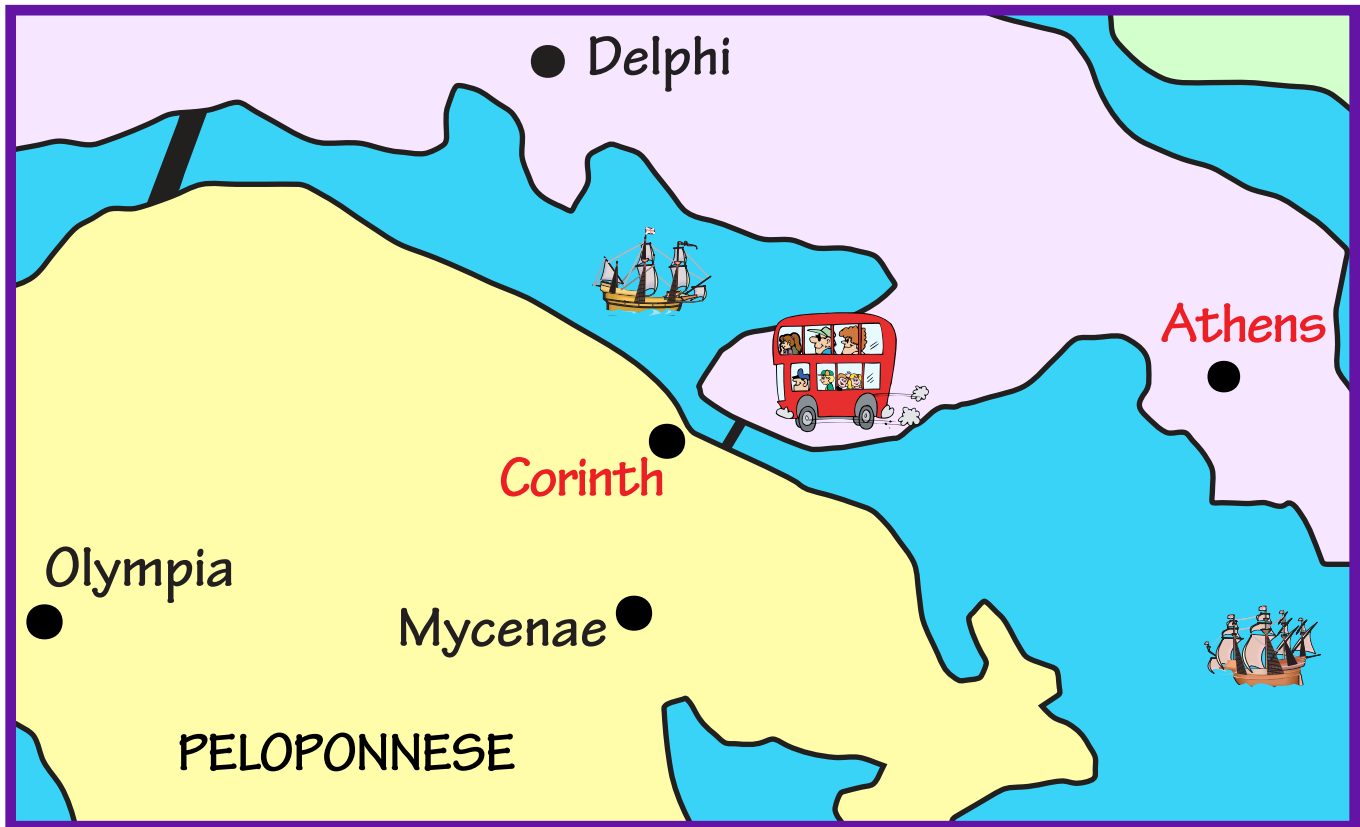


Tour of the Holy Lands - Corinth



Paul gave his best speech to the people of Athens. He had chosen his words carefully, but the people were like the Pharisees in the Bible – they were very intelligent and thought they knew everything they needed to know already. Very few in the audience became Christians. Paul was disappointed. It seemed like God had let him down. But, as Paul thought about it, perhaps coming to Athens was not God-directed, but his own decision. It gave him reason to listen more carefully. It was an important lesson for Paul.

