

ACTS LESSON 18

Acts Chapter 18

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Memory verses for this week: *Phil 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*

Introduction: In Chapter 17, Paul and his companions went into Thessalonica and reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue. Such opposition arose that they fled to Berea where the people had a more ready mind to test the words to see if they were true. But the Jews who opposed Paul in Thessalonica came down to Berea and cause much trouble. Paul then went to Athens, where he declared the “unknown god” that they ignorantly worshipped to the people there on Mars Hill. This week, Paul arrives in Corinth. Corinth was the culture capital of the world during this time, but God’s view of the city was not like the world’s view. It was a commercial place of great importance, and had many activities going on in it like fairs, races, and gambling. Sailors came in from two different seas, and this was a very vile city.

In the first portion of this chapter, Paul goes to Corinth and begins a fruitful ministry there. Though there was opposition as he often faced, nevertheless, God blessed. Afterwards, he returned to his home church at Antioch after completing his second missionary journey. In the beginning of his third missionary journey, Paul first returns to strengthen earlier converts. The focus of the ministry then turns to Ephesus. For the next several years, his ministry will be centered there.

I. Paul at Corinth

Acts 18:1 After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; Acts 18:2 And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them.

Corinth was the commercial capital of Greece, located on a narrow isthmus of land between the Aegean Sea to the east and the Adriatic Sea to the west. Across this land was a major ‘portage’ route, carrying heavy commerce between the port of Cenchræa on the east and Laecheum on the west. Small ships were even hauled across this route intact. Situated in the city of Corinth was the mount Acrocorinthus upon which was a pagan temple to Aphrodite. Here, one-thousand religious prostitutes formed part of the pagan worship. In the Roman

world, to Corinthianize meant to engage in sexual immorality. It was a licentious city. Because of the heavy, commercial trade at Corinth; a significant colony of Jews had also been attracted.

In Corinth, Paul found a Jewish couple by the name of Aquila and Priscilla. We are told that Aquila originally was from Pontus (which was a province in eastern Asia minor along the southeast shore of the Black Sea). They had recently come from Rome because the Roman Emperor Claudius in A.D. 49 had expelled all Jews from Rome. Jews had been generally unpopular in Rome. Tiberias earlier had deported 4,000 Jews from Rome to Sardinia. The cause of Claudius' indignation was noted by Seutonius as being in a constant state of tumult by one 'Chrestus.' This may have been how Jews in Rome were agitated by others already preaching Christ there. The time Paul met Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth probably was at the beginning of A.D. 51. They later would return to Rome (Romans 16:3).

Acts 18:3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers.

Evidently, during this point in Paul's ministry, he had to work 'on the side' to make ends meet. Paul must have been trained at some point in the craft of making tents. He therefore joined in partnership with Aquila and Priscilla to make a living. It was a common practice of Jews of that era to associate with those of like craft. Whether this couple were already Christians, we are not told. However, if not, they soon would be. Soon, Timothy and Silas would arrive with support from the churches to the north in Macedonia.

In most of the recent travels, Paul had had one to four people with him. At this time, he was by himself. Timothy had joined Paul at Athens, but Paul sent him to Thessalonica. Silas was still in Berea, and Luke had remained in Philippi. When Paul came into Corinth, we see he found a Christian family, Aquila and his wife Priscilla. It says they had come from Italy when Claudius commanded the Jews to depart from Rome. This couple is one of the more notable couples of the New Testament. They had something in common with Paul, they were all tentmakers. It is a wonderful thing to find other Christians when you travel to new cities. And while Christians may be a minority in numbers to the world, praise the Lord you can find Christians in almost any place you travel.

II. Paul's Ministry and Founding of the Church at Corinth

Acts 18:4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

Acts 18:5 And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.

Meanwhile, Paul “reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and Greeks.” As was his custom, Paul went to the Jew first by reasoning and persuading in the local synagogue. There evidently were God-fearing gentiles attending this synagogue as well.

Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia to the north. Though not recorded here, it is noteworthy that Paul wrote later that the churches of Thessalonica and Philippi sent support to him. (See I Thessalonians 3:6, II Corinthians 11:9, and Philippians 4:9).

2Co 11:9 And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself.

