



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

Missiology

Lesson 11 – Paul’s Long Stay in Ephesus

It was the congregation in Antioch of Syria that first sent the apostle Paul into the Gentile world with the saving Gospel of Christ. On the first journey his partner was Barnabas. On his second journey his partner was Silas. We are not told of any particular partner on his third journey, but as we follow Paul on his journey, we read about many others who were with him at least part of the time. Luke’s account of this journey begins: **“After he had spent some time there (in Antioch of Syria), he departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples”** (Acts 18:23). He must have visited once again the congregations in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia, as well as other congregations that are not mentioned specifically in Scripture. He was on his way to Ephesus to fulfill his promise to them: **“I will return again to you, God willing”** (Acts 18:21).

But before Luke tells us what happened when Paul reached Ephesus, he tells us about another development that affected both the Ephesians and the Corinthians. He reports: **“Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately”** (Acts 18:24-26).

Alexandria was a large city in Egypt. Many scattered Jews lived there. Apparently, some of them were acquainted with the teachings of John the Baptist, particularly his teachings on a baptism of repentance in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. Apollos was a fervent student of the Old Testament Scriptures, and God had given him the gift of eloquence so that he could teach others what he had learned from the Scriptures. Apollos moved to Ephesus (we are not told why) and as a Jew he attended the synagogue worship of the Jews. He was a good speaker, and he knew the Scriptures. But he did not know the whole story. We do not know how much he knew of the work of Jesus, the Lamb of God for whom John the Baptist had prepared the way. When the tentmakers Aquila and Priscilla listened to his preaching in the synagogue, they realized that Apollos did not know the whole story. So they talked to him after the service and explained to him the things he did not know or did not know fully. Through their help Apollos became a faithful preacher of the Gospel.

Apollos wanted to cross over from Ephesus to Corinth, where Paul had been Aquila’s and Priscilla’s teacher for one and a half years. The young congregation in Corinth had many problems, as we shall see. Apollos would be able to help them, so the small group of

believers in Ephesus wrote a letter to the Christians in Corinth, **“exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace, for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ”** (Acts 18:27-28).

Paul was the founder of the congregation in Corinth. He was their pastoral leader for over a year, and surely they had grown in faith and understanding through his ministry. But now Apollos was their pastor. He proclaimed the exact same message as Paul had proclaimed, and Apollos used the Old Testament Scriptures effectively to demonstrate that Jesus of Nazareth, the man crucified and risen in Jerusalem, was indeed the promised Messiah.

Later Paul wrote to the Corinthians about the relationship between himself and Apollos. He wrote: **“Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase”** (1 Corinthians 3:5-7). God gives His Church many ministers (servants), and these ministers do not necessarily have the same gifts. Paul claimed that he was not eloquent, but Luke says that Apollos was eloquent. Both of them knew the Scriptures very well, but their teaching methods were probably not exactly the same. The content of their message, however, was the same. We are read of any doctrinal disagreement between Paul and Apollos.

In a young congregation, and even in older congregations as well, there sometimes arises a conflict between two or more congregational leaders. This happened in Corinth, but not because Paul and Apollos disagreed with or fought with each other. It was because some of the members favored Paul over Apollos, and some favored Apollos over Paul, and there were others who believed that the apostle Peter should rank above both Paul and Apollos. Paul learned from Chloe’s family that there were **“contentions”** among the Corinthians. It was this situation in Corinth that Paul had to address in his first letter to the Corinthians. He wrote: **“Each of you says, ‘I am of Paul.’ or ‘I am of Apollos.’ or ‘I am of Cephas’** (another name for Peter), **or ‘I am of Christ.’ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you?”** (1 Corinthians 1:12).

After a thorough discussion of God’s will in these matters, Paul concluded: **“Let no one boast in men. For all things are yours: whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come – all are yours. And you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s”** (1 Corinthians 3:21-23). In other words, Paul and Apollos and Cephas were all gifts from God to the Corinthians, and they each brought God’s blessings to the Corinthians. Why pick one, when God has given you more than one? Rivalries among Christian leaders and factions following one leader over another have caused many problems in Christian groups. God’s word tells us to turn away and reject those teachers who teach something contrary to God’s Word, but we should accept faithful teachers and profit from the gifts God has given to us through each one of them.

