

Note: any scripture and any purple words are hyperlinked for more information.

[The Second Missionary Journey Ends](#)

[Acts 18:18-23](#)

18 Paul, after staying many more days in Corinth, said farewell to the brothers and sailed away to Syria accompanied by [Priscilla](#) and [Aquila](#). He had his hair cut off at [Cenchrea](#) because he had made a vow. 19 When they reached Ephesus, Paul left Priscilla and Aquila behind there, but he himself went into the synagogue and addressed the Jews. 20 When they asked him to stay longer, he would not consent, 21 but said farewell to them and added, “I will come back to you again if God wills.” Then he set sail from Ephesus, 22 and when he arrived at [Caesarea](#), he went up and greeted the church at Jerusalem and then went down to [Antioch](#). 23 After he spent some time there, Paul left and went through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples ([Acts 18:18-23](#)).

Paul stayed on in Corinth for “**many more days**” (verse [18](#)).

When they reached Ephesus, Paul went to the synagogue, where he addressed the Jews, showing that Jesus was the Christ. Paul did not consent to stay, however. Instead, he promised to return “**if God wills**” ([Acts 18:21](#)). The question that comes to our minds is “Why?” “Why didn’t Paul stay on in Ephesus to preach the gospel to them?”

First, Paul may be eager to get back to Jerusalem, home turf. This may be related to the vow he had taken (verse [18](#)). *Second*, earlier Paul and Silas had been forbidden to preach the gospel in Asia. Did this earlier prohibition still stand? Paul may not be certain, and so he waits for further confirmation. He did not wish to attempt to break down a door that God had closed. *Third*, Asia just wasn’t quite ready for Paul. It is clear that Asia is ready by his third missionary journey. One wonders if Apollos ([Acts 18:24-28](#)) was not part of the preparation process (not to mention Priscilla and Aquila).

Paul set sail from Ephesus, leaving Priscilla and Aquila behind. When his ship had landed at Caesarea, Paul made his way up to Jerusalem. After Jerusalem, Paul went to Antioch, from which he had commenced both of his missionary journeys.

The Ministry of Apollos in Ephesus and Corinth

[Acts 18:24-28](#)

24 Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, arrived in Ephesus. He was an eloquent speaker, well-versed in the scriptures. 25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and with great enthusiasm he spoke and taught accurately the facts about Jesus, although he knew only the baptism of John. 26 He began to speak out fearlessly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained the way of God to him more accurately. 27

When Apollos wanted to cross over to **Achaia**, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he assisted greatly those who had believed by grace, 28 for he refuted the Jews vigorously in public debate, demonstrating from the scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

Apollos is a most fascinating fellow. Thanks to Luke's description of him, we know that he is a very bright and gifted Jew from **Alexandria**. One of the early Greek manuscripts of the New Testament (**Codex Alexandrinus**), along with other important New Testament manuscripts, was obtained in Alexandria. Alexandrian Jews were among those with whom Stephen debated (**Acts 6:9**). If Apollos was "**well-versed in the scriptures**" (**Acts 18:24**) it was probably in Alexandria that he became a great student of the Old Testament.

Apollos was not only very knowledgeable in the Old Testament Scriptures; he was also a very powerful speaker. (He almost seems to be a replacement for Stephen, who died as a martyr for the faith – **Acts 6:8—8:1**.)

Apollos was unaware that Jesus of Nazareth

1. We are told that **Apollos** knew the Old Testament Scriptures well. Through the Old Testament Scriptures, he had been instructed in "**the way of the Lord**" (**Acts 18:24**). The term rendered "**Lord**" here need not refer to Jesus, but can just as easily refer to **God** the Father. But even if "**Lord**" here refers to Jesus, it would simply mean that Apollos knew many of the facts about Jesus, facts about Him that were revealed by the Old Testament prophets. Apollos knew a lot about the Messiah who was to come, yet without knowing Jesus personally as the Messiah.
2. If this is true (that Apollos had not yet personally come to trust in Jesus as the promised Messiah), it in no way undercuts the importance of Apollos to Luke's argument. From Luke's description of Apollos, we can see that Apollos' message was precisely the same as the first part of Paul's presentation of the gospel (from the Old Testament Scriptures). Apollos' message is further confirmation of the gospel as preached by Paul. Independently of each other, both reached the same conclusion: the Messiah must be rejected by His people, crucified, and raised again. And once enlightened by Priscilla and Aquila, the message of Apollos would be precisely that of Paul.
3. Apollos was an Old Testament saint, like those listed in the "hall of faith" in **Hebrews 11**. He was like the Ethiopian eunuch of **Acts 8**, or **Cornelius** of **Acts 10**. He (like other Old Testament saints) believed that Messiah was coming, but they did not, as yet, realize that He had come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

4. The record of the further instruction of Apollos by Priscilla and Aquila is placed just before Luke's account of the 12 brethren in Ephesus who were disciples of John the Baptist, who had never received believers' baptism or the gift of the Holy Spirit.

