

Let's open our Bibles tonight to Acts 18:18 as we continue our study through the Bible. We've been in the book of Acts for quite some time on Wednesday nights. We are learning a lot.

Acts was a written narrative, which means that we learn from the report. There're less doctrinal statements there, although there are some; most of those are found in the epistles. But yet there is a report through the pen of Dr. Luke, led by the Spirit, of the first thirty years of the early church's development and growth, as Jesus dies, and He ascends, and the Holy Spirit is sent - who empowers the believer and who gives to the believer passion and drive and love for the lost. And we've brought up (more than once) the book of Acts is that place where you ask yourself, "Who would God use?" because you'll find a lot of examples, and "What kind of church should we be? What does God value as a church?"

The gospel in the book of Acts is, like I said, thirty years of going forth. The first fifteen years, it goes almost exclusively to the Jews. The Lord had told us that He would first go to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. And as the gospel is preached in Jerusalem and in Samaria and the surrounding areas, there came a time when, certainly, the LORD's will (which always, in the Old Testament) was to make clear that He sent His Son to save all men. And so, miraculously, He sent Peter to the house of Cornelius, who happened to be a Gentile centurion; he lived in Caesarea. And through a series of events that we studied in the narrative, Peter showed up, shared a what - if the whole sermon is there, less than 45-seconds before the people began to open their hearts, and God moved into their hearts by His Spirit as He did on the day of Pentecost, and the people were saved.

About the same time, there were men from Cyprus and Cyrene who had been chased out of Jerusalem because Stephen had been killed for his faith; and they went 300 miles north. You can see it on the map. (And we have maps; if you don't have any, please stop by the information table, and you can get all of the trips of Paul that we have been going through). But they ended up in a place called Antioch in Syria (chapter 11:19 - it starts there), and they began to share the Lord with not just Jews but with Hellenists. Hellenists were, for the most part, Jews that lived in Greek or Roman cultures. They didn't have the same restrictive kind of

behavior; they were a lot more open to the Gentiles' way of life, if you will. And again, the gospel began to save lives, and God began to work. Barnabas, a disciple early on from Jerusalem, was sent 300 miles north to see what was going on there because news got back. He stayed around. He encouraged the work. He finally went to get Saul (or Paul), who had been saved probably ten years or more at this point and had kind of disappeared from the scene; he lived in the Tarsus area. And he brought Paul back, and he said, "Hey, we need a teacher." And that was what Paul was - a teacher, a church planter. And so for the next year, Paul stayed there in Antioch, and this place (Antioch) became really the missions congregation, and the focus in last of the book of Acts, for the most part, switches from Jerusalem to Antioch. And it is from Antioch that Paul makes - with his teams - three very long journeys to plant churches throughout Europe and Galatia, through Asia Minor, if you will, and to reach souls. And those churches became, really, the basis for which the gospel would thrive and eventually go to all of the world.

We've been trying, as we've gone through the narrative, to give you times and places and understanding as far as how far Paul traveled, how long he was gone. There are months in here when there're no miracles and no salvations. If you read the book quickly enough, you'll think, "Gosh. Every day 100 people got saved, and the dead are raised. Why aren't we seeing that today?" Well, there're a lot of hours and days in Paul's trips as well.

So, Paul took three missionary journeys. The first one was from 46-47 A.D. He went with Barnabas. He went to Galatia which, today, is Turkey. He planted churches during those two years - traveled about 1200 miles - and those became the foundation places. In fact, in the second and third trips of Paul, he would always go back to those churches first to try to see if they were doing well and to keep encouraging them (chapter 13:4-14:28).

The second trip was much longer - almost six years. Paul was out from 50-55 A.D. He spent a lot of time in places longer than he did the first time out; covered about 2700 miles or so. It began towards the end of chapter 15. We're going to end his journey of chapter 2 today and begin his journey to chapter 3 tonight. So, we'll flip the map up here in a little bit.

