

## **Acts (Part Nineteen)**

**Acts 18: Priscilla and Aquila, Gallio's Decision, Arrival of Apollos**

**John W. Ritenbaugh**

**Given 31-Jan-89; Sermon #BS-AC19**

Back to Acts the 18th chapter.

We went through Acts the 17th chapter the last time and in that chapter, the apostle Paul was making his way from Philippi and eventually came to Athens. And along the way he stopped in Thessalonica and there he ran into a great deal of difficulty and had to leave the city and he left his friends behind there, a small church. I say small, I do not know, but I assumed that it was not very large. They were meeting in a person's house. But he left a small group of converted people there under a great deal of duress, and then he was hustled on down to Berea. And when he got to Berea, he found people there who he says were more noble than those people in Thessalonica, that they searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether the things that the apostle Paul was saying were true.

But he no sooner seemed to get things really rolling down there and a delegation from Thessalonica, representing the Jews there, made their way into Berea, and they stirred up trouble once again, and the apostle Paul was hustled out of town in order to preserve his life and try to calm things down there in Berea, and he went off to Athens.

When he got to Athens he was in what was undoubtedly one of the more famous cities of his period of time, although, as I mentioned to you the last time, it was living on its past. It was, by the time of the apostle Paul, really nothing more than a large town having, according to the figures that commentators are able to dig up, only about 10,000 people in it. It had really sunk practically into oblivion, but the people who remained there were still nonetheless pretty proud people and apparently interested in only one thing and that was discussing something new.

Well, Paul got into discussions with the Epicureans and the Stoics, and they invited him to speak at the Areopagus, which was the Hill of Mars. That is

where the city council met. And so he was taken there and he made the address that begins in verse 22 and goes all the way through to the end of verse 31. A pretty famous address. But Paul's efforts in Athens were not very successful at all. There were some who believed and then he had to leave. He did not receive permission to remain in the city and continue to preach.

So as you can see, things were not going all that well for the apostle Paul, even though he had a great deal of drive, a great deal of zeal, he had high hopes—everywhere he went, he got run out of town. After a while, that begins to get kind of wearying. And so he went from there to the city of Corinth.

Corinth was a, I was going to say a horse of a different color, but maybe that does not quite fit. At least it is compared to Athens because Corinth was a booming city by comparison to Athens. It had a population of about 200,000 people. It was prosperous and wealthy. It was sitting astride of a very important trade route that ran between the Aegean Sea and the Adriatic Sea. So it was the leading city of the area and Paul was looking forward here to something that was going to be more productive than were his other efforts.

I want to go back to I Corinthians 2 just to reiterate something here that gives us some sort of insight into the apostle Paul's mind as he came into the city of Corinth from Athens.

**I Corinthians 2:1-3** And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.

Now, from what I have just told you, you might be able to understand why he would say something like that. Even though he was a man of a great deal of zeal, he suffered a very terrible beating in Philippi. In Thessalonica, though not exactly run out of town, it was very clear that he was no longer welcome there, and he felt that his efforts there were really not as productive as they could have been. Then on to Berea, where there were a few conversions, not very many, and then on to Athens, where apparently just a very tiny number. And here was the man that the Bible proclaims of being

one of the hardest workers for God that ever lived. And he had this dream, this vision of accomplishing very great things for God, and even had a vision from God that said, "Come on over to Macedonia and preach here." And everything seemed to be turning out wrong. Surely the man would be examining himself. What am I doing wrong? Am I sinning, have I got something here that I am not aware of? Why is God not blessing my efforts?

Now here he was coming to the big time, Corinth. And undoubtedly he was worried as to whether the big time meant bigger crowds chasing him out of bigger towns. He certainly would think that way and he was probably wondering with all these injuries whether or not he was going to have enough energy and strength to be able to do that. You know, it is even possible that this reference in II Corinthians 12, where he is talking about his thorn in the flesh, that that had something to do with the beating that he took there in Philippi. And how he sought God three times and God said to him in verse 9,

**II Corinthians 12:9-10** And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast of my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Possibly the injuries that he sustained there in Philippi might have left quite an impression not only on his body, but also on his mind.