“And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus” (Acts 19:1). Paul kept his promise to the Ephesians. One of the first things that happened when He reached Ephesus was that he found some believers in the Messiah who knew only the baptism of John. This had been the case also with Apollos (Acts 18:25) before Aquila and Priscilla had the opportunity to give him the full story of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit. We do not know the exact connection between Apollos and these disciples, but their knowledge was limited to John’s baptism, just as his was.

Paul asked them: **“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” “So they said to him, ‘We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit’”** (Acts 19:2). Paul then asked them: **“Into what then were you baptized?” They answered: “Into John’s baptism”** (Acts 19:3). **“Then Paul said, ‘John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus’”** (Acts 19:4-5).

You will notice that I have placed the quotation marks in a different place than most translations. I believe that it suits the context better to consider verse 5 as a continuation of Paul’s words about John’s baptism. In other words, the baptisms referred to in verse 5 are the baptisms of those baptized by John the Baptist when he carried out his work. However, it is also possible that the baptisms of verse 5 refer to the disciples or believers that Paul met in Ephesus.

It seems that their lack of knowledge was about whether Jesus was the Messiah, but about the Holy Spirit. In other words, they knew nothing about what happened on Pentecost, and how the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples at that time. So, in a marvelous way these twelve men now had a Pentecost of their own. The miracle of Pentecost took place once more, as also it had taken place in the home of Cornelius when Peter proclaimed the Gospel there. For we read in Acts 19:6: **“And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.”** In other words, they spoke languages that they had never learned, just like the disciples at Pentecost.

Paul had visited with the Jews at the Ephesus synagogue briefly on his second journey. Now he had the opportunity for more instruction. **“And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God”** (Acts 19:8). Even though the Jews gave Paul a long a time to proclaim the Gospel of Christ and prove its validity from their Old Testament Scriptures, the end result was the same as in other synagogues. **“When some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks”** (Acts 19:9-10).

Despite the opposition of those Jews who had hardened themselves against the Gospel Paul preached, the Lord gave Paul an open door for His Word in a school building used by a

teacher named Tyrannus. The result was that the Gospel went out from this school building. Those who heard the Gospel there proclaimed it in their own communities. There were many communities in the adjacent countryside in the province of Asia, and all these communities had the opportunity to learn about Jesus and the way of salvation by faith in Him. It is very probable that during this time Christian congregations were formed in the seven cities referred to in Revelation 1:11: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. The book of Revelations calls these congregations **“the seven churches which are in Asia.”** It is very likely that the congregation in Colosse also came into existence at this time, for Paul later wrote to them: **“The grace of God in truth ... as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf”** (Colossians 1:6-7). Paul had never been in Colosse, and yet the Gospel of Christ was brought to them by Epaphras, Paul’s fellow-minister, who had probably been trained by Paul in the school of Tyrannus.

At the end of his third mission journey, Paul addressed the elders of the Ephesian congregation and reviewed his Gospel work in their midst. He said to them: **“You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ”** (Acts 20:18-21). Paul proclaimed repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ; he is proclaimed Law and Gospel. Paul proclaimed the Law to reveal and uncover sins against God, and Paul proclaimed the Gospel to show the love of God in Christ: how He took away our sins and won forgiveness and eternal life for us. This Good News to be grasped and claimed by all without any works or deeds, but simply by faith in Jesus. This is what Paul proclaimed, and it must be the message of every faithful missionary and preacher of Jesus Christ.

Moreover, Paul said to these leaders: **“I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God”** (Acts 20:27). He did not give them a shortened version of God’s Word. He gave them all of God’s teaching, just as Jesus had said: **“teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded”** (Matthew 28:20). Paul used all the gifts God had given him for the work in Ephesus. He said to them: **“Remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears”** (Acts 20:31).

As in many other places during Paul’s journeys, the Lord confirmed Paul’s teaching by giving him the power to do mighty miracles. **“Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them”** (Acts 19:11-12). These signs and miracles testified that Paul was a true apostle, chosen by God Himself to bring God’s message to the world.