But anyway, then there's a third journey, and that third journey was almost right on top of the second one. Paul came back home, maybe nine months, maybe six months; he didn't stay long. And he went back out for the next three years, 55-

56-57 A.D. before he would head for Jerusalem and eventually to prison. And we'll get that towards the end of the book.

Needless to say, God used Paul greatly. The trips that he went on, the way that the Lord led him, his willingness to share the Lord with others, the preaching of the gospel, the power of God's Spirit - it's really a great example to us of what God can do with you and me today. I mean, this city needs Jesus, don't you think? In fact, for that matter, our country needs the Lord. We're living in a circus, and we need the gospel. So, God use us, you know? We saw Paul (in the second journey) going through the same places he had gone the first time; was, over several months, led to go to Europe; saw three significant salvations there that became kind of the roots in Europe, if you will. He went to Thessalonica from Philippi, maybe 105 miles or so; only spent, by the way, three weeks in Philippi. Even though we have the book of Philippians, you'd think he was there a long time - he wasn't. It's the greatest argument for God doesn't need us to do a work. He'll do 'em, but sometimes you have very little to do with it, but you're there. And that certainly was the case with the Philippian church. They got chased out of town, a riot erupted. They went down another 50 miles to Berea, where they found a bunch of intellectual open hearts, really interesting kind of a mixture. They were learned, but they were open. They weren't filled with themselves; they were just wanting to be taught. And Paul had a great fruitfulness there. It went really well there. They gained, I think, a lot of fruit. Eventually, from 50 miles away, the Thessalonica church came and caused trouble; and there, in Thessalonica, these people came, and Paul was put on a boat to travel 250 miles or so to Athens - leaving Timothy behind, leaving Silas behind. And then being alone. And we talked a lot about Paul's depths of his suffering because he spent a lot of time on his own in some of the worst places around. Athens was certainly a place of great idolatry. He didn't have much success with the Mars Hill intellectuals and philosophers; bore little fruit. You can see it at the end of chapter 17.

He packed up, still waiting for his guys to come, and went to Corinth instead, where he spent and where we spent last week with him in the first eighteen verses of this chapter. Paul would arrive quietly. He wasn't really witnessing much. He was under the radar. He'd been beat up and spit out so often that he kind of had worn himself out, and it was a tough place to survive. I was just thinking what I just said to you - I think Thessalonica was the three weeks, not Philippi. Philippi was the first place. Thessalonica was the place Paul spent three weeks. I'll get you confused if I can. (Laughing)

Finally, in Corinth, Silas and Timothy showed up. They brought good news from the Thessalonian church. They actually brought an offering from the Philippian church to help Paul, who had been working and kind of just hanging in there. The Lord began to work. Paul began to preach like the old Paul. There was resistance in the synagogue again. He moved next door to a place that was called, in the Bible, Justus' house. Eventually even the ruler of the synagogue got saved - a guy named Crispus. And Paul, fearing that he was going to get beat up again, I think was just at the end of his tolerance for gettin' beat up one more time; and the Lord (in verses 9-10 of this chapter) comes to visit Paul, and He says some great things to him. "You don't have to worry. I've got a lot of souls in this city. They belong to Me" (even though they weren't saved yet). And, "Don't be afraid. No one's going to hurt you." And so Paul took that to heart, and it wasn't the last time he got a visit from Jesus. But he got a word from the Lord that was strengthening, and so he went to work. He stayed there for a year and a half.

We ended last week with verses 16 and 17, which kind of tells us what the Lord's promise was - that He would protect Paul. A new governor was moved into Achaia. His name was Gallio. And some of his Jewish enemies (Paul's) came to the new governor, figuring, "Well, he's going to make a good impression, so we'll just bring our complaints about Paul to him." They said he was worshipping a different God, he was enforcing a different law. Paul stood up to defend himself, but ultimately Gallio spoke up, and he said, "Look, if it was a matter of law, I'll deal with it. But if it's a matter of your conviction of things, then you deal with it." And they left kind of unsatisfied, if you will. In fact, some of those who lived in that city took these Jewish brethren and took them to task and gave them a beating right in front of the court, and Gallio didn't do anything about it.

