

Evangelism

Part 4

“5 After I go through Macedonia, I will come to you--for I will be going through Macedonia. 6 Perhaps I will stay with you awhile, or even spend the winter, so that you can help me on my journey, wherever I go. 7 I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. 8 But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, 9 because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.” (1Corinthians 16:5-9)

Ephesus is a city in the province of Asia Minor over the Mediterranean sea. A city inhabited by few Jews and more of pagan Greeks. Here we will find the Jewish synagogue, and the main temple of the goddess Artemis which brought worshippers from all over the world and contributed to the city's financial prosperity. Paul reached this city Ephesus in his 3rd missionary journey. He arrived to this city by travelling through the land, and there he met few of the disciples whom he baptized by water and whom God baptized by the Holy Spirit and planted with them the Church in Ephesus. Paul had in his heart the great goal in preaching the word of God on travelling to Ephesus. But when he arrived there he faced high opposition to preach the truth. To start with, from the obstinate Jews and later on suffered the persecution from the local Greeks because they were running business of shrine-making to the goddess Artemis, the business that suffered the threat of collapse upon the spread of the Gospel in Ephesus.

So the above was the situation around Paul whom at this stage was writing the letter to the Corinthians. From the above chosen passage we can point out exactly certain practical points about evangelism and how to reach new people for Christ. Evangelism should have a strategy and principles we need to observe in choosing the places that God is calling us to reach out. We should be led by the Holy Spirit of God to do the things that he is leading us to do. In analyzing that passage we can come out with the following fact that reflects Paul's thoughts, plans, attitudes and reactions:

1) Concentration on the goal: “But I will stay on at Ephesus ...” (1Corinthians 16:8) Paul's desire was to visit the Church in Corinth, but he suppressed this desire and fixed his effort on “Ephesus” and on the noble goal he came to achieve there. Paul stayed in Corinth for 18 months and after he left the church he was following them through letters. The meaning of the word “Corinth,” is ‘*satiated.*’ which means also ‘*full and satisfied.*’ Paul did all he could do to the Corinthians church and we know that they were not much satisfied with Paul labour for them. Paul was still thinking of them and to visit them, but they are full and satisfied, and if they will not be repenting by themselves then nothing can be done further. In evangelism we should understand that certain people whom we have done our part and they are not satisfied we should no more give our attention to them. In regard to the Ephesians Paul wrote to them that he will visit and stay with them if God would permit him, ***“7 I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits.” (1Corinthian 16:7)*** Paul mind was clear that the Lord should work now on the Corinthians and he (Paul) should concentrate on the city of Ephesus and the church there. The meaning of Ephesus is ‘Permitted,’ which has the following meaning, ‘legal, allowed, endorsed and officially recognized.’ So Paul realized that Ephesus is God's choice and target for him to stay at that moment to evangelize and spread the word of God. This point is a very important point in Evangelism; we need to grasp where God wants us to concentrate, which place and to which people, so that our effort will bear the fruit.

2) Patience: “But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost.” (1Corinthians 16:8) Paul stayed long at Ephesus, ***“This went on for two years, so that all Jews and Greeks who lived in the Province of Asia heard***

the word of the Lord.” (Acts 19:10) “Paul stayed until Pentecost.” The feast of Pentecost was for the Jews but for Christians it is a celebration commemorating the pouring of the Holy Spirit over the disciples. And, figuratively speaking ‘I will stay until Pentecost’, or until the appearing of the Holy Spirit on the reality state that mark the victory of any spiritually inspired Lord's mission. So, that was what really happened in Ephesus for ***“God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even the handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.” (Acts 19:11-12)***

3) Appreciation for the great task God delegated to him: “because a great door for effective work has opened to me” (1Corinthians 16:9a) Paul comprehended the honour that God gave him when he found himself in a city with a strong resistance to the Lord's message. The great door of resistance in the eyes of Paul was recognized as a blessing from God. In the same way, can you grasp the resistance that you are facing today is a sign that you are at the right place to spread God's word.

4) Confidence: “and there are many who oppose me.” (1Corinthians 16:9b) Paul was confidence about the certainty of the nature of his mission to the Ephesians. Paul in spite of the great opposition this did not shake him and did not make him doubt about the will of God for his presence in Ephesus and for what God wanted him to do there. Paul fought wild beasts at Ephesus but he did not quit, ***“If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus ..” (1Corinthians 15L32)*** You should have the same thought and understanding; your missions will have its value with such resistance and opposition.

5) The need for plenty efforts: “because a great door for effective work has opened to me.” (1Corinthians 16:9a) In response to above situation in Ephesus there were many things need to be done and hard work required to pave the way towards the victory. You should understand and accept that effective and hard work is needed to achieve the victory.

6) The spirit to conquer and the foreseen victory: In spite of many Jews and Greeks who opposed him he found in them the target to teach himself and to develop the spirit to overcome in reaching his goal, the Ephesians. Finally as we know that the Lord did miracles and wonders that helped Paul in his mission. ***“When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus held in high honour.” (Acts 19:17)*** You should behave and act in same way that even you are facing resistance but you are called to reach certain people who are in need of the gospel of Jesus and for the word of God.

My Dear and Beloved: Are you at the great door? Do much opposition bless you? Do you need to work hard in your ministry? Are you living in contemporary Ephesus? What God wants to tell you from this passage? Did Paul stay in Ephesus or he left early to another city? One more thing before we close, ***“Be on guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong.” (1Corinthians 16:13)*** As you agree to pray

My Prayer: *Father God I come before you in the name of Jesus who died on the cross for my sins and rose from the death to give me eternal life. Thank you for your word that brings encouragement and imparts more understanding of how I serve you and spread your word in the city that you had placed me in. Lord gives me more wisdom and patient and please do the needful miracle so the people will believe in you that you are the true God and I am your servant. Lord upholds me with your grace to stand firm and to persevere till you enable me to do that. This is my prayer in Jesus name, Amen.*

*please read Acts Chapters 19 & 20 about Paul's Journey to Ephesus.