

# In Corinth

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Preacher: Courtney Smith

[0:00] And shoot. There were public executions where criminals, where crowds came to see condemned criminals put to death and drunkenness was rife.

! A German visitor to London was appalled whilst walking the streets as he saw prostitutes, some as young as 10 every few yards.

The population was growing fast. It grew from 5.5 million in 1700 to just over 9 million by 1801, as was trade with other countries around the globe.

Religion was declining, as were the effects of the revival in the previous century, which included the rise of the Puritans.

Many ministers were not converted, but were simply ministers, not because they believed the gospel, but because it was a respectable profession and they had a decent pension.

[1:07] Such a man was John Wesley, who became a Church of England minister, though he was unconverted. He and his brother Charles went to America to preach the gospel to the Native Americans.

He later said that he'd gone to America to convert the Indians, but who is going to convert me? By a series of events, which included meeting a Moravian called Peter Bola.

It made him see that he was not a Christian, and it was during a meeting in Aldersgate where he was converted when he felt his heart was strangely warmed and he repented of his sins and trusted in Jesus as his Lord and Saviour.

In that day, the masses wouldn't come to church, as it were, and the army of unconverted ministers weren't interested in taking the gospel out to them.

So some Christians add this peculiar idea of taking the gospel out and bringing it to the people.

These included John Wesley, George Whitfield, and William Williams of Pantykelling.

[2:23] Others as well, who went up and down the land to preach the gospel in the open air to the masses. It wasn't all plain sailing, though. They faced a lot of opposition, and Wesley, on an occasion, he was chased out of town.

He had a dead cat thrown at him. He had people blasting trumpets out, trying to drown out his voice. And at times, he used to have a prize fighter, you know, old pugilist, with him.

He was converted to help keep him safe. But these men, they persisted in their labours, and they yielded fruit. Multitudes of men and women and boys and girls heard the gospel and believed it.

Britain was gradually transformed so that, unlike France, the neighbour across the Channel, which had a revolution, a bloody revolution, British society was changed drastically.

And Britain was changed from a dark place spiritually, immoral, dangerous place in the 18th century. And many of the societies which were founded in those days for the betterment of mankind, we still benefit from them today.

[3:42] And in Acts chapter 18, the apostle Paul arrives in the city of Corinth. This city was the political and commercial centre of Greece, even surpassing Athens in importance.

Corinth had a reputation for great wickedness and immorality. There was a temple to the goddess Aphrodite, the goddess of love and war, on a large hill outside the city.

Or just behind the city. And in this popular religion, people worshipped this goddess by donating money to a temple and engaging in sexual acts with both male and female temple prostitutes.

Corinth had a trade centre, so had an unsettled population, many of whom were devotees of Aphrodite, the verb.

It was so bad that the verb to Corinthianise meant to cause to become immoral and debauched. Their lifestyle became notoriously notorious or a byword.

[4:50] It was to this colourful place that the apostle Paul and his team came to share the good news of Jesus Christ. And the message has got four points, all beginning with A.

It was Aquila and Priscilla, and then Agitated, then Antioch, and then Apollos. So first of all, Aquila and Priscilla.

So Paul arrives at Athens, sorry, at Corinth, which was 50 miles or so southwest of Athens, which we read of in 17, where he preached the gospel on Mars Hill.

And in the New Testament times, it was probably slightly bigger than Brighton or Wolverhampton because he had a population of around about 200,000, including Greeks, Jews, Romans, Roman army veterans, businessmen and government officials, and many slaves.

Paul immediately struck up a friendship with a Jew named Aquila, which means eagle, and his wife Priscilla, which means old lady.

[5:58] And they were a close couple because whenever we read of Priscilla and Aquila in the Bible, they're never mentioned separately.

They're always mentioned together. And she was perhaps from a higher social status than her husband because she's always listed first.

And the Roman historian Suetonius tells us that in A.D. 49, the Emperor Claudius Caesar expelled the Jews from Rome because of Christus.

That is probably a corruption of Christus or Christ. There may have been some disputes between Jews and Christians. So we're not sure when Aquila and Priscilla became Christians, likely before this date, because we read later in the New Testament that there was a church already at Rome and there was a church in their house.

But they were together, became friends with the Apostle Paul, and they were in the same trade as we read there at the start of the chapter.