This evidently allowed Paul to return to the ministry ‘full-time’ and not be ‘burdensome’ to the Corinthian work (II Corinthian 11:9). In so doing, his ministry was greatly expanded. Notice that he then was “pressed in spirit” and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. The coming of Silas and Timothy not only freed Paul to spend more time in the ministry, it lifted his spirit. With even greater vigor, he increased his message to the Jews that Jesus was in fact their long awaited Messiah.

Commerce was great in Corinth, and many of the Jews followed the possibility for financial gain. We see that the Jews had a synagogue there in Corinth as was the case in most of the cities. Paul went there every sabbath day and persuaded the Jews and Greeks with the scriptures. How do you persuade someone? You do it a little at a time and prove each point. The Word of God makes it clear that Jesus Christ was the one who was prophesied to come, and he met every jot and tittle of the law as was promised. Everything that the Law and Prophets had to say about Christ fit him. Paul not simply asserted that Jesus was the Christ, he solemnly testified that the virgin born son of Mary was the Christ, the very one who is Mediator between God and man today. Only Christ can give life to the spiritually dead. And all of us, until we accept Christ as Savior, are half dead. We may have physical life, but the spiritual man is not alive until we are saved.

Acts 18:6 And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.

Sadly, many of the Jews “opposed themselves, and blasphemed concerning his message.” The idea is that in opposing Paul’s message of Christ, they in reality were opposing their own selves. To fight the gospel is fight against one’s own self. It is the epitome of folly. Yet men to this day resist God’s offer of grace.

The word translated as blasphemed (blasphemew blasphemo), in its generic sense, is to 'speak against.'

These quite evidently spake against Jesus Christ and in so doing, entered that dangerous place of actually blaspheming the name of Christ. Paul then "shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." The Apostle used a symbol of exasperation similar to shaking off the dust of one's shoes. He absolved himself from any further responsibility to the Jews there. He had done all he could. Their blood would be upon their own heads. Ironically, the Jews of Jerusalem had used this same phrase in assuming the responsibility for the blood of Jesus (Matthew 27:25). Their blood would no longer be on Paul's hands. He now would turn to the gentiles of Corinth.

Pilate Delivers Jesus to Be Crucified

Mat 27:24 When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.

Mat 27:25 Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.

When Paul first began to teach, the Jews listened to him. But as his teachings became clear about Jesus, they opposed Paul. Note the scriptures say they opposed themselves. Anytime we reject God, we are at odds with our own selves. God tells us to try and reach that man and woman who are against themselves.

2 Tim 2:24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

2 Tim 2:25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

2 Tim 2:26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

The Jews were so against the truth Paul was preaching, that he told them that he was turning his message to the Gentiles.

Acts 18:7 And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.

Acts 18:8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.

Adjacent to the synagogue and perhaps immediately next door was the house of a man by the name of Justus (Titus Justus). As a gentile seeking the God of heaven through the synagogue, his moniker was 'Titus the Just.' Not only was the location of Justus' home strategic, being next door to the synagogue, Paul found a gentile believer willing to use his home for the furtherance of the gospel.

Greater inroad was made into the synagogue when its chief ruler, Crispus, "believed on the Lord with all his house." This was encouragement for many more Corinthians to come to Christ. Though Paul had redirected his focus to the gentiles, the leader of the synagogue was saved. Moreover, his entire family was saved as well.

Notice the sequence so evident throughout the book of Acts.

- (1) They heard.
- (2) They believed and then
- (3) They were baptized.

That always is the scriptural sequence and never the reverse. Bible baptism always is an outward expression of the great inward spiritual experience of having been born again.

It says after Paul left the synagogue, he came to the home of Justus and began to hold services right there in the house next to the synagogue. And it says that Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue came to the knowledge of Christ and was saved as well as several of the Corinthians who were baptized after being saved. We know that God's desire is for every believer to be baptized after they are saved, but not in order to be saved. Baptism is a work of righteousness which gives us access into the church. And we know that works of righteousness do not save us.

Mat 3:13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

Mat 3:14 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

Mat 3:15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

Titus 3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

Titus 3:6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

Titus 3:7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Acts 18:9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:

Acts 18:10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.