God directed Paul to Corinth, which was a huge city compared to Athens — in fact, it was 20 times larger! Surely there would be more people there who were interested in becoming Christians. So that's where we are going, too. Here we are now, back at the familiar Corinth Canal. Let's cross the bridge one more time.

YOUNG PAUL LEARNING HOW TO MAKE TENTS



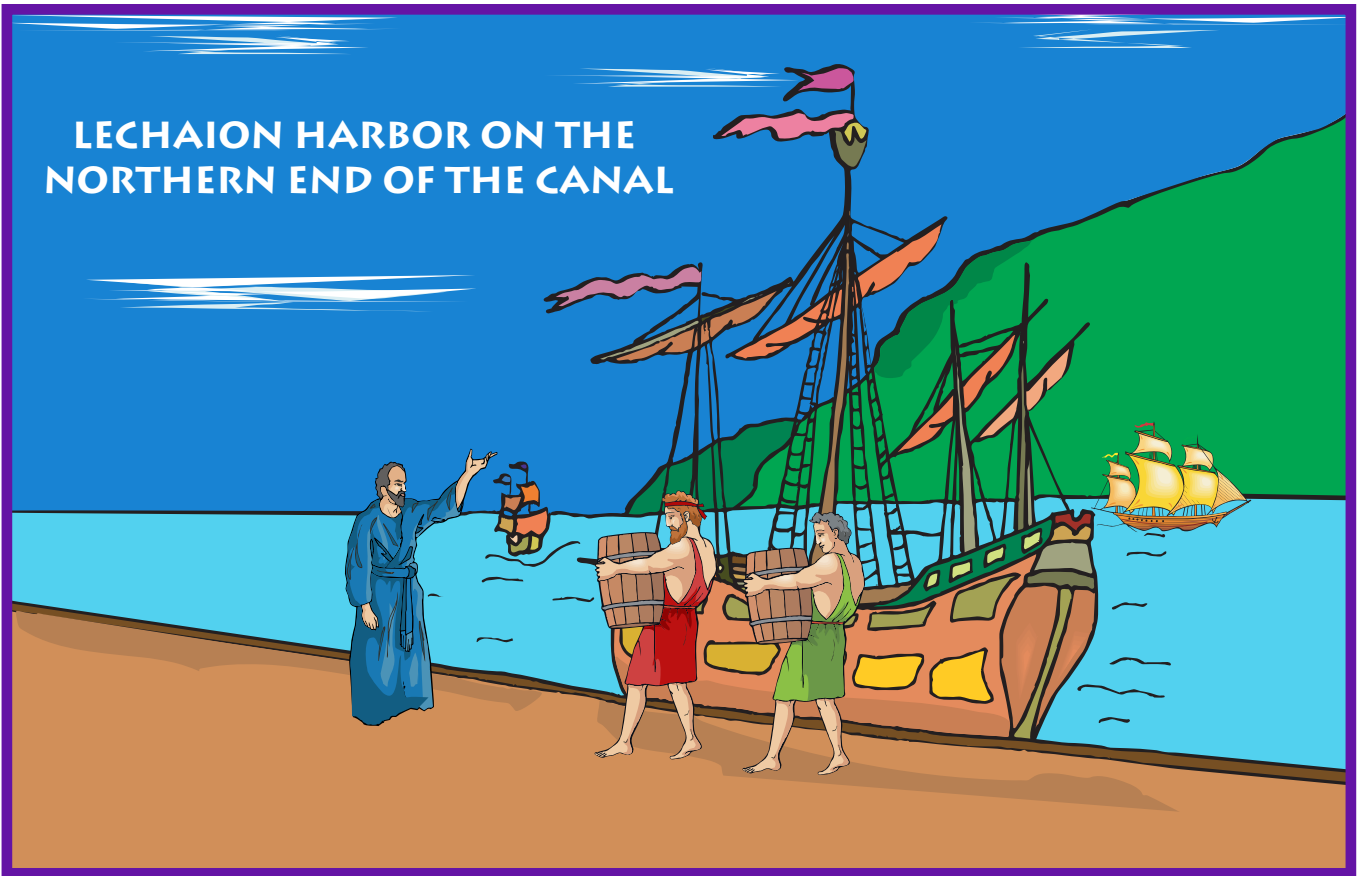
When Paul arrived in the large city of Corinth, he suddenly realized how alone he was. He missed his friends in northern Greece, and worried about how they were doing.

