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Series: Acts - *The Cure Goes Viral*

Title: *Who You Don't Know CAN Hurt You*

Text: Acts 18:23-19:7

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These days, everyone seems to be extra health conscious. We take our vitamins. We wear sports watches that make sure we get in enough steps and, most of all, we avoid things we KNOW can be harmful to our health.

Well, get out a pen and a piece of paper because this week I came across an article that lists things we DON'T know that can hurt us.

For example:

- **Being a night owl can hurt you.** Did you know that?
Studies show that people who favor being active in the evening are 2.5 times more likely to have type 2 diabetes than those who were more active in the morning.
- **Not changing your sheets often enough can hurt you.** Did you know that?
A study in 2018 found that the average one-week old pillowcase contains some 3 million colony-forming units of bacteria per square inch---which is 17,442 times more bacteria than you'd find on the average toilet seat.
- **Sitting in a traffic jam can hurt you.** I bet you DID know that or at least THINK it!
A 2016 study published in the journal *Atmospheric Environment* found that simply sitting in traffic with the windows closed and the fan on--can increase your exposure to toxic fumes by as much as 76 percent.
- **Reading your e-mail when you first wake up can hurt you.** Did you know that?
If you're an early e-mail reader (like me) your stress level is much higher than those who wait a while. This stress can cause high blood pressure and problems with digestion, fertility, memory, and even blood flow.

I could go on, but I'll stop because I have a sneaky suspicion that TALKING about things that we don't know can hurt us---can hurt us. The reason I bring up this hurtful subject is because in our text for this morning we meet some people who learned that---not WHAT---but WHO you don't know can hurt you. I'm referring to people who didn't know Jesus and in each instance God sent people who DID know our Lord to lead them to faith.

I'm excited about our text because I believe these encounters will help us as we learn how best to introduce people to our Lord. Before we get to our text let's get the setting in our minds.

When we last left Paul, he had just finished his second missionary journey where it began, in Antioch. He probably spent the winter of AD 51/52 there for a well-deserved rest and after the spring thaw, Paul set out again, following the same course as his second journey up through Syria and into Cilicia, where he probably stopped off in his hometown of Tarsus for a brief visit, perhaps to see family. And please note, Paul was alone this time. Neither Barnabas nor Silas was with him. But that's okay because he had travelled these roads before, plus he would be stopping regularly to minister to dear friends he personally had led to Christ, members of the churches he had started in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch.

Okay, as I said earlier, in today's text, Dr. Luke tells us about people who were hurting because they DIDN'T know Jesus. In each example God sent Christians to them to help. When it comes to Sharing the Cure---a question that is often asked is: "*What about the people who never hear about Jesus?*" Well, today's text gives us an answer because as God promised in Jeremiah 29:13, "***If you seek Me, you will find Me, if you seek me with all your heart.***" These people were SEEKERS---they hungered to know God and God answered that seeking by sending Christians to help.

I can't help but think of part of Paul's sermon on Mars Hill when he said, ***"[God] marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from any one of us."*** You see, not only did God send Christians to help these seekers---he put these hungry people in the time and place where they could come to know Him.

Okay, Luke divides this into two marble-moving encounters---so we'll divide our study in that way. The first takes place in Acts 18:23-28. So, take your Bibles and turn there and if you are able stand as I read.

Acts 18:23-28

23 - After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

24 - Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures.

25 - He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John.

26 - He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

27 - When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers and sisters encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed.

28 - For he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.

Okay, who's the seeker in this text? RIGHT! A man named APPOLOS.

Let me help you get a mental image of this guy Apollos was the kind of person who stands out in any gathering. In my mind he was tall---I'm thinking a 1st century Shaquille O'Neal. But it wasn't just his stature that made people notice him.

a. Apollos was also highly educated.

He was born in Alexandria, a place that rivaled Athens when it came to a reputation for knowledge. You may remember that the greatest library in the world was in Alexandria. Before Julius Caesar destroyed part of it, it contained 700,000 Greek texts. The Septuagint---the Greek translation of the Old Testament was written there in the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C.

And in case it comes up on Jeopardy, I'll tell you it was called *"The Septuagint"* because that word means "70" and supposedly 70 Jewish scholars worked together on the project. They would not have been hard to find because Alexandria had a large Jewish population. In fact, some say not 70 but 72 Jewish rabbis did the translation---six for every tribe of Israel. They worked in independent groups and when they compared each group's translation they matched perfectly.