Though there was obvious outward progress and blessing in the ministry, it is apparent that Paul was troubled within. (Most preachers will understand this state.) It may be, Paul from experience could sense further trouble brewing, which indeed was. He may have been burdened for these young converts. It may be, he, from physical, emotional, and spiritual weariness in the battles he had incessantly faced, was internally exhausted.

Whatever, the problem, the Lord knew and intervened one night to Paul by a vision and encouraged him. The Lord had spoken to Paul at other critical points in his ministry and here He did again. His message was one of encouragement. "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace, For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city." Though trouble did erupt, Jesus kept His Word and Paul was not harmed. Moreover, the wonderful promise that there were many more people to be reached in this city must have been a great encouragement.

We gather by these verses that Paul's life may have been in great danger here in Corinth. We have seen how the lost rebel against those who preach the truth if they reject the message. Many a convicted sinner either comes to repentance, or lashes out in rebellion. God stands by Paul in the night and tells him not to be afraid. I looked last night, and "fear not" is in the bible 63 times. God does not want His children to be fearful, but of a strong mind and of great courage. And we can be when we look to God for our strength. God promises to be with him and not let any harm come to him. We know from verse 3 of the second book of Corinthians, that Paul had to have been threatened and in fear while being with these Christians.

1 Cor 2:3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

III. Paul Continues in Corinth

Acts 18:11 And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

We are not told how long the time was from Paul's arrival at Corinth until this point. However, he continued there another eighteen months, possibly more,

according to verse 18. This evidently refers to the time Paul spent working out of the home of Justus.

This was one of the longest periods of time that Paul stayed in one area teaching the word of God to those who were saved. Be sure that this was the very will of God for his life, as Paul was constantly seeking the Lord's will.

John Calvin said this about verse 11: "We do not read of Paul staying anywhere else this long; yet it is evident from his two letters not only that he had to put up with many troubles, but that he endured many unjust things because of people's pride and ingratitude. The Lord made him experience every kind of warfare. We also see how hard it is to build up the church, since the best master-builder spent so much time laying the foundation of just one church. Nor did he boast of having finished the work, but only that the Lord had replaced him with other people who would build on his foundation, as he says later that he planted, but Apollos watered.

1 Cor 3:6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

1 Cor 3:7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

IV. Gallio Refuses to Hear

Acts 18:12 And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat, Acts 18:13 Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law.

Acts 18:14 And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you:

Trouble was brewing from the unbelieving Jews. Gallio became the proconsul of Corinth in A.D. 51. He was noted in Roman history as a very pleasant man. Evidently, the Jews hostile to Paul thought they could gain an advantage with a Roman ruler with such a reputation. They therefore "made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat." The word translated as insurrection (katefisthmi katephistemi) literally means to 'arise against.'

The reference to the judgment seat is translated from (bhma) bema. It was the raised platform upon which Roman authorities sat as judge. The same word is used for the Judgment Seat of Christ in II Corinthians 5:10. Their charge though simple was intentionally ambiguous. They accused Paul of persuading men "to worship God contrary to the law." The wily Jews did not specify which law Paul

was guilty of violating nor did they produce any evidence. Under Roman law, Judaism was considered religia licita. That is, the Romans allowed the practice of Judaism as one of the legal religions of the Roman Empire. The Jews here were trying to accuse Paul of advocating an unapproved and hence an illegal religion, religia illicita.

As Paul was about to defend himself, the Proconsul Gallio interrupted and in effect said, 'if you Jews had a charge of real wrong or of criminal activity, I would bear with you.' The words translated as wicked lewdness (ponhrov radiourghma ponerous rhadiourgema) essentially means 'a wicked crime.' It was evident to even as pleasant an official as Gallio that they were taking advantage of him.

Acts 18:15 But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters.

Acts 18:16 And he drove them from the judgment seat.

Acts 18:17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

The Jews were notorious for nitpicking over "words and names," and of their law. Moreover, Gallio perhaps picked up on how these Jews hostile to Paul were trying to take advantage of him and use him to settle a score for them. Gallio reacted angrily. Not only did he refuse to be a judge of such a matter, he also drove them from the judgment seat. It is doubtful if the Romans followed the practice of legal precedent which forms such a bulwark of the modern legal profession. However, Paul could only interpret this decision if not a de jure, then a de facto decision from a Roman perspective that Christianity was considered religia licita. It would not only free him from trouble from the authorities here, but for some time thereafter. God took what seemed to be another round of grave trouble and turned it to a great victory for Paul and the gospel.

