

The  
**ACTS**  
of the Apostles



God is faithful to encourage us in various ways when we face tough seasons of ministry and life.

Acts 18

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# Introduction

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- Paul, who is downcast in a hard season of ministry, makes his way to Corinth under a cloud.
- God gives Paul the refreshment and strength he needs to endure.
- We also see two other things, Paul's commitment to fulfill a vow in his journey and his entrusting the Ephesian church to his friends, Aquila and Priscilla.

God encourages us in difficult seasons  
of ministry when we need it most

Acts 18:1-17

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# Background

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- After suffering a beating in Philippi, public rejection in Thessalonica and Berea, and smug indifference in Athens, Paul walks the 50 miles to Corinth.
- He arrives in a dejected and depressed mood, burdened by anxiety from the problems in Macedonia and his dismissal among the Athenian philosophers, yearning to find a more receptive audience in this new city.

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# Background

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- He later records he stumbled into Corinth “in weakness and in fear, and much trembling” (1 Corinthians 2:1–3).
- This demeanor was likely due to worry that the same pattern he experienced in his past would happen again.
- Paul was tired and disillusioned and in need of some divine encouragement.

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# Background

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- Coming out of Athens, where he had experienced a great culture shock, he now enters Corinth, where he experiences a great moral shock.
- Corinth was notorious for its sexual depravity—the Vanity Fair of ancient times.
- In fact, to Corinthianize (a term well-known in Paul's day), referred to a person's transition into a sexually immoral lifestyle, and it took many forms.

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# Background

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- Cultish prostitution, where a thousand prostitutes would descend on the city every night to encourage citizens to worship Aphrodite through sexual encounters with them in the temple, was the norm.
- Homosexual behavior was rampant.
- The city was hyper-sexualized. Engaging in illicit behavior was smiled upon, even seen as spiritual.

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# Aquila and Priscilla

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- Almost immediately, God begins to encourage Paul in his time of frailty and darkness.
- First, we see God gives Paul community. The Lord offers people for Paul not only to partner with in ministry, but work with day to day: Aquila and Priscilla.
- Paul describes them as “fellow workers” who “risked their lives” for his sake (16:3). They were dear friends and fellow soldiers.

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# Silas and Timothy

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- Second, God encourages Paul with good news and provision through Silas and Timothy.
- Silas and Timothy bring the wonderful news that the Thessalonian church was doing quite well, their faith and love standing firm (1 Thessalonians 3:6–10).
- They also bring a missionary offering from Philippi (2 Corinthians 11:9; Philippians 4:14–15), allowing Paul take a break from tent making and preach the Gospel.

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# Silas and Timothy

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- Third, God encourages Paul with a base of operations and the fruit of conversion in Corinth.
- Next door to the synagogue lived Titius Justus, a Gentile Roman citizen who was not only also a God-fearer, but likely a believer in Paul's message, who offered his home as the headquarters for the apostle's work.
- Justus' house thus becomes the first meeting place of the Corinthian church.

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# Silas and Timothy

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- Moreover, Crispus (the ruler of the synagogue) and his household become believers.
- Crispus is among the few Paul personally baptizes (1 Corinthians 1:14–16).
- This shows that not all Jews rejected the Gospel.
- Through the support and example of Justus and Crispus, many more in Corinth convert as well.

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# Night Vision

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- Fourth, God encourages Paul with His Word.
- In a vision, the Lord refreshes Paul with a fortifying message. God tells him not to fear. Paul was clearly worried about troubles he wasn't facing yet, playing out the "what ifs" of persecution that may come for him.
- God gives him the alternative to living in fear. Keep on preaching the Gospel and ministering.

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# Night Vision

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- God gives Paul the source for endurance: God is with him. God's presence and love casts out all fear (1 John 4:18), and Paul needed this reminder.
- God also tells Paul that, in this part of his journey, no one would attack or harm him.
- Though the apostle has faced harm in the past, and will experience it in the future, God is giving him a present window where he can be sure that this will not happen.

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# Jews Attack

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- In these verses, we see the details of God's keeping His promise to Paul.
- Though some Jews try to attack the apostle, which was his biggest fear, the attempt backfires, just as God promised.
- Not only is Paul not being harmed in the end, but for a season Paul and his team enjoy more freedom than before while in Corinth.

We should keep our commitments to  
God and edify other believers

Acts 18:18-28

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# Ephesus

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- In these verses, Paul finishes his second missionary journey. After his long ministry in Corinth, he decides to set sail and return to Syria.
- On his way, he stops in Ephesus. While preaching in the synagogues, new converts are made, though Paul chooses not to stay to establish them.
- He leaves the Ephesians in the capable hands of Aquila and Priscilla, and sets off for Syria.

