Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

From Judaism to Jesus, Part 2: Apollos in Transition
Scripture: Acts 18:24-28
Code: 1769

. . . Acts chapter 18, and we're going through the Book of Acts and how our hearts have been blessed as we've studied this marvelous book. I'm just thrilled at what God has been doing in my own life and my own heart in helping to crystallize Biblical principals and review things for me and teach me things that I did not know, and my own heart has been so enriched and I hope and trust yours has.

Now, I've entitled this portion, beginning in chapter 18 verse 18 through chapter 19 verse 7, we've entitle it From Judaism to Jesus because it does portray for us a transition. We have made the mention in past studies that the Book of Acts records for us transitions and we see the fading out of Judaism and the coming in of Christianity. In understanding this, we have to understand that it sometimes was a slow transition. Salvation is not a transition; it's a momentary miracle. But losing all of the trappings of Judaism came a little slower. People would get saved and then find it hard to let go over everything, and so there was a certain amount of difficulty in making the transition from Judaism to Jesus. And as I said last week, we find that true very often today, even with Jews who come to Jesus Christ and find it difficult to break with patterns that were so much a part of Judaism.

Now, I think part of this is due to the fact, maybe most of it is due to the fact that Judaism in itself is such a distinct kind of life. Now, we could talk for a long time about the distinctions of Judaism and I don't mean to do that, but in some generality to point out to you the distinctness of Judaism, in order that you might understand how difficult the transition comes about.

For example, a Jewish town or a Jewish city or township or village, no matter whether it was centered right in the midst of a Pagan country or whether it was butted up against a Pagan society in another city, still maintained an amazing uniqueness, and no matter how much interrelation and intercourse economically and culturally and all it happened to have with Pagans, it seemed never to be tainted by Paganism. There was just such a unique identity and this was particularly around the time of Christ and the time of the New Testament.

You couldn't even enter a Jewish town or enter a Jewish village without feeling like you had almost stepped into another world. You get that feeling today when you go to Jerusalem, not so much when you see the hustle and bustle of a modern city, but when you happen to be isolated with a group, say, of Orthodox Jews who are doing what only Orthodox Jews do, you feel that somehow something's wrong. You're out of whack or they're out of whack with the world. It's just so different and so unique.

The buildings and streets, the arrangements of the houses, the styles of the houses were so prescribed in Judaism that you would spot a Jewish town immediately. And when you were to enter the town, you would find that the rules of municipal life as well as the rules of religious life were prescribed. You would fine the manners and the customs of the people so distinct. You would enter into the home and you find the behavior of the father, the mother and the children very unique. You would find the processes in the kitchen very unique. You would find the clothing very unique. You would find so many, many things that are so very singular to Judaism.

And I think the thing that you need to keep in mind is this, that Judaism was not just a religion. You know, when we think of a religion today, apart from us who are Christian, but when we think of a religion today, we get the idea of you do your own thing all week and then you go drift into some kind of religious gig on the weekend. You get it all squared away and bounce out of there and start all over again on Monday. And that's kind of what religion is. It's sort of an addendum. It's sort of a little divine salt to sprinkle on your secular diet and little else.

I think that, for most of us, we tend to look at religion in this frame. But Judaism was not such an isolated creed of theology. You see, it was a whole way of life. It pervaded every single human relationship. It pervaded every single attitude toward eating and drinking and clothing and all kinds of things in terms of economy, not just a set of observances, not just a creed, but a way of life and you could never just suck Jewish theology out and remove Judaism. No, because Judaism was a way of life. It was a frame in which everything existed.

It all really began, of course, because of the Old Testament. When God laid down, first of all, moral and ethical law and the Ten Commandments and God said the basis of your ethics and the basis of your morality is this code. But in addition to that, God wanted them to be a singular witness in the world so He gave them some other prescribed things that were not so ethical--some were ethical, but not all of them were ethical. Some of them were just plain old visual or external so that the world might see them as a unique people. And these were given, and you read the Old Testament. You find these also in the plenitude.

And so there were Old Testament laws in terms of morality. There were Old Testament laws in terms of relationships such as family relationships, cousins, uncles, aunts, fathers, mothers, kids, parents, the whole thing. There were relationships with other kinds of people apart from your own family. There were very many prescribed rules for touching on all phases of life.