Gallio evidently was the successor of Crispus who already had become a Christian and may have been the point-person in bringing charges against Paul. In any event, he was the present leader of the Jewish community in Corinth. Therefore, Gallio looked the other way as the Greeks took him and beat him. Interestingly, when Paul wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians, he referred to Sosthenes as then not only a brother, but a co-worker. He evidently had gotten saved and at some point had joined with Paul in his ministry.

We see that Gallio was the deputy of Achaia and was quite indifferent to the accusations the people brought against Paul. The Jews brought Paul to the judgment seat and charged him with persuading men to worship God contrary to the law. If this had been a case contrary to Roman law, Gallio would have heard them. Paul was never allowed to speak, but if given a chance, I'm sure he would have told Gallio about Jesus Christ. While it was good that he did not

judge against Paul, the fact that he never heard Paul was perhaps the greatest loss of his life if he never came to know Christ as Savior later on. It says he had nothing to do with the matter and drove them from the judgment seat. The Jews then took the ruler of synagogue and beat him. Anytime someone acts with bitterness and hatred, you can be sure that the love of the Lord is not in that individual. The bible says we will know Christians by their fruits.

Mat 7:16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

Mat 7:17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

Mat 7:18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

Mat 7:19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Mat 7:20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

V. Paul Returns to Antioch

Acts 18:18 And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.

Acts 18:19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.

Paul stayed there for a couple of years and then left the brethren, and sailed to Syria. He took Priscilla and Aquila with him. Whether the “good while” mentioned here is a part of the eighteen months noted in verse 11 or in addition thereto, we are not told. However, Paul spent at least two years in Corinth, probably from A.D. 51 through A.D. 52. Quite possibly, it was during this time that Paul’s ministry extended to some of the outlying areas around Corinth. He later sent greetings to the church at Cenchrea in Romans 16:1, 27.

Cenchrea was the port city near Corinth on the Aegean Sea. He therefore “took his leave of the brethren” and began a homeward journey to Syria whence his home church at Antioch was located. Traveling with him were Aquila and Priscilla. The mention of a vow and having cut his hair no doubt is a reference to some Jewish vow he had taken (possibly a Nazarite vow). Though Paul would not impose such Jewish tradition upon others, as a Jew himself, he still retained some of his cultural heritage and customs. The reference to his head being shorn may not mean he had his head shaved. Rather, it probably refers to having his hair cut. Jews taking a vow such as a Nazarite vow did so for a limited duration. During that time they would not cut their hair. Therefore, they would have their hair cut prior so as not to become shameful in long hair as noted in I Corinthians 11:14.

We see Paul made a vow unto the Lord and cut his hair due to this vow. It is important that when we vow things that we stand by our word, particularly when vowing to the Lord.

*Eccl 5:4 When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed.
Eccl 5:5 Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.*

Perhaps Paul took a temporary Nazarite vow or perhaps he took the vow for life. A man could take a Nazarite vow for 30 days if he so chose. (See scriptures on Nazarites in Numbers 6:2, 13, 18)

Priscilla and Aquila accompany Paul to Ephesus, but when they arrive, he leaves them and goes into the synagogue to reason with the Jews. I'm sure that the battles Paul faced wore him down, but he was a man with courage and conviction, and did not give up. God needs more men like Paul in this old world today.

*Acts 18:20 When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not;
Acts 18:21 But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.*

Though the Holy Spirit had forbidden Paul to go to Asia and, by extension, Ephesus earlier; he evidently now felt free to do so. He stopped for a short time and "reasoned with the Jews" in the synagogue at Ephesus. Though they invited him to stay longer, he declined, noting that he wanted to reach Jerusalem for the impending feast thereat. We are not told which Jewish feast, but if it were in the spring, then the feasts of Unleavened Bread, Passover and Pentecost were at hand. Paul extended a promise, God willing, that he would return to them. Whereupon, he sailed further homeward bound.

