry, and the spread of the gospel throughout Europe.

So, Paul made his home with this couple while working in Corinth. Of course, his objective in that city was not to advance his tentmaking career, but to preach the gospel. He continued to do just that even while working with his hands. I've known many a preacher who had to labor in some secular career in order to provide for himself and his family, doing so in order that he could be able to preach. By the way, any preacher who isn't willing to do that, who thinks he's above work, who's not willing to go to work when the need arises to provide for himself—that man isn't worth much to the cause of Christ. The Bible teaches that the church is to support those who labor in the gospel. But, on this occasion, Paul found it best to rely on his tentmaking trade to allow him to stay there and to spread the gospel in that city. Paul would work through the week making tents, but the record says that when the Sabbath day came, he went to the local synagogue because he would find Jews there with whom he could discuss and reason about the scriptures and preach Christ to them. That was his strategy throughout his journeys. That's generally where Paul first went in a city, not because he was trying to perpetuate the Jewish customs and observe Jewish law, for as a Christian he was free from that. It was because he could find people familiar enough with the scriptures to reason with them about Christ. If he could first convert some of them to Christ, they gave him a base or a nucleus from which he could reach out and continue to spread the gospel to that city, including the Gentile people. That's what he did here.

**Acts 18:4 “And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.”**

Now, the events that followed resulted in an unusual thing. That is, the conversion of the very ruler of that synagogue to Christ. Usually when Paul encountered the Jewish leaders, he met some opposition, and this is no exception. The hierarchy of power, the Jewish religion, not only resisted Jesus Himself, they also resisted the preaching of the apostles. The Bible says that when Paul testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ, they opposed him and blasphemed.

**Acts 18:5-7 “When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. 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.” And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue.”**

Here, Paul found an open ear in Justus, and he was allowed to use his house to teach people about Christ. Notice what happens.

**Acts 18:8 “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.”**

Like the jailer we learned about last week, and like Cornelius in **Acts 10**, Crispus and his household *believed on the Lord*. But then it says that many of the Corinthians *believed and were baptized*.

Remember that in every case of conversion where we're given any details, each and every case ended with the person who accepted the gospel being immediately baptized. That's because the early church was operating under the commission. I go back to that again--the commission that Jesus gave to them, which is the same commission we are to follow today as well since we've never received another one. That commission said to ***Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15)***. Every creature in Jerusalem, every creature in Samaria, every creature throughout the Roman Empire,

including right here in the city of Corinth. ***He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned (Mark 16:16).*** That's exactly what we've seen happening time and again since the first sermon was preached by Peter on the Day of Pentecost in **Acts 2**.

Here, we come to a specific case where the Bible says that Crispus and his household believed on the Lord, then goes on to say of many other Corinthians that they heard, believed, and were baptized. So, why does it merely say that Crispus believed and that others went ahead and were baptized? Does that signal to us that baptism is not essential and is therefore relatively unimportant? Was there some reason why Crispus did not see the need to be baptized? Well, we actually know beyond the shadow of any doubt that Crispus WAS baptized just like all of the others. How do we know that? Because when Paul later wrote back to this church when it was dealing with some internal trouble, he plainly recalls the beginning of that church.

**I Corinthians 1:14 "I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,"**

You see, Crispus WAS baptized by Paul himself, doubtlessly when Paul preached to him at the house of Justus and when he believed. So, again, we have yet another case which proves the gospel order that always took place. I want to emphasize this, it always took place when the gospel was preached and received. They first heard the gospel. Every person who is saved must first hear the gospel.

**Romans 10:17 "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."**

We're not saved by visions, dreams, feelings, Holy Ghost experiences, or any other kind of experience. People are only saved when they hear the gospel. There are no exceptions to that. No one can be saved without hearing the gospel. Then the Bible says they believed the gospel. And upon believing the gospel, they were immediately baptized for the remission or forgiveness of their sins. That's the way the gospel works to save people from their sins still today. Anybody who claims to be preaching and sharing the gospel of Christ and does not include all of those steps—friend, they are not preaching the gospel. They're only preaching part of the gospel if they're preaching any of it at all. That should concern us.

You might ask, *why then did Paul say that he thanked God that he baptized only a few of them?*

**I Corinthians 1:17 "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect."**

Some will try to use this verse to say that Paul is showing that baptism has nothing to do with the gospel but is just a church ceremony that has nothing to do with being saved. But is that what Paul is teaching? Is he teaching that baptism is not a part of gospel obedience, of coming into Christ and having sins forgiven? No, not at all. Look at **verse 14**.

**I Corinthians 1:14-15 "I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name."**

You see, Paul was not minimizing baptism and its importance, nor was he suggesting that baptism is not included in the commands of the gospel plan of salvation. He was saying *I'm glad that I was not the one who baptized you, lest you should think I baptized in my own name*. By the time Paul wrote back to this established congregation, a number of problems had emerged. One of which was prideful and petty attitudes and behavior among the members. The Corinthian church was wont to boast and compare

themselves with each other. That's how they treated spiritual gifts as we read later in this epistle. Paul is saying here that he wanted no part in someone boasting over the fact that Paul, the great apostle, had baptized them with his own hands. That doesn't mean they weren't baptized, nor does it mean that their baptism was not essential or was unimportant. It was simply that Paul was relieved that he, personally, had not baptized them so they could not stake their claim on Paul's name, reputation, fame, or importance in the scheme of things.