Such miracles could not fail to make to impress the residents of Ephesus. Among those who were impressed were seven sons of a Jewish priest named Sceva. They decided that they also would use the name of Jesus to do miracles like Paul. They seemed to think that the very name of Jesus had some kind of magic power and that they also could harness this power for their own purposes. These seven traveling exorcists **“took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, ‘We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches’”** (Acts 19:13). To their surprise **“the evil spirit answered and said, ‘Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?’ Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded”** (Acts 19:15-16). The name of Jesus cannot be used as a magic charm by persons who do not even know who Jesus is or what He has done.

This incident **“became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified”** (Acts 19:17). Those who had come to faith in Jesus among the Ephesians began to realize that Jesus was not just another superstition, but He was the real Savior. They began to realize that Jesus was true God, and that many of their former beliefs in spirits and magic charms were nothing but powerless and foolish ideas that needed to be eradicated. Therefore **“many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed”** (Acts 19:18-20).

Beliefs in superstitious practices, various magic charms, and in spirits of various kinds are difficult to leave behind if one has been brought up with such beliefs since childhood. But belief in the true God of the Bible drives out all false beliefs. There is only one God, one Savior, one book of truth, and one belief that saves us, helps us, and protects us from evil. All other religions, religious beliefs, and books of magic and sorcery are worthless and deserve only to be thrown into the fire. They are not worthy of our belief when we may believe in the one true God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Paul endured many hardships for the Gospel’s sake. He listed many of these hardships in his second letter to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 11:23-27). At the end of this list he says: **“Besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches”** (2 Corinthians 11:28). Because of this concern, Paul kept in touch with all the congregations he had founded. During his time at Ephesus, he was especially concerned about the young congregation in Corinth. Paul planned to visit Corinth along with the congregations in Macedonia (including Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea), for we read: **“Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, ‘After I have been there, I must also see Rome.’ So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time”** (Acts 19:21-22). Corinth and Athens were both cities in Achaia.

There were many problems that developed in Corinth. Paul worked there for one and a half years, and then he was succeeded by Apollos. Paul and Apollos were co-workers, and there was no problem between them, but for some reason Apollos left Corinth after a time and returned to Ephesus, as we learn from 1 Corinthians 16:12. It is not possible to be absolutely sure of the sequence of events, but this is most likely what happened: Because of a problem of sexual immorality in the congregation at Corinth, Paul made a brief trip to Corinth from Ephesus to help resolve this problem. At the same time, he also encouraged the Corinthians to participate in a monetary gift he was gathering for the poverty-stricken Christians in Jerusalem. In fact, that is the very reason that Paul was planning to go to Jerusalem before going west to Rome. After he returned to Ephesus, Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthians in which he told them that they should excommunicate those in the congregation who were continuing their sexual immorality and defending it. This letter no longer exists today; the Holy Spirit did not see fit to preserve it for us. But Paul refers to this letter in the New Testament letter we know as 1 Corinthians: **“I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people”** (1 Corinthians 5:9).

The Corinthians misunderstood what Paul had written in this previous letter. They thought he meant that they should have no dealings with anyone in the world who was sexually immoral. That was clearly impossible, as they would have to leave the world, so it seems they ignored what he wrote to them because it was something they didn't think they could do. When Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, he had to explain what he had meant with his instruction: **“I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner – not even to eat with such a person. For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore put away from yourselves the evil person”** (1 Corinthians 5:10-13).

It is important for a Christian congregation to understand right from the beginning that the Gospel of forgiveness of sins through Christ does not give believers permission to live as they please and follow no moral standards. In other words, forgiveness of sin is not a license to sin. This was especially difficult to understand for those congregations surrounded by an immoral culture, like that in Corinth and in other cities of the Roman Empire at that time. The same problem is prevalent in most countries of the world today. Sexual immorality is a serious problem throughout our whole world.

While Paul stayed in Ephesus, he was very much concerned about the Corinthians. That is why he sent Timothy to visit them, as he later wrote: **“I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church”** (1 Corinthians 4:17). The Bible does not tell us any more about Timothy's visit, however.