But it wasn't long before Paul made new friends. It happened when he began to look for a job. He had to earn some money. He didn't want to rely on others to take care of him. You might remember that it was a custom for every Jew to learn a trade. When he was young, Paul learned how to make tents, awnings and sails out of goat hair and animal skins. After asking around, he found a shop that needed his skills.



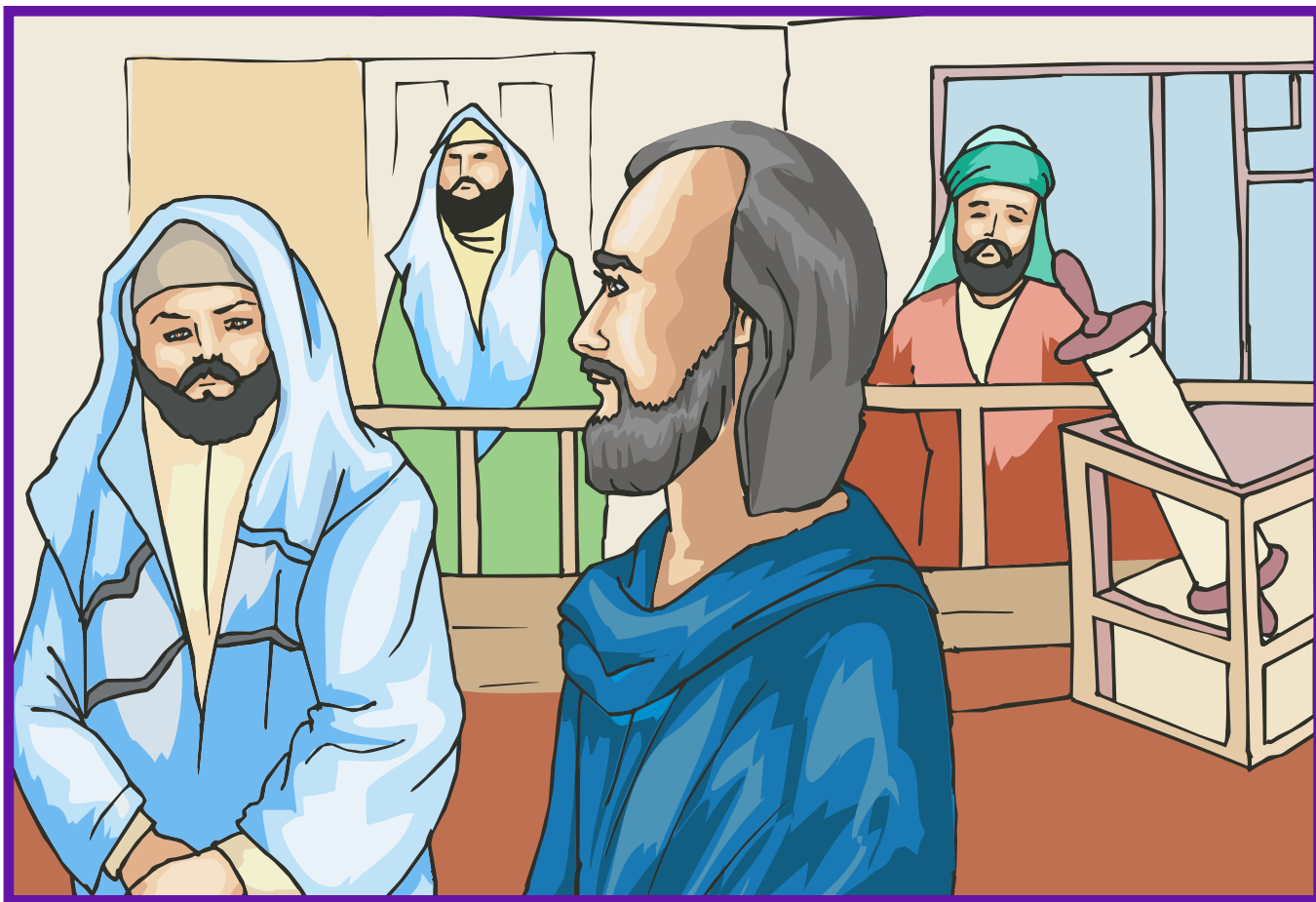
The shop was owned by Aquila and his wife, Priscilla. You and I met them three summers ago in Ephesus, but it is here in Corinth where Paul meets them for the first time. Paul called them his “helpers in Christ.” These three Christians made a great team, making tents and winning souls.