Back to Acts 18. We find some more characters coming on the stage in verse 2.

**Acts 18:2-3** He found a certain Jew named Aquila [that means eagle], born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. So because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tent makers.

We are going to see that in just a minute that Saul, Paul, used the same modus operandi here that he did in other places in going to the synagogue. But coming into the city, very likely not having much in the way of money, the first thing he had to do was find a job and be able to take care of himself. That was a necessity because there was no church there to take care of him and provide for his needs. So it is likely that he either came into the synagogue or even walked through the city. I doubt very much whether they had any yellow pages, but he probably walked around the city asking people if they knew where there was somebody who was a tent maker, leather workers. Either that or he went to the synagogue and also asked there.

But at any rate, he came in contact with Priscilla and Aquila. And they became a pretty important people in Paul's life. Now these people were, by everything we are able to see, already converted. They had recently come from Rome, which gives the indication that they were converted by some kind of an evangelistic campaign that was held in Rome. They got caught in this edict of Claudius', which was made in 49 AD. It was directed at the Jews and they got run out of town.

Now, where we get our information from this was a man by the name of Suetonius who was a historian. And Suetonius said that this decree of Claudius was directed at a man and his followers, and this man's name was Crestus. Nobody knows for sure whether this Crestus was Jesus Christ or whether he was a Jew who was stirring up the Jews about one thing or another. Nobody knows for sure, but most of the commentators feel that it was probably things involving the true church and Jesus Christ, but it is still a probable.

At any rate, Priscilla and Aquila had to get out of town and so they came to Corinth and it is very likely they went into the business that they were involved in while they were in Rome. That is, leatherwork, the making of tents.

Now it says that Aquila was from Pontus. Now Pontus was part of what we call today Northern Turkey. It was on the south shore of the Black Sea. So, where he came from combined with Priscilla and the fact that Priscilla is more frequently mentioned before Aquila, leads to some speculations. Why

is she mentioned before him? Most of the time I think the normal custom would have been to mention the man first and then his wife. But she is more frequently mentioned before him.

There are two reasons, possibly. One is a spiritual reason: that she was more deeply converted than he and that spiritually she was the real leader in the family and that she was the one who was more deeply involved in the church, was a far greater help to the apostle Paul than was Aquila in spiritual areas. The second reason is that very possibly Aquila was a slave who had been recently freed, whereas Priscilla came from a family where she was free by birth, that is, they had been given Roman citizenship and liberty in a generation or two before Priscilla was ever born. And that Priscilla came from a higher born family and that her being mentioned first was a recognition of that.

That makes another speculation. If this were true, the second one, then it is highly likely that whenever the decree came from Claudius for the Jews to leave Rome, that even though she was Jewish, because she was free born, she would not have had to have left. And that she left because of her husband and because of his trade. Now later begins to develop that it is very likely that Priscilla and Aquila were very well off because it looks as though they had operations in Rome, in Corinth, and in Ephesus. You do not have operations in three cities that far apart in that kind of a historical context without being somebody of some means. So at any rate, they seem to be somebody of unusual character, both physically and spiritually.

**Acts 18:4** And he reasoned in the synagogues every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.

At this point, Paul's ministry is not very aggressive. He is apparently just going to the synagogue, and it says that he reasoned with them. Now the indication here is that he did not, as was his normal policy, get up and proclaim Christ. That is, in what we would say an evangelistic preaching session. But rather, in private conversation, after or before services, he would kind of get somebody in the corner and reason with a group of people. Then the question is, why? Well, the thought is that very likely he was waiting for Timothy and Silas to get back with him. You might remember from chapter 7, he left them up there in Macedonia when he had to be rushed out of town

and he went alone. They went back and tried to take care of the churches that were established there.

