

Acts 18:24-28

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[0 : 00] The brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed. For he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

And so we have this little sidestep at the end of our text last week. We see Paul pass through Ephesus, taking with him Priscilla and Aquila, and he leaves them there in Ephesus.

And Luke's narrative stays with them in that place as Paul goes on. And I believe that Luke recorded this for us to show us, to give to us Apollos as a model.

The scripture is full, it's rich with men whose lives we can emulate. Ultimately and finally, looking to Christ. We want to emulate Christ. We want to be Christ-like.

But there are men who characterize qualities of Christ and put them on display for us to pay careful attention to. And so our outline for this morning's text has three points.

[1 : 12] If they don't alliterate this morning, I'm sorry. And they are as follows. Apollos serves us as number one, a model of zeal. As number two, a model of zeal.

And number three, as a model of refutation. I'll explain in a bit. So number one, Apollos serves us as a model of zeal.

Apollos is introduced for us as a native of Alexandria in verse 24. Alexandria, located in Egypt, had a large Jewish population.

So while Apollos did not grow up in Israel, he was raised in a Jewish culture. Therefore, he had been instructed in the way of the Lord.

Now this phrase, the way of the Lord, was an Old Testament term for, generally, the things of God. In Genesis chapter 18, verse 19, God says of Abraham, For I have chosen him that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.

[2 : 32] So the way of the Lord would have been the Old Testament instruction. Luke tells us that Apollos was also competent in the Scriptures and an eloquent man.

He was eloquent. The Greek term for this is *logios*, right? Literally, a man of words. Also could mean a man of ideas.

But we see that the ideas that he's presenting were not his ideas. They weren't fabricated ideas.

But he was competent in the Scriptures and had been instructed in the way of the Lord.

And he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus. Now why was he doing this?

Luke does not tell us the exact occasion for Apollos' visit to Ephesus.

But it's likely that he went as a missionary. It's likely that he goes as a missionary. Luke does tell us that he was fervent in spirit.

[3 : 36] And this is the reason. This is the impetus for speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus. To be fervent in spirit is to say that Apollos' soul was enthusiastic for the things of God.

I think that I preach from an ESV. I think they get right that he was fervent in lowercase spirit. Not in the spirit, but in his spirit.

I think Luke's trying to communicate to us that his soul was fervent, cared deeply about the things of God.

He was zealous for God. And so, I believe he left Alexandria and traveled to Ephesus to tell the Ephesians all that he knew about the way of the Lord.

But Luke adds an interesting phrase. Apollos, though he knew only the baptism of John. Which leads me to believe that Apollos was also not yet a regenerate follower of Jesus Christ.

[4 : 49] He was a lover of God. He was familiar with the Old Testament. He had a zeal for the things of God. But he only knew the baptism of John.

The text evidences for us that he was familiar with the Old Testament. He would have been aware of God as creator and ruler of the world. Of God's good law for the governance of his people. Of mankind's transgression of that law. Of the need of sacrifice to satisfy this issue between the wrath of God against all unlawfulness.

He would have been familiar with the need of a mediator between God and man. And of the promises of God to restore people to himself with a perfect sacrifice.

And a perfect mediator, the Messiah. He was aware of the baptism of John. Which was a baptism of repentance.

[5 : 53] Declaring that the Messiah was coming. This was the ministry of John in the desert. Baptizing people and declaring that Jesus was coming.

And he was also aware that the Messiah was Jesus. But it would seem that he did not yet understand the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Which is why he had need for Priscilla and Achilla to take him aside and explain to him the way of God more accurately.

Now, you are welcome to disagree with me on the matter. That he was already in fact a regenerate disciple of Jesus Christ. I think we catch him in a moment of moving toward that.

Right? Being drawn to God in his understanding of Scripture. Whether or not we agree doesn't really matter for the point that's being made.

[6 : 52] We have Apollos as a model of zeal. He took his incomplete knowledge of the way of the Lord. And he faithfully worked to promulgate it.

He wanted people to know what he knew of the way of the Lord. Beloved, you may never be labeled eloquent. I've never been called this.