LECHAION HARBOR ON THE NORTHERN END OF THE CANAL



Corinth had two harbors – one on each end of the Corinth Canal. Ships would dock in them on their passages between Italy and Asia. Because of that, Corinth was called “the Bridge of Greece.” Why did that interest Paul? With his help, he hoped the salesmen and sailors from the ships would become Christians in Corinth and then take what they had learned back to sea, spreading the word of God throughout the Mediterranean.

But first, Paul faced a challenge in Corinth that he didn’t expect—bad behavior! The sailors looked forward to stopping in Corinth because they could party all night with the pretty ladies. Paul knew that people who party a lot don’t usually want to know about God.

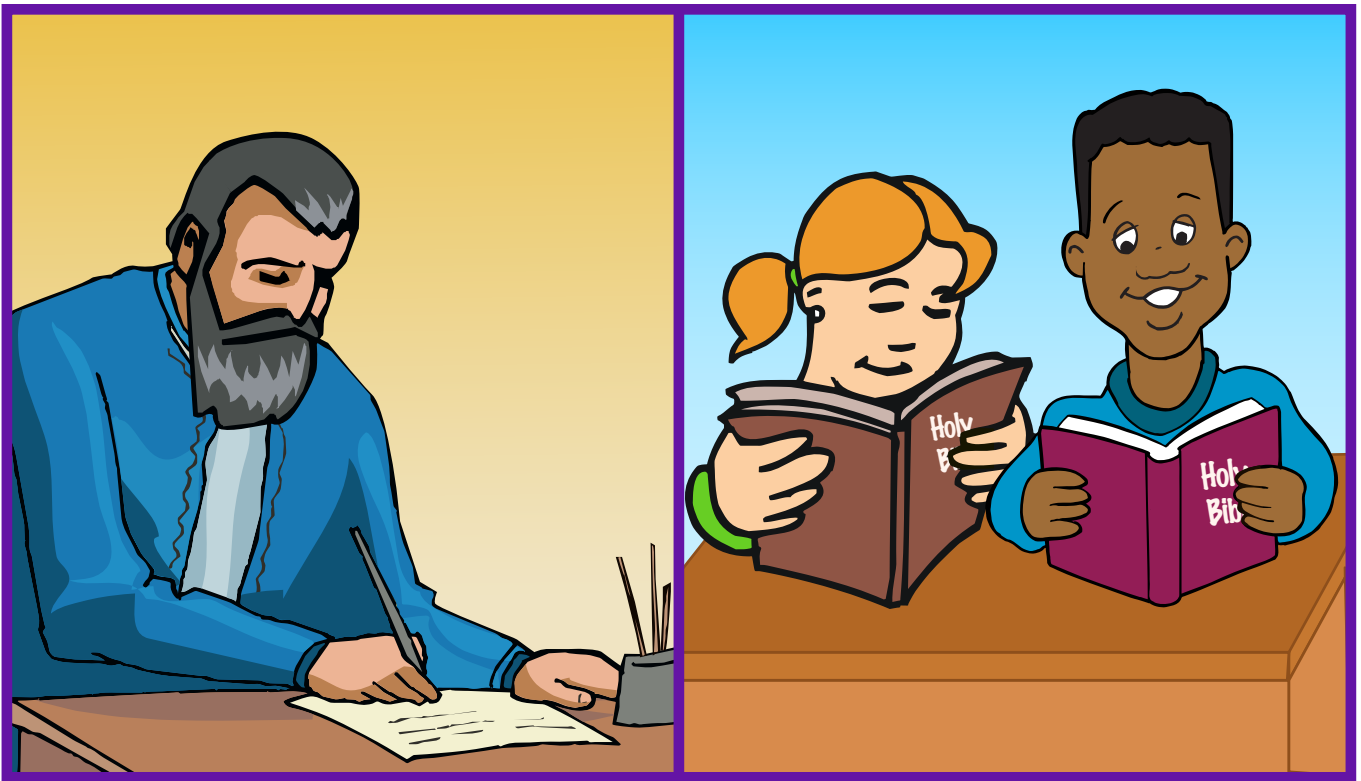


Paul worked at his trade during the week and held talks in the synagogue on Saturday, which was the Jewish Sabbath. Years later, archaeologists found a sign carved in stone in Corinth that said, "Synagogue of the Hebrews." It's always fun to hear that an artifact has been found which proves a Bible story to be true.





It wasn't long before Paul's friends, Silas and Timothy, showed up in Corinth, bringing good news about the churches in northern Greece. All of Paul's worries were put to rest. The church members had not given up their faith. They refused to believe the stories they'd been told about Paul deserting them. Plus, his friends brought Paul money, which meant he could spend more time preaching and less time working in the tent shop.