Meanwhile **“those of Chloe’s household”** reported the serious problem of the four factions in the congregation naming themselves after Paul, Apollos, Cephas or Peter, and Christ. Chloe’s family also reported that the serious case of fornication in the congregation was still unresolved, and the congregation was taking no action. Another problem was that members were suing one another in heathen courts instead of resolving their differences among themselves as Christians. Besides that, it was also reported that members were visiting prostitutes, as was so common in their culture.

Besides these problems brought to Paul’s attention by Chloe’s family, there were other questions and problems in the congregation that came to Paul’s attention through a letter written by some of the Christians in Corinth and delivered to Paul in Ephesus by Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus. These men also added their own oral report of the situation in Corinth.

This time Paul did not make a trip to Corinth to help resolve these problems. Instead, he wrote a long letter to them (1 Corinthians) in which he applied God’s Word to all of these problems, one after the other. This letter was very difficult for Paul to write because he felt he had to speak harshly to them and plainly tell them where their beliefs and their practices were wrong in the sight of God. In the letter we call 2 Corinthians Paul referred to his feelings during the writing of 1 Corinthians: **“Even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while. Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner”** (2 Corinthians 7:8-9).

One of the most difficult tasks of a pastor or missionary is to preach God’s law to members who are living in a way that is contrary to God’s Word. Such open sin cannot be ignored. This calls for patience, however, especially with new converts who, because of their background, may be accustomed to grievous sins without giving a thought that such conduct might be contrary to the will of God. Nevertheless, a Christian congregation needs to learn right from the beginning how to practice Christian discipline according to our Lord’s instructions and the example set by the apostle Paul.

Regarding the man living openly with his father’s wife in an adulterous relationship, Paul instructed the congregation to excommunicate him, that is, no longer to regard him as a Christian brother.

Regarding lawsuits among the members, Paul suggested that a better way would be to give in and yield to your brother if it is an earthly matter. If the matter remains unresolved, the Christians themselves should be able to make the right judgment, rather than to entrust the matter to heathen courts.

Paul’s instructions concerning sexual immorality were plain: **“Flee sexual immorality. ... Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price”** (1 Corinthians

6:18-20). Those who continue in sins such as these without repentance are not on their way to heaven. Paul makes it very clear: **“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”** (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). But Paul also made it clear that those who sinned in these ways would be happily received by Christ and His Church if they recognized their sin and turned to Christ for forgiveness. Members of the congregation had been involved in such sins, but Paul assured them: **“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”** (1 Corinthians 6:11). There is rejoicing in heaven when a sinner grasps the forgiveness of sins in Christ and begins to lead a holier way of life.

Paul carefully answered the questions raised in the letter from Corinth delivered by Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus concerning marriage. There is no sin in marriage itself nor in remaining single. But if a man or a woman gets married, he or she must be sexually faithful to their one and only spouse. **“Let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband”** (1 Corinthians 7:2). This rules out plural marriages or polygamy of any kind. It also rules out any unnatural combinations that have been legalized in some countries today, such as marriages between two men or between two women. Within a marriage of one man and one woman, sexual intimacy is expected. Paul says: **“The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer, and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control”** (1 Corinthians 7:4-5). Notice that just as a husband has a right to enjoy the body of his wife in sexual matters, so also does a wife have a right to enjoy the body of her husband in sexual matters. They are equal in that respect. Depriving your partner of sexual intimacy may lead to fornication. Therefore, such deprivation should be exercised only with mutual consent and only for a limited time for a good reason.

The single life has some advantages, but if the single person finds himself or herself being tempted to sexual sin outside of marriage, Paul’s instruction is plain: **“If they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion”** (1 Corinthians 7:9).

Paul also strongly insists that **“a wife is not to depart from her husband. ... And a husband is not to divorce his wife”** (1 Corinthians 7:10-11). There may be some situations that call for temporary separation. There may even be situations where a legal divorce is possible. Jesus referred to sexual unfaithfulness as a situation that permitted a marriage to end (see Matthew 5:32). Paul refers to a case where an unbelieving partner simply abandons the believing partner and says: **“If the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases”** (1 Corinthians 7:15). A missionary or pastor needs special wisdom to give the proper God-pleasing instruction regarding marriage problems

and any related sexual problems. It is good if he can consult with other missionaries and pastors when such cases arise. It is also always good to learn as much as possible about the customs and laws of the area and country in which one is working.