Maybe a man of words. But not eloquent to be sure. But if you are part of a local congregation, and I hope that you are, that loves the Bible, faithfully teaches it, really hope that you are, you're being accurately instructed in the way of the Lord.

And you can be competent in the Scriptures. And this should compel zeal in you for others to know what you know.

Let me give you a bit of a lesson from history. In 1559, John Calvin began a seminary which was across the street from, and this is important, it was across the street from, and worked in conjunction with the church he pastored.

[8 : 07] It was a ministry of his church in Geneva to train young pastors. We know that Calvin sent at least 88 of the men trained in a seminary to his native country of France, and possibly many more.

We know for a fact that at least 88 men were trained up to the seminary and sent back to France. Now Calvin is in Geneva because of religious persecution. It was dangerous to be a preacher of the gospel in France in the 16th century because of anti-Protestant sentiment.

In fact, it was so dangerous that the Academy of Geneva, what the seminary was officially called, became known as Calvin's School of Death.

Because so many graduates went out to martyrdom. Let that shape your thinking about the man John Calvin and the theology that so many demonize in relationship to him.

Calvin's School of Death. I wonder what the enrollment of a seminary today would be that was nicknamed the School of Death.

[9 : 17] Theology. Theology. If you were a follower of Jesus Christ, you are a theologian. You might be a very poor theologian, but you are a theologian.

Meant to know God. Not a scholar, but a theologian. To open your word and to read it and to know the God of the Bible.

Theology. A competence in the Scriptures drives zeal. Properly viewing God in the personal work of Jesus Christ drives zeal in us.

Which drives mission. Here we observe imperfect knowledge. I'm arguing that he had not yet completed his understanding of Jesus as the Christ.

And I'm arguing that the Spirit was not yet in him to guide him in his understanding. How much greater should our zeal now be?

[10:23] Having given full comprehension. Having been given the New Testament, which gives so much commentary on the Old Testament. The Gospel fully revealed.

The canon now closed. We can pick it up and we can read it and be changed by it. And we ought to desire to see others changed by it as well.

And so in this way, Apollo serves us as a model of zeal. Our zeal should surpass his. We also see that Apollo serves us as a model of humility.

Next in verse 26, we see Priscilla and Aquila encounter Apollo speaking boldly in the synagogue. And if you weren't here with us last week, Paul finds, seeks out and finds Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth. Befriends them.

[11:20] They're all tent makers by trade. He lives with them while he's there in Corinth. Takes them with him and leaves them behind in Ephesus. So having been left in Ephesus by Paul, it is likely that they have taken up his missionary practice of beginning Gospel ministry amongst the Jews and finding Jews by visiting the synagogue.

It was a very reasonable place to find people of Jewish descent. But Priscilla and Aquila see that Apollo needs some instruction as he only knew of the baptism of John.

So they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. Now, note the tact that Priscilla and Aquila display as they took Apollos aside.

Apollos' teaching was not bad. It was just incomplete. So this couple very kindly, discreetly explained to him the way of God more accurately.

Some suggest they likely took him aside to their home. This wasn't a quick little lesson, but they had to take him and spend time with him, helping him to completely understand the way of God more accurately as the term Luke uses.

[12:43] And Apollos humbly received their instruction. I believe that Apollos becomes a regenerate follower of Jesus during the time of this further instruction.

Luke does not record said conversation, nor does he tell us that Apollos was baptized. But he says in verse 27, and when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers, now his brothers, encouraged him and wrote to the disciples, those disciples in Achaia, to welcome him.

So they would have written a letter of recommendation, right? This man we're sending to you is a brother in the faith. And they sent him with that letter. Now you may be thinking, it seems like a large assumption to say that Apollos humbly received their instruction.

How can I make that claim? Where am I getting this from? Number one, he was teachable. He was teachable. We see that he goes with them, right?

And he receives instruction. He went aside and he heard what they had to say. Beloved, it is a great mark of the humble Christian to be a teachable Christian.

[14:02] None of us ever have arrived and can't receive some instruction, some better explanation to the things that we already may believe to be true.