But when he left the people that rushed him out of town in Berea, he left them with a message to be gotten to Timothy and Silas to meet him in Athens. Now they apparently did not meet him in Athens because he had to leave town before they could actually get there, so you can understand what might have happened. They got the message. They left Macedonia, went down to Athens, had to look all over town and find somebody that knew anything about him and find out that he went to Corinth. So it was not an easy situation. He just could not pick up a telephone and call them and say, hey, come to such and such a place. So he was apparently waiting for Silas and Timothy to join him.

**Acts 18:5** When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was constrained by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.

Now notice: immediately the picture changes. Now he gets up and he begins aggressively. evangelizing the area. Now why? Well, the reason is they brought him good news. Remember what it says in the Proverbs about a good word from afar is succor to the bones. Well, when they arrived, Paul's depression was over, if there was any there, and now he felt strong once again. He felt that God had not abandoned him, that things really had not fallen apart at all. He was beginning to realize that things were working out just the way they were supposed to work out.

Now go with me back to I Thessalonians 3, verse 6. We have a little insight here because when Timothy came, he brought news of what was going on in Thessalonica and this is what caused Paul to write the book of I Thessalonians. So he wrote it there in Corinth shortly after Timothy arrived.

**I Thessalonians 3:6-7** But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought to us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you—therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress. . .

You begin to see where you can get information about what his attitude was like there in Corinth. He was really down in the dumps. Now he was lifted up. He really felt good. Does that not begin to make you feel that Paul was human? He was not just a machine, boy, he had feelings.

**I Thessalonians 3:7-10** . . . therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith. For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord. [Now life had a quality for him because he was refreshed at the information that he got.] For what thanks can we render to God for you, and for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?

Now what is lacking is what the book of I Thessalonians is about. And what we find out there, mostly it was good and positive. There were a few problems. There were some people who had some negative-type questions, but most of the things were just clarifications of things that they did not understand, were not fully instructed in, or maybe that, apparently, Timothy did not really know the answers to either, and so they had to be brought to the apostle Paul, and the most famous of those things appears in the 4th chapter about the coming of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of the dead. So that was one of about six or seven things that are addressed in I Thessalonians.

Well, we find out from reading I Thessalonians and putting it together with the book of Acts, that after they received the letter, there were still a few things that they had in regard to questions about the second coming of Christ. And so then II Thessalonians was written right on the heels of I Thessalonians. There has to be a falling away; the man of sin is going to have to be revealed, and he explained to them that Imminency, that is, the return of Christ was imminent, did not mean *immediately*. Now that had to be explained because we find in II Thessalonians 3, that there were some people who had quit their jobs and they were going out on a hillside somewhere and waiting things out and bumming off other people. And so Paul had to explain, no, you do not do that. That is being a busybody, being lazy, and if a person will not work, then he should not eat. Let us be working, is what he said, right up to the return of Christ.

**Acts 18:6** But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

See, when he began to do things more aggressively, fruit began to be born, and with it came opposition. And the shaking of the garments is something that appears back in the Old Testament. It appears in the book of Nehemiah, and it is a symbolic repudiation. It is a way of saying, "Well, I am clean. Your blood is not on my head," and it is sort of like you can go on living the way you are, but you are passing up a great opportunity. So it was a way of very definitely breaking fellowship. There was no doubt about it. I am not going to have anything at all to do with you.

**Acts 18:7** And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue.

That is kind of interesting. Just rub it right in. He just went out one door, and in another. Now this man apparently appears in other places in the Bible, but not by that name. The Romans were in the habit of giving people three names just as we do. We have our surname, a first name, and a second name, a middle name. Well so did they. Justus was his surname, like Ritenbaugh. His full name apparently was Gaius Titius Justus. This man was apparently a convert of Paul's and he opened up his place to Paul, so that Paul could use it there.

Now this man appears, I will just give you a couple of references.