The other problems Paul deals with in 1 Corinthians may arise in newly founded congregations today also. For example, Paul's discussion of eating meat that has been sacrificed to idols (1 Corinthians 8 and 10) can help the missionary determine to what extent Christians may go along with the customs of the country without becoming part of the idolatrous worship in that country. Paul's discussion of compensation for pastors and missionaries (1 Corinthians 9) can be helpful in determining whether church workers should follow Paul's pattern of tentmaking to support themselves or follow the principle stated by Paul in these words: **"Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the Gospel should live from (or make their living from) the Gospel"** (1 Corinthians 9:14).

Paul discusses the principles involved in celebrating the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 10-11. These principles need to be explained very carefully to new Christians and to young congregations. What Paul wrote to the Corinthians is of great help in teaching about the Lord's Supper.

Paul addresses the role of women in the church services and meetings in 1 Corinthians 11 and 14. Many Christian churches in our day have been influenced by the worldwide feminist movement and have abandoned the clear principles given to us by God through Paul. God tells us to make a distinction between men and women in the home and in the church, **"for man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man"** (1 Corinthians 11: 8-9). The man is rightfully the head of the house, as Paul teaches in Ephesians 5:22-33. It is not God's will that women be the speakers or teachers in the assembly, for Paul wrote: **"Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak"** (1 Corinthians 14:34). This agrees with what Paul later wrote to Timothy: **"I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve"** (1 Timothy 2:12-13). Note the Paul does not appeal to the culture of his time, but the timeless pattern established by God at creation. These principles on women's role may agree with the culture of the country in which the missionary is working, or they may go against it. If it goes against the local culture, it will take careful instruction and patience on the part of the missionary to establish God-pleasing practice in the congregation. There are many ways in which women can serve their Lord, especially as helpers to their husbands and as teachers of other women and the children. Lydia, Priscilla, and Phoebe are all good examples of women in Paul's world that were important associates in his Gospel ministry.

Charismatic or Pentecostal churches are very prominent in our world today. These groups emphasize what they call special manifestations of the Holy Spirit, such as speaking in tongues, healing services, and emotional outbursts, rather than emphasizing the simple proclamation of the Gospel of Christ and careful instruction in the teachings of the Bible. The

Christians in Corinth were given special spiritual gifts from God, but they were, to a large extent, misusing these gifts. For this reason, Paul had to instruct the Corinthians in the proper use of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12-14). What he stressed in his instruction was love towards others, the edification of the whole congregation, good order, and consideration of others. The church is like a human body with its many different members; each member has its own particular function that can benefit the whole body. Paul's concluding statement in his discussion of these matters was this: **"Let all things be done decently and in order"** (1 Corinthians 14:40). He also wrote: **"God is not the author of confusion but of peace"** (1 Corinthians 14:33).

There are different styles of worship in different places on earth. There is no command from God that we must all worship in the same way. Nevertheless, the content of our teaching must be the same as it is based on Holy Scripture. The way things are done, however, can vary from one culture to another. For example, the music used in worship in one country may not be considered as music appropriate for church service in another country. A missionary must remember that his job is to proclaim the Gospel and to teach the Word of God. It is not his role to change the style of worship in a different country unless that style is contrary to God's Word or does not build people up in their faith.

Chapter 15 in 1 Corinthians deals with the very important topic of Christ's and our resurrection. This is a topic that must be taught carefully in every Christian congregation, but especially in places where long-held superstitions abound regarding death and the hereafter. It may take a long time to eradicate false ideas about the spirit world that have become part of the culture of the land. Paul stresses the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead as a very necessary part of the Gospel. In fact, without Jesus' resurrection from the dead, there is no Gospel. Since Christ rose from the dead, so shall He raise all the dead on the Last Day. But only those who die as believers in Jesus will rise for eternal life, as Paul writes: **"Each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming"** (1 Corinthians 15:23). Every human being must face the fact of his own mortality: each person is going to die. What then? What great Good News it is to learn that in Christ we have won the victory over death! **"The last enemy that will be destroyed is death"** (1 Corinthians 15:26). Paul explains what will happen to our bodies on that Last Day and concludes with these triumphant words: **"Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord"** (1 Corinthians 15:57-58). Those who reject Christ and His Gospel, however, will not share in this victory, as Jesus explained: **"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"** (Mark 16:16).