Now, the thing that happened so interestingly was, in addition to the Old Testament, throughout the history of Israel, there have always been rabbis, which means teacher or master. And all of these rabbis were teaching and interpreting and adding to Scripture. And, of course, the esteem of a rabbi was so great that what the rabbi said was often written down. And all of these things were gathered

and gathered and accumulated until today, you have this monstrous set of volumes known as the Talmud. And the Talmud is all of these rabbinical statements added onto the Biblical, and you will find that if you visit any rabbi who was at all involved in what he ought to be involved in as a rabbi, you would find that he has not only prescribed his life around the Old Testament, but perhaps even more so around the Talmud where he is following up all of the interpretations and suggestions of all the rabbis, some of which, most of which are unnecessary and unbiblical.

In addition to that, there was the Mishnah, which was a codified law that grew up. And in addition to that, there were just plain traditions that just became a way of life. So, all of this stuff was just laid on generation after generation after generation, and were you to be born into a Jewish family, there was no way that would ever really be exposed to much else.

And in addition to that, God had set down a standard in the very beginning, in the Book of Deuteronomy chapter 6, called the Shimah, which says, "The Lord our God is one Lord." And then it goes on to say that the trues that this implies are to be taught to your children and their children and their children--in other words, repetitious teaching. And they were instructed to teach when they were sitting down, standing up, walking, lying, all the time.

So what happened? You had all of this prescription of life being propagated, propagated, propagated to every born child. They were taught in the home, for example. They were taught in the synagogue. They were taught in the temple, and in any town or any community were there 25 boys or 125 families, they had to appoint a schoolmaster and start a school and teach these things. And so there were schools all over everywhere. Someone said at the destruction of Jerusalem, there were between 400 and 500 such schools teaching children these basic things repetitiously.

Well, you see what happens is that eventually these things become just indelibly impressed into the minds of people. And so Judaism continued to foster this tremendous conglomerate way of living that was not isolated only in the area of theology, but it was an entire existence.

But at the core of this thing was the law, the ceremonies, the rituals that they had to keep and they believed--and this wasn't Old Testament by any stretch of the imagination--they believed that if they kept all those laws, they'd get into heaven. Now, God in the Old Testament was a gracious God. And people say, "Well, there's no grace in the Old Testament." Guess again. Who is a pardoning God like thee and who gives grace? And it goes on to talk about that. Read it. It's in the Old Testament, many places. God says in Malachi that He had a book of remembrance in which He writes the name of those who are righteous and those who believe in Him. And Abraham believed God. It was _____ righteousness.

Faith is still a way of salvation in the Old Testament as today. And what happened was the Jews supplanted faith with law, and by the time of Christ, they believed that the only way you'd get into

heaven was by keeping the law. And, of course, the guys out in front leading the whole mob along were the Pharoses. They were hyper-zealous for the law and they tended to drag everybody after them.

Well, this had unbelievable consequences. Let me give you a couple illustrations. We could talk about many angles, but interesting. There was a rabbi by the name of Rabbi Jacanon Van Saccai. It was written of him that he said this at his death. And it was interesting because he was called The Light of Israel. He lived at the time of the destruction of the temple. He was a very famous man, highly esteemed. And he was the president of the San Hedron or the ruling body of Israel. So he was not a small-time rabbi, but a very important man. On his deathbed, he began to weep just bitterly and profusely, and some of his students who had studied under him and sat at his feet couldn't believe this.

And they asked him how such a man who had lived as he could have such fear of death, and this was his reply and I quote, "If I were now to be brought before an Earthly kind who lives today and dies tomorrow, whose wrath and whose bonds are not everlasting and whose sentence of death even is not that to everlasting death, who can be assuaged by arguments or perhaps bought off by money, I should still tremble and weep. How much more reason have I for it when about to be led before the King of Kings, the Holy One, Blessed by He who liveth and abideth forever, whose chains are chains forevermore, whose sentence of death kills forever, whom I cannot assuage with words nor bride with money and not only so, but there are before me two ways: one's a paradise and the other one to hell. And I know not which of the two ways I shall have to go. How then shall I not shed tears?" End quote. The man believed that there was only one to enter into heaven and that was to keep the law and he knew in his conscious that he hadn't done it, and he had a fear of spending forever in hell. You see, he had no concept of faith, no concept of grace. He was in a system that bound him and if he didn't do what the system wanted him to do, he believed he'd go to hell forever.

Now, when a system has that kind of grip, it's scary. Right? You always wondered why people who get into the Jehovah's Witnesses, for example, stick with it, because they're told that if they don't, they'll go to hell. It's the same kind of hold exactly. The same thing that this kind if Judaism, not Biblical Judaism, but the kind of Judaism that existed in the day of Christ had on those people. They feared for their souls. And here was an honest man. Here was a man who came to the end of his life and according to the code; he knew he couldn't make it. And he died in mortal fear, his own soul.