We have, in our early church writings (not in the book of Acts), that Paul corresponded often with Gallio's brother, a fellow named Seneca, who you might remember if you've had to study ancient history. Seneca would lead his brother, this guy Gallio, to Christ, and Paul and he would both be beheaded by Nero down the road maybe ten years or so. So, God kept Paul, promised to Paul he'd be safe in this town; wasn't safe in every town, but he was safe here.

So tonight we want to pick up at verse 18. We're going to, Lord be willing, get to the end of the chapter, get Paul on his way to Ephesus, which is where we'd like to leave him tonight and where he would spend the most time - three years of his life - planting a church. But let's start at verse 18. It says, "So Paul still remained" (in

Corinth) "a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him. He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow." Now, after a year and a half, Paul felt (verse 11 and again verse 18) it was time to move on. He actually crosses over to Cenchrea, which, if you look at the map, there were two ports in Corinth there; it was the one that they sailed out of more often. It was also the side, it seems from the Bible, that the church might have been meeting on. But anyway, it was the eastern port. I think Romans 16:1 talks about this place is the place that the church met there, but you'll have to look it up to see if I'm right or not; I think I'm right. I try to put myself in Paul's shoes, and I think to myself after all of the beatings and people chasin' you down and all, stonings.....when you get here, and God's protecting you, I don't think I ever want to leave. Right? After a year and a half, the Lord comes and obviously says to Paul, "It's time to move on." Can you hear Paul's argument internally, saying, "Yeah, maybe that's not the Lord. That's probably the devil." Because how good was it here? How safe had it been here? And yet, I think it's much like Philip who, in the midst of a revival in Samaria, heard the Lord say, "Go. It's time to leave." And he does it as well. And it ministers a lot to me because it goes against the grain. We usually interpret God's voice as whatever's blessing us the most. And if it isn't really working to our favor, then maybe the Lord's not in it. Well, this was a huge move from Paul's standpoint - really felt the Lord had spoken to him, and he was going to do it, even in the midst of what seemed like the most wonderful protective kind of shell that he had found himself in, in years.

So, we read at the end of verse 18 that Paul had taken a vow. The Nazirite vow (Numbers 6) was a practice that, as a Jew, was a matter of personal consideration that you would be provided for under the law for a time of devotion to the LORD. It involved abstaining from wine, which was certainly an ordinary daily drink; you couldn't defile yourself by touching a dead body; you weren't allowed to cut your hair - it became a part of the sacrifice. When you went back through those commitments, if you will, you could do a Nazirite vow to thank God for past blessings or to seek the LORD for the future or just from the standpoint of devotion. It really was a Jewish practice. And it might interest you, if you read it, to say, "Well, gosh, here's Paul, a Jew, who's been sent to the Gentiles, who's been persecuted by the Jews a lot, reverting back to doing something that's Jewish." And the answer is he's been in Corinth forever. That's as Gentile as it gets. But he's headed for Jerusalem, where he's not always been liked very much because he's so liberal in his grace, if you will. So he becomes all things to all men. In fact, he will write that to the Corinthians in the letter that he would write to them. In 1

Corinthians 9, he said, "Whatever I have to be to reach people, I'm gonna do that." Well, he's headed for the Jewish capital, if you will; and so Paul makes a vow. He had made a vow there; he had taken the vow. He cut his hair off there. He was ready to go forward. He was ready to go to this ministry. But I love the picture of Paul, and again, it's a narrative, but here's Paul who seems to be so flexible. Right? He ministers for a year and a half with Gentiles in the roughest town on the map, on the globe; and now he's going to the religious persecution center of it all. And he's just ready to go, "I'll just become a Jew for a while." He seems to be able to handle anything. He's not narrow in his practices. He's not so narrow that he makes himself useless. He doesn't have too many hang-ups. He's not unable to be flexible with people; not that he necessarily approved all of those things, but he wants to meet them halfway.

