

Acts 18:18-28 “Apollos” 10/13/2024

Review:

Last week we looked at Paul’s trip to Corinth and discussed why so many churches are dying today in the US. We looked at the need for **households** to be formed by Christ, We looked at the Doctrines of Grace aka Calvinism and the need for **strong theology**. Lastly, we looked at sacrificial, entrepreneurial, **Pauline** church planting. Churches should build households, not just individuals. Churches should have strong doctrine, not just feel-good cupcake sermons. Churches should have lions that plant them, not soft handed soy boys. You’ll remember that 1000 churches a year are closing in America. If we plan to change our situation, we must change what we are doing. We need strong households, strong theology and strong, entrepreneurial church planting.

Intro:

Now, let us turn our attention to Acts itself. One of the characteristics of the book of **Acts** is **that it focuses on personalities and theology** more than it does places and times. What I mean is that Luke does not guidepost much of the journeys. He barely mentions them. For instance, today we will go from Paul’s second missionary journey to the third within a verse with no real commentary. In three verses, 23-24 & 19:1 Luke covers about 1500 miles. He just says that Paul went back to where he came and then he goes out again. There is no fanfare or anything. It is up to the reader to infer what is happening. **Paul’s third, and final recorded missionary journey starts in verse 23**. There are helpful maps, timelines and guides showing graphically the trips that Paul takes. I encourage everyone to look at these online and in your Bibles. One helpful timeline is on <https://www.understandchristianity.com/timelines/>

You’ll remember that **Paul writes 13 of the 27 books of your New Testament**. These letters are written to churches and individuals that he meets along his missionary journeys. These are the journeys that we have been looking at. Last week he was in Corinth and stayed for a year and a half (Acts 18:11). From here, he most likely wrote the letters to the Thessalonians from chapter 17:1-9. Of course, 1&2 Corinthians will be written to the Corinthian church. Today we see that he visits Ephesus, another church that gets a letter. He has already been through the Galatian region twice. They got a letter. The same is true with Philippians to the church at Philippi where

Lydia was converted in chapter 16. We've seen Timothy, who ends up pastoring the church at Ephesus, gets two letters. The point is that almost all the churches and people that Paul writes to are being outlined here in the book of Acts.

Today we will examine one guy in particular, a fellow by the name of Apollos.

"From Alexandria" -probably an educated sophisticate of some sort (v24). It says that he was eloquent. **He was well spoken and probably trained in rhetoric.**

V28 says that he was powerfully refuting the Jews, demonstrating from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. It is because of this verse, that **some believed him to have written the New Testament book of Hebrews**. Martin Luther believed this. Modern scholarship generally prefers the idea that Luke recorded one of Paul's many "reasoning"(s) with the Jews (v19) as the Greek is most like Luke's style and it fits the pattern of Paul's activity. Nevertheless, Apollo was such an influential and powerful personality that the Corinthians were even divided over him, Paul, Peter, and Jesus (1Cor 1:12).

I. Biblical: Not intellectualism or emotionalism

"he was mighty in the Scriptures" -v24

Quote "relying on the Spirit" or "being led by the Spirit" is never an excuse to be ignorant of the Bible. I know people who've said the most outlandish things like they were "at peace with divorcing their husband" even though he had done nothing worthy of such action.

The Spirit of God uses the word of God.

The Spirit will never remind you of something in the Bible you've never read.

Rationalism and scholasticism is not the answer. Biblicism is the start of the answer. Go to the source.

"preach THE WORD." 2Tim 4:2... not cleverly devised myths or stories or ideas, or church dogma, but the word of the Living God. When I was young, we belonged to a mainline denominational church. The Bible was read but pretty much everything else in the sermon was some sort of storytelling. It was not thoroughly Biblical. And that is one reason why that denomination was one of the fastest shrinking denominations in the US.

If the preacher cannot say "thus sayeth the LORD" then everything else is just speculation and empty, vain, opinion. God's people come to hear God's word. He hasn't promised to bless our

soliloquy or rhetoric. God's word is what is sharper than any two edged sword. His words are the words of life. His word is the foundation of our belief and practice. His word, is life, giving water to our souls. Nothing else can satisfy. There is nothing else that the Spirit of God will use like the preaching of His word. **Sola Scriptura**. Scripture alone.

We must be Biblical over and against everything else. That is the starting point.

II. **Passionate**: not rationalism or emotionalism.

"fervent in spirit" -v25

Passionate orthodoxy.

Charismania is not the answer, but neither is cold, dead, emotionless, data.

I've listened to nonsensical sermons and wanted to gouge out my own ears. I've also listed to dead lectures that had no soul.

Dabney believed that "The preacher is a herald; his work is heralding the King's message."

Preaching should never be boring. It is not a lecture. It is not a Bible study. It is not a presentation or seminar. Preaching is not simply explaining the text.

There is a difference between preaching and teaching. Preaching is the announcing or heralding of something. It's actually a different word in the Greek than teaching. Kerusso (preaching) and didasko (teaching). Preaching always includes teaching, but teaching isn't preaching. Preaching involves passion, motivation and zeal. Teaching is more information based, whereas preaching requires the driving of the message home to its hearers. Preaching also requires an immediate response from the hearers. Teaching is less rhetorical and more cerebral. Preaching is intellectual and emotional. That is why preaching requires an elevated volume and animation. Preaching is proclamation. Teaching is conversation. Preaching is generally monological. Teaching is dialogical.