After dealing with all these many problems in 1 Corinthians, Paul reminds them of something very dear to his heart: the gathering of an offering from the newly founded congregations (which were made up mostly of converted Gentiles) for the very poor Jewish

Christians living in Jerusalem. He was very much concerned about this expression of Christian unity between congregations in different places with different backgrounds.

Today the Christian missionary must remind his listeners that every Christian believer and every Christian congregation is part of a worldwide enterprise, and it is important for Christians in one place to interact with Christians in other places, as long as they can do this without supporting false teaching.

While Paul was in Ephesus (from where he wrote 1 Corinthians), he faced a serious crisis that threatened his life as well as the work he had been doing over the past two years. Ephesus was known for its worship of the goddess Diana (also called Artemis). There was a temple to Diana in Ephesus that attracted people from all over the province of Asia and places far off. The silversmiths in Ephesus made a good living by making silver shrines of Diana to sell to the people who came there to worship the goddess. But because of Paul's preaching of Christ the sale of these shrines had fallen off. There is hardly anything that gets people more angry than the loss of income. We read that **"a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana ... called them (other silversmiths) together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: 'Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship'" (Acts 19:24-27).**

Demetrius was mainly concerned about his loss of income, but he made it sound as though Paul and his new religion was threatening the prominence of the city. He succeeded in stirring up a huge crowd. **"When they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians!' So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul's travel companions"** (Acts 19:28-29). When a mob gets worked up like this, it may result in violence. All the Christians were in danger, particularly Paul and his assistants.

Paul thought this give him an opportunity to address the crowd, but his friends thought otherwise. **"When Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him. Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater. Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together"** (Acts 19:30-32). Sometimes it is good to have friends in high places, and God uses such friends to protect His spokesmen. They recognized that Paul, the chief missionary, would get nowhere with this crowd. They did not want Paul to be torn apart by this mob.

Instead of letting Paul address the crowd, **“they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand, and wanted to make his defense to the people. But when they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, ‘Great is Diana of the Ephesians!’”** (Acts 19:33-34). Very likely Alexander intended to convince the crowd that the Jews did not agree with Paul either and that the Jews were not to blame for this disturbance. But there was no way the people were going to let this Jew talk. No doubt the same thing, or worse, would have taken place if Paul himself had stood up to speak.

Finally, the city clerk quieted the crowd, saying to them: **“Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Zeus? Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly. For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess. Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly. For we are in danger of being called in question for today’s uproar, there being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering”** (Acts 19:35-40).

It has happened throughout history God has protected His faithful Christians through men in government who recognize that Christians are no threat and should not be punished for their beliefs, as long as they do not commit any crimes. But sometimes God, for His own hidden purposes, allows mobs like this to take over and bring great distress to Christians and their leaders. We see this happen in many parts of the world today. Paul instructs us to pray for those in government: **“I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence”** (1 Timothy 2:1-2). Our God surely listens to our prayers in the name of our Mediator, Jesus Christ.

Shortly after this incident Paul wrote to the Corinthians: **“We do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us, you also helping together in prayer for us”** (2 Corinthians 1:8-11).

Questions

1. What does the Bible tell us about the man Apollos?
2. What did Aquila and Priscilla do for Apollos? Why did they do this?
3. What special gift did God give to the twelve disciples in Ephesus?
4. Why did Paul have to do his teaching in the school of Tyrannus?
5. How did the sons of Sceva try to imitate Paul? What was the result?
6. Why did the Ephesians burn their valuable books?
7. Why are superstitious practices and beliefs so difficult to get rid of?
8. What did Chloe's family tell Paul about the situation in Corinth?
9. What were Paul's instructions to the Corinthians about sexual immorality?
10. What did Paul have to say about the divisions in Corinth?
11. How do we know that polygamy is contrary to the will of God for us today?
12. How were the Corinthians misusing their Spirit-given gifts?
13. What was Paul's teaching concerning death and resurrection?
14. Why was Paul gathering an offering from the Gentile churches?
15. What crisis took place in Ephesus that endangered Paul's life?
16. How did the city clerk handle the disturbance?