

ACTS 18:24-28

We need this; we need to be together. We want to be more faithful. We need, then, models and mentors and examples. We like to believe that we don't need models and mentors. But that's a recipe for disaster.

There are many models for us in Scripture. Timothy needed a model and Paul said "Imitate me." Timothy had a model. There are also horrifyingly tragic models because God knows we need to see those too. It's not only important to remember David, a man after God's own heart, but we also need to see Saul. We need to end well and do well.

We want to look at one of the most neglected models — Apollos.

It's a mystery why Apollos is so neglected. In the NT, there are only 10 verses that refer to Apollos, but in these verses, we learn much about Apollos and why he should be a model for us.

In this passage we learn that Christ calls *men* to accomplish His purposes for His glory.

What Luke is doing in Acts is similar to his gospel — he is giving an orderly and factual account of the early church. Luke drops little pieces of embedded language that can be missed too readily — e.g., 18:5, Paul was *occupied* with the Word. Paul's priority was the Word. Far too many are too preoccupied with too much other than preaching. Don't trouble Paul with other matters; he is preoccupied with the Word. In contrast, Gallio (v. 15) thought it was *just about words*.

Paul then moves on from Ephesus and Apollos arrives (v. 24).

The first thing that we know about Apollos is that he is a Jew — and Jews don't name their sons Apollos. That's a Greek and pagan name. What could explain this? He is a native of Alexandria — the first place of the Jewish diaspora; the culture had a museum and library (the greatest of the ancient world) — a center of learning and the Jews that were drawn there were the ones who were particularly drawn to learning. So his Jewish parents named him Apollos because of their attraction to learning. Remember that this is also the place where the LXX was translated in the second century before Christ. Apollos would have been trained in the Scriptures, but also trained in the Greek Scriptures — and now he is in a Greek culture!

How does Apollos enter the book of Acts now? From Alexandria? Where did he hear the gospel and from whom? Then follow six statements that are commendations:

1. He is an eloquent man

That is, one who is gifted and eloquent and publically significant. He had an orderly mind and words in accordance with the ancient canons of rhetoric. Eloquence is not enough — you have

to have the desire! But you do have to have the first part of eloquence — an ability to be able to communicate and be understood.

2. He was dynamic (and competent) in the Scriptures.

Other translations say *mighty in the Scriptures*. He is powerful and at home in the Scriptures — a dynamism and expertise in his explanation of the Scriptures. This kind of competence is necessary for a congregation to trust a preacher — the preacher better rightly divide the Word of truth, a trustworthy exegete. It is known and universally expected that when he stands behind the sacred desk that what is going to happen is a sermon! That's why Timothy is told to study to prove himself...

3. He was instructed in the way of the Lord.

He had come to know the ways of Jesus. From the beginning, the church was deeply instructional. Teaching is absolutely necessary — the faith is not passed on through osmosis or proximity. It is passed on through instruction. In order to have an Apollos, you have to have someone to train him to be competent in the Scriptures.

4. He is fervent in spirit.

This does not mean he is an excited personality. Cf. Rom. 12 — it is not an attitude of excitement but someone who is working hard and diligent — not slothful in what he does because he knows what is at stake. He is busy, just like Paul was found busy (v. 5). The one who is fervent is the one who is alive with the work of the ministry. He is *doing* something. He is serving the Lord.

Some say, "I can't find a place to serve..." Don't find a place to serve — find a need and fill it! Be caught doing something!

5. He spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus.

There are so many who are not teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus. There's a lot that goes into making that happen. Avoiding heresy is not a one-time decision but a lifetime preoccupation. Some teach heresy who do not want to and do not recognize that they do (e.g., the heresy of Arius). Heresy fills giant rooms and draws an enormous audience and often sounds sweet to those who do not have an ear to hear. It can sound so slick. It takes work and dedication and theological expertise and commitment to teach accurately.

6. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue.

Everyone is afraid of something. That's not the problem. An unwillingness to conquer the fear is the problem. Be confident in the One who sent us and is able to save! He goes right into the synagogue — a man named *Apollos* and boldly proclaimed the truth about Christ.

If the text ended here, we would have an account of a man who is marked by remarkable

commendation. But that's not where it ends.

We read in v. 25 that *he knew only the baptism of John*. That's a problem — a pretty huge problem. He grew up in Hellenistic Judaism and he is basically in the same position as the disciples of John: he knows enough about Jesus that he can speak accurately, but not to be entirely faithful to the ministry of Jesus.

What we then have here is the correction of Apollos — through the ministry of Priscilla and Aquila. That they are in this place at this time is a remarkable working of the sovereignty of God. When the church needed them there to correct Apollos, they were there (placed there by God).

Here in v. 26 we have a model of correction for the NT — it is possible to be right in the Scriptures and be wrong and need correction. P & A heard and recognized that there was a problem — he had a baptism of repentance, not regeneration. He didn't have the entire picture. And they took him aside (not publically to shame him) and graciously corrected him. If Apollos preached boldly, this was also bold of P & A. It takes boldness to correct and point to the truth. Good intentions are not enough when it comes to gospel ministry. We need P & A; I have needed P & A and will need them in the future.

They correct Apollos. It could have gone badly. He received the correction (vv. 27-28) to the extent that the brothers that heard him commended him to others. Paul nowhere says a negative word about Apollos. In fact, he said, "I planted...Apollos watered," and later "make sure Apollos lacks for nothing."

May the things that are said of Apollos be said of us. Something *will be* said of you. May these be the things that are said of you. And when you need P & A may they be there for you and may you here them and the brothers commend you.