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# Antioch

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- After regrouping in Antioch, the third missionary journey begins.
- As we will see in the next chapter, Paul has his eyes on Ephesus, where he would eventually spend more than two years working hard to plant a solid community.
- Before he gets there, Paul revisits a few sites along the way where he has already planted the Gospel, strengthening the churches that have been growing.

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# Apollos

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- Luke focuses on Apollos, a well-educated, eloquent and insightful preacher who knew that the Scriptures pointed to the Christ, and was likely a believer already.
- Apollos was not up to date about all the benefits of Christianity, especially as it relates to the Holy Spirit's indwelling.
- His teaching was not wrong; it was simply incomplete.

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# Apollos

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- After hearing him, Priscilla and Aquila pull Apollos aside and teach him “the way of God more accurately” (verse 26).
- They are a couple steps ahead of Apollos, so they use their knowledge to build up this influential man, which ends up bearing much fruit in his ministry to the Jews.
- Before Paul sets foot in Ephesus, God is already using the Ephesian body to move His mission forward.

# History, geography, and archaeology of Corinth

# Cosmopolitan City



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# Cosmopolitan City

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- Corinth was famous for its cult prostitution and had a reputation for sexual immorality.
- Although there were a number of Jews already in the city, Paul would probably not feel that his ministry there would be very fruitful. It turned out to be very fruitful.
- As he approached the city, he would see the massive form of the Arco-Corinth.

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# Arch-Corinth

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# City of Mobility



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# City of Mobility

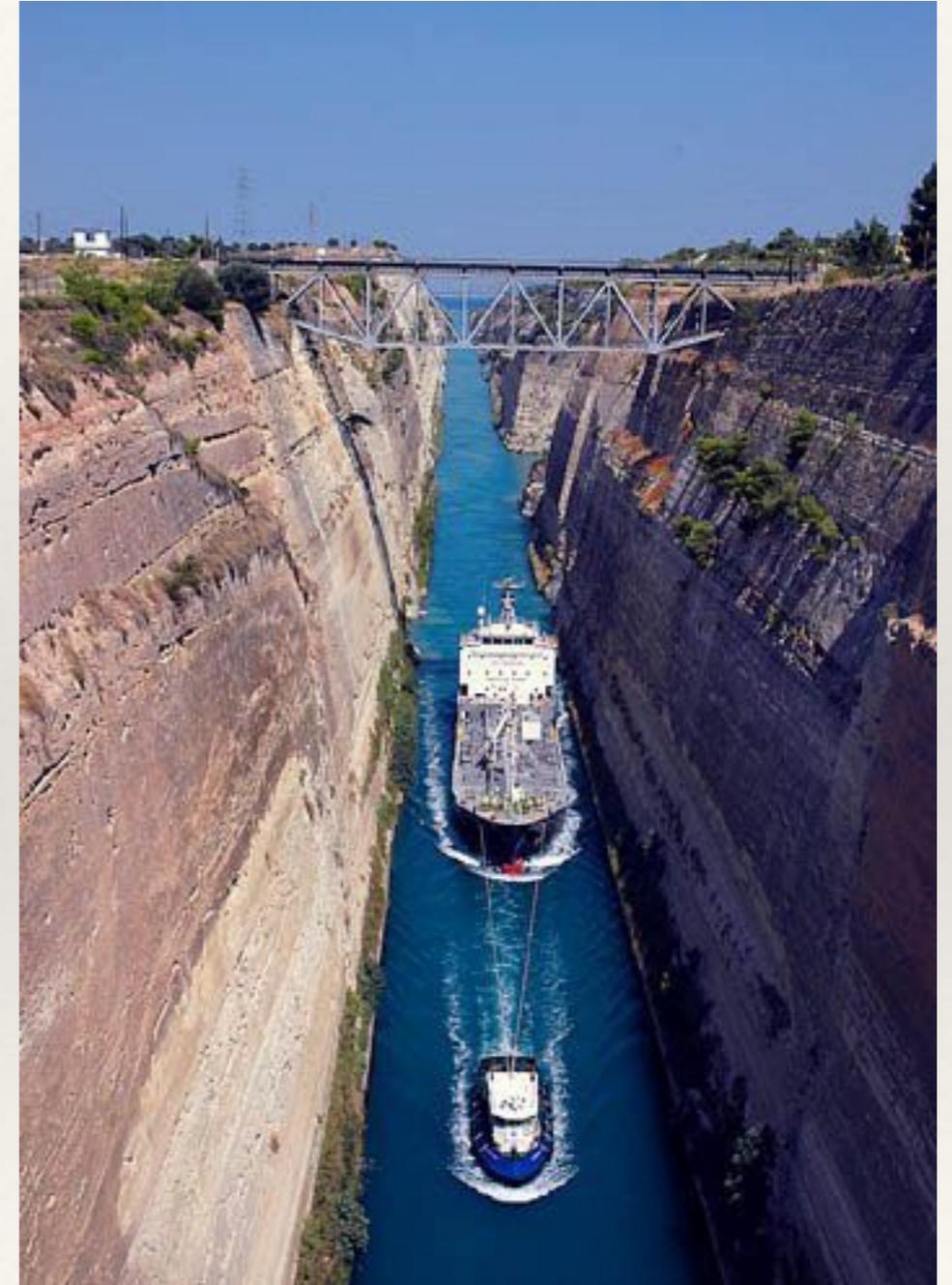
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- Corinth occupied a unique geographical location by the narrow isthmus that connected mainland Greece and the Peloponnese to the south.
- Corinth had one harbor facing east and one harbor facing west.
- Because of this, Corinth was the center of thriving commerce. It was also host to the Isthmian Games.