Speaking of scholars, like Athens, Alexandria was known for some pretty famous ones. For example, if you High School kids are having a problem with Geometry---then blame Alexandria because it was the home of Euclid---the guy who invented that often-perplexing form of math. It was also the home of famous philosophers like Plotinus and Philo. Anyway, thanks to his hometown, Apollos was highly-educated---something uncommon in those days.

But his stature and his education weren't the only things that made him stand out.

b. Apollos was also a GREAT speaker.

As Luke puts it in verse 25, ***"He spoke with great fervor."*** Apollos was the kind of speaker who could hold an audience in the palm of his hand. He was both eloquent and passionate.

When we served at Bethany Baptist Church in Newport, Delaware, we had an interim pastor who was like Apollos in this sense. His name was RAY HARVEY. Ray was a popular professor at Wesley College in Dover because he was able to keep

the attention of college kids and he used his giftedness to keep our attention at Bethany. He had the humor of Grady Nutt---anyone remember him? And he had the depth of someone like Joe Stowell. God used Ray's OUTSTANDING speaking gifts to bless that church. Here's something else about Apollos that made him stand out.

c. He knew ABOUT Jesus.

That put him in the minority in the 1st century. Look at verse 25 again.

“He had been instructed in the way of the Lord...and [he] taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John.”

Apollos had been a disciple of John the Baptist, he had been baptized into repentance and was looking for the coming Messiah. But he didn't know the meaning of the cross. He wasn't familiar with the Resurrection and had not heard about Pentecost.

d. Apollos also knew the Scriptures.

In other words, Apollos knew the Old Testament backwards and forwards. He probably had his own copy of the Septuagint. But of course, that's not enough. Knowing ABOUT Jesus---knowing the Scriptures---that won't get you into Heaven. You can know the book of God and NOT know the God of the Book.

When we went to Israel a few years back our guide was a man named Danny Applebaum. Danny was a proud Israeli citizen, but he was not a Christian. Like Apollos, he knew the Scriptures. He had a well-worn New Testament and would use it at every stop to compliment his lectures. I remember when we were in Capernaum he stood on an ancient street with his New Testament open and pointed to the synagogue on his right and Peter's house on his left and read from Luke 4:38: ***“Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. So, He bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them.”*** I loved when he did that, I mean the Scripture came alive but it made me sad because even though Danny knew the Bible---even though he could quote it from memory---he didn't know Jesus.

And what you don't know---WHO you don't know---can hurt you. People like Danny are the ones Jesus referred to in Matthew 7:23 when He said, ***“Depart from Me for I never knew You.”***

I've been praying for Danny since 2014. I hope you'll join me.

Well, verse 26 says that one day Apollos spoke in the synagogue. Priscilla and Aquilla “just happened” to be there. I use “air quotes” because we know that as Paul said in that Mars Hill Sermon:

“[God] marked out [Apollos' appointed time in history and the boundaries of [Apollos'] lands.”

In other words, God put Apollos in that synagogue on the day that Aquilla and Priscilla were present. This couple listened respectfully to Apollos' message and then once he finished talking to everyone else, they invited him home for dinner. I'm thinking this is where the wonderful old tradition of inviting the preacher home for Sunday dinner started.

During our seminary days I served on staff at a church in New Albany, Indiana. Not to long after we arrived, I learned about my predecessor---Bob Albritton. Bob was single when he was at Southern so he welcomed invites to dinner on Sundays or ANY day. But Bob took it a step further. When he first came to the church he passed out toothbrushes with his name on it to the families of the church, just in case they were to see fit to invite him home for a good meal. I think next to his name were the words, *“hint, hint.”*

Well, I don't think Apollos was hungry for food that Sabbath afternoon, but he was hungry for God and I'm sure he sensed the Lord's love in the hearts of this couple. So, he accepted their invitation.

And at this point please note what Priscilla and Aquilla DIDN'T do.

- They didn't stand up in the middle of Apollos' sermon and publicly point out the things he got wrong. They didn't slander him to his face.

- And they also didn't talk about him behind his back---you know point out his flaws to the other synagogue attenders when Apollos wasn't looking.

No, they invited him home and with a good meal in his belly they gently, lovingly told him what---WHO---he had been missing. As Luke says in verse 26, ***"They explained to him the way of God more adequately."*** In other words, they introduced him to the Person he KNEW about---the Person Whose book he knew so well---the Person he didn't actually KNOW. Apollos came to their home with a hungry heart and left with a full one---he put his faith in Jesus.