And so Paul is geared to go from a place of great protection to a place where he knows there's going to be difficulty, and he leaves for Syria with Aquila and Priscilla (verses 2 and 3) in tow. In fact, we read that (back in verses 2 and 3) they were with him. I don't doubt that Paul welcomed their company. This couple, and we'll end with them tonight, Aquila and Priscilla, lived in Rome, it seems like. However, if you look at history, in 54 A.D. the Emperor Claudius got angry at the Jews and made every Jew move out of Rome. That was a political stunt. He wanted to flex his muscle. And all the Jews had to leave town in 54 A.D. So, back in 57 A.D., or three years later, we will find them moving (according to Romans 16) back to Rome when that curfew or that restriction was lifted, and the next guy came in. So these guys were really out of their homeland for no choice of their own, but they had been forced out through politics, and they find themselves now with Paul in the ministry there in Corinth. So, they're together. If you look at the map, you see that Paul wanted to leave Cenchrea. They would go over to Ephesus, and then Paul would take this long 650-mile boat ride to go back to Caesarea at the coast and then on to Jerusalem before he heads back to Antioch, where he had begun.

Verse 19 tells us, "And he came to Ephesus, and left them" (Aquila and Priscilla) "there; but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. When they asked him to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent, but took leave of them, saying, 'I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing.' And he sailed from Ephesus." Ephesus is indeed one of the most important cities in Asia Minor, at least from a historical standpoint and a biblical standpoint. We had the chance, when we took our group

from church here through the "Footsteps of Paul" last year, to walk through the ruins of Ephesus. They are the largest and most developed ruins you'll ever see anywhere in the world. It's the most amazing place. And even the little stalls where the vendors like Paul, with his tents, would have worked - there are many that are still standing there, as well as the amphitheater and all. It's an amazing place; it'll blow your mind. If we have a chance to take another group in a year or two from now, we will do that if you are interested in going. But the Temple of Artemis, as she's called in the Greek, was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The chief market in Ephesus was trading in magic and idol worship, and it was an amazing, amazing place. So Paul stops there, notice, as he takes his crews over, and he leaves Aquila and Priscilla there because it does seem like this was a place that they could do some ministry; Paul hadn't been there. Paul reasoned for a little time at the synagogue there, as he had done in Corinth. He is invited to stay, which would tell me he wasn't preaching at the top of his lungs; he was saying to people, "Hey, who do you think the Messiah is?" and I think he was sneakin' up on it because when he got loud, he didn't last long in the synagogue. But anyway, they said to him, "We'd love you to stay some more. You're really challenging us." And Paul said, "Well, I can't. My heart is constrained to go back to Jerusalem to keep the feast day." We don't know why this feast day weighed so heavily on Paul's heart, and, as far as I know, there's no place in the Bible you'll get an answer to that. We don't know other than this is what was going on. He didn't want to miss the Passover. Sailing on the Mediterranean was closed in the winter time, and so through the middle of March, and Passover was in April, so he would have had to hurry to make it work. So they decided to leave this couple behind - start to do the follow-up, do the planting of this church. Paul said (what we read in James 4:15), and it's good for you and me to say, "I would like to do that, the Lord be willing." And Paul walked away from an open door; he'd walked away from a revival and a protection, and now an open door just to be in Jerusalem because that's where he believed that God would have him to be. And so he had no assurances of the next day, but Paul was going to trust the Lord. "If God wants me back, I'll go back." So he leaves Aquila and Priscilla there, and, like I said, he gets on this boat, and he sails 650 miles across the Mediterranean, heading back to Jerusalem. Caesarea's about 60 miles or so (if you have to walk it) to Jerusalem from there, and then he would head 320 miles north back to Antioch.

Now, Paul was never extremely close to the people in Jerusalem. It is because - well, there're a couple of reasons. Number one - I think that the years of persecution, early on he was a tough guy. They had a legalistic view of Christianity

which kind of conflicted with Paul's idea of grace. He was a very strong, independent personality, that's for sure. I'm not sure why, but if you notice, as we've read here, it doesn't seem like they were all that excited to see him this time either. There's nothing written by Dr. Luke about "they rolled out the red carpet, here's the champion of the church for this generation." The Holy Spirit gives us no details, except he made the feast, said hello to the church and then took off. Right?

