

Series: **The Original Church Planter**

Today's Title: ***"Powerful and Teachable"***

June 18, 2023 – Acts 18:24-28

Father's Day!!

Objective: To encourage Christians to be confident in the power of the Scriptures, and remain humble and teachable.

- VBS recap - pics

Opening Prayer

I want to start by taking a step back and look at the book of Acts and to see where it falls in the larger picture of God's work in the world throughout history.

Acts: A period of transition from the O.T. Judaism to the N.T. and the Church.

That sentence is a huge topic – and I can't cover all the different aspects of it.

However, I think it's important to point out a significant truth that will help us understand and interpret what we read in the Luke's account of the Apostle's work as the church spreads across the Mediterranean basin.

As we study the book of Acts, we must remember that this period is a time of transition.

- God has moved from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant in Christ (See Hebrews 8).

- We need to realize that God made the shift – but it took people a bit longer.

- The Church – for the first few decades – is meeting in Synagogues – and then it shifts to meet in homes.
- It took Christians a while to figure out the reality of grace – especially as it related to the rules and regulations of Mosaic Law.
- Peter (**Acts 10**) struggles with the freedom he had in Christ. The dietary restrictions of Mosaic Law were no longer in effect. Their purpose had been realized.
- Paul was still making vows which were not necessary (18:18 - not a sinful thing).
- The believers in Galatia were drawn back into religious rules and regulations of the O.T. Law – which Paul addresses in **Galatians**.

All that to say this...

You must be careful when reading Acts – which is a book detailing the shift or transition period in the work of God.

You must be careful that you don't take certain actions as prescriptive for all believers through all time.

Much of Acts is descriptive – not prescriptive.

It describes the events and growth of the Church.

It does not always prescribe things for all people in all eras to follow.

Turn in your Bible to Acts 18:24-28

Today we will be introduced to a guy named Apollos. Apollos – like Paul – was in 2 worlds: The world of the Old Covenant – and the world of the New Covenant.

He was a powerful speaker – but he was mixing teaching from John the Baptizer – and the teaching of Jesus.

Old Covenant – and New Covenant.

In this account we see some very helpful things to apply today – but we also see the challenge Apollos had – and almost every follower of Christ from a Jewish background had to work through in the early decades of the Church.

The high value of knowing the Scriptures. vs. 24-25

Even though Acts is a book of transition – detailing the birth and growth of the Church – the New Covenant replacing the Old Covenant – there are some timeless truths we can find.

One of the primary truths is the timeless value of knowing the Scriptures / the Bible.

Read vs. 24-25

Apollos is Jewish – born and raised in Alexandria, Egypt, which was on the northern shore of Africa. Alexandria was founded in 332 B.C. by Alexander the Great.

It was a large city – with a **very large Jewish population**.

Some estimate the Jewish population was up to 30% of the city.

Alexandria is known for the **massive library** which was the most famous library of antiquity.

It was an intellectual and philosophical center.

The Septuagint (Greek translation of the Hebrew O.T.) was done in Alexandria due to the abundant research material and books available in the library.

The Pharos lighthouse was there in Alexandria – one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world (various images).

Apollos arrives in Ephesus, and Luke tells us 5 things about him in **vs. 24-25**.

1. “He was an eloquent man...”

This Greek word (translated by “eloquent”) – only time it’s used in the N.T.

It combines the ideas of knowledge and eloquence – or great content with great and powerful delivery.

This guy was a top-notch speaker – and he was very well educated.

2. “competent in the Scriptures”

This is another timeless principle here – especially for those who teach in the church.

“competent” is not the best translation of the Greek word. ‘mighty’ or ‘powerful’ would be better.

The Greek word is the word we get our word, *'dynamite'* from.

He spoke powerfully from the Scriptures.

"Scriptures" = the O.T. – the N.T. has not been written yet.

3. "...instructed in the way of the Lord."

He had been "instructed" – Greek: *katécheó* – Catechized / catechism.

He was systematically taught the "way of the Lord".

This phrase: "the way of the Lord" is used throughout the O.T. – so it's a general term referring to the things of God.

John the Baptizer talked of "preparing the way of the Lord" (quoting Isaiah 40:3) in reference to the ministry of Jesus – so it can have a more precise meaning (Matt. 3:1-3).

4. "...fervent in spirit"

Here is an interpretation question.

In the Greek, the definite article (the) is before "spirit" – which seems to indicate the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of God – not Apollos' spirit.

