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Acts 18:18-28

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Turn if you would to Acts 18 and our reading for the evening will be verses 18-28; Acts 18:18-28. This is the Word of the Lord.

After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had cut his hair, for he was under a vow. 19 And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there, but he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. 20 When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined. 21 But on taking leave of them he said, “I will return to you if God wills,” and he set sail from Ephesus.

22 When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch. 23 After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

24 Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. 25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. 27 And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, 28 for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

We are going to get to an interesting point in the story. Rob and I were talking this week and I’ve always wondered about Apollos. I’ve heard about Apollos and he’s mentioned several times in Scripture but I’ve never really known anything about him other than he was a great leader in the church. We come to a point in the story where there are some critical things in the life of the local church, particularly the church in Ephesus, are happening, but also things that are critical for us to understand how the church is to function and work; things like the importance of strong doctrine and things like the importance of transparency in relationships, and things like the submission of believers to one another. Paul will speak on unity in his letter to the Ephesians, and in that letter, which we will reference some tonight, he says things like, “We are to submit to one another. We are to encourage one another.” The Scripture gives us a means of biblical confrontation. We are going to see the importance of the sovereignty of God in the way we seek out mission endeavors, or ministry endeavors, or the direction we are going to go in the preaching of the sermons that we are going to preach in a given series. There are a lot of things going on here at the church in Ephesus.

I was thinking about something today. It was cold and rainy. It’s not crazy cold right now. It’s been kind of weird winter. It’s been kind of an El Nino winter. Remember El Nino? Remember that guy? I think he’s back. But our son, Moses, has a little remote control boat and he took it down to the pond. Our pond is pretty small. Somebody wouldn’t even call it a pond but to me it’s a pond. It’s only technically about thigh deep but Moe and his cousin, Wyatt, sank his remote control boat in the pond. So, they came up to the house. It was driving, pouring rain and he said, “I’ve got to get my boat. It sunk.” The water was muddy because it’s been raining. So, I go down there and strip down to my shorts and go into the pond. Now, it’s a cold day today. My hands still haven’t warmed up. I was shaking hands earlier and thinking that people would think I was clammy. I still haven’t warmed up. But I was in the pond for an everlasting long time trying to find that blasted boat. I couldn’t see and what happened is I stepped into the pond and immediately sank into mud over my knees. So, I’m trying to wade through like this but finally I figured if I could just kind of lay out and pull myself along I could keep my head above water. But then, all of me is under the water. At one point, I yelled at those poor little boys, “Where is the boat?!” Maybe now I should do the same thing Shawn was talking about and apologize to Moe tonight. But I was freezing. Finally, I found the boat but what was so hard is that I couldn’t just walk around. It was just sludge, and it was cold, and it was miserable.

When I got out, I got in a hot shower and I was warming up and getting dressed and I thought, “The Lord has been stirring my soul this week about the state of the United Methodist Church. Have you paid attention to this? It’s a bad day, man, because what they are doing is they are abandoning the God of the Bible for some pagan, worldly, perverted, demonic substitute. It’s been going on since the beginning of time that churches do this but now you have the second largest mainstream denomination in America that has voted by the skin of their proverbial teeth to just adhere to biblical doctrine. That we would even have a vote on that blows my mind. A church that doesn’t rest on the solid, doctrinal teaching of who Jesus is and what Jesus teaches is like me out there in that pond just sludging around. There is no solid footing. There is nothing but misery and instability. And we are living in a day where it is critical that churches are doctrinally and biblically clear on their understanding of who Jesus is because without Jesus we are not going to push back the darkness and we don’t have a Gospel to take to the nations. We have nothing to do with planting churches in other cultures, or countries, or down the street. We don’t have anything to share with our friends and there’s no reason to invite them to church. If we get them to church, if we’re not going to preach a Gospel-centered, Christ-centered, Christ-exalting message, then we don’t have any business being a church. They have this thing called the Lion’s Club. They have this thing called the Rotary Club. When I was in Little League, I played baseball for the Moose Club. But the Church of Jesus Christ is on mission, commissioned by Jesus before He left this Earth, and we are not out from under that mission until He comes back and gets us. And we live in a time when the waters are muddied culturally and we’ve got to understand what we believe about the most critical components of Scripture and that begins with Christology, which is the study, and theology, and doctrine that pertains to Jesus Christ.