*Acts 18:22 And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch.
Acts 18:23 And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.*

His ship landed at Caesarea. It is noted how Paul therefore went up. This was the standard idiom for ascending to Jerusalem in Judea. Indeed it was an upward journey in altitude from Caesarea to Jerusalem, located in the mountains. Paul evidently there attended the feast for which he had planned. He there "saluted the church" which no doubt is a reference to the Jerusalem church. He

then journeyed onward to Antioch and gave a report how God had worked through their ministry. This ended Paul's second missionary journey.

As Paul began his next missionary effort, it is notably different. On his first and second journeys, he had assistants in Barnabas and Silas as well as Timothy and Luke, now he evidently is alone, at least initially. Later in chapter 20, Luke evidently will rejoin Paul. See 20:6. Also Gaius and Aristarchus joined with him at Ephesus as well as Timothy and Erastus.

Act 20:6 And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days.

The amount of time 'on furlough' in Antioch is not noted. It may be surmised, however, he did not spend a long time there. The greatness of Paul shines through. He returned to the work. It had been arduous, living by faith, waiting on the Lord for support, and working on the side as necessary making tents. It had been extremely dangerous with fierce opposition arising almost everywhere he had gone. Now Paul returns to the work alone, a solitary veteran missionary.

As was his custom, he returned to those places where he had earlier won people to Christ and had established churches. Discipleship as commanded in the Great Commission requires much 'follow-up.' Here, he "went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples." This likely included but was not limited to such places as Derbe, Iconium, and Lystra. The mention of how he so "went over" (literally, 'went through') these regions "in order" reflects a systematic and orderly progression of follow-up. Before, he would plow new fields, he returned to strengthen those he had already won.

The people wanted Paul to stay longer, but he said the needed to go down to Jerusalem to keep the feast. After this he sailed to Caesarea and then to Antioch, always encouraging and exhorting the church to serve the Lord.

VI. Apollos teaches at Ephesus and in Achaia

Acts 18:24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.

Acts 18:25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

Luke mentions the conversion and spiritual development of Apollos. Luke records that Apollos was a Jew originally from Alexandria, the great Egyptian city founded by Alexander the Great in 332 B.C. Alexander had placed a large colony of Jews there and at one time, Jews had formed one third of the

population. It was an erudite city with a great university and library. Though it was primarily a gentile city, nevertheless, there was a strong Jewish cultural base there.

For reasons undisclosed, though likely professional or commercial in purpose, Apollos had come to Ephesus, the great city on the western coast of what today is referred to as Asia minor (present day Turkey). Luke records that Apollos was (1) “eloquent” and (2) “mighty in the scriptures.” The word translated as eloquent (logios) is a derivative of the more common word ‘logos.’

It had two senses:

- (1) one articulate and forceful of speech
- (2) one having a sharp mind and ideas.

Probably both were present in Apollos. The reference to him being “mighty in the scriptures” bespeaks one who was powerful in his knowledge of the Old Testament Scripture. (The New Testament had not been written as yet.)

Apollos instruction in the “way of the Lord” may have been a reference to an imperfect and limited knowledge of Christ. It is noted that he knew “only the baptism of John.” John the Baptist, of course, was the forerunner of Christ. At some point Apollos had come into contact with either John’s ministry years earlier in Judaea or had been influenced by someone who had heard John preach.

John’s message had been essentially to repent for the King and His kingdom were impending. In any event, this eloquent Jew “being fervent in spirit spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord.” The word translated as fervent (zeos) has the literal sense of ‘to boil over.’ It is whence the English word ‘zealous’ and ‘zeal’ derive. He was zealous and enthusiastic in his message. Unfortunately, his knowledge was incomplete. He evidently was unaware of Christ’s coming, Calvary, the resurrection, and the gospel of grace.

Apollos was one of the most remarkable characters in the Bible, and no doubt God had he and Paul meet for a special reason. He was a Jew from Alexandria and very learned and eloquent Jew.