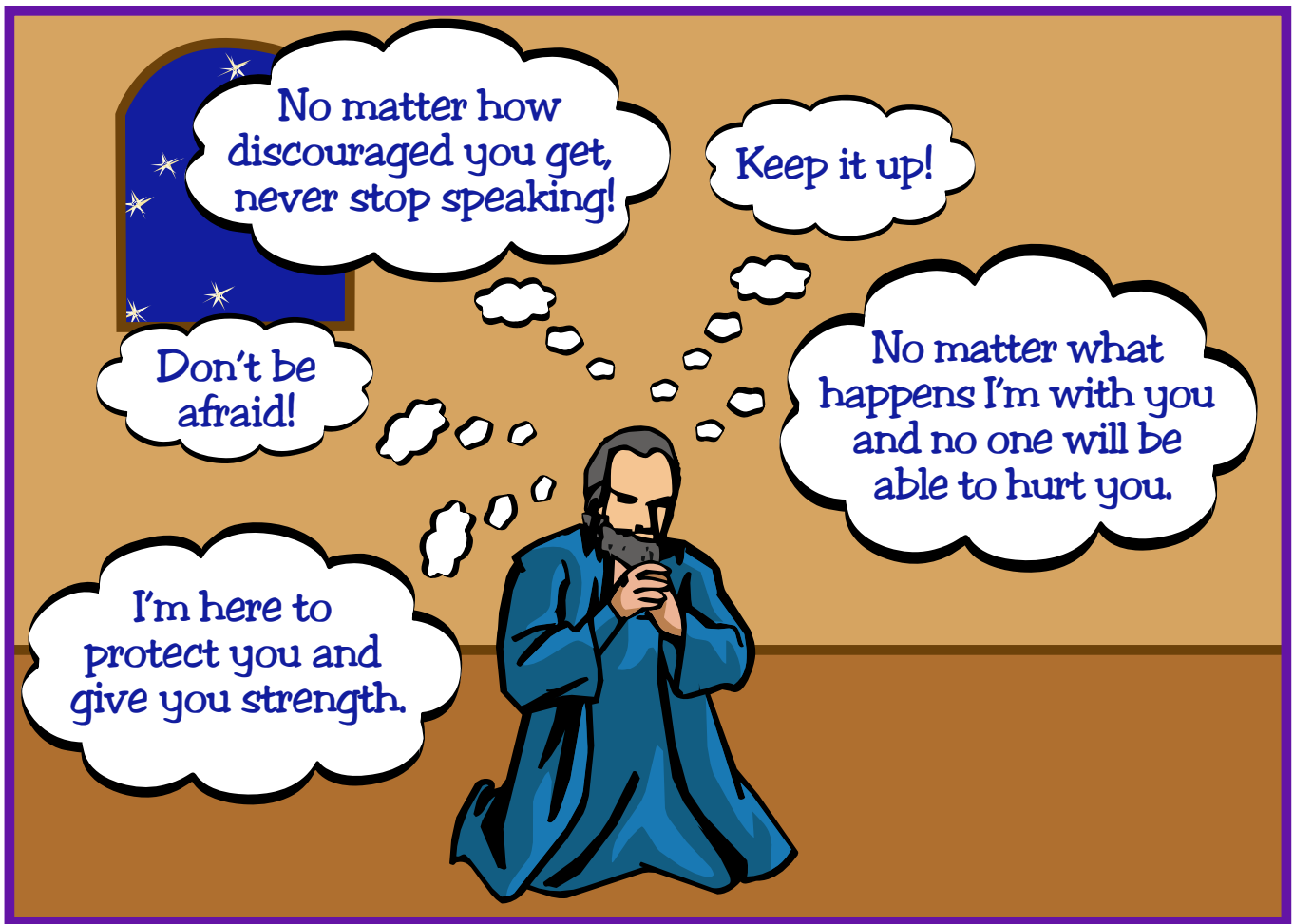


It was then that Paul wrote his very first letter, called an epistle. He wrote to the Thessalonians in 50 CE. In that letter, Paul thanked God for them, and he told them that he prayed to be able to fill whatever was missing in their faith. Just think – we still have this first letter so we can feel the same warm caring from his words as those early Christians did.



Meanwhile, the Jews in Corinth began to give Paul a hard time. They didn't believe that their Messiah would be hanged on a cross. Finally, Paul stopped trying to talk them into believing the Word of God. He stood up and shook the dust from his robe, which was a common way of showing someone that you were moving on and leaving their "dust" behind. From now on Paul was going to talk to the Gentiles because they believed what he had to say.

Paul walked out of the synagogue and went next door to the home of Titius (tish'ee-us) Justus, a Roman citizen and a "God-fearer." That meant that he had been attending Jewish services, but was not Jewish. There, Paul was welcome to preach. Many came to hear him and decided to become Christians.



In fact, the first person to become a Christian was the ruler of the synagogue (and his whole family) where Paul had just left! The Gentiles were curious and interested in what Paul was preaching, and the power of God began working in them. More and more Gentiles became believers.

One night Paul heard an encouraging divine message: Keep it up! Don't be afraid. No matter how discouraged you get, never stop speaking. How will they know unless you tell them? No matter what happens, I'm with you and no one will be able to hurt you. I'm here to protect you and give you strength. You have no idea how many people I have here in this city. They may not respond right away, but these are God's people and many of them are waiting to be shown.