[7:09] They were tent makers or literally leather workers. They may have even been suppliers of tents to the Roman army, but that's speculating.

So Paul, he was a tent maker. That was his trade. And the rabbis used to say that he who fails to teach his son a trade teaches him to steal.

And even though the Apostle Paul, he was an apostle, obviously, he tells us in 1 Corinthians 9.14 that as an apostle, he had the right to make his living from the gospel.

But he didn't do that. And he chose to work with his hands and make a living by his own sweat of his brow.

And many missionaries who go overseas go as tent makers. That is, they don't literally make tents and sell them. But that is, they work at their chosen profession whilst at the same time doing evangelistic work.

[8:16] And some modern missionaries may go overseas as health care professionals, teachers, builders, other tradesmen, sports coaches, or many other professions that you can think of.

So when anybody goes overseas as a missionary, a tent maker, it comes from this expression there in Acts 18. And Pontus, where we read of where Aquila was from, was on the north coast of Asia Minor, or Turkey as we call it now.

And this couple, Priscilla and Aquila, were to become close friends with the Apostle, as we read in Romans 16, verses 3 and 4, where it says that they even risked their lives for him.

And we're also told in that passage in Romans 16 that they had a church in their house. Early churches didn't meet in buildings.

That came later, a couple of centuries later. But they would meet in the homes of Christians like Priscilla and Aquila. And anybody who'd been schooled or shared fellowship with the Apostle Paul is obviously going to be very well versed in Scripture and spot on in their doctrines and in their theology.

[9:41] And I'm sure that in the weeks, months, and years that Priscilla and Aquila were together with the Apostle Paul, that they would have spent a lot of time discussing, going over Scriptures.

They perhaps peppered him with questions. And Proverbs 27 says, As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friends. So you can bet your bottom dollar when Aquila and Priscilla were with the Apostle Paul, that they sharpened each other like iron sharpened iron. And we see evidence of this later in the chapter when they encounter Apollos, but more of that as we press on. So Aquila and Priscilla are an example of what God can do through a husband and wife.

Their hospitality opened the door to many to receive the gospel and be saved. And today, the Christian home is still a great tool for spreading the gospel.

So if you're part of a Christian couple, let their example be inspiration and encouragement and a challenge to you. So that's the first point, Aquila and Priscilla.

[11:00] And then comes agitated or agitation. The gospel causes offense. Whenever the gospel is preached, people become unsettled.

In Matthew 10, 34 to 36, Jesus said, Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against a mother, a daughter-in-law against a mother-in-law, and a man's enemies will be those of his own household.

And in John 7, verse 43, during Jesus' earthly ministry, we read, So there was a division among the people because of him. In John 9, 16, and there was a division among them.

John 10, 19. Therefore, there was a division again among the Jews because of these sayings. And Jesus said in John 7, 7, it says, That the world hates me because I testify of it that its works are evil.

[12:18] And in John 15, Jesus says, If the world hates you, said to his disciples, you know that at first it hated me. So, he was hated.

Paul, the Christians here, when they spread the gospel to the Jews, they didn't react very well. But we read here that Silas and Timothy rejoined Paul, having come to him from Macedonia.

But the apostle Paul is filled with the zeal that the Holy Spirit put in him, just like he was when he was in Athens. He was provoked.

He couldn't keep silent, but he had to spread the gospel. So, here, his zeal, he begins preaching the gospel to his fellow Jews.

Remember Romans 16? It was in those days, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. He had that zeal for God.

[13:23] The zeal which he had before he was converted, when he was yet a Pharisee, when he was persecuting the church, hunting down Christians. He supposed that he was pleasing God.

But now, that he'd become a Christian with the full light of the gospel, and knowing the Lord Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior, and the fulfillment of the hopes of Israel revealed in the Old Testament, he couldn't hold back from sharing the gospel with his fellow Jews.

But when he shared the gospel with the Jews, they rejected it. The scriptures, the same scriptures what he looked at where he saw Christ, they just couldn't see that Jesus was the fulfillment as the long-awaited Messiah and Savior of the world.

The Jews rejected Paul's message. Paul must have been brokenhearted, but he does exactly what Jesus says when he shakes out his garment.