If you find yourself unteachable, you're also going to find yourself proud. So he's teachable. That's an expression of his humility. But not only is he teachable.

Secondly, he was willing to be instructed by Priscilla. Luke records for us that when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

You could read it like this. When they heard him, they took him aside and they explained to him the way of God more accurately.

So Apollos received instruction from both Aquila, the husband, and Priscilla, the wife. And interestingly, the order that I just presented them to you in, Aquila and Priscilla, only occurs twice in the six times the couple is mentioned in the Bible.

[15:10] When they are initially introduced in Acts 18, verse 2, and in 1 Corinthians 16, 19. The other four places, they're mentioned in this order in our text today.

Priscilla and Aquila. This is likely, likely. This is where we access the scholars. The scholars say this is likely because Priscilla was the more prominent of the two in service to the church.

She did more for the church than Aquila. Now, it's important to understand that women in this day were not given much prominence. If you ever hear somebody claim that Christianity has been bad for women, maybe in some instances some perversion of Christianity has been.

But generally speaking, in the world, Christianity has been very, very good for women. In Talmudic times, where our text is set, so think first century, Talmud was the Old Testament with the explanation of rabbinical writings added to it.

In this time, respectable women were expected to stay within the confines of the home. In fact, the terminology for a prostitute was one who goes abroad.

[16:31] So the opposite of a respectable woman who stays at home was a prostitute, one who goes abroad. The woman of the first century did not even do her own shopping, except possibly to go out accompanied by a slave to buy material, which she would use to construct her own clothing at home.

The women with whom Jesus spoke were very likely illiterate, since the rabbis did not consider it an incumbent upon women to learn to read in order to study the Scriptures.

Based on the passage in Deuteronomy 4.9, teach them to your sons. The rabbis declared women to be exempt from the commandment to learn the law of Moses.

Indeed, the Talmud says, so this would be commentary, rabbinical commentary, it is foolishness to teach the Torah to your daughter. Women were separated from men in private, public, and religious life.

They would go to the temple, but could not venture beyond the confines of the women's court, and there is no such explanation of the women's court in the description of Solomon's temple. It was added. Women were not allowed to participate in public prayer at the temple, although they were encouraged to have private prayer lives at home.

[17:44] Women weren't reliable witnesses in this day. But here you have Apollos, an Alexandrian Jew, willing to have the way of God to explain to him more accurately by Priscilla.

Men, we would do well to learn things from the women of our church. We need to take a lesson from Apollos' humility. Now, because some of you are cringing right now, I know.

It is not my intention this morning to undermine complementarianism. Complementarianism is the biblical, it's a biblical understanding that men and women are positionally and personally equal before God.

Positionally and personally equally before God. But that men and women are meant to serve in differing roles. We've been given unique and valuable and precious roles that we're meant to serve in.

That's complementarianism. I am not an egalitarian which says that in all ways we're equal. There is no... I am an opponent to feminism in that sense, the use of that word feminism.

[19:04] I am a complementarian. So I'm not undermining that this morning, in case that's what you heard me do. It is not my intention to ignore the teaching of Paul in 1 Timothy 2.12.

Paul says this, I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man. Rather, she is to remain quiet. So how do we reconcile?

How do we reconcile these things this morning? We don't. Not this morning. Much of how we need to wrestle with these issues is what Paul means in 1 Timothy 2.12 by exercise authority.

And there are a lot of views out there floating around. Many, many different views. Good, conservative views about what that means and exactly the way in which it gets worked out.

But it's not my intention to accomplish all that we can accomplish concerning that. It's not my intention to undermine complementarianism. It is, however, my intention to say that there is a place for men to humbly hear and learn from women.

[20:12] Men read books written by women. A simple example of a great way to do that. I don't have the time this morning nor the bandwidth this past week to prepare an exhaustive treatment on the matter.

But I will look for an opportunity to do so soon, right? That we all might properly value the role of women in our church. That we might be the strongest possible congregation for the glory of our king.