So, I don't see how we can conclude that Apollos had come to trust in Jesus as the promised Messiah until after Priscilla and Aquila informed him more accurately.

Why does Luke bother to include this information about Apollos? The gospel was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, and Jesus was the fulfillment of the prophecies of the coming of Messiah. I believe there is another reason why Apollos is included in this account: it enables us to better understand Paul's references to Apollos in his epistles. Aside from references to **Apollos** in Acts (18:24; 19:1), we find Paul frequently referring to him in his First Corinthian Epistle (1:12; 3:4, 5, 6, 22; 4:6; 16:12). Beyond this, he is mentioned only one other time (**Titus 3:13**). Apollos is noteworthy because of his great gift as a speaker and also because of his independence from Paul:

With regard to our brother Apollos: I strongly encouraged him to visit you with the other brothers, but it was simply not his intention to come now. He will come when he has the opportunity (**1 Corinthians 16:12**).

I believe there is at least one more reason why Apollos is mentioned in **Acts 18** and **19**. There is a kind of alternation that takes place in Ephesus and Corinth. Paul spent a good while in Corinth (at least 18 months according to **Acts 18:11**), and then he moved on to Ephesus, where he briefly ministered before leaving for Syria (**Acts 18:19-21**). Apollos seems to have arrived in Ephesus after Paul had left (**Acts 18:24-26**). It was here that Priscilla and Aquila (whom Paul had left behind in Ephesus) more fully explained the way of God to him. From Ephesus, Apollos went on to Corinth in Achaia (**Acts 18:27; 19:1**

When Apollos wanted to cross over to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, **he assisted greatly those who had believed by grace (**Acts 18:27**, emphasis mine).**

I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused it to grow (**1 Corinthians 3:6**).

After Apollos left Ephesus for Corinth, Paul seems to have arrived for his much more lengthy ministry there (**Acts 19:1ff.**).

Paul Returns to Ephesus and Finds Faith **Acts 19:1-7**

1 While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul went through the inland regions and came to **Ephesus**. He found some disciples there 2 and said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They replied, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." 3 So Paul said,

“Into what then were you baptized?” “Into John’s baptism,” they replied. 4 Paul said, “John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus.” 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, 6 and when Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they began to speak in tongues and to prophesy. 7 (Now there were about twelve men in all.) (Acts 19:1-7)

There is good reason not to lose sight of this text when studying [Acts 18](#). Apollos seems to have been very much like these 12 [Ephesian “disciples.”](#) Apollos and these 12 disciples were products of the ministry of John the Baptist (compare [Acts 18:25](#) and [19:3](#)).

When they heard the “rest of the story,” these disciples of John believed in Jesus and were baptized in His name. Then, when Paul placed his hands upon them, they received the gift of the Holy Spirit, just as Luke has recorded concerning Pentecost ([Acts 2:1-4](#)), the Samaritan saints ([Acts 8:14-17](#)), and Cornelius and those who were with him ([Acts 10:44-46](#)).

From the Synagogue to the School **[\(Acts 19:8-10\)](#)**

8 And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. 9 But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. 10 And this took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

“the kingdom of God” (verse 8). I would think that Paul began with the Old Testament prophecies pertaining to the kingdom, showing over a period of time how Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled these, and then going on to disclose those aspects of the kingdom which were revealed by Jesus, or to the apostles by the Holy Spirit.

Over the three month period of time Paul preached at the synagogue in Ephesus some were convinced of the truth of the gospel, while others became more and more opposed to it. It became impossible to carry on his teaching in a way that would facilitate good teaching. And so Paul changed his base of operations. He moved from the synagogue to the school house, the school of Tyrannus.

Very little is said of the teaching ministry of Paul in this “school.” The most complete picture of his ministry while at Ephesus is found in chapter 20. For example, we know that he worked with his own hands during his stay in Ephesus, so that he would not be a burden and that he could minister to the material needs of others ([Acts 20:33-35](#)).