What we read of in verse 6, it says he shook out his garment. Because in Matthew 10.14, Jesus said that if people reject the gospel in a particular place, that we are, he says his disciples, to shake the dust off your feet, they were to be regarded as pagans.

[14:56] Because whenever the Jews went outside the Holy Land and they came back, they would shake off the dust of their, or the sand of their sandals, because they wouldn't want to defile the pure holy land with dust or sand from these pagan, ungodly, filthy dog Gentiles.

So they would literally shake off the sandal, their sandals, so that no dust or dirt from any of these filthy, dirty, heathen lands would defile pure Israel.

So the fact that he shook off his garment showed that because these Jews rejected the gospel, they were treated as unbelievers.

The Gentiles will be presented with the gospel instead. And today when the gospel is preached, all manner of responses result.

Some believe and are baptised, and others reject the gospel. But Paul receives great encouragement from the Lord in the form of a vision.

[16:09] He says, no one's going to attack you because I've got many people in this city. The gospel had only just arrived there and not many of them believed yet.

But when Jesus gave this vision to Paul, he knew that his people were there, although they were not yet believers.

Paul was to not remain silent, but he was to keep sharing the gospel because it would bear fruit. In Acts 13, verse 48, we read, Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed or ordained to eternal life believed.

It's God who appoints those who are to believe because they weren't yet believers, but God said to Paul, Jesus said to Paul, I've got many people in this city.

Faith is a gift. Remember Ephesians 2, verses 8 and 9, For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast.

[17:31] And remember Jesus said in John 6, verse 44, it says, No one can come to me except the Father draw him. And the word what Jesus used, word for draw in the New Testament, it's the word helkuo, and it literally means drag.

So no one can come to me except the Father drag him. I'll show you what I mean. The same word, drag, is used in John 21, verses 6 and 11, where after the resurrection, they catch the miraculous draw to fish, and they had to, the nets were filled to bursting, and they had to literally drag the net to shore.

And it's used in Acts chapter 16, where Paul and Silas, where Paul cast the demon out of the girl, the demon-possessed girl, and the owners of the girl, who made money by predicting the future, they drag Paul and Silas into the market.

And it's also used in James 2, 6, is it not the rich who drag you into court? So Jesus literally says, no one can come to me except the Father drag him.

When I was growing up, my favorite TV program of all time was an American program called Lost in Space. Some of you might remember that.

[18:54] There was a family, the Robinson family, they got lost in outer space, and they were trying to get back to Earth, and they used to end up on other planets. And there was a mischief maker called Dr. Zachary Smith on board, and he was always causing problems.

And I remember one particular episode of Lost in Space. Will Robinson, the boy of the family, the robot, it was like a walking computer, and Dr. Smith were there.

And all of a sudden, because the program always used to end on a cliffhanger, Dr. Smith was there, Will Robinson, the robot, Dr. Smith said, out of the way, I'm being summoned.

And this force was drawing Dr. Smith, and he couldn't help but be drawn by the force. Will Robinson couldn't hear anything, and the robot couldn't hear anything, but Dr. Smith could hear the voice, hear the sound, and he was drawn irresistibly to it.

In John 10, verses 27 to 29 to 28, Jesus said, My sheep hear my voice, and they know me, and they follow me, and I'll give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.

[20:07] So Jesus' sheep hear Jesus' voice. In John 8, 47, it says, Jesus said, Therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.

He who is of God hears God's words, therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God. So, when Jesus calls, his sheep hear his voice, and they follow him.

They were like Dr. Smith. The robot couldn't hear anything, Will Robinson couldn't hear anything, but Dr. Smith could. When the gospel is preached, there's people who hear the Lord calling them. The person in the next seat might hear nothing, but that same voice, Jesus is calling them. If you hear his voice, follow him.

The Bible says that if you hear his voice, today if you hear his voice, then follow me. Two lots of people, those that hear his words, believe it, and they're drawn, they're dragged, as what Jesus said.

[21:13] So, God had chosen these people, many people, who were in Corinth, but they still needed Paul to preach the gospel to them.

Preaching is God's means of saving sinners, and bringing them to faith. 1 Corinthians 1.21 says, it pleased God by the message, the foolishness of the preaching.

And in Romans 10, it says, how shall they hear without a preacher? How shall they preach unless one is sent? So then, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

God has his chosen people, but his means of calling them is through preaching. And then we hear, so, look at verse 11, he spent a year and a half in Corinth.