Remember, according to **Acts 18**, by the time Paul had converted Crispus and the others at the house of Justus, Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia and joined him there in Corinth, and I assume that he left that duty to those men or even some of the new converts such as Crispus himself after he became a Christian. You see, it's not important who the man is that baptizes a person into Christ. What is important is the heart and mind of the one being baptized. Sometimes even today when missionaries or evangelists go to a foreign country to preach the gospel and establish churches, they will often wisely choose to have the local preachers of that native land do the baptizing, lest someone think they're special or set apart from everybody else because they were baptized by a foreign preacher, thinking that that man is notable or perhaps more significant. That's all Paul is saying here in this passage. And when he said *Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel*, he wasn't saying that being baptized has nothing to do with the gospel or with salvation. He was simply showing that baptism is the result of people hearing and believing the gospel, and he came there as an inspired apostle to preach that gospel to them, and that it did not matter who the individual was who performed the act of baptism.

Paul faced a number of challenges in Corinth. All of these people obey the gospel and a church is established. Paul endured some hardships and difficulties there; so much so that he was tempted to leave, but God assured him that He wanted him to remain there. So, Paul stayed for another year and a half to build up the church in that city. A church was born and a church remained that would face many struggles of its own, just as any church will face. But it was still a Church of the Lord Jesus nonetheless. It was a church that was striving to be faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ who had its problems that Paul had to write back and address. In fact, he very sternly addressed those problems. He wrote them in such a stern tone that he threatened that when he came to them, it would not be a pleasant meeting if they didn't get those difficulties and issues straightened out in the congregation. But Paul loved them as his brethren and treated them as a Church of the Lord Jesus.

The city of Corinth was a notoriously wicked and immoral city. In fact, the name of the city itself is synonymous with immoral behavior. That bustling and prosperous city was rank with every kind of sinful and immoral behavior and lifestyle that you can imagine. As I earlier said, the very temple itself had numerous—maybe up to 1,000—prostitutes and immorality was a part of their pagan worship. Paul lists the various types of sins that were going on in the city of Corinth.

**I Corinthians 6: 9-11 “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.”**

Why did he ask that rhetorical question? Because they were letting sin slip into their lives. In **chapter 5**, he talks about a man who was living in an incestuous relationship. He had his father's wife. It was so bad that it wasn't even a sin that the Gentiles accepted as a rule, but here's this man living in this unspeakable way of life. Paul reminds them that they need to know that the unrighteous will not inherit

the kingdom of God. You can't live in sin and immorality and be saved. We need to know that today as well. Paul says that in no uncertain terms. That is his picture of life in the ancient city of Corinth. It's also a picture of life in America and much of the world today. But, you know, we should realize that the world is really no more wicked and sinful today than it was 2,000 years ago. There isn't anything that we encounter today that Paul didn't encounter in places like Corinth back in the first century. Today, it's thrown into our living rooms through television and media. We're so connected around the world that we're aware of what goes on all around the world at any given time. But the fact is, sin existed in the world 2,000 years ago—since the dawn of time when Adam sinned and introduced sin into the world—and this world continues to lie in sin and wickedness.

Paul confronted religious sin, sexual sin, every kind of sin under the sun throughout the ancient world, especially throughout the Roman world. It was a fierce, dark, and ungodly world in which to live. Many a preacher and many a Christian would approach a city of Corinth today saying, *there's no hope for that crowd. I don't want to go there and preach. The church will never amount to anything in a place like that. We're wasting our time preaching in a city such as Corinth.* I think the Church—especially in America—is guilty of sitting back and wringing its hands and thinking, *well, the glory days of the gospel are past. What good is it to preach and evangelize? We might as well just try to keep the lights burning in the church house for Jesus until He comes again to rescue the faithful few.*

But that wasn't Paul's attitude. Paul rose to the challenge. Paul believed in the power of the gospel. He rolled up his sleeves and took the gospel to those people who were living in sin and evil and immorality, believing that the gospel could change lives. I believe that today or I wouldn't be sitting here preaching on this television program week after week. I believe it can change my life, your life, any life. Regardless of what your life now is, the gospel can change you. Christ has the power to change you. For Paul not only lists the sins that were prevalent in the city of Corinth. He says to the church there, listen now:

**I Corinthians 6:11 “And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”**

Were what? Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomites, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners—*such were some of you, BUT you were washed.* Washed by the blood of Jesus in the waters of baptism. *But you were sanctified.* That means *set apart, made holy*, freed from that life to live a new and a changed and holy life. He can do that for you. *But you were justified.* Declared righteous as though you had never sinned through the blood of Jesus Christ. *Washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.*

My friend, if that could happen for them, it can happen for you. There is no sin too deep or too bad for the blood of Christ to reach. No sin too powerful for the gospel to break its chains. If God could make new creations out of those people in Corinth, He can make a new creation out of you, and no matter what you've done or where you've been, you can be a new creature in Christ.

©2020 BibleWay Media. All rights reserved.  
BibleWay Media grants permission to copy this material for personal use. Permission is also granted to distribute this transcript as long as it is reproduced in its entirety, used solely for its original purpose of spreading the gospel, and attribution is given to the author and Let the Bible Speak.