Kilby, and Little, and I were having a conversation today while we were sitting out in front of the fire in front of our house. We were under the awning listening to the rain hit it and sitting by the fire. It was awesome. We were talking about a church in the west that is led by a lady you might have heard of, named Nadia Bolz-Weber. Have you heard of her? We’re calling them by name right here on the interwebs. What she has done is she is a self-proclaimed pastor who has started a campaign to ask young ladies and women, who throughout the 90s and early 2000s, took part in the True Love Waits movement, to send her their purity rings so that she might melt them and have them made into a statue, an idol of sorts, of a female’s private body parts, that she has then presented as an award to a leading feminist proponent of abortion rights. This woman is a pastor. Now, she’s not a pastor but that’s what she calls herself.

We have to understand that the severity of false doctrine is that it’s not just a disagreement here or a disagreement there. It is that the end that it will ultimately bring about is a tearing down of the identity of Christ, and we have to get Jesus right if we are going to get anything right. We’ve got to understand who Jesus is.

So, in the text tonight we are going to see this really powerful moment where that happens. We come into this text where that happens in the Early Church. Last week, we saw Paul in a really fragile and critical place in his own ministry. He was struggling with some depression, some fear, some overwhelming anxiety and the Lord comforts him and says, “Man, I’m going to keep you in Corinth and you are going to be there for a long time. We are going to do good ministry in Corinth.” And He does. He keeps him there for a year-and-a-half, the longest Paul has ever stayed in one place. So, Paul preaches and a church is planted; a strong, thriving church. In fact, several other times in Scripture people in the church in Corinth are mentioned. The lengthiest letters Paul will write are letters to the church at Corinth. God uses him to establish a strong church but that church sort of destabilizes when Paul leaves. So, there is a lot of drama that goes on in that church. So, Paul leaves Corinth, and in our text tonight he goes with Aquilla and Priscilla, two people that he met in Corinth, and he goes over to the city of Ephesus.

Now, the city of Ephesus is really similar to Corinth. We looked at Corinth a little last week. The city of Ephesus was a pagan city. It was a Roman capital city, which means it was sort of self-governing. They had their own Senate and their own local government so they sort of had some autonomy. It was a very authoritative place. They were also known for pagan worship. They worshipped a female goddess named Diana, or Artemis, depending on what language you’re reading that in. In fact, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world was not Mount Rushmore. There were seven wonders of the ancient world and I don’t know what they were but I know what one of them was. The other six you are on your own—maybe the pyramids. Were the pyramids one of them? Yes, I know two of them. I should have done a little more homework on this but it doesn’t really matter. What we need to know is that the Temple to Artemis was one of them. That tells us that this was a culture that technologically was very advanced. There was so much going on in Rome. They were building stuff that was blowing people’s minds. The Romans put in 50,000 plus miles of interstate highway, paved roads. This was going on in the first century, prior to the time of Christ. But in Ephesus they build something that was so impressive that the whole world noticed it and it was a temple to a goddess. It was a very pagan city with a lot of pagan worship.

You also had a lot of Jews in Ephesus. We saw last week that the Jews had been run out of Rome, so professional businessmen and women, Jews who were very successful, would have sought refuge in a city like Corinth or Ephesus because they had a lot of the same benefits as living in Rome. So, you had a strong Jewish population.

When Paul gets there he begins to preach in Ephesus. We see right there that he’s preaching to the Jews in the synagogue but he doesn’t stay long. He preaches, preaches, preaches and then he’s like, “I’m out. I’ve got to go. I’m leaving.” He’s going to leave and we’ve seen this about Paul; when the Spirit of God tells him to go, he goes. Then, the people say, “No, we want you to stay with us.” You see that right there in verses 18-21. They say, “We want you to stay with us. Don’t go.” But he says, “No, I’m going to go. God is leading me out of here,” but he’s going to leave Priscilla and Aquilla and they are going to stay there. He’s going to leave and he says something very important; he says, “If it is God’s will, I will return.”

