

ORDER OF SERVICE

Sunday 17 October 2021

Chit Chat
Welcome and Notices
Christine Bradbeer

Prayer of Invocation

Young @ Heart
Hymns and penguins
Christine Bradbeer

Bible Reading: Acts 18:1-17
Amanda Fairs

Sermon
Corinth opens...
the freedom of the city

Meditation
Andante and Allegro
Sonata in G minor, by Handel
Amanda Fairs (viola), Sue hamerton (violin)
Barbara Manovel (cello)

Prayer of Intercession
and
The Lord's Prayer

Benediction



NOTICES

17 October 2021

www.blackburnpc.org.au

Wednesday 20 October 1.30 pm Covenanted Prayer Time.

Sunday 24 October 11 am Divine Service. Online Only.
Live stream on Facebook, later with
closed caption option on YouTube.

For Your Prayers

Congregational member: **Keith FERRES.**

and



Rob and Teresa and family: Please pray for a growing
number of connections into the U community in Melbourne [no
image].

GARDENIA ST

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

53 Gardenia Street,
Blackburn 3130



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GARDENIA ST. PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH BLACKBURN

17 October 2021



Papyrus 38

Designated **p.38** this is an early copy of part of the
Acts of the Apostles. It contains only Acts
18:27-19:6.12-16. The manuscript has been dated
to 220 AD. University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

WELCOME



Despite reforms, Uzbekistan's political system remains largely authoritarian. Many reform promises remain unfulfilled. Thousands of people, mainly peaceful religious believers, remain in prison on false charges. The National Security Service still holds strong powers to detain perceived critics, and there is no genuine political pluralism.

During 2020, there were reports of torture and ill-treatment in prisons, most former prisoners were not rehabilitated, journalists and activists were persecuted, independent rights groups were denied registration, and forced labor was not eliminated.

Human Rights Watch 2020

Church leaders are often subject to persecution at the hands of the authorities. They can be detained, or denied visas to leave the country. Many are fined for holding 'illegal' meetings, possessing Christian literature or even having Christian songs on their phone.

Outside the church, Christian men may be overlooked for promotion in the workplace, and businessmen who follow Jesus are watched and monitored by the authorities. Because of this, Christian families are sometimes crippled by financial hardship.

Compulsory military service can also expose Christian men to further harassment and hostility and they are forced to leave their families with little income.

The decision to leave Islam for Christianity is costly for many women. Social expectations around submission mean most females cannot choose their religion and are in great danger if they do so. In extreme cases, wives must flee their own homes..

Open Doors 2021

Sermon
Outline

Corinth opens... the freedom of the city!

Paul moved on quickly from Athens to Corinth. Paul's arrival can be dated (within six months) to late 49 or early 50 AD drawing on Claudius' expulsion of Jews and the date of Gallio's Proconsulship. Paul stayed for a year and a half!

The city (destroyed in 146 BC) had been rebuilt as a Roman Colony in 44 BC and was the provincial capital of Greece. It featured a high acropolis; the *Acrocorinth* surmounted by a temple to the goddess Aphrodite, whose culture impacted the morality of the port city.

1. Jesus' people gather and regroup (18:2,5)

Arriving in Corinth Paul met two Christian believers who were among the Jews expelled from Rome by edict of the Emperor Claudius; Aquila and Priscilla. (See *impulsore Chresto* - right). They become friends and feature in several letters (1 Corinthians 16:9, Romans 16:3). We meet them again in Ephesus (18:26).

They were 'tentmakers' or leather-workers, since tents were then made of leather. We know that Paul 'worked with his own hands to earn a living (rather than the support of the believers (1 Thessalonians 2:9). Now we hear for the first time that his trade was 'tentmaker'. A trade was common for Rabbis.

Eventually Silas and Timothy arrive from Macedonia (18:9) They bring gifts (Philippians 4:14f) which enable Paul to give himself more fully to teaching.

2. Familiar opponents, new friends (18:5-8)

The synagogue was open to discussions about the scriptures. However 'Jesus is the Messiah' was as contentious as before. The Gentile, Titius Justus was persuaded, as was Crispus, the Jewish leader of the synagogue, and others. However hostility intensified. Despite Paul's encouraging vision, he was still hauled before the authorities.

Gallio, the Proconsul (and brother of the *Stoic* writer Seneca) dismissed the parties at the bar. 'No crime was committed' he declared. It was an internal Jewish matter. By this decision Gallio legalised the Christian faith in the empire as a tolerated religion, like Judaism (from which he did not distinguish it). Paul's mission moved from the synagogue to the house next door!

3. Civic freedoms, old prejudices (17:24, 28)

Despite granting tolerance of Jesus' disciples, the Proconsul also tolerated the mob violence against Jewish Sosthenes. Jews had been tolerated but periodically victimised. What is needed for coexistence without violence?

In 54 AD Nero invited Jews back to Rome. On the other hand the freedom granted by Gallio was reversed at some stage. By the year 110 AD the Younger Pliny writes of the capture and torture of two Christian deaconesses. (Book 10, Letter 96). The faith had been outlawed.

What moves are used to marginalise the faith today? Consider the instructive case of Päivi Räsänen, Finland's interior minister from 2011 to 2015.

Religious freedom, currently an issue in Australia, is one of many competing freedoms which any civil society needs to balance.



Street in ancient Corinth. Temple of Apollo (right) Corinth was privileged as a Roman Colony. It featured many temples and the most imposing acropolis in the ancient world.



IMPULSORE CRESTO

This statue of Roman Emperor Claudius, is now in the Louvre, Paris. The Roman Suetonius wrote that Claudius expelled Jews from Rome for disturbances *impulsore Chresto* - 'at the instigation of Chresto'. To whom does he refer?



Jewish scholar Louis Feldman states that most scholars assume that the disturbances were due to the spread of Christianity in Rome. James Dunn states that the disturbances Suetonius refers to were probably caused by the objections of Jewish community to preachings by early Christians; Dunn moreover perceives confusion in Suetonius which would weaken the historical value of the reference as a whole. William Lane states that the cause of the disturbance was likely the preachings of Hellenistic Jews in Rome and their insistence that Jesus was the Messiah, resulting in tensions with the Jews in Rome.

The Temple of Apollo, a few miles north of Corinth, where the Delphi Inscription was discovered in the 20th century, used to date the proconsulship of Gallio which provides a peg for the chronology of Paul. Wikipedia