But the **ESV** translates this in a way that points to *'Apollos' spirit'* – and doesn't include the definite article in the translation.

The **NASB** ("and being fervent in spirit") is the same as the **ESV**.

The **NIV** doesn't translate the word '*spirit*' at all, “and he spoke with great fervor”

The **KJV** translates “the spirit” – but doesn't capitalize “spirit” – indicating Apollos' spirit.

The Message: “and fiery in his enthusiasm”

The **NLT:** “with an enthusiastic spirit”

Why all these differences?

Because many don't believe Apollos was a Christian at this point.

They believe he had partial truth about Jesus – and would become a Christian in the next verse.

But the next verse never says he gets saved – and Luke doesn't record him being baptized, which he usually did when someone got saved.

Some commentators / theologians take the position that he was saved at this point. They take this position because Luke includes the definite article before “spirit” – which they see as the Holy Spirit.

As you can see... this is debated.

But remember – this is a time of transition for the people we're reading about – especially those from a Jewish background.

I tend to agree with those who believe he was a Christian here – and the reference here is to the Holy Spirit.

At the same time, I'm not dogmatic in this – because of the various translations and how they have interpreted this.

5. “...he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.”

Apollos was accurate in his teaching about Jesus.

I think this is another timeless principle for us.

Bible teachers / preachers must be accurate in what they teach.

I work hard at accurately teaching the Bible to you each week.

I manuscript my sermons – and one of the reasons is I want to make sure I say the right words.

I also want to provide a way for you to go back and see what I wrote – or see the source material that I detail in quotes and other details (website/ app).

I want to make sure I'm clear – and accurate to what the Bible says.

I think this should be the goal of every Bible teacher.

“...though he only knew the baptism of John.”

Apollos had a foot in the Old Covenant – and one in the New Covenant.

The world of technology is another way of understanding Apollos – and this transition period moving from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant.

If you're over 40 or 50, you grew up watching TV on one of these – CRT's – Cathode Ray Tube TV (pics of different tube TV's).

TVs were pieces of furniture in some cases!

We thought these were great!

I can remember when we got a new Console TV – with stereo capability!!!

Miami Vice came on – and for the first time ever – a TV show was broadcast in stereo sound – and the red light on the console TV lit up - indicating a stereo audio signal was being received and played!! Crocket and Tubbs – and the 80's show intro music never sounded so good!!

But today – we have HD TV's – 4K TV's – and the picture quality of today's modern TV's makes me wonder how I ever watched the blurry images of TV shows in the 80's and 90's!

A few minutes of watching TV Land – a Starsky and Hutch episode – and my eyes start hurting!

Apollos was still in the CRT TV era.

He had truth about Jesus – but it was a bit fuzzy – dated.

Another example of bringing clarity to what is blurry or even unknown is in the world of art restoration.

It's amazing what the passage of years does to a painting.

Some of the most famous, almost priceless paintings have degraded and been covered by years of light – dust – and other substances that accumulate on a painting over the centuries.

Here are some images that show what happens to paintings over time – and how restoration artists can bring an old, dulled-out painting back to its original glory.

The restoration process reveals details that were hidden – covered up.

Some of us need to be restored.

The brightness and clarity of our faith has been dulled over the years.

Or maybe you only heard part of the gospel.

Maybe you only heard about salvation in Jesus – but never heard the fullness of the gospel – and how Christ came not only to give us eternal life, but abundant – purposeful life – a fulfilled life now!!

The “baptism of John” was one of expectation – preparation for the Messiah.

Repent – get ready for the Kingdom of God – the Messiah is coming.

John the Baptizer was an O.T. prophet – he was pre-Christ / pre-cross / pre-resurrection.

The baptism of Jesus – a N.T. baptism – is one of celebration – of new life – of resurrection!

So, Apollos is a highly educated, powerful orator of Scripture from Alexandria. He was raised and taught the things of God, and he was accurately teaching the things about Jesus, but his teaching was incomplete.

It was accurate, but he didn’t have the full story – or the full understanding of the gospel.

Correction done the right way. vs. 26

Correcting someone is such a vital thing not only in a church – but in life!

We are such a pride-driven culture – that we tend to reject any sort of correction.

The Bible is clear – that correction – being teachable – describes the wise person.

Proverbs 10:17

“Whoever heeds discipline shows the way to life, but whoever ignores correction leads others astray.”

