

THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

MINISTRY NOTES ON CORINTH

- A. There is great value in team ministry.
- B. God encourages and directs those who serve Him.
- C. God can make good out of seemingly bad situations.
- D. Paul wrote 1 and 2 Thessalonians while at Corinth.

THE ENTRANCE OF APOLLOS, ACTS 18:23-28

- A. The start of Paul's Third Missionary Journey (23), *After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.*
 - 1. Paul spent some time in Antioch.
 - a. He had been gone about two years.
 - b. Thomas Constable, *Luke did not record Paul's activities in Antioch, but we may safely assume he gave another report to the church as he had done when he returned from his first journey (14:27–28). Paul probably remained in Antioch from the spring or summer of 52 through the spring of 53 A.D.*
 - 2. Paul ministered in the churches of Galatia and Phrygia.
 - a. *Disciple* is used almost exclusively in Acts to refer to Christians.
 - b. He strengthened believers in their faith in Jesus Christ as he began his third missionary journey, R. Lenski, *He viewed the progress that had been made, and his one aim was to make them as firm and solid as possible in the faith they had received.*
 - c. Kenneth Gangel, *...he set his sights for Ephesus, fifteen hundred miles to the west. Along the way he visited the churches we have come to know, most likely including Tarsus, Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Pisidian Antioch, and perhaps some Luke has not told us about...This ministry across Asia Minor was not new evangelism, but encouragement and establishment of existing congregations.*
- B. The ministry of Apollos (24-28)
 - 1. An introduction of Apollos (24-25), *Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.*
 - a. This section gives an update of what was taking place in Ephesus since Paul left that city.
 - 1) Kenneth Gangel, *We need to know what happened in Ephesus before Paul arrived, so Luke breaks into the narrative of Paul's ministry to tell us about a new character—Apollos.*
 - 2) Stanley Toussaint, *What took place in verses 24–28 occurred after Paul left Ephesus (v. 21) and before he returned (19:1). During this interval a church had been started, probably under the influence of Aquila and Priscilla. To this church came the gifted Apollos from Alexandria in northern Africa. As a Jew, he knew the Scriptures, that is, the Old Testament, well.*
 - 3) Thomas Constable, *Apollos may have arrived in Ephesus after Paul had departed for Jerusalem. That is the impression Luke gave.*
 - b. Apollos' background
 - 1) He was from Alexandria, the capital of Egypt, a city of great learning.
 - 2) He was a Greek Jew who had a deep understanding of the Old Testament.
 - 3) He was gifted communicator who enthusiastically defended the faith as best he knew it, R. Lenski, *And now we learn something about the spirit of Apollos, namely, that he was fervent in spirit, meaning to boil, to seethe. What he had discovered did not appeal to him only intellectually, it captivated his very spirit; he glowed with holy enthusiasm and zeal.*
 - c. Apollos' knowledge of the Christian faith was deficient.
 - 1) Stanley Toussaint, *His doctrine regarding Jesus was accurate but deficient. Probably this means Apollos did not know about the Holy Spirit's baptism. John's baptism symbolized cleansing by God because of repentance toward God (cf. 19:4). But Christian baptism pictures union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection by means of Spirit baptism (cf. Rom. 6:3–10; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12).*
 - 2) Richard Lenski, *What Apollos thus knew was correct enough as far as it went; the trouble was that it did not go far enough.*

- 3) He knew only the baptism of John, Thomas Constable, *Apollos was proclaiming what he knew of the gospel in the Ephesian synagogue, but he did not know about Christian baptism. He only knew about John the Baptist's baptism that expressed repentance for sins*
 - 4) William Larkin, Jr., ... *(Apollos)believes Jesus is the Messiah but does not understand the present saving significance of his death and resurrection. Further, he is unaware of what Pentecost means for all who are baptized in the name of Jesus. The way of the Lord that he knows, then, is not the Gospel, but God's way of salvations set forth in the promises of the Old Testament.*
 - 5) Richard Lenski, ...*his knowledge did not extend to the completion of the work of Jesus...To know only John's baptism was not to know about the crucifixion, the resurrection, the ascension, Pentecost, etc., not to know of the Lord's Supper, the first church at Jerusalem, the mission of the apostles, etc.*
- d. Stanley Toussaint, *This episode (18:24–28) and the following (19:1–7) underscore the transitional nature of this phase of church history...This section of Acts also indicates that Christianity is the logical outgrowth of the Old Testament and of John the Baptist's ministry. In fact, the message of Paul is superior to that of the spiritual giant John the Baptist. Though John's message had reached as far as Alexandria and Ephesus, John's work was brought to fruition only in Christ.*
2. Priscilla and Aquila instructed Apollos (26), ***He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.***
 - a. Priscilla and Aquila noticed a deficiency in Apollos' message.
 - 1) Homer Kent, *Before the encounter with Aquila and Priscilla, it is best to regard Apollos in the same class as OT saints. They too hoped for salvation in Messiah and had not rejected him. The entire Book of Acts depicts the transition from Judaism to Christianity. It is not surprising, therefore, to find imperfect forms of faith during those epochal days.*
 - 2) Kenneth Gangel, *Like many preachers, what Apollos said was quite true. What he left out demonstrated his inadequate understanding of Christian truth.*
 - b. They instructed Apollos in private concerning the truth of God in Jesus.
 - 1) Richard Lenski, *It was providential that this valuable man came to Ephesus just at this time. The teachers he needed to complete his education had also been providentially brought to Ephesus just at this time...He must have been a man of deep spirituality not to let his superior education, ability, and standing assert themselves and prevent him from going to school to such lowly teachers.*
 - 2) F.F. Bruce, ...*how much better it is to give such private help to a preacher whose ministry is defective than to correct or denounce him publicly.*
 3. Apollos' ministry in Achaia (27-28)
 - a. Apollos sought to minister in Achaia (27), ***And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him.***
 - 1) Apollos sought to move to Achaia to continue his ministry.
 - 2) It is not known why he wanted to move to Achaia (possibly Corinth).
 - 3) He received a letter of recommendation for the church at Ephesus.
 - b. He had an effective Gospel ministry (28), ***When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.***
 - 1) Apollos strengthened those who had already placed trust in Christ.
 - 2) It is noted that belief is a gift of God's grace.
 - 3) He refuted the Jews in public.
 - a) This word is only used here in the New Testament.
 - b) It means to convince thoroughly, to defeat in a debate.
 - c) It was accomplished by showing from Scripture that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah).

- 4) He developed a strong personal following in Corinth.
 - a) 1 Corinthians 1:12, *What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ."*
 - b) It appears that Apollos was not responsible for encouraging division, note 1 Corinthians 16:12, *Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brothers, but it was not at all his will to come now. He will come when he has opportunity.*
- 5) Kenneth Gangel, *...Apollos may very well have written Hebrews. Though the text of that book may reflect both the content and eloquence evident in this man's public ministry, we have no overt evidence of that authorship.*

CONCLUSION

- A. It is important to set God ordained ministry priorities.
- B. Allow other Christians to live out their faith as they believe God is leading them.
- C. Be willing to learn from others.