I feel led to point out that one of the MAJOR flaws in today's SOCIAL MEDIA is that it makes it EASY to slam someone in public and in private. If someone, even a good friend, posts something we find offensive, we can ZAP them right away---we can make them look foolish in the eyes of all their cyber friends. We can counter post THEIR posts. We can cite OUR experts. I mean social media makes attacking each other easy. From the comfort of your home you can rip someone to shreds. Doing that is cowardly and sinful.

I mean, does that sound like something Jesus would endorse? OF COURSE NOT!

I confess that when I have self-righteously sinned in this way, I have felt shame, God has tapped me on the shoulder and done this: (shake finger) Jesus wants us to build each other up not tear each other down. He wants us to win our brother or sister---not WIN an argument with them. Sure, we can discuss our differences of opinion---we can even agree to disagree---but we must never use our words to intentionally HURT.

Priscilla and Aquilla were mature enough---they knew Jesus WELL enough---to know how to deal with Apollos' flaws. As Jesus had taught in Matthew 18, they spoke to him alone in the privacy of their home. Luke doesn't describe their teaching but I get the image of well-educated, talented Apollos, humbly sitting at the feet of these two fairly new Christians. And their method; inviting him into their home, speaking to him privately, was life-giving---eternal life-giving because Apollos went from knowing ABOUT Jesus---to KNOWING Him personally. He came DEAD in his trespasses and sins and he left RESURRECTED---a NEW CREATION!

He ate up the teaching of Priscilla and Aquilla and with the missing pieces of the puzzle found, he grew spiritually by leaps and bounds such that as verses 27-28 says, ***"When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers and sisters encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. For he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah."***

No longer would he just tell people ABOUT Jesus. From then on, he INTRODUCED them to Him. Many believe it was Apollos who wrote the book of Hebrews. I don't know---but I do know that he became a powerful evangelist. In fact, some who knew both him and Paul preferred to hear Apollos preach but this didn't bother Paul. In 1st Corinthians 3:5-6 he said, ***"What after all is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe---as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow."***

When I read about Apollos I think of John Wesley because their life stories are so similar. John was the son of a clergyman, Samuel Wesley, and an unusually Godly and dedicated mom, Susanna Wesley. After growing up in this wonderful Christian home, John Wesley attended Charterhouse and Oxford and became a double professor of Greek and logic at Lincoln College.

He also served as his father's assistant and was ordained by the church. While at Oxford he was a member of "the Holy Club," a group so nicknamed by the other students because they seriously attempted to cultivate their spiritual lives. Eventually Wesley accepted an invitation from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to become a missionary to the Native Americans living in the wilderness of Georgia. But he failed miserably, such that he had to return to England. He later wrote, ***"I went to American to convert the Indians, but, oh, who shall convert me?"*** The good news is while in America, he met some Moravian Christians whose deep faith impressed him so when he returned to England he sought out Moravian believers. Wesley writes,

"I was clearly convinced of my unbelief, of the want of that faith whereby alone we are saved."

Then on the Evening of May 24, 1738 Wesley wrote in his journal,
"In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me, that, He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

When I read about Wesley's conversion, I can't help but think of those disciples on the Emmaus road who said when they met Jesus their hearts were burning inside them. But, think of it. Like Apollos, John Wesley knew more theology and knew more of the Bible and was more dedicated than most believers, but he did not know Jesus. The lesson I want us to take from this first encounter is this: knowing ABOUT Jesus---even knowing THE BIBLE isn't enough.

Not knowing Jesus PERSONALLY---can hurt you.

Okay, let's continue to read. Look at Acts 19 and follow along as I read the first seven verses. And as I read, note Paul and Apollos kind of missed each other. It reads like Apollos was in Ephesus and he headed to Corinth at about the same time Paul, who was in Ephesus, headed to Ephesus.

If able, please stand as I read:

Acts 19:1-7

1 - While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples

2 - and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

3 - So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism," they replied.

4 - Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus."

5 - On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

6 - When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

7 - There were about twelve men in all.

So, while Apollos was in Corinth watering what Paul had planted, Paul keeps his promise to the church in Ephesus and returned there. When he arrived, he met some "disciples." They may have been disciples of Apollos---men who had heard him preach BEFORE he came to know Jesus. Like Apollos, somehow they missed out on all the news of Jesus' sinless life, atoning death, and victorious resurrection. They knew nothing of the Great Commission and Pentecost. Remember, they said, **"We have not even heard there IS a Holy Spirit."**

This week I read that during the latter part of the eighteenth century a group of colonists left Virginia and started through the mountains to settle the valleys that lay far to the west. Many of them stayed in that remote region. For over 20 years these settlers saw no other white people---until a group of travelers from the east straggled into the area where they were living. Of course, since two decades had past there was a lot to share with these isolated settlers---things they had never heard of---like George Washington and the revolutionary war---and the fact that they were now living in a newborn country called: *The United States of America*. In their minds these isolated settlers were still part of England---still serving King George.