Proverbs 12:1

“Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but whoever hates correction is stupid.”

Even when the correction is needed – even when it’s done well, we often reject it because we feel like we’re being attacked – insulted – disrespected.

This is where we must understand our culture’s influence on us – or maybe even how we were raised and the role models we had growing up – and how we tend to follow those same patterns – even if they were sinful / dysfunctional / or even if we didn’t like it.

We still end up following their example – because it’s the example we were raised with – the only one we really saw in practice.

I’m not a counselor – so I refer many people to some good Christian counselors in the area when the need arises.

But I do pre-marital counseling.

And one of the things we talk about is the influence our family has on how we look at life and the roles and expectations of marriage.

Even if you didn’t like how your parents raised you – or how they related in their marriage – that is the template you’ve been raised with – impressed with – and you will default to that model.

You can change – you aren't destined to repeat that model – but to create a new model in your life you will need to be very intentional – humble – and open to correction.

Read vs. 26

What a beautiful picture we're given here of how to correct someone.

We don't have all the details, but there are 2 keys that are vital for us to understand – and to put into practice.

2 Keys

Key #1: Apollos had a *teachable* spirit!

He was humble.

He was highly educated, but he knew...that he didn't know everything.

He realized he had some blind spots.

A wise person – a person who is truly educated and not just puffed up with knowledge – knows they don't know everything!

I think I've told you this before...but when I was starting seminary (1993?) I couldn't wait to be done – because I would know everything about the Bible!

It didn't take me long to realize that the more I was learning, there was so much more I didn't know!

The more I learned, the more questions I had.

Apollos knew he didn't know everything.

He wasn't defensive when Priscilla and Aquila told him he was wrong or needed to adjust what he was teaching. He needed the full story – the full truth.

He wasn't necessarily wrong – but he needed to be updated.

He needed to know more of Jesus and the forgiveness we have due to the cross and the resurrection.

He needed more accurate information.

He needed the full truth of the Gospel.

We don't have the details of the conversation when they told him (wouldn't that be great if we did!!), but we do have the result.

Key #2: Priscilla and Aquila *corrected* him in *private*.

A public correction would be inappropriate and unnecessary.

A public correction would be humiliating.

A public correction would be fitting if he was unrepentant of sin for an extended time...or if he was continually refusing corrective instruction from church leaders (**See Matthew 18:17**).

A private correction honors and respects the person.

A private correction maintains their dignity.

A private correction protects their position of authority or leadership.

A private correction allows for questions and discussion, allowing the issue to be understood more fully.

Priscilla and Aquila shared with Apollos an even more accurate knowledge of Jesus – and the Gospel.

The local church affirms God's call on someone's life. vs. 27-28

After spending time in Ephesus and having his teaching / theology corrected and refined by Priscilla and Aquila, Apollos is being led by the Spirit to travel over to Achaia – and to Corinth.

Read vs. 27-28

The church in Ephesus wrote a letter of recommendation – so when Apollos would arrive at a church in Achaia, he could show them this letter, and the believers in that place could be comfortable with this new speaker / preacher – who was unknown to them.

The fruit of his ministry is evident right away.

“When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed...”

My guess is one of the corrections to his teaching was the whole topic of grace.

The grace of God is certainly in the O.T. and in the Old Covenant, but it's a bit hidden.

In the New Covenant – in the Gospel – God's grace is the headline!

Then Luke tells us that Apollos is destroying the Jews who don't believe in Jesus.

He is tearing their arguments apart – and “...showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.”

His education level is much greater than virtually everyone else.

His speaking ability blows people away.

The truth and accuracy with which he speaks – is irrefutable!!

The synagogue debates were public debates – so Luke is telling us here that Apollos is speaking in the synagogue – which is a public setting for Jewish men – and nobody can debate him effectively.

He was “...showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.” but nobody was able to give a sufficient counterpoint to his arguments.

He was a strong – formidable evangelist and apologist for the cause of Christ.

Apply it...

Every Christian should be growing in their knowledge of the Bible.

Correct others privately.

It's also important for you to be teachable – not defensive when someone is correcting you.

Learn to receive correction with humility and thanks.

Affirm the ministry / gifting of other Christians.

It's important for us to recognize and affirm when we see God's gifting in another person in the church.

Encourage them – affirm God's call on their life.

Encourage them to take the next step in ministry – to benefit the church by using their gift in the church.

Closing prayer