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# City of Mobility

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# Sexual Immorality

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Strabo claimed the city had 1,000 temple prostitutes at the temple of Aphrodite.



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# Commerce

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# Commerce

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# Art and Culture

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# Art and Culture

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# Roman Tribunal

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# Bema Seat

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# Bema Seat

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# Erastus

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- In the book of Acts, Paul calls attention to a person named Erastus who was a “city treasurer.”
- He would have been one of the few Christians who were among the social elite at Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:26). But there was no historical evidence of someone named Erastus in Corinth.
- Acts 19:22 - “And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.”

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# Erastus

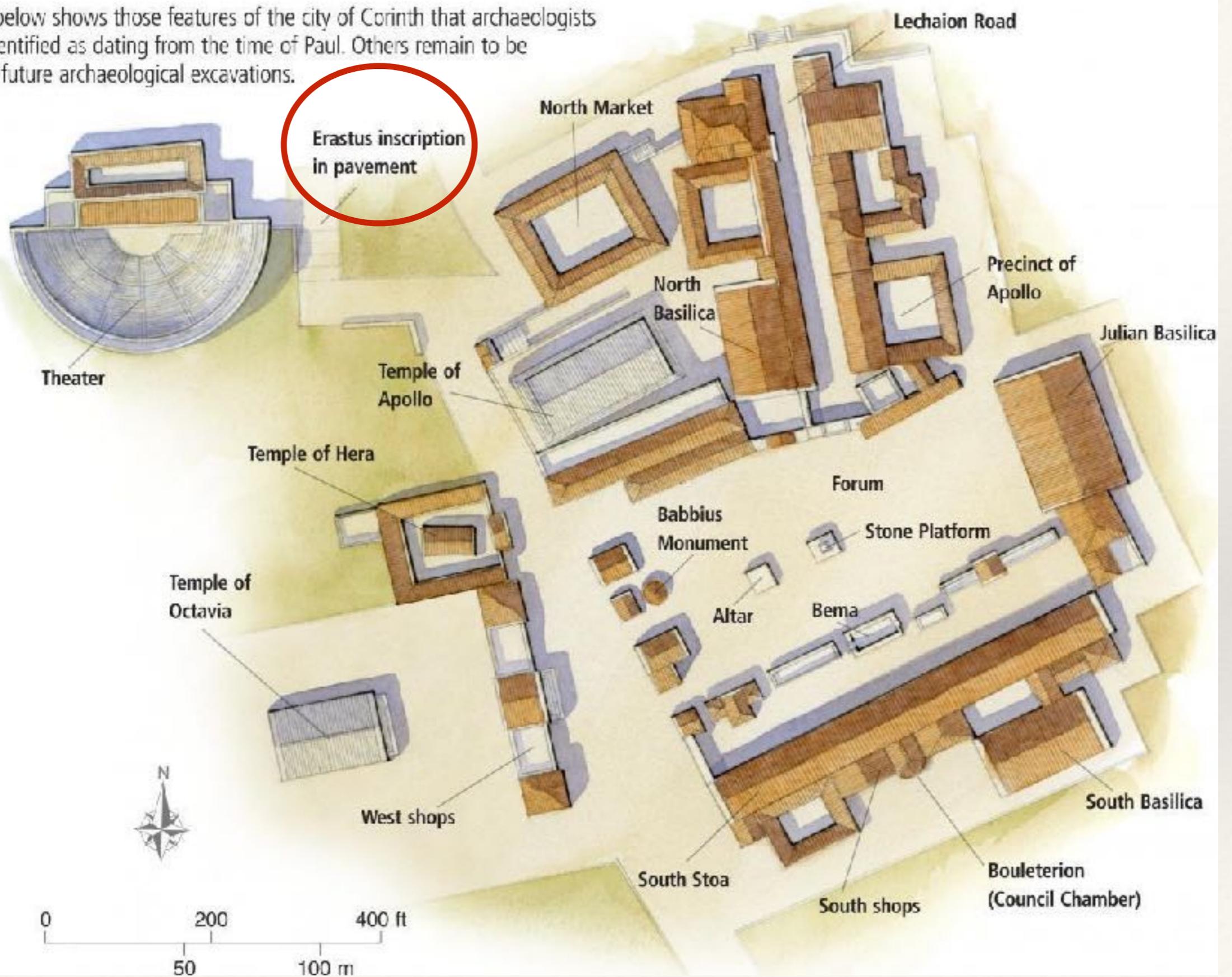
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- During the 1929 archaeological excavation of the area near the theater, a plaza was located that contained a stone inscription bearing the name of Erastus and indicating that he was a public official.