I grew up hearing my mom and my grandparents say this. “Lord willing, we’ll be back.” What’s the old saying? “Lord willing…and the Creek don’t rise.” Do y’all know what that saying means? It doesn’t have anything to do with the river; it has to do with the Creek Indians. Did you know that? This is a saying that came from Colonial America where in the spring of the year there would be native uprisings, so that saying had to do with if we were not preoccupied with defending our homes then we will see you then. It was this idea that if something doesn’t sidetrack us that’s bigger than what we are talking about then we will see you then.

So, Paul’s saying, “If God doesn’t take me somewhere else…” Paul had experienced this. Remember, a few weeks ago we saw that he was going to one place and then God took him to another place. Sometimes, God will move like that. God will do things like that, where we feel like we are going in one direction and He takes us in another direction. So, Paul is leaning on the providence of God. He’s leaning on the will of God. He’s trusting that God’s going to give him clarity and if it’s God’s will then he will come back to Ephesus. He would love to come back there. So, Paul is going to leave and he’s going to leave Priscilla and Aquilla there.

It mentions something there in verse 18 about this stopover between Corinth and Ephesus where Paul got a haircut. He went to the barbershop. We don’t know a whole lot about that. We tried to figure that one out. Commentators all say, “We don’t really know what’s going on. Maybe it was this. Maybe it was a Nazirite vow.” One man said that maybe Paul was giving thanks because God had preserved him in Corinth and brought him through that difficult time. Maybe he was ending a Nazirite-type vow. But the bottom line is that we don’t really know what was going on there.

Paul continues on and we get down to verse 22 and it says,

When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch. 23 After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

What you have in about three verses is 1500 miles of travel and who knows how long. Sometimes the Bible will do this. It will just compress things and say, “This happened, this happened, this happened,” when there’s a lot going on there. Paul continues to travel and we think he probably goes back to Jerusalem to touch base. This would have marked the end of his second missionary journey. Paul, we know, did three major missionary journeys. This is now ending the third decade since Christ had left the Earth and we are getting deep into first century Church history. So, Paul is probably going to Jerusalem to strengthen the local believers there and meet with the leaders of the Church. Then, he’s going to start back through some of the other churches that he has planted, back to some areas where he had been, and to some new areas that he has wanted to go to but hasn’t gotten to go to yet. But Paul is going to end up back in Ephesus and we are going to get back to Paul at a later time but we are going to zero in and kind of home in on verse 24 because this is where we meet this guy Apollos in the city of Ephesus.

Now, here’s what it tells us about Apollos. There are a few things that we learn about Apollos in this text. We learn that he was from Alexandria, so he was an Egyptian. This is what we know about Alexandria, that it was a university city. Remember a couple of weeks ago when we studied about Athens? It was a philosophical city and was like the hub of philosophy. Well, Alexandria was a university city, so it was a place known for higher education. Apollos would have had something like the equivalent of a graduate degree. He’d be like a guy who had been to university and got his master’s degree from a really reputable place. It says he’s a learned man, which makes sense because he’s from Alexandria, a huge university city. He would have what we call an Ivy League education; a very reputable or elite education.

There is a bit of a pattern emerging here at this point in our story where we see that missions work is occurring in rural, small towns and in major cities, but often the work is going to plant itself in the larger cities because culture tends to flow out of the cities into the rural communities. At any rate, every sector of humanity was being engaged intentionally with the Gospel.

The passage also tells us that Apollos was eloquent in speech. Remember, Paul says in his letter to the Corinthians, “I didn’t come to you guys with words of eloquent wisdom,” but this guy was eloquent. The idea that he was eloquent in speech, if you really break this down, is the fact that he was a really captivating speaker.

I’ve been on the road preaching this weekend and I was up in Knoxville at the Blount County Association meeting. The Director of Missions was there and it was their city-wide Disciple Now. I think there were about twenty churches. The youth from twenty churches were there. It was an incredible opportunity to preach the Gospel and disciple students. We talked about Jesus as the hope of the world. We looked in the book of Ephesians primarily and it was a great weekend. So, I was asked to do a session yesterday afternoon for the parents who would be willing to come. They’d invited the parents to come to the final worship service last night. It was a very likeminded group of pastors and youth pastors. So, I was going to be speaking and then the student pastor of the largest church in that association was also going to be sharing after me. So, I got up and shared and talked for about 35-40 minutes and I just broke down Proverbs 22:6,

Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.