**Romans 16:23** Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greets you. [Paul wrote Romans from here too.] Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you, and Quartus, a brother.

He also appears in,

**I Corinthians 1:14** I thank God that I baptize none of you except Crispus and Gaius.



Gaius Titius Justus. There he appears there as well.

**Acts 18:8** Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all of his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.

So the Jews chased him out of the synagogue, but Paul you might say, had a laugh. When the ruler of the synagogue, apparently the chief priest there was converted and so he moved next door too, along with the others.

**Acts 18:9** Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the vision in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent."

It is very likely that after the encouragement of verse 5, and beginning to really proclaim the gospel again in a powerful way, beginning to see conversions, and then immediately persecution, that some fear and doubt and depression was beginning to creep back into Paul's mind once again. And so this time God moved by giving him a vision to give him some encouragement. And Paul was probably beginning to see the beginning of a pattern once again, and God wanted to take that out of his mind and give him some encouragement so that he would not get downcast. So He is letting Paul know that he is to continue there until God decides that he is done.

He said He had many people there. It indicates that God already knew who He was going to call. He was going to call out a pretty large congregation of people.

**Acts 18:10-12** "For I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city." [Kind of hang on to that verse because it gets to be interesting a little bit later.] And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. [It probably means a year and a half total. It does not mean a year and a half from this point, but actually from the beginning of verse 1, he was there for a year and a half.] When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat.

Now wait a minute! God just told him, "Do not be afraid. Speak out. I have many people in the city." I want you to notice how specific this is. You see it in verse 10, "no one will attack you." God did not say you are not going to have any trouble. Now he had plenty of trouble but no one attacked him. There is a difference between the two. At least he was not beaten physically. It might even be likely one more beating like he had in in Philippi, and that might have been the end of it. So God allowed him to continue to have persecution, have problems, but at least he was not beaten, was not injured physically.

What happened here was this. It is highly likely that the Jews took advantage of a change in the proconsul. The proconsuls were changed every July, the Romans shifted them around. There is wisdom in that because they were less likely to get so involved with people that bribery would become a bigger problem than it actually was. So they shifted their proconsuls around very frequently to keep them from getting the kind of friendships that would lead to a more corrupt government than already was there.

Every July they changed the proconsul and whenever a proconsul came into town, new, it took a while for him to get into gear, to kind of learn the ropes of the city and so forth. So the Jews apparently waited until Galileo got there and then bam! they hit him with what they thought was this big problem, and they were going to use this way of getting Paul out of town, where he would no longer be a thorn in their flesh.

Gallio has an interesting background. He came from a very famous family. I do not know how many of you are familiar with the Roman poet philosopher by the name of Seneca. You might have heard of him. But Seneca was his brother. You wonder why they have different names. One's name is Gallio and the other's name is Seneca. See, this is their surname. Well, actually, neither one of them was a Roman. They were Spaniards. And what happened was, they came from an aristocratic Spanish family and came to Rome for some reason. I do not know what the reason was. Maybe that is because that is where the action was. I mean, that was the capital of the empire and if there was any place that you wanted to make your name and make your fortune, it was in Rome.

Well there were three brothers. And I think their name was Novatnes I think that is what it was. Their Spanish surname was Novatnes. When they got there, they were adopted into different families and whenever they were adopted into a Roman family, they took the name of the family that they were adopted into.

Now none of these fellows in this family were dumbbells. They had their head pretty well screwed on right. They were people of pretty great intellect. Well, we are going to see that Gallio saw through this immediately, and he did what we would say today, he threw the case out of court. It was absolutely groundless as far as he was concerned. It was not something that he should be meddling in at all.