**PAUL IS STANDING ON THE BEMA
WITH THE ACROCORINTH IN THE BACKGROUND**

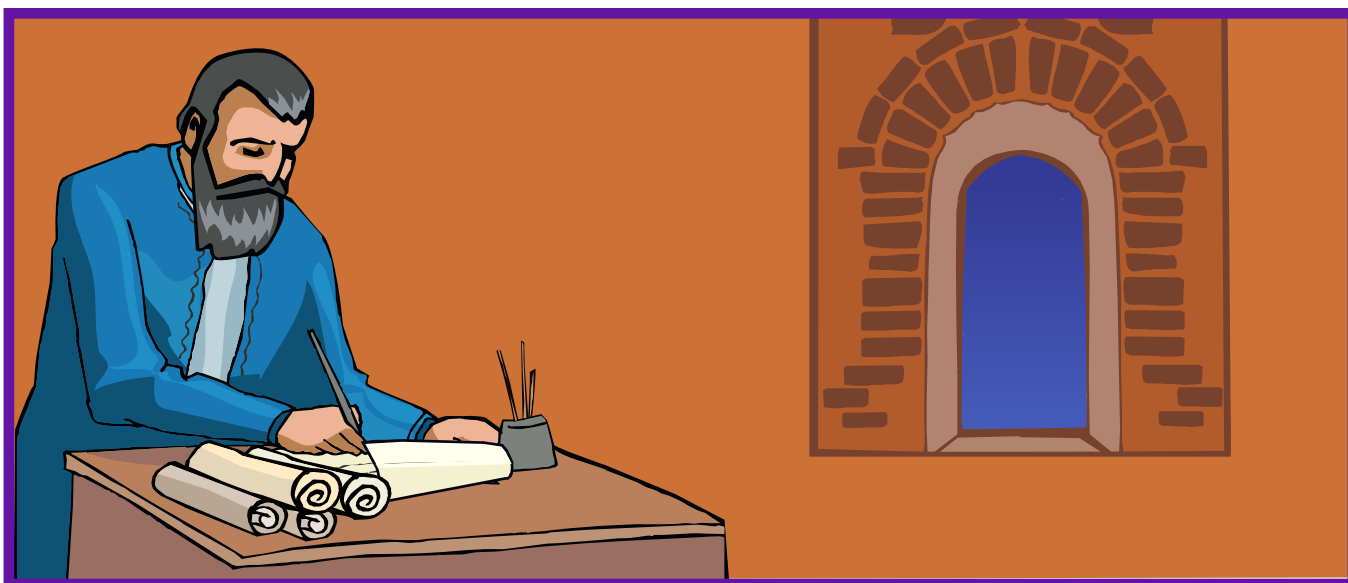


This promise was fulfilled! Paul preached in Corinth for quite a while—until another plan was shown to him. He established a strong church that would prove to be a beacon of light shining over the regions of Europe. This church would become the largest of all the churches Paul established.



As the Corinth church grew, a new Roman governor over the Peloponnese came to power. His name was Gallio and he was well-educated and charming.

By this time, the Christian church was growing faster than the synagogue, and this made the Jews very unhappy. They decided they were going to do something about it. They would test the new governor by pointing out to him that the law did not allow all religions in Corinth. Judaism was allowed, but the Jews declared that Paul was preaching something illegal. Before anything could be said in court, Governor Gallio told the Jews that if this was a criminal matter, he would be happy to listen to them. But this was a Jewish matter. He told them, "Take care of it yourselves. I can't be bothered." And then he turned to the lictors (men armed with rods) and said, "Drive the accusers from the court."



By refusing to get involved, the governor made Christianity a legal religion.

The audience in the court began to attack the new ruler of the synagogue, whose name was Sosthenes (saws'then-eez). They beat him up. The governor said nothing. Perhaps he was trying to teach a lesson to these men for wasting his time.

Paul stayed in Corinth for more than a year and a half. During that time, he started more churches and helped with challenges they faced. Paul also wrote a LOT of letters! They were LONG ones, too. He cared deeply for every church he started, and he wanted to support and encourage them. His letters reminded the church members of how Christ Jesus had taught us to live – of what it took to be a Christian.

Paul also wrote a letter to the church in Rome, preparing the way to visit them and asking for their help with spreading Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. This letter would become his greatest work, and it's in the Bible—it's the book of Romans. Imagine one of your letters being so good and so long that it becomes a book one day—and a book that is a very helpful tool for living a Christian life!