I probably made some redneck jokes and talked about being from Western North Carolina. They are from East Tennessee and I probably made jokes about marrying your cousin. I don’t remember what all I did. We were just having a good time. Well, then, it was Jason’s turn. Jason is the youth pastor and I didn’t know he has a PhD from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. That’s pretty impressive. He’s a youth pastor—did I say that? He got up and I was looking at his credentials and I thought, “Ooh! I have a high pain tolerance and can lift heavy stuff. I’m not bringing a lot to the table here.” Well, I’d had a lot of interaction with this guy up to this point and he had one of those personalities that was less than magnetic. He’s a good dude but he said as little as needed to be said and communicated just the thought that needed to be communicated. He’s one of those guys where you’re like, “Hey, man! How’s it going? Good to be here!,” and go to shake hands and there’s some awkward silence. It’s the major details with no minor details added and then some more awkward silence. “Oh, man, well just let me know if you need anything, okay?” So, he gets up and he begins to speak on ministering the Gospel to Generation Z and it was one of the most captivating speeches I’ve ever heard in my life. He gave us handouts. I was captivated. When he got done, I was like, “Hey, can you do Part 2 right now?” It was incredible. He was a magnetic communicator. He was prepared. I talked to him afterward. I had seen at the bottom of his handout that it was copyrighted with his name on it. I thought, “I’ve got to start doing that. It makes you seem more legitimate, you know?” I said, “Jason, what in the…what was that?” and he was right back to being the guy I had met the day before—“I did my doctrinal dissertation on that subject.” It was phenomenal. I thought how he is one of those guys that you could stick in a room and people couldn’t care less about the content but you’d listen to him. Do you know what I’m talking about? Have you ever seen somebody like that? This guy was great. There was joy in listening to this. This was Apollos. He was captivating. When he speaks he draws audiences in.

We miss this in our society and we have to understand this. In an oral culture where there are no movies, no TV, where theater is the only entertainment opportunity, stump speaking or speech giving was a huge cultural experience. People would gather to hear folks give speeches. This man was not only giving speeches but he was a brilliant man, highly educated, magnetic in his personality. People are drawn to him and he’s captivating audiences. Not only that, he’s competent in the Scripture. Praise Jesus for preachers and teachers that you can pay attention to. You have your favorite guys. I listen to podcasts and listen to stuff on YouTube and I have guys that I love to listen to. I’ve said it a thousand times—my favorite speaker is Alistair Begg. I love that brother and I love to listen to him and part of it is his accent. He’s got a Scottish thing going on but he has the right amount of humor and the right amount of illustration. There’s a way he presents himself. I feel the same way about Ravi Zacharias. I love listening to him. So, Apollos is that kind of guy but he’s not just a good communicator.

How many of us have listened to somebody preach and then have made this statement; “You’ve got to give it to him, he’s a good communicator.” What you’re saying is, “That guy didn’t teach any truth” or “it was weak” or “it was watered down.” Do you know what I’m talking about? You see that experience a lot of times. In fact, a lot of times, in larger cities the churches that tend to boom, and grow, and become megachurches, have the best, most gifted communicators but they are not competent in the Scripture. Right?

So, this guy was competent in the Scripture and he was a captivating communicator—and it says he had been instructed in the faith. What does that mean? He’s been discipled. Somebody has taught him the Bible. This dude has been discipled and invested in. He is fervent in spirit and he taught about Jesus with accuracy. It also says he spoke boldly in the Jewish synagogue. Like Paul, this would mean he was using the Old Testament Scriptures to point people to Jesus as the fulfillment of prophecy and the end of the Law. He effectively debated Jews in the public square on the matter of Jesus as the Messiah. But there’s one hangup. He’s operating under the baptism of John. There’s some debate on what that means but the bottom line is that he didn’t have the full revelation of the Gospel yet. He didn’t totally understand that the Spirit of God had been poured out at Pentecost and that people were now preaching a completed Gospel—the Gospel of the kingdom. He got it to a point but he didn’t get it to a point. He’s so close to being the ultimate guy.