So, this was the longest that Paul spent anywhere apart from Ephesus, which in chapter 20, when he's talking to the elders in Miletus, he said that he spent three years there.

[22:23] So, look at verses 12 and 13. There's more opposition to the gospel. It says, while Galileo was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews of Corinth made a united attack on Paul and brought him to the place of judgment or the bema, the judgment seat, this man, they charged, is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law.

And history tells us because of an inscription uncovered by archaeologists that Galileo was proconsul of Achaia from July AD 51 to June AD 52.

And whilst Judaism was not an official religion because they refused to worship the emperor or the gods of the Greco-Roman world, Judaism was tolerated in the Roman emperor.

It was what was known as a religio licita or an approved religion. And the Christian faith was simply viewed as a sect of Judaism.

And the Jews brought Paul before Galileo accusing him of teaching things outside of Judaism and should therefore be banned.

[23:48] But Galileo, as we see here, he wasn't interested, he was apathetic or indifferent. and his refusal to intervene meant that Christianity was not outlawed in the empire at this time.

Galileo ruled that nothing illegal had taken place and he dismissed the case. Galileo, it's interesting to note that he had a, if you know anything about Greco-Roman history, he had a famous brother called Seneca.

He was a well-known philosopher in New Testament times in Rome and it's interesting again that John Calvin when he did his first degree in his parish university, his degree was on a commentary on the works of Seneca and it's also ironic that both Seneca and Galileo were both executed under Nero.

He made them commit suicide. So, these persecutors here, Jews in this instance, today, preachers, you might hear of preachers preaching the gospel in the streets of Britain, persecuted LGBT movement, Muslims, opposers of the gospel, but they can't stop the march of the gospel.

Some countries outlaw the gospel, Christians are killed, persecuted in prisons. We heard recently of 70 Christians beheaded in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

[25:26] Christians are put in concentration camps in North Korea. They're hunted down and killed in Afghanistan, persecuted in Pakistan, Somalia, Iran, prisoned on trumped up charges.

We heard some more within the last week including a heavily pregnant woman. Crimes against the state just for believing the gospel. Sostenes took the brunt of it, the evil plotting.

He was brought, beaten in front of the seat, the judgment seat, but Gallio paid no mind to it. We read in 2 Timothy chapter 3 I think it is, or chapter 2, it says the word of God is not bound.

Remember Jesus said in Matthew 16, 18, I will build my church, but the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

So, men can do their worst, they can outlaw the gospel, persecute Christians, even as Paul did, kill Christians, but Jesus said, I will build my church.

[26:36] So that's the agitation now, Antioch. So after leaving Corinth, the apostle Paul headed back to his commissioning church to Antioch, where the disciples were first known as Christians as reading 1126, in this passage it says that Priscilla and Aquila came with him, and when we read in, it says that he also went up to Jerusalem, and we read also that he had his hair cut off.

So what's that all about? Well, in the Old Testament in Numbers chapter 6, there was a vow called a Nazarite vow, where you could make an oath to God, and when it was fulfilled, you cut your hair

off, and you presented it as an offering, and you took nothing from the vine, raisins, vinegar, grapes, anything like that, and sometimes we see people like Samson, Samuel, or John the Baptist who were Nazarites for life, but Paul here is just a Nazarite for a certain time, and it's likely that Paul made this vow to show his thankfulness to God for the tough time that he endured at Corinth, and the vow, when it ended, they cut their hair off and presented it, the temple, in Jerusalem within 30 days.

So, and being zealous for the Lord, when Paul, after he'd gone to Jerusalem and travelled on, and back to Antioch, he went to visit people who were converted during his second missionary journey, and he helped strengthen them in the gospel, as we read here, in Ephesus, and although the Jews there in Ephesus wanted him to stay behind to hear more of the gospel, he was determined that nothing would stop him from going back to Jerusalem.

Aquila and Priscilla stayed in Ephesus, as we read in 1 Corinthians 16, 19, and established a church in their house before they eventually returned to Rome.

so he returned to his commissioning church before his unstoppable zeal caused him to strengthen the disciples.

