

DEVOTIONS FOR ACTS 17-21

THE WHOLE GOSPEL

Tuesday, May 30

Reading: Acts 18

Acts 18:24 Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. **25** He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. **26** He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately. **27** When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers and sisters encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. **28** For he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.

Over the past few decades a dangerous trend has developed. Surveys show that Americans are becoming increasingly ignorant of American history and government. Many schools and colleges do not require graduates to take courses in history and civics anymore, leaving a generation that does not fully understand the founding principles and values of our country. It is no wonder America is going downhill so quickly. The old saying is true: “Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.”

Apollos was a man who did not know all his facts. He was not wrong in what he taught; he just did not know the whole gospel story. He was from Alexandria, Egypt, a great center of Jewish thought and learning. He was a powerful speaker and was fluent in the Old Testament Scriptures. However, he knew the gospel story only up to John the Baptist. He knew that John had declared Jesus to be the Messiah, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. But he did not know about Jesus’ death and resurrection or the coming of the Spirit to indwell believers. He was a great preacher with only half the message.

Paul’s companions Aquila and Priscilla not only saw the gift God had given Apollos, but how much he could do for God’s kingdom as well. This devoted man and wife invited the preacher home for dinner and explained to him the rest of the gospel story. I am impressed with Aquila and Priscilla. They are lay leaders who see someone they can help and jump right in to disciple him. We need more lay leaders like that!

I am also impressed with Apollos. He was a man of higher education, yet he humbly accepts what these two tentmakers teach him. He realizes what they are telling him is the truth and it makes him a better man (he literally goes from being an Old Testament saint to a New Testament saint!) and better preacher - now that he knows the whole gospel story. We need more servants of God who are humble, willing to be taught, and open to correction when they are wrong.

There are many so-called “preachers” out there who are only preaching half the gospel. They may even know the full gospel but choose not to teach it for fear of criticism, losing their popularity, etc. We need to pray the real gospel of Jesus Christ is preached in our churches and be open to sharing the full gospel when we see it lacking in someone’s life.

¹ See... <http://www.voanews.com/a/mht-americans-knowledge-of-government-history-in-crisis-acta/3153123.html>
& <http://www.cnn.com/2013/10/07/opinion/callista-gingrich-u-s-history/> ...among others.