So we read, in verse 22, "And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch." That's it. That was the whole, "I gotta get there," and then he gets there, "Hey, how you doin'?" and then he's gotta leave. Really no interaction, no seeming welcome. But it teaches me a lot because sometimes you are isolated to just walking with God. You don't have the support you always wish you had. You're having to answer to Him. God used James. James was the big shot in Jerusalem. You've read his book, haven't you? It beats you to death, doesn't it? The book of James - a lot of you are going through it right now - tough stuff. James was a legalist in many ways. Now he'd find the grace of God. Paul would tell you about grace, and James would tell you that faith without works is dead (James 2:17). In between there, there's a healthy tension, a good balance. But they didn't always get along. And it just seems to me a very dry verse. Right? He shows up. Imagine being on a boat 650 miles, and, "I'm here," 65 miles walking, and you get there and, "Hey." "Yeah, how you doin', Paul?" That's it. And he leaves. Nothing to report. Terrible.

Verse 23, "After he had spent some time there" (at home in Antioch), "he departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples." Paul came home, and he always did, to give a report to the local church. All of our missionaries give us reports. They are financially accountable to our Board of Directors. They are open to have you come visit. If you know of a missionary somewhere where you're going, let us know; we'll get you a place to stay. It's a good place to join in. But, in any event, Paul always went home to give a report. And I think because the leadership in the Antioch church was so strong, Paul didn't feel like he needed to stay very long. In fact, there are several Bible commentaries, and they have pretty good reasoning, that believe that he might not have been home much longer than three or four months - literally to repack a bag. It was hard for Paul, apparently, to sit still. He loved the lost. He burned in his heart for churches to be planted. Some people like down time. "I just want to be down." Paul was burning to serve. Some people like to be wrapped up in sports.



Paul just wanted to run the race. Some people are interested in money and gain. Paul just was interested in souls. I mean, he was just driven. Imagine being out on the road for the better part of a decade, and you're still just wailing to go. And this isn't the resorts he's hanging out in; this place is where they've stoned him and tried to kill him and beat him and lied about him and imprisoned him. And it's not a good road to follow, but yet that's where he is.

So he starts off again. And, if you have these notes, you might find the third missionary journey of Paul. We have it up on the board behind me as well. Verse 23, Luke, in one sentence, covers all of the familiar places that Paul went with a kind of broad brush. He went to Tarsus, to Iconium, to Lystra, to Derbe, to Antioch, to Phrygia and Galatia (those are the provinces to the north), and we're not told anything about those. He just went back, and his one message to all of these churches - and there were a lot of them now - was just, "Come on, man. Hang in there with Jesus." Right? "Trust the Lord." And then he headed for Asia where last time, if you were with us on the second journey, the Holy Spirit did not allow Paul to go. He tried to go down towards Ephesus, but he wasn't allowed. But this time, having stopped there months earlier, he now finds himself allowed by the Lord to head for Ephesus and that place where he had left Aquila and Priscilla to oversee this fledgling work that God had seen last time.

Verse 23 is an important verse because Paul spent months of his time just meeting with churches, encouraging the saints. I think there's something to be said for being in church during the week. You know, there're a lot of people around you that need to be encouraged. It's not always easy to walk with the Lord. It's not always easy to do the right thing. We need to be praying for each other. We've got to hang out together. We're all we've got, you know? The church is together in the world; we're not a part of that, but we can find strength together.

So, in one verse Luke covers 810 miles of travel and who knows how many stops of Paul to encourage the people. It is an amazing story to say the least. And we will, in fact, pick up next week when Paul arrives in Ephesus at the ministry that Paul starts there. In fact, he'll be there three years, and we're going to do the first seven verses next week of, Lord be willing, chapter 19. But before we get there, God gives to us not any reports of the 810 miles of travel or of the welcome in Jerusalem, but He takes us to Ephesus to show us the preparation that is going on in this town before Paul arrives.