[29:15] So we move to our final point, which is Apollos, Apollos, in verse 24, and it says, although that the Jews in Corinth rejected the gospel, the fact that Paul himself was a Jew, and Aquila and Priscilla were Jews, Apollos was a Jew, it shows that there was and is a remnant amongst the Jews, and Apollos, as he preaches, we learn here that he was only aware of what John the Baptist preached about our Lord Jesus Christ, so his preaching was clearly incomplete.

John the Baptist, he preached about repentance from sin and then baptized people who believed his message, but the whole message was after repentance from sin, people needed to turn to Christ who was crucified there on the cross to take away the sins of the world.

John the Baptist pointed to Christ, but Apollos didn't know about Jesus, his life, his crucifixion, his death, his burial, his resurrection, about the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Aquila and Priscilla heard him preaching in the synagogue. They were impressed by his knowledge, but could clearly see that his message was lacking.

we don't read that Priscilla and Aquila confronted him or rebuked him or argued with him.

[31:03] The couple simply took him home and shared with him what he needed to know. They told him about Jesus' ministry, how he fulfilled all the Old Testament predictions about the coming of the Messiah who would come to take away the sins of the world so that all the descendants of Adam and Eve, which is all of us, who were condemned in front of God by sins could be made clean in the sight of God.

They instructed him from the Bible and Apollos being a sincere man, he believed them, he accepted their message because he's an intelligent man, he wasn't going to be fooled but he could clearly see from the scriptures that Jesus was the fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies.

Apollos now, because he accepted their message, he now had the fully orb'd gospel. And Apollos, as we read in verse 24, he was from Alexandria, which was in Egypt, the second most prominent city in the Roman Empire, and home to a significant university with a well-known library.

So, he was a scholar, debater, a narrator, and now with his knowledge about the gospel complete, God could use these skills, he could hone them, so that use Apollos to encourage the church and spread the gospel to the disbelievers.

And in time, many in Corinth were very crass and worldly and identified with Apollos, others with Paul, others with Peter, and the pious ones with Christ.

[33:08] We see this in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 12 and 13 where we say, some said that I am of Apollos, I'm of Cephas, I'm of Paul, and I am of Christ.

And this wasn't Apollos' fault, it was just that those in Corinth would be behaving like the world, and that shows us that we should never put anyone on a pedestal.

Only God is to be glorified, but in many ways Apollos was like Paul himself. He was zealous for God, he knew the Old Testament, and he went about seeking to please God.

And like Paul, once God took the veil off his eyes, Apollos saw Christ in all of the scriptures, and he became a powerful tool in God's hand.

And as Apollos travelled, he encouraged believers and convinced Jews, as we read here, that Jesus was the promised Messiah. And Apollos is an illustration that we can know the facts, and what it is about the gospel, but in order to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, we need the Lord to open our eyes.

[34:28] So to conclude, that despite the opposition and violence, the gospel brought light to this spiritually dark city, Corinth, and a church was formed, if God could do that then, and God brought light to Britain in the 1700s through Wesley, Whitfield, William Williams and co, he can do so in Brighton, London, Wolverhampton or anywhere today.

It won't be the Labour Party, the Conservative Party, the Reform Party or any other political party that will change the landscape of the UK.

It is the gospel. God did it before and maybe he started doing so again. We've heard in the last week that in the UK in the last year, the sales of Bibles are up 87% and many generation Zed young people, that is those 18 to 25 are seeking God.

God changed society once at a time making dangerous violent sinners into new creatures in Christ. He changes immoral people into pure people. The gospel is the power. Jesus changes thieves and liars into honest hardworking people.

[36:05] The gospel of Jesus transforms sinners but Jesus warns in the gospels about hell and about judgment.

So the gospel is not just theory, it's to be believed and acted upon. So if anybody here today has never trusted in Christ, say sorry to God today and follow the Lord Jesus Christ because there's a judgment to come and only the blood of Jesus Christ shed on Calvary will deliver us from the wrath to come.

So he's able to change society one heart at a time. He's able to change dangerous people into useful and productive members of society so trust him today and to all believers Jesus said if you follow me I will make you fishers of men.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you brother corny.

Let's sing our last song to close. Love before the dawn of time chosen by my maker hidden by my saviour I am his and he is mine cherished for eternity.

[37:38] when I'm staying with guilt and sin he is there to lift me heal me and forgive me gives me strength to stand again. Amen. Amen.