That's what it was like for these 12 disciples after hearing the teaching of John the Baptist through Apollos or someone like him, these men had become *"spiritual Rip Van Winkles."* There was so much they didn't know. So, Paul told them. Look at verses 4 and 5 again where Paul says:

"John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the One coming after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

They believed and as it is with all people, the moment they believed the Holy Spirit took up residence in their lives. Think of it this way. They invited Jesus in and He came in. It was a mini-Pentecost---they praised God in other languages. Tears flowed freely. Some cried aloud for joy.

Jesus' words in John 7 come to mind:

"If a man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said---streams of living water will flow from within him." ***By this He meant the Spirit.*** (John 7:37-39)

Quick sub-point. Some have used this text to teach that to be a REAL Christian---you need a second blessing---a SPECIAL blessing of the Holy Spirit---where you speak in tongues. That's not what this text says, because these men had never HAD a "first blessing." They didn't KNOW Jesus. There is no such thing as the "second blessing." We get the Holy Spirit when we become Christians...period.

But the main point I want us to get from this faith conversation---the thing that if we DON'T know it---it can hurt us is: repentance is not enough for our salvation. To be cured of our sin we need to both REPENT and put our faith in Jesus. Becoming a Christian is not just repenting of sin---it's not turning over a new leaf---saying, *"I'm going to stop sinning and live better."* Living better is not enough---we have to be pure---forgiven---cleansed. And that only comes through faith in Jesus' sacrifice. I mean, being cured of sin is not something WE do---or DON'T do---it's putting our faith in what Jesus did on the cross. And only when we KNOW Jesus only when the Holy Spirit lives in us do we have the power to live repentant lives. On our own we always fall back into sin. Paul didn't say, *"I can do all things through ME who strengthens ME."* He said, ***"I can do all things through CHRIST who strengthens me."***

In his book, *The Social Animal*, David Brooks summarizes vast amounts of social science research by stating that *"Information programs alone are not very effective in changing behavior."*

In other words, KNOWING we should do this or that and NOT do this or that is not enough.

He writes:

"Both reason and will are obviously important in making moral decisions and exercising self-control. But neither of these character models has proven very effective. You can tell people not to eat the French fry. You can give pamphlets about the risks of obesity. You can deliver sermons urging them to exercise self-control and not eat the fry. And in their nonhungry state, most people will vow not to eat it. But then their hungry self arises, their well-intentioned self fades, and they eat the French fry. Most diets fail because the conscious forces of reason and will are simply not powerful enough to consistently subdue unconscious urges. The evidence suggests reason and will are like muscles, and not particularly powerful muscles. In some cases and in the right circumstances, they can resist temptation and control the impulses. But in many cases they are too weak to impose self-discipline by themselves. In many cases self-delusion takes control."

The story of these 12 men is further proof that WHO we don't know can hurt us! As Paul put it in Philippians 3:10, ***"We need to KNOW Christ and the POWER of His resurrection."***

So, Who you don't know can hurt you...that's why we call it the cure. Do you KNOW Jesus---does His Spirit live in you? You can know Him right now. As Paul said, ***"He is not far away from any of us."*** (Acts 17). God is waiting for you to come to Him. So do that---pray---talk to Him. He is listening. Tell Him---Admit to Him that you are a sinner---tell Him you believe Jesus is His Son and that He died to pay for your sin---tell Him you want to turn from you sin and follow Jesus as Lord. If you do---you will be cured. The rest of you---those of you who ARE Christians---it's our task to share the Cure with those who don't know Jesus.

I am reminded of the lyrics to an old song by William J. Reynolds.

How do you share the love of Jesus with a lonely man?

How do you tell a hungry man about the bread of life?

*How do you tell a thirsty man about the living water of the Lord?
How do you tell him of His Word?*

People who know go to people who need to know Jesus.

*How do you tell a loveless world that God Himself is love?
How do you help a man who's down to lift His eyes above?*

*How do you tell a bleeding man about the healing power of the Lord?
How do you tell him of His Word?*

People who know go to people who need to know Jesus

Let's pray.