And we read, in verse 24, "Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John." Paul had been gone from Ephesus, it might very well have been almost a year by now. The Holy Spirit directs us to the ministry of Aquila and Priscilla and, in particular, one guy. Remember this is the report from Jesus to the church. "This is how I work." This is your standard. Right? This is the template. This is how you want to watch and see how God works. One of these men in this town was named Apollos. He would eventually, as we go down a few verses, end up in Corinth where Paul, remember, had sailed away from (in the last study that we had, where he had been for eighteen months). Apollos was a guy that came from Alexandria which, in Egypt, was the intellectual center of the country, certainly. In fact, in Alexandria, 250 years earlier than what you're reading, the Bible had been translated into Greek, and it was then (and still is) called the Septuagint. It's the Old Testament in Greek. The New Testament, for the most part, is written in Greek; but the Old Testament is not. So it was translated by a handful of men into the Greek; and it helps us a lot - we use it a lot even in our study. There was in Alexandria, many years ago they discovered a library in one of the ruins that had 700,000 books in it. Pretty amazing for that 1<sup>st</sup> century, for sure.

We're told a couple of things about Apollos. He was an "eloquent man." The word means to be fluid in letters, which is an interesting word. It's kind of a play on the word "*logos*" or word. It just means he's a really educated man. We are told that he was "mighty in the Scriptures," "*dunatos*." "*Dunatos*" means powerful or dynamic. So when he shared, he was a guy that you wanted to listen to. And he was "instructed in the way of the Lord." We don't know who taught him. We don't know where he learned what he knew. We don't understand where he came from with all of that information. But we are told that when he showed up in Ephesus, this was a guy that was not only good at speaking, but he had a lot of information and understanding about God's ways. In fact, the Lord goes on, and He says "he spoke and taught accurately." "*Akribos*" is a word that means with every detail in place. So he didn't just wing it; he knew stuff. And he was good at it, and he was "fervent in spirit." "*Zeo*" is a Greek word that means to boil over like a pot of water. So, really excited, accurate in what he shared, eloquent in his ability to communicate and really well-taught in the things that he knew. So, he had a man with conviction and emotion all at the same time; that's pretty good. And he was able to teach with actual enthusiasm, which I think makes him a rare guy.

But here's the drawback - when he gets to Ephesus, this is a man who hadn't heard the whole gospel. He'd only heard the gospel up to the baptism of John, which takes you right to the beginning of the gospels for the most part; certainly to the book of Matthew - you're just startin' at the beginning. Right? Here's John preachin', funny clothes, eatin' weird stuff; and the whole country goin' out to see him and to be baptized. And the Jews forever, never in their life, are now getting baptized as John calls them to repent, and he says to them (John 1:27), "There's coming someone after me. I'm not worthy to unlatch his shoes, his sandals. But He's going to give you the Holy Spirit. He's coming." That was John's message. John's baptism was not the baptism of the New Testament; it was the baptism of repentance, of preparedness. For a Jew who believed "I'm chosen by God, I don't need to follow baptism, that's for Gentiles to join me," they were now called to repent of their position before God. And many did. That was John's ministry. And when Jesus came, you remember, John said (John 3:30), "I have to decrease, He's got to increase," and John kind of fades from the picture, and here comes the ministry of Jesus. That's all that Apollos knew. He was eloquent and excited and insightful and accurate; he just didn't have the whole story. And so he might have heard that Jesus, the Messiah, had come to be baptized by John; he might have heard about the miracles of Jesus, even. What he didn't hear about was the death of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus, the coming of the Holy Spirit, the need to repent, the opportunity to be born again. None of that stuff came to Apollos. He was on fire with what he knew; he just didn't know everything. And so God used him greatly. He came there and had an influence, but he didn't have all the answers. I bring that up to you only because sometimes I'll hear Christians say, "I don't really know what to say to my neighbor because I don't know everything." Well you know a lot more than Apollos knows, and God used that guy plenty. So unless you want to beg off completely, be Apollos; tell them what you know. "I don't have all the answers, but here's what I know. I don't know all of the things, but here's what I do know." And there's an ability that we have to be able to share what God has taught us. And that's all that Apollos did. What he taught was right. It was just with limited information, lots of unanswered questions. He was accurate. He has conviction and all. But it didn't slow him down at all. So don't let that slow you down either. There's a lot to be shared.