Much of the preaching which took place outside the city was done by others, some of whom may be named in [Acts 20:4](#). Although the Spirit had once forbidden the preaching of the word in Asia ([Acts 16:6](#)), now the word had been proclaimed throughout Asia. In God’s time, the word of God was proclaimed.

Paul proclaims his innocence “Therefore I testify to you this day, that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God” (Acts 20:26-27).

Conclusion

The first thing we can learn from our text is that Paul is human and that he has his fears and his weaknesses.

([2 Corinthians 12:7-10](#)).

The second thing we should learn is that God never intended for us to be “[Lone Ranger](#)” Christians; He purposed to use Christians collectively to accomplish His purposes. When we read about spiritual growth in [Ephesians 4:10-16](#), Paul speaks of growing up together as a church, and not just individual growth. In [1 Corinthians 12](#), Paul describes individual Christians as members of the body of our Lord, members of the church.

Thus, when Paul writes his First Epistle to the [Corinthians](#), he rebukes those who foolishly follow one man:

11 For members of Chloe’s household have made it clear to me, my brothers and sisters, that there are quarrels among you. 12 Now I mean this, that each of you is saying, “I am with Paul,” or “I am with Apollos,” or “I am with Cephas,” or “I am with Christ.” 13 Is Christ divided? Paul wasn’t crucified for you, was he? Or were you in fact baptized in the name of Paul? ([1 Corinthians 1:11-13](#))

4 For whenever someone says, “I am with Paul,” or “I am with Apollos,” are you not merely human? 5 What is Apollos, really? Or what is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, and each of us in the ministry the Lord gave us. 6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused it to grow. 7 So neither the one who plants counts for anything, nor the one who waters, but God who causes the growth. 8 The one who plants and the one who waters work as one, but each will receive his reward according to his work ([1 Corinthians 3:4-8](#)).

In a day when Christians are tempted to idolize a particular Christian leader, let us remember Paul and our text.

Third, God used people to encourage and to strengthen Paul in his hour of weakness. Paul was alone when he first came to Corinth ([Acts 17:14; 18:5](#)). God first brought Paul to Aquila and Priscilla ([Acts 18:1-3](#)), and then later he was joined by Silas and Timothy (who appear to have come with a gift from the saints at Philippi – see [Acts 18:5; Philippians 4:15-16](#)). Apollos did not have direct contact with Paul in our text, but his ministry did complement Paul’s ministry ([Acts 18:27](#)).

James indicated that Elijah was a man “**of like passions**,” a man like us ([James 5:17](#)). [Elisha](#) was immediately selected to accompany [Elijah](#), and he remained at his side until he (Elijah) was taken up into heaven ([2 Kings 2:1-11](#)). I believe that one of Elisha’s primary functions was to provide **fellowship** and **encouragement** to Elijah.

Paul, too, was merely a man, like us. But God knows our frame and that we are but dust ([Psalm 103:14](#)), and thus God provided encouragement for Paul in his hour of weakness and fear. He

encouraged him by a night vision, as well as by working through others like Aquila and Priscilla, Silas and Timothy, Apollos, and even Gallio. What a gracious God we serve.

Fourth, Luke provides us with insight into how missionary activity was financed in the early days of the church. We know from [1 Corinthians 9](#) that it is not wrong to be supported by those to whom we minister.

Now for many, a tent-making ministry is not possible. One of our Missionary couples, [Anthony & Irene Chapman](#), must be pursuing post graduate studies at the Israeli University to keep his visa. Now he can preach the Gospel in Hebrew through out that area.

Let us also bear in mind that this is not the only way to do ministry. When Silas and Timothy arrived from [Macedonia](#), they seem to have come with a financial gift, a gift which enabled Paul to cease his tent-making job and devote himself fully to the proclamation of the Word of God. Let us not look down on this divine provision as well.

Finally, let us rejoice in the way that God worked through human instruments to bring salvation to those who were desperately lost and destined for eternal judgment. Let us remember the kind of people God saved in Corinth:

9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! The sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, passive homosexual partners, practicing homosexuals, 10 thieves, the greedy, drunkards, the verbally abusive, and swindlers will not inherit the kingdom of God. 11 Some of you once lived this way. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God ([1 Corinthians 6:9-11](#)).

Let us also take note of the fact that God works through His body, the church, and not just through individual effort. God used others to comfort Paul in his time of need, and He used these same people to advance the gospel. Are you lonely? Are you fearful? Do you feel helpless? If you have not trusted in Jesus, do so today. And if you have trusted in Jesus, then get involved in Community Groups where you can minister with others and to others, and where they can minister to you.