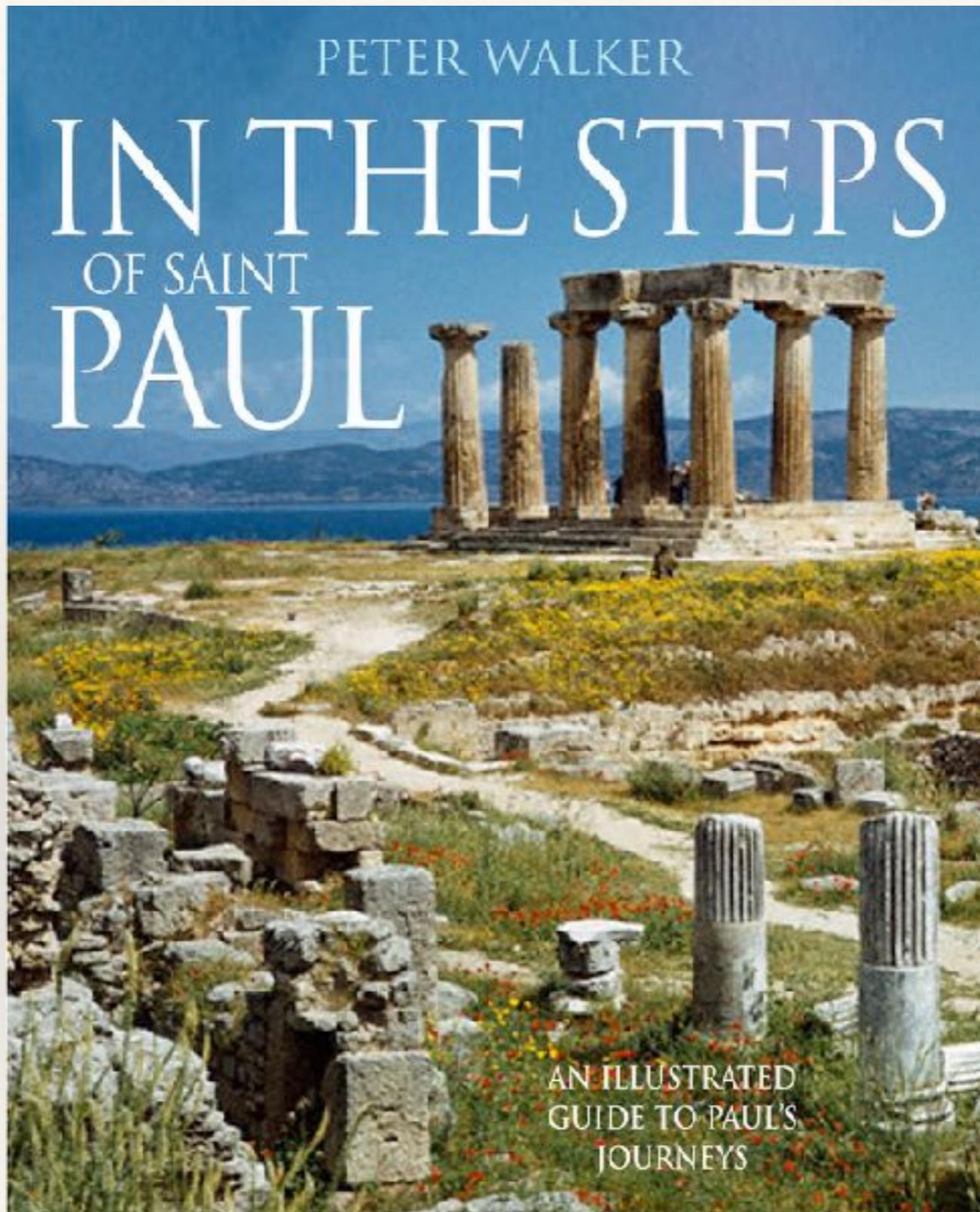
## CORINTH IN THE TIME OF PAUL (C. A.D. 60)

The city plan below shows those features of the city of Corinth that archaeologists have so far identified as dating from the time of Paul. Others remain to be discovered by future archaeological excavations.



PETER WALKER

# IN THE STEPS OF SAINT PAUL



AN ILLUSTRATED  
GUIDE TO PAUL'S  
JOURNEYS