In his commentary on Acts, J. Vernon McGee said: “Apollos was a Jew, which meant he had the background of the Mosaic Law. His name, Apollos, is Greek. So he was a Hellenist of the Diaspora. He hadn’t been born in Greece or in that area of Macedonia; he was born at Alexandria in North Africa. Alexandria, founded by Alexander the Great, was one of the great centers of Greek culture. A great university was there and it had one of the finest libraries in the world. It was there that a Greek version of the Old Testament, The Septuagint, was made. There was a Jewish temple in Alexandria. The great center of the early church

moved from Jerusalem and Antioch to Alexandria, and it remained important for several centuries of early church history. Athanasius, Tertullian, and Augustine, three great men of the early church, came from there. We are told he was an eloquent man and a great preacher. Also, it says he was “mighty in the scriptures” which means he was well trained in the Old Testament.”

Acts 18:26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

Apollos could preach his message of repentance in the local synagogue. Meanwhile, Aquila and Priscilla had arrived in Ephesus and were in attendance at this synagogue when Apollos rose to speak. They thereafter took him aside, perhaps for a meal, and “expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.” The word translated as more perfectly (akribhsteron akribesteron) has the sense of more accurately or more precisely. Apollos had zeal without complete knowledge of what he spoke. They evidently sat down with this bright zealous preacher and expounded to him that Jesus was the King of which John had foretold. They no doubt then proceeded to inform him of Christ’s life, ministry, and most importantly, His work on the cross and the resurrection.

Acts 18:27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace:

Acts 18:28 For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

How long Apollos remained in Ephesus, we are not told. However, when business or other concerns drew him to go “into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him.” Achaia was the region of southern Greece across the Aegean Sea from the region of Ephesus. It would encompass Corinth, where he evidently went. (Acts 19:1) Upon arriving in Achaia, Apollos “helped them much which had believed through grace.” As in Ephesians 2:8, grace and faith are closely linked. It is because of the grace of God that we have the privilege to believe. Works by their very nature do not lend themselves to belief. Grace, however, is the dew which causes the seed of the gospel to spring forth in one’s heart by faith.

In Corinth, Apollos “mightily convinced the Jews.” As Apollos evidently went to the synagogue of Corinth which had expelled Paul earlier, he powerfully preached and debated the Jews there. It may have been under his preaching that Sosthenes, the new chief ruler of the synagogue, was converted (I Corinthians 1:1). He publicly showed “by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.” It was customary for Jews to argue from the Talmud (the traditions) whereas

Apollos forcibly argued from the Scriptures. Indeed, the Word of God is quick and powerful.

Although Apollos had much knowledge of the Old Testament scriptures, he had not been informed of things beyond the baptism of John. Two of those trained under Paul's ministry, Aquila and Priscilla, expounded unto to him the way of God more perfectly. Most likely they brought him up to date on the things that had happened in Jerusalem about Christ dying on the cross and being raised from the dead after three days and three nights. It says that when Apollos expressed a desire to go into Achaia, the brethren wrote letters of exhortation that the other churches might receive him with readiness of mind. We know he was a great man, because verse 28 says that he convinced the Jews mightily by using the scriptures.

W. A. Criswell in the Believers Study Bible said this about Apollos.

Apollos was also "fervent in the spirit" and could teach "accurately" or diligently concerning the faith. One great gap loomed in his total makeup: he knew "only the baptism of John." At this point the sensitivity for ministry of Aquila and Priscilla appeared. On hearing Apollos preach accurately, in fervent spirit and with boldness, they were moved to take "him aside" and to expound to him "the way of God more accurately" (v. 26). Therefore, a sensitivity to someone's need, a concern for his spiritual instruction and accurate information, resulted in Apollos joining the efforts of the apostles. His expertise and eloquence may explain why some have suggested that he wrote the Book of Hebrews. Before embracing the faith, which centered in a Christ who had already come rather than in the message implied by the knowledge of the "baptism of John," Apollos had already shown great acumen and fervor. He was also bold "in the synagogue" at a time when all care and tact were necessary in approaching the Hebrews with the gospel of a Messiah who had already come and accomplished His work of redemption. Apollos gained the confidence of the brethren of the area. When he wanted to go over into Achaia, the brethren wrote to the disciples to receive him despite his unusual preparation and his background (v. 27). He was a very persuasive and convincing speaker, inasmuch as he presented the O.T. Scriptures in a vigorous manner that inspired many Jews in Achaia to believe Jesus was the Christ (v. 28). 1

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1W.A. Criswell, *Believer's study Bible [computer file], electronic ed.*, Logos Library System, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1991 by the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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