Just a little more about Gallio and about Seneca and about Gallio's brother. They did all right. Gallio was a man who did not have very good health so after his proconsulship was up there in Achaia, he took off on a journey aboard a ship and took quite a bit of time off, which gives you an indication that he was pretty well off. But he took some time off in order to recuperate from his health problems. Then he apparently went back and worked in the government for a while longer and then there is another time that he took a period of time off, he went to Egypt. They said in the account that he had asthma and apparently their prescription then was pretty much the same as it was here. Go to a dry climate and try to get rid of that stuff. So we went down to Egypt. And he was there for about a year or so time, and he next surfaces in Rome again.

Well, when he surfaces in Rome, he has somehow or another, along with his brothers, incurred the wrath of Nero and you did not want to incur the wrath of Nero. Or maybe any emperor for that matter, but Nero was loony. Anyway, Nero forced the suicide of Seneca in 65 AD and then executed Gallio and his brother right after Seneca. So the family came to a very quick end in 65 AD. They are just wiped out. You do not want to get on the bad side of Nero. He has one of his fits and he was an epileptic. By the way, I do not know whether that had anything to do with the state of his mind, probably did not, but he was as loony as any emperor that they ever had. But at any rate, Gallio was put to death because of somehow falling into disfavor with Nero.

Now here comes the charge.

**Acts 18:13-15** "This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law." And when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, O Jews, there would be reason why I should bear with you. But if it is a question of words and names and your own law, look to it yourselves, for I do not want to be a judge in such matters."

You can see that Paul was all set to defend himself but Gallio cut him short because he saw that this suit that was brought before him was not against the state at all. But rather, he looked upon it as an internal matter of the Jewish church. He undoubtedly did not think of, let us say, Christianity as being anything more than a sect of the Jews, and that this was really an intramural affair that they were fighting about and it was something that they should have decided amongst themselves, and so he just tossed it out of court.

Now, there is more to this than meets the eye. You might remember that when Paul went to Philippi, for that matter, when he went to all of these other places in Asia Minor, and then he went on up into Macedonia to Philippi, on to Thessalonica, on to Berea, on to Athens, and now to Corinth, in none of those places was there ever any a clear cut decision made by a Roman official regarding Christianity. Now what this amounted to here was this: For the very first time, you see, it was on record by a Roman official, in this case, it was a man appointed by the Senate of Rome, Gallio, who made a decision that involved the Christian church that indirectly recognized it as a legal religion. By refusing to hear the case, he actually gave them the right to practice religion.

See, a precedent had been set by a very high court. It was not the highest court of the Roman Empire, but it was nonetheless a very high court, maybe something equivalent to a State Supreme Court, as opposed to a federal court. But it gave Christianity a legal recognition within the empire that would have to be set aside by somebody higher. Now that did apparently occur when Paul went to Rome and the Christian church fell into very bad favor under Nero and things got reversed there. But here was an important

decision. Now if anybody in Thessalonica legally moved against the church, there was already a precedent set down in Achaia which was still under the jurisdiction of Rome. Even though it was a separate state, a separate province, it was nonetheless an official decision of a Roman official, so it was important.

**Acts 18:16** [To add insult to injury] And he drove them from the judgment seat.

That is, he drove the Jews. I do not think he did it personally. I mean, he probably just gave the command and the soldiers who were probably around there were at the ready, and that was enough. And what it resulted in was verse 17,

**Acts 18:17** Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. But Gallio took no notice of these things.

So the tables just were completely turned. And what is so interesting, Paul did not have to open his mouth. God showed the intervention that He was going to give him, and when He said nobody is going to attack you, He meant it. They are not even going to be attacking you verbally in court. So things worked out very well there for the church.

Incidentally, Sosthenes is called here the ruler of the synagogue. And it is very likely that he is the man who took over when Crispus became converted. What is so interesting is that there is a Sosthenes that appears later in the Bible. In fact, I believe that he was a scribe that the apostle Paul used in the writing of one of his letters. Now whether it is the same Sosthenes, nobody knows. But there is a possibility that it was. That this man too became converted and became a part of Paul's retinue.