Verse 26 tells us, "So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately." So, a couple of things. Number one - there was no real church established here, so Aquila and Priscilla (Jews, born again) were attending

synagogue. There was no church established. Apollos came to the synagogue; they rejoiced to hear this young man preaching..... "Man, this guy's dynamic, but he doesn't have all the information." So he never got to the clincher..... "the death of Jesus, and He was risen from the dead." He just stopped with "then you get baptized, and the Messiah's comin' " and stopped. Not quite all of the information. So they invited him home. He had a good start, no finish. No political debate. They just sat down with him and began to share the Word of God with him. And you have to admire Apollos, and Paul sure did. He listened. He was teachable. In fact, if you read the 1 Corinthian letter (since that's where Apollos will end up) in chapters 1, 3, 4, 16 - he mentions this man four different times. He mentions him again in the book of Titus in chapter 3 as well. So, while Paul was away, this guy shows up; he shows great promise. And then these older, more mature saints take him under their wings, begin to quietly (at home, away from the synagogue) teach him what's going on and share with him the plans of God. And he loved what he heard, and he sat with them, and he seemed to just grow with leaps and bounds. And he was learning these things, not from a pastor but from a tentmaker. These guys made tents. "Hey, come over with us. Sit in the tents, the one we just built." Right? They had a stall, there at the bazaar, and that's where you came if you needed a place to live. So these guys weren't in ministry, per se; they were in town, they were sustaining themselves, and they were sharing the gospel with others. What they have done, we can do - share God's Word. Share it with your friends, share it at your job. Be a disciple maker. Because this guy turns out to be quite a guy, even though he showed up not knowin' very much. You might go, "Well, that guy's not goin' anywhere; he doesn't know anything." Well that's true for a while.

We read, in verse 27, "And when he desired to cross to Achaia," (Achaia, if you look at your map, is where Corinth and Athens; it's in that area, in particular, down at the bottom, if you will, of that peninsula) "the brethren" (the brethren who were in Ephesus) "wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ." Boy this guy came a long way. Some time passed, but it isn't much time; it wasn't years before Apollos digested the new things, studied to show himself approved, felt the Lord lead him to a place far away. And when he showed up, not only did he show up with recommendations from the brothers who knew him, but he began to be of "great help" to them. So read the words there. "Great help" to the saints. How? He had a ministry of convincing the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. He was really good at using the Bible. Many people got saved. And from what I read in

the Corinthian letter, this guy was a huge help in establishing the church there. In the church that Paul had begun in Corinth (spent eighteen months), Apollos now runs in to become a blessing to it. Meanwhile, Paul will show up in Ephesus, and at least the people that he had left behind (Apollos, who also didn't have as much information as he did), Paul will take them that next step (in the next seven verses in chapter 19) and presents Jesus to them. And so what Apollos left behind, Paul built on, and the church was blessed in both ends. So, God uses a lot of different people in the church. It takes all kinds, you know? Some of you have begun serving in the body; others of you have laid the foundation in ministry. And we just hired a new receptionist today, who told me that she had gone to one of our ladies' classes (in Sunday school who has been working for us over twenty years and gettin' ready to retire), so she went through that class as a little, like, 5<sup>th</sup> grader. And now she's answering phones at the church and helpin' people out. It's pretty cool. You know, somebody plants, another waters, and look at us. We all lose our hair. I don't know how that works, (Laughing) but I'm pretty sure that's the way that it works.