Okay? I hope that leaves you settled enough for us to move on from there. Okay? So here, please hear everything I said. Not undermining complementarianism.

I do think there are times, there is a place for men to humbly hear and learn from women. We'll work it out in the future. Okay? So we have in Apollos a model of humility.

The Apostle Peter wrote, 1 Peter 5, 5, Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another. For God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

[21:17] And on your bulletin this morning, another Spurgeon quote. Spurgeon said, Growing Christians think nothing of themselves, but full-grown Christians know themselves to be less than nothing.

Proper worth for the Christian comes from an understanding that we have no worth on our own. But that we have infinite worth because of the infinite worth of the one who bestows love on us. Our worth is found in magnifying the worth of God in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This is where our infinite worth comes from.

Right? I am saved by this worth. Look at Jesus. Look at Jesus. That's the worth that I have. And it is infinite because of that. Magnifying Him.

And this gives us much reason to be humble. So, Paul serves us as a model of zeal and as a model of humility.

[22 : 28] And lastly, he serves us as a model of refutation. There may be a better word for that, but I'm pulling it right out of the text. Verse 28. He powerfully refuted the Jews in public.

I started my notes out this week with model of confrontation. But I know that a lot of people don't like that word. So, refutation.

After some time, and for an unknown reason, but I would suggest it's likely because he has this missionary zeal. He's being driven. Right? He came from Alexandria to Ephesus.

And now he wants to go to Achaia. Right? Which is the region where Corinth is located. Luke records for us that he assisted the believers there. Right? When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed.

Right? Followers of Jesus Christ. In that, the way that he helped them is that he powerfully refuted the Jews in public. Showing by the scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

[23 : 35] Apollos helped the church in Corinth by refuting the Jews. That is to say, and this is the Greek of the word refuted, that Apollos crushed opponents of the cross of Christ.

Right? He left them no space for argument. Right? He used his eloquence and his competence in the scriptures to put them in their place as opponents of God.

Now this was the great error of their day. Right? Jews standing up in opposition to Jesus being the Messiah. The Christ. Recall that when Paul preached the gospel, wherever he preached the gospel, he left behind a wake of Jewish unrest.

He was often the recipient of their disdain for the preaching of Jesus as the Christ. But we would be foolish to think that the hatred of the gospel ceased when Paul departed.

Right? Paul goes on to the next place. It's not that the town settled down. Right? It would be silly for us to think such a thing. Why? Because Paul left behind those who through grace had believed.

[24 : 50] Paul left behind Christians. Christians. And Christians preach the good news of Jesus Christ. So you can see this is still a problem for them in Corinth.

There's still this disdain. There's still this unrest. There's still this opposition to the gospel being preached. And this is normative for the Christian, beloved.

We are not exempt from this because we live in America. The way in which the gospel exists here will take different shape than it is in other places in the world. But we will experience opposition to the preaching of the gospel.

If you don't experience opposition to the preaching of the gospel, it's because you don't preach the gospel. The Bible doesn't leave us any room to get around that. 2 Timothy 3.12 Paul writes to Timothy, Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

And the will be cannot be translated in any other way. There's not might be found anywhere in that use of that Greek phrase. Will be persecuted.

[26 : 02] So if you just consider 2 Timothy 3.12, if you're not being persecuted, then you're not living a godly life in Christ Jesus. So, the Jewish opposition was the primary source of Christian persecution.

And Apollos throws his eloquence and his competency in the scriptures now explained more accurately into those confrontations.

He refutes the false claims of the Jews against him and the gospel of Jesus Christ. So we have in Apollos a model of this, refutation.

So, what then are the issues of our day that need this? What do we need to confront the falsehood that needs to be confronted?

What is being promulgated widely in our religious landscape that needs refutation? Beloved, the issues are too many and too varied to address all of them this morning.

[27 : 08] They are wide and varied. I want to give you this morning just one example. Just one example. And that is what is commonly called, you've heard me call it before here, the cheap grace

gospel.

The cheap grace gospel. Certainly, the offer to come to God by grace through faith and the personal work of Jesus Christ is a free offer.