**Acts 18:18** So Paul still remained 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.

The commentaries date this as roughly about another nine months after the incident with Gallio. And it is by this time early spring of 52 AD. Now one of the interesting things about this verse is that he had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow. Again, what it shows is Paul's attitude toward the law. Now you can see here that Paul did not think of it in terms of being done away as modern Christianity does.

Now this was one of those ceremonial regulations. It had to do with being a Nazarite. The Nazarite vow was instituted by God in order that men and women of tribes other than the tribe of Levi might serve God more directly. And so they took the vow to be separate for a specified length of time. And one of the things that was stipulated to show that they had separated themselves from God is that during that period of time they were not allowed to cut their hair. They were not allowed to touch a dead body. They were not allowed to drink anything or eat anything from the vine, grapes or wine. They were symbols of their separation.

Paul had taken a vow. Now, why did he take a vow? Did he take this vow because of his feelings of depression? Was he trying to show God that he really did want to serve Him despite his depression, despite the way that he felt about the way things were going, and that if he set himself apart by this vow. . . See, Paul was a Jew, a Benjamite actually, he was not of the tribe of Levi, so he was free to do this. And he did it. It was part of the ceremonial law, and so he let his hair grow. And then when the vow was over, he cut his hair.

But in order to complete the vow, he had to go back to Jerusalem because the hair had to be cut and then put on the altar, and the only place that it could be put on the altar was at the Temple in Jerusalem because that is the only place they were allowed to do those things. So that meant that he had to go back to Jerusalem. So he cut his hair in Cenchrea, which was one of the port cities, Port Corinth, and then taking Priscilla and Aquila with him; they went with him as far as Ephesus. And there are those who feel it is very likely that Priscilla and Aquila paid his way back to Jerusalem. They cannot figure out where Paul would get the money to be able to do such a thing and that there is a possibility there that they paid his way back.

**Acts 18:19-21** And he came to Ephesus, and left them there [Priscilla and Aquila]; but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews [he is always the evangelist, never forgets his responsibilities]. When they asked him to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent, but he 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.

Now that feast is one of two feasts. It is either the Days of Unleavened Bread, more likely though Pentecost. Thinking of the time elements, it is not likely that he could have gotten back to Jerusalem in time for the Days of Unleavened Bread, just putting the chronology together. But we will allow that as a possibility. So it is very likely that the feast that he was talking about in Jerusalem was Pentecost, and that incidentally, is an indication. Why would he want to get to Jerusalem in time for the feast, except that he wanted to keep the feast there. They were still keeping it. If the feast days were done away, then why the rush to get there in time? It would not have mattered. But the feast meant something to Paul because he was keeping it.

**Acts 18:22** When he had landed at Caesarea [remember Caesarea was the port city for Jerusalem] and gone up [That is a idiom for saying going to Jerusalem. You went *up* to Jerusalem.] and greeted the church [meaning that he greeted the church there in Jerusalem], he went down to Antioch.

Now the instructions in the Talmud regarding the breaking of one's vow or the ending of one's vow, required that the person spend 30 days purifying himself in Jerusalem. Now those things do not appear in the Bible. We can only assume that the apostle Paul did follow that. And so he was in Jerusalem then roughly at least a month. And during that period of time, he went to the Temple, he offered his hair, and made the suitable sacrifices which are given there in Numbers the 6th chapter, and then from there he went to, notice, he went *down* to Antioch. Everything from Jerusalem was down. So he went down to Antioch.

For Paul, Antioch was home base. So he was actually, in a sense, going back to his home church. It was this congregation apparently that funded most of his activities. And so he looked upon it as home base. Now, after he had spent some time there, probably several months, and again, putting things together, it seems likely that he spent probably six or eight months there. From the summer of '52 until the spring of '53 he spent at Antioch and then began working his way back to Ephesus.

Now he went over land. So if you know where Antioch is, he went north, probably went into Tarsus, where he was born, and then went up northwest up into Galatia, Pisidia, onto the cities of western Asia Minor, western Turkey, and in all the ways checking on the condition of the church there and was working his way back toward Ephesus.