So, sadly, when it comes to Corinth, Paul would later have to write to this church because, as much as they loved Paul who had been there so long, eventually they began to love Apollos more. And so you will read in 1 Corinthians 1, where Paul writes to them, he says, "How come there's such a division in your church? One of you says, 'I'm of Apollos,' and another one of you says, 'Well, I'm of Paul.' Really, Christ isn't divided, and Paul wasn't crucified for you, and you weren't baptized in the name of Paul. Knock it off! Quit choosin' sides." I've always been interested in church, the way churches work. Because I listen to a lot of guys that I like to listen to, and there are several that I really don't want to ever listen to. They're good teachers, they're just not for me. You probably won't admit that, but you know that's true for you as well. As long as I'm not on that list, you're good. (Laughing) In any event, they began to, "I like him better." "No. I like him better." And they got their eyes off of Jesus. It was 1 Corinthians 3 where Paul said, "How come one of you says, 'I'm of Paul,' and another one of you says, 'I am of Apollos'?" You guys are all a bunch of carnal people. I planted, Apollos watered, God gave the increase. He's the One we're interested in." So if you find someone that's blessing you, God for you! It just means that God is blessing you. But God uses a lot of different folks. I never have taken it personally when people say, "I can't learn from you." I say, "All right. Move along." What can I do? Right? God uses a lot of us to do the right thing for Him. So, if God's using you, not everyone's going to listen, but you be faithful to what God's given you to do. So, at best, we're His vessels. Right? But notice the work, here, of this couple - with one guy -

during the year that Paul was gone. Because we'll see him arriving in verse 1, in Ephesus, and beginning his ministry there that will, like I said, take three years.

Well, we'll finish in verse 28 where it says that "he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ." I love the word "vigorously refuted." It's only one word in Greek. It means to defend without shame. It is only used here in the New Testament. You won't find the word anywhere else. Here's my question to you. Could you go to the Old Testament and vigorously defend that Jesus is the Christ? Could you do that? If you had to do that tonight, bring someone in - they need to know from the Old Testament that Jesus is Lord.....could you do that? If you can't, why not work on that as a project? It won't take you that long. Find the Scriptures. Make a list of things that add to your points. And learn them. We have had great times in Israel over the years, talking with folks who live there who don't believe in the New Testament; so you only have an Old Testament, and now you've got to get to Jesus from there. So, there are 330 prophecies in the Old Testament regarding the first coming of Jesus. Learn a few of those. There's a verse in Daniel 9 that will tell you the exact day that Jesus will appear in Jerusalem as their King - exactly 383 years after the order was given to rebuild Jerusalem by Artaxerxes, after the Babylonian destruction. You can learn those and say, "If Jesus isn't the Messiah, there isn't one because these years have come and gone." But, anyway, Apollos was good at proving that Jesus was the Messiah. He came to water what Paul had planted. And, like I said, it would seem (in chapter 19) that Paul came to water what Apollos had planted in Ephesus as well.

So, to me the lesson is pretty obvious. Paul is a guy that burns within to see people get saved. I don't know what drives you, but from my way of thinking, if we can lead someone to the Lord, that's the best work we'll ever do. That's eternal. You leave that eternally so, don't you? One of the things that got me out of my job - I had a really good job, made good money, and I felt the Lord call me into ministry, and I wasn't going to get paid near as much; in fact, I wasn't going to get paid almost at all - but I thought to myself, whatever I'm doing at my old job, I can make a lot of dough, but someone else can do this job. But if I get called to ministry, no one else can do that; not the way I'm supposed to be doing it. Right? We all have a unique calling. And what we do is eternal. You lead someone to Jesus, you've affected them for eternity. You didn't just give them a day off or an extra dollar or a foot up; you gave them life. Right? You've led them to the One who gives life. And Paul couldn't shake the responsibility. As much as he had to

pay personally to get it done, I don't think you could have talked him out of the importance of doing what he did. And then you look at Aquila and Priscilla. They're not exactly household words when it comes to the Bible. Unless you're a real avid Bible student, you might not even remember where they might have shown up. But they have this great influence, and they touched churches hundreds of miles apart just by their faithfulness to teach one guy. So who knows what God'll do with you as you share your faith with others? I would write across these nine or ten verses, "It Takes All Kinds." One God, all kinds. And God knows, we have all kinds in here, don't we?

Submitted by Maureen Dickson  
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