Just come. Just come and believe. Certainly, there are no amount of good works we can amass in order to earn God's favor.

We don't work, work, work, work, work our way to God. This is absolutely true. I talked with the children earlier about this being the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

This was the great thing that Martin Luther and many other men were standing up against that Rome was preaching and still preaches today. Do enough good. Outweigh your bad with enough good and you'll be accepted by God.

[28 : 18] The gospel teaches that our bad is infinite and there's no amount of good we can do to balance out infinite bad. God but Jesus being infinitely good gives us his goodness by faith in him.

This is the gospel of Jesus Christ so there's a there's a freeness to it but once we come to Christ we give him all of ourselves.

It costs us our life literally in some cases but certainly as that you say figuratively but we give everything to him.

He becomes our greatest treasure in all that we do. Our greatest highest good is in service to him. And that is not the gospel that is most often preached in churches these days.

The kind of gospel invitations that are given in churches these days involve every head bowed and every eye closed. No one's looking around.

[29 : 28] We wouldn't want you to be embarrassed for following Jesus. Just slip up your hand. I see you over there brother. I don't think there ever was that person the first person.

I see your hand I see you looking at me. There you are. No one's looking. I don't feel ashamed. And then we don't expect the kind of lives that bring opposition as a result.

Why would we if this is the way the gospel is offered to begin with? And so somebody in secret makes their way down to the front of a building to steps carpeted we call it an altar for some odd reason and they sign a card and they think they're a Christian.

In our association of churches 75 churches the reported number of members is about 40,000 in this area that we live in a couple counties four or five counties 40,000 but the reported average attendance is 16,000 one prominent church in our association reports approximately 8,700 members with an average weekly attendance of 2,800 and at very best at very best there are just bad records sometimes we make mistakes and we have a lot fewer than 8,700 names to keep up with I'm usually the problem with our record keeping that's the best case scenario though right someone has become a member of another fellowship and they've yet to be removed they moved to

California how could they possibly be there on Sunday morning with them at worst there are 6,000 people 5,900 people who believe that they're followers of Jesus Christ and they're not because they're not expected to follow him in obedience Jesus said this in John 13 35 by this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another there's no one in my life that I love that I don't enjoy gathering with as often as I possibly can it is a privilege for us to be together on a Sunday morning the average church active church member these days used to be the average church member would be at church three times a week now the average active classified as active church member these days is at church three times a month

[32 : 37] Jesus also said in Matthew chapter 7 17 through 19 so every healthy tree bears good fruit I am not saying right that if you come to church you will be saved please hear me not say that what I am saying is that we will be obedient to the things that God has asked us to do and one of those things is gathering with the church one of the many things that we will do as a grateful response to what Jesus has done for us as we'll gather with his people and do all of the one another!

as a church it'll be a! to get to do such a thing so every healthy tree bears good fruit but the diseased tree bears bad fruit the diseased tree sits at home and says nah not this morning the Jesus says I'm so sick of the church and all the hypocrisy in it says the hypocrite verse 18 a healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit in verse 19 every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire the cheap grace gospel says to everybody you're a great tree and isn't even concerned about the fruit that's being produced and it's dangerous beloved it's damning people who think they're followers of

Jesus Christ who think they have eternal! security and they don't and I'm not saying that people who aren't right now members of a church and going every single Sunday are not Christians but they definitely need to be encouraged to be meeting with the church amongst other things and beloved we need to always do this with gentleness and with humility because we love others because we love them we must refute those who teach improper doctrine we must we must refute we must refute the cultural ideologies that have been propitiated by bad doctrine we must correct error and we must do so with accurate competency in the scriptures 2 Timothy 3 16 all scripture is breathed out by God and it's profitable it's good it's helpful for what for teaching for reproof for correction and for training in righteousness if we love people we will be about this activity for their good for their good error must be refuted and it's not just my responsibility

I think I play a very prominent part in that but it's also yours I would like to conclude this morning by encouraging you to take some time today take some time this week and across the span of your life for Apollos to serve you as a model of zeal as a model of humility and as a model of refutation let's pray together