**Acts 18:24** [Another another character, another actor comes on the stage here.] Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria [that is in Egypt], an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.

Paul has not met this man yet, but this is taking place while Paul is gone but working his way back there. So, Apollos is coming on stage here. Now he was an eloquent man, it says he was a very fine speaker, somebody who was very well grounded in the Scriptures, somebody very well educated. And we find him cropping up in the book of I Corinthians, probably as an unintended rival of the apostle Paul's. From what we are able to see, it is not likely that he put himself in that position, but rather some people gathered themselves around him. Remember in I Corinthians, it says, "I am of Paul," "I am of Cephas," "I am of Apollos." See, is Christ divided?

**Acts 18:25** This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in spirit, . . .

It does not mean the Spirit of God. It simply means he was a zealous, enthusiastic person. You might say by nature, a man who put himself into what he did with a great deal of energy.



**Acts 18:25** . . . he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John.

Now, this is interesting because here is this man who is not even a Christian. But somebody somewhere had instructed him regarding Jesus as the Christ. And what he had, he had accurately but he did not have enough. He did not have as much of the picture as was really necessary to do an effective job. Priscilla and Aquila are going to come back into the scene here because God brings these people together.

**Acts 18:26** So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue, and when Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

It is highly likely that what happened was this. Apollos was a Jew, very well educated, eloquent; a man who was zealous by nature in the things that he did. He came into contact with some of the disciples of John the Baptist. Now it is entirely possible that he might have come into contact with John the Baptist himself. It is a possibility. We have no idea how old Apollos was, but if he was the age of the apostle Paul, then he could have come in contact with John the Baptist personally.

But at any rate, Apollos really picked up on the instruction that was given to him. And it is very clearly saying that Apollos' understanding did not end with John the Baptist. That he picked up on the instruction that John was only a forerunner. He was baptized into that, but he was actually looking forward or through John the Baptist to Jesus Christ. Although he had never been introduced to Jesus Christ, either in person or through the Scriptures, except what he was able to see in the Scriptures. Then he comes in contact with Priscilla and Aquila and they fill in the missing details. And now he has a very clear definition of who the Messiah is.

**Acts 18:27** And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; . . .

The ones who wrote were probably Priscilla and Aquila and maybe others giving him letters of recommendation to carry to the church over there.

Saying, that this is a bona fide convert. He is a Christian and he knows what he is talking about.

**Acts 18:27** . . . 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.

Now it seems as though his forte was to sit down and reason with people, debate with them, in a sense, argue if we want to use that. To go from one scripture to another and show these people in private counsel that they were wrong, what they had was insufficient. And so he was very good in that area and proved to be very, very helpful to the church.

And now, I wanted you to notice just a little aside, because of what is going to appear at the beginning of chapter 19. There is no indication that Apollo was baptized. It says that he knew only the baptism of John, yet any specific reference to him being, we might say rebaptized, is missing. And yet at the beginning of chapter 19, there is an episode in which other disciples of John were baptized. Or as we might say, rebaptized.

This makes for interesting theological material. Why the absence of it with Apollos and why the mention of it with these 12 men who are going to follow here? Is it possible that John's baptism was accepted in the case of Apollos? But John's baptism was not accepted in the case of those 12 men in Ephesus. And if that is the case, why?

Now this has interesting ramifications for the ministry because from time to time we run into people who were baptized previously. Maybe they were baptized in the right way by a Baptist minister. Now is that acceptable? On the other hand, maybe they were baptized the right way by a Baptist minister, and is that one acceptable? See, what is the difference between the two? Where we might accept one and we will not accept another.

Well, I think we will leave the answer for that the next time. But it does show up here and the fact that he was not baptized is very interesting. No indication that he was rebaptized, but the other ones definitely were. I think we are going to see that the answer is actually given here as to why it appears as though the one was not asked to be baptized and the others were.