Now, listen. Talk about his impact. Let’s go over to 1 Corinthians 1:10. This is Paul writing a letter to the Corinthians. What happens in our text is that at the end of this Apollos gets sent to Corinth. So, we are in Ephesus and Paul leaves Corinth and comes to Ephesus. He leaves some of his team there and they meet this guy, Apollos, and then he goes back to Corinth to be a pastor there. So, now, sometime later, Paul writes a letter to the Corinthians.

I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. 11 For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers.

The folks in the church are not getting along over in Corinth. They are arguing with each other.

12 What I mean is that each one of you says, “I follow Paul,”…

Here’s what they’re disagreeing on. They are disagreeing on who their favorite preacher is, who their favorite theologian is, who their favorite commentator is. Some people are saying, “We follow Paul because Paul is the man. He’s the ultimate church planter. He’s the guy. He’s a Jew, a rabbi, he understands the Law, and understands the Old Testament Scriptures. We got saved under Paul’s ministry and that trumps everything else.” Then, some people are going, “Well, we follow Apollos. He’s the guy who came here and did the work of growing the church and reaching our communities. He established really effective programs that drew people in, and grew the church, and expanded the house church movement to many, many homes. We follow Apollos. Paul was here but I didn’t know Paul. Apollos is my guy.” They started to have some rivalry over this. Some people were like, “Peter’s my guy.” This was the blue collar crowd. “He’s a fisherman. I’m following that guy.” Then, you have the super spiritual people who spiritualize everything but then don’t want to go to church on Sunday. They’re like, “We follow Jesus. We don’t go to church. We have our own church. I have church in nature. It’s just me and Jesus. It’s an exclusive relationship. You guys wouldn’t know anything about that. You guys can follow Apollos, and Paul, and Peter. I don’t need the church. Me and Jesus have an agreement.” Have you ever met those people? I’ve met those people. “I don’t need to come to church on Sunday. Me and Jesus got it worked out.”

Then, in verse 13, he says,

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? 14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. 16 (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel…

He’s saying, “The proclamation of the Gospel is my job. The results are Jesus’ job.” Nobody gets to take credit for the results. No human gets to take credit for the Gospel doing its work and moving the Church forward.

…and not with words of eloquent wisdom…

He’s like, “I get it. Apollos was legit. He can speak. He’s good and he’s gifted. But I’m not a man of eloquent words. In fact, I tried that in Athens on Mars Hill at the Aeropagus and it did not work for me. I’m just going to stay in my lane. I’m going to declare the Gospel, that’s all. I know Apollos is gifted.

Jump over the 1 Corinthians 3:5,

What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. 6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.

So, Apollos was a very effective minister of Gospel and a church leader. He was probably a major player in the church planting movement. In fact, at the end of the book of Titus, Apollos is mentioned, and he’s sent for, and he’s still doing the work.

Look at one more passage in 1 Corinthians 4:1.

This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. 3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. 4 For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. 5 Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God. 6 I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.

What we have is the church at Corinth where Apollos would land at the end of our text for this evening and Apollos had an incredibly effective ministry there. God used him. He became a steward of the mysteries of the Gospel to those people. He carried the Gospel, he grew the Church, and God used him in a powerful way. But here’s the last characteristic that we see in our text about Apollos. That is, with all of that—he was a humble man. It’s hard to be humble when you’re that kind of a person. Is it not true that when God uses you in an incredible way that you may have to fight back some self-boasting? Sometimes it can be hard to give credit to Jesus. But Apollos was humble. How do we know that? Well, we know it because of the intentionality of Aquilla and Priscilla. I love this brother and sister.