The preacher, and all Christians for that matter, must be Biblical and passionate. He must have affection for the God he is proclaiming. He must care about the people he is speaking to. As Christians, we must be "full of grace and truth." Paul will later say to the Corinthians that, "The love of Christ compels us." 2 Cor 5:14. There is a burning in his soul. "He makes his ministers aflame." Heb 1:7.

I know that everyone thinks that I just like to pick on Baptists, Pentecostals and Charismatics. Let us aim at the Reformed camp for a bit. In our own tradition of Presbyterianism there has been a shift over the last two hundred years to dry, dead, passionless, intellectualism. There has been a focus on scholasticism at the expense of deep, emotional, psychological, experiential, affection. This is an overcorrection for Charismania and has no place in the roots of our tradition. The men of the first great awakening in our country were by in large, either Presbyterians or card-carrying Calvinists. They were not men of stoic sensibilities but men of white-hot passion. There is no place for “dead orthodoxy” or the “frozen chosen”.

George Whitfield is one such example.

The early colonial evangelist was said to have preached with great emotion and fervor. He was never considered a dull, boring type. He was also a thoroughgoing Calvinist. His preaching, by the grace of God, attracted so great crowds that he couldn't keep preaching in church buildings. They had to move to open air environments. It is estimated that he preached to an estimated 10 million people in his lifetime. He was so loud that he could be heard by as many as 30 thousand people without amplification. God used him to plant the seeds of vibrant Christianity in a nation, yet to be formed.

Perhaps we should go back further to the father of Presbyterianism, **John Knox**. He was the disciple of Calvin himself, and also known as a fiery preacher. Knox would often hunch over the lectern while waving his fists.

Knox was known for using bold and controversial words in his sermons. He spoke with authority and courage. His style was plain spoken and to the point even though he regularly preached for two hours.

The prince of preachers, and ardent Calvinist, **Charles Haddon Spurgeon** preached to thousands regularly without amplification. He was called the prince of preachers and you can still feel the unction by which he spoke from the Holy Spirit.

Apollos was “fervent in spirit” (v25), spoke “boldly” (v26) and “powerfully refuted the Jews” (v28). Monological does not mean monotone.

Biblical and passionate. This is the way. However, there is one more component that needs to be considered.

III. **Accurate** and Orthodox

V26 says that Priscilla and Aquilla explained the way of God more accurately to Apollos. He then went on to be a powerful mouthpiece for God in “demonstrating from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ” v28. He was sincere but his belief was incomplete. He knew of the Baptism of John but apparently did not know about the death, burial and resurrection. His heart was pure but his knowledge was incomplete. Much damage has been done by well-intentioned ignorant people. When knowledge is truncated, or incomplete, immaturity abounds. Imagine if your knowledge of food were stopped at three years old. You’d still be eating nothing but chicken nuggets or peanut butter and jelly sandwiches never knowing the beauty of a truly wonderful wagyu steak or lobster. Paul, in 1 Cor 13 says “when I was a child, I thought as a child and reasoned as a child.” Apollos’ knowledge was inaccurate in that it was incomplete.

What we **believe** does actually matter. Words have meaning and to conflate issues, ideas and commit category error is a problem. What we believe matters because the Bible actually does and does not teach certain things. This is one of the reasons why we, as a church, are confessional. We affirm the historic doctrines of the faith and are not out trying to figure it out. We are not asking questions like, “who is God?” because the Scriptures and the confession tell us who God is. If you think that God is an impersonal force, or the universe, then you are a deist and cannot know Him. If you think that God is “heavenly Father” and is actually an alien who created this planet with his wife (like the Mormons) then you will obviously not be able to understand the point of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection.

For example, the Mormons say they believe in Jesus, but the question is which Jesus?

Many evangelicals today say they believe the gospel, but what gospel? The man-centered, feel good, “God loves you more than anything” non-gospel or the Jesus is King, repent and trust His death, burial and resurrection to save you, gospel?

Orthodoxy matters.

Orthodoxy is “the faith” mentioned 18x in the New Testament. That phrase is used by Paul, Jude, and the writer of Hebrews. It refers to the collection of essential to Christian teaching. You might call it dogma. It is what is not up for grabs. These are closed handed issues. That doesn’t mean that we can’t discuss them, but it does mean that we can’t deny them. Things like the Trinity, two natures of Christ, the substitutionary atonement, and resurrection. This is not to be confused with the Greek Orthodox Church. I’m talking about what makes something or someone explicitly Christian and without it you cannot be Christian. The reason Mormons and the Church of Latter-Day Saints is not Christian is because it is not orthodox. It does not believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, nor do Jehovah’s’ Witnesses.

Our faith and our preaching should also never be a clever invention. It should be accurate.

So, we see these three things must always accompany godly preachers and also apply to Christ's bride, the church. It applies to all of us.

Biblical, passionate, and orthodox, or accurate.

Application and Conclusion:

1. Get ready to read the Bible in a **year** with us as a church.
2. **Know** what you believe. Study the Scriptures and the Westminster Standards.
3. Be open to challenges about your belief so as to fortify your understanding and deepen your faith.
4. **Give** yourself over to the wooing of the Holy Spirit.

Closing Prayer:

Father, thank you for this story about Apollos and how you did mighty things through him. Find us faithful people who are Biblical, passionate, and accurate. Shape and form our hearts and minds. Let our affections be ever growing towards Christ, for Your glory and empowered by the Spirit. And now, as we take the Lord's supper, we remember the death of the Lord Jesus, that He gave His life as a ransom for many. In His name we pray, Amen.