Here’s what we know about them, just to bring you up to speed. They are the latest traveling companions of Paul. He met them in Corinth. They were displaced from their home in Rome because of Claudius’ edict. He kicked all the Jews out of Rome. Aquilla and Priscilla went from Rome, to Corinth, to Ephesus—major city, to major city, to major city. They were making Gospel impact. They were likely uneducated and they worked in tent making. Here’s the thing about tent making. Most every historian believes that tents were made out of animal skins. Well, a Jew who handled dead animals was a pretty filthy person, kind of on the same level as shepherds. So, you have Apollos who is elite and you have Priscilla and Aquilla who are sort of a lower caste of society. They are dirty people and they dealt in animal carcasses and skins. They did blue collar work with their hands. Then, you have this guy and the masses are listening to him. He’s debating Jews and winning the day. This guy trained under Philo in Alexandria. He was as credentialed as you could be and these people were the exact opposite of him. They stayed in Ephesus when Paul left to travel to Caesarea to continue the missionary work of church planting. This shows their willingness to do whatever it took for the greater good and work of advancing the kingdom. They asked Paul to stay with them but when he told them he had to go they accepted that. They clearly had the gift of hospitality. Their marriage was a partnership for advancing the Gospel and making disciples. Biblical confrontation and exhortation for the good of a brother’s holiness and sanctification, as well as the greater good and health of the Church, was a greater priority to them than their own comfort. 1 Corinthians 16:19 tells us that a church met in their home in Corinth and we know from Romans 16:4 that they risked their very lives for Paul in Corinth. We don’t know what happened there but they risked their lives for Paul in Corinth. These two were very humble people.

Now, watch this interaction between Priscilla and Aquilla and Apollos. As we’ve now seen, Apollos was a very educated man who had incredible credentials. He was studied and well-spoken. He was the all-star, the rock star. He was very gifted yet he had the humility to sit under the teaching of Aquilla and Priscilla. On the other hand, Aquilla and Priscilla were blue collar folks, unlearned, of the native Jewish population and were low caste because of their line of work. They could have been intimidated, or passive, or had a who-am-I-to-confront-Apollos mentality. But they were bold for the Gospel, passionate about true, biblical understanding of who Jesus was, and they saw the need to intervene in a very godly and humble way. They quietly took him aside into their home, practicing the hospitality that they were so gifted at. They instructed him in the full message of the Gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit.

There are two thoughts on Apollos and his salvation. One is that he wasn’t saved until this day when these guys brought him into their home. The second is that he was living by faith in Jesus but he just didn’t yet understand the full work of the Holy Spirit of God. Here’s what Darrel Bock, a commentator, says,

Apollos teaches about Jesus accurately but knows only of John’s baptism. This lack of knowledge has created much discussion among some commentators. Is Apollos really a Christian at this point? A likely answer is yes, despite the gap in his knowledge. At least the expression “fervent in spirit,” even if it points only to enthusiasm, is a positive expression. The fact that he speaks about Jesus accurately is unlikely to be said of a non-Christian who preaches. Apollos is a teacher caught in a transitional time and who ministers during that time and thus needs to be caught up to date. His teaching is not inaccurate, it is merely incomplete.

That is the stance that we sort of talked about as a group of pastors and leaders in this church. Men and women are doing the work of the Gospel but this is still a transitional period when the Spirit of God is being poured out. In any case, praise the Lord for the faithfulness of Priscilla and Aquilla. Apollos went on to be a great minister of the Gospel. God used him and his gifting in a mighty way in the Church.

Zach brought up a great illustration. It’s like Bock said there at the end when he said that Apollos’ preaching was not inaccurate, but merely incomplete. We were talking and he said to think of something that you have, like a tool, and you don’t realize it has a certain feature. I was thinking of a circular saw. When I was a teenager, I could run a circular saw but I remember when I was working for a framer named Kenny Osgood. Kenny showed me how you could set the depth on that circular saw. I had been running a circular saw for a while and I remember that it was like a new lease on life. You mean I don’t have to hold that thing and kind of hand guide it? No, just set the depth. If you’re cutting quarter-inch plywood, just set that thing to a quarter-inch and rip it. It was like a new world in construction. I would imagine that if you’re a computer person that when you got that first Macbook Deluxe—all I do is type word documents and that’s it—that learning the new features is probably exciting. I think that there was just pure, accurate, faithful teaching but it was incomplete, and this couple had enough humility to bring him into their home and, watch this, the church was so networked and people cared about each other so much, they loved each other but they were passionate that the Gospel was being proclaimed faithfully, so that what’s going on in the churches in America today and that was going on in the churches in Corinth would be pushed back. We’ve got to build strong churches that are rooted in Christ, built on faithful and biblical doctrine, and so they had to bring that guy into their home. They didn’t want to make a scene, or cause a fight, or create factions and divisions. They said, “Let’s bring him into our home and let’s address it.” That’s what they did.

So, what do we learn from them? Well, the result is that this man becomes very effective, and not only a leader but a defender of the Gospel, missionary and pastor, and he leaves the area, goes to Corinth, has a deep investment and influence there, and he’s a faithful brother and leader. For the final application for us as a church, I’m going to give you five things and I’m not going to elaborate on any of them.

Here are five things. We’ve all got gifts and we’ve all got callings and God wants to use every person at Red Oak in the Body of Christ but we have to know Jesus and be continuing to grow in that relationship, which requires humility and teachability.

So, number one, let’s all be unified in our work for the Gospel. Let’s be a church that’s unified in our work for the Gospel. This means understanding what we’re doing missionally. We put it in front of you all the time. And understanding what we’re doing in the community and the surrounding area. Let’s be unified in that work.

Number two, let’s be a church that is engaging one another through hospitality and biblical, theological discussion. The best catalyst for this is our discipleship groups. If you’re not in a discipleship group we encourage you to join one of those. It’s a time for food, fellowship, good coffee, and biblical, theological discussion that is most typically going to be connected to the sermon on Sunday night. Theological discussion. So many churches in America—in my church research on that stuff we talked about at the beginning of the sermon, I found myself on the site of an LGBT church in Atlanta and I thought, “I’m going to listen to a sermon.” I clicked on it and it was a seventeen-minute sermon. The whole service was about 57 minutes long. It’s like people show up, they get their little fix, they go into the world, and there is no theological discussion. See, if we are all students of the Word, growing in our understanding and knowledge of who God is, and then we are having those discussions, how many of us can give testimony that other people in this body have grown, sharpened, and encouraged our own faith and knowledge? I love learning stuff from other people in the church. Let’s be a church that’s engaging one another through hospitality, opening our homes, and sharing meals together.

Number three, let’s all use our gifts and platforms to advance the work of Jesus. Use your gifts, use your platforms, whatever platform God has given you. Vocationally, in your work, the public sector, your creative gifts, or whatever it might be that God has given you—use those platforms as relationships to advance the work of the Gospel.

Number four, let’s be a church who has a high view of the big picture, a high view of the big mission of what we’re called to. Not just thinking about Sunday evening for an hour and twenty minutes but thinking ‘big picture.’ We are here and this is central command for us as a local body. This is our forward operating base. We are working out of the authority of a kingdom that is eternal, with a throne that is perpetual, and a Commander-In-Chief that is never going to yield that throne. We are at a forward operating base, working out of this, on mission to the end of the world. Let’s keep that in view.

Number five, let’s all be about Jesus but let’s be about the biblical, self-revealed Jesus, not a Jesus that we re-create. It’s all about Jesus at Red Oak. It’s got to be all about Jesus for His glory, to advance His kingdom, so that all men might know, hear, and understand the Gospel. It’s got to be about Jesus, not about anything else, but it’s got to be about the biblical Jesus because there are people peddling a different Jesus today. Paul says in Galatians 1, as we saw last summer when we went through that study, “Not that there is another Gospel but there are people trying to create another Gospel.” So, let’s be all about Jesus and let’s be a church on mission and we will see the Gospel go forward.

Would you pray with me? Lord, I love you and thank you for the work of Apollos, and the work of Priscilla, and Aquilla, and Paul, and Luke, and Timothy, and Stephen, and Peter, and the different men and women we have met in this study. Women like Lydia and Priscilla and men like Barnabas and Silas that are making a church body that is operating under the head, which is Christ, and they are impacting the fourth, and fifth, and sixth decades of the first century to establish the foundation of a Church that is never going to go away and that has only grown ever since. God, I pray we would be faithful to what work you have done through them and through other leaders in other generations. I pray that Red Oak would be a part of your big mission. I pray that we would learn from them and that we would encourage one another and that Jesus would be exalted in everything that we do. I pray that if there is anybody here tonight who doesn’t know you, who doesn’t have a personal relationship with Jesus, that you would draw them to yourself, show them who you are, and I pray they would come to faith in Jesus. In your name, Amen.