Now, contrast that with the opposite extreme that grows under legalism, not the fear, but listen to this. There was a rabbi by the name of Jahudah and there were a lot of these guys. You could probably give 25 illustrations from this kind of an angle. But Jahudah was about to die, and at his death, he lifted up his hands to heaven and told God that none of those ten fingers had ever broken a single law. Oh, that's awful. That is the sickest kind of self-righteousness. But you see, that's the other extreme, isn't it. That terrible fear and then that sickly kind of self-righteousness. But you see, both

of those things tie those people down to the system.

Well, now watch. Into this system comes a man by the name of Paul and he's running around say, "Grace. Grace. Forget all the laws." And the Jews are having culture shock. There's no way they can handle that. That's why when he went into the synagogue the reaction was so violent. See? Because in their own frame of reference, they just couldn't handle it. It's understandable. And that's why you have in the Book of Acts when people get saved, when Jews get saved, there's a little time lapse before they're physical trappings catch up with their soul that's been recreated. See? That's why you get a little drift in the Book of Acts between salvation and the release of obligations in Judaism.

Why, there's a classic example in Peter. Peter knew the New Covenant. Why, he was preaching on Pentecost, wasn't he? Act II. "____ Israel, be this known _____ and my words," and off he goes and preaches Jesus. He talks about the fact of what they had done to Christ and later on he says, "You desire to murder, be released unto you, you killed the Prince of Life and the Holy One," and all of this. And he preaches Christ and we have no question about his understanding of salvation. Peter was saved. We know that he was really a spirit filled man. The Bible says he was filled with the Holy Spirit. Tremendous guy. He had all the New Covenant features. He was in Christ.

Well, that was a dead issue in terms of ceremony, the moral law's still good. The law of God in terms of ethics is still valid. But all of the ceremonies and rituals and codes and all that stuff added by rabbis was gone. And Peter was new in Christ and he was in a grace kind of operation. And the Spirit would lead him. He didn't need all these rules anymore.

And you know what happens to old Peter who's got all that liberty? He comes to Act 10 and he has a little vision. He's up on his roof and he falls asleep and he's hungry, and a voice says, well, let's read it so you get it right. Acts 10:9. "The next day, they went on a journey and drew near the city. Peter went on the housetop to pray. About the sixth hour, he became hungry and would've eaten but while they made ready, fell asleep, fell into a trance. And he saw a heaven open and a certain vessel descending onto him as if it had been a great sheet and then at the four corners, let down," and he sees in this vision a big sheet coming out of heaven, "And which were all matter of four-footed beasts of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things," that's snakes and reptiles and birds, fowls of the air. "And there came a voice to him, 'Rise, Peter. Kill and eat.'" Now, that sounds like a simple thing. He sees in his vision all these animals and the voice says, "Go ahead, Peter, just kill them all and eat."

Now what's he saying? Well, in effect, he's saying there's no distinction because in the Old Testament there were certain things a Jew couldn't eat, right? And Peter had lived all his life that way. And now in the New Covenant, Jew and Gentile were going to be one in the church, and God didn't want any difference anymore. There is no difference. Paul made that so very clear in

Ephesians. There's no difference at all. And so He's saying to Peter, "Peter, all of the old _____ are wiped out. My new body, the church, that's the thing. One in Christ. No more distinction." You think Peter could've gone, "Oh, fine Lord. Sure. Just pass the plate. I'll eat whatever's there." No. Couldn't handle it.

Verse 14. "And Peter said, 'Not so Lord.'" Peter actually said, "No, Lord." That's pretty flagrant disobedience. This can't be. Are you kidding me? "For I've never eaten anything that is common or unclean in my life, I've never done that. Salvation or no salvation, I can't handle it." See. Transition hadn't caught up with him.

And I like this. And the voice spoke to him a second time, "What God hath cleansed, doth call that uncommon." Do you know how many times God had to tell him the same thing before he even understood it? Verse 16, this was done how many times? Three times. You see, the transition was difficult.

Now, look at this. In Romans 14 and 15, what do you have? You have Paul saying to the church, "Now you Gentile Christians, I know you've got liberties, but when you invite those new Jewish believers over to your house, don't have ham. All you're doing is needlessly offending them, so acknowledge he's a weaker brother and back off from your liberty." Because we have to recognize the transition. Paul was so willing to do that, wasn't he? Sure.

Now the Book of Acts then, beloved, must be understood transitionally. If you don't understand that there's a state of flux here, you're going to get all kinds of confusion into your life. We always hear them say, "Well, oh we want to get back to the Book of Acts." I don't want to go back to the Book of Acts. Not in terms of _____. They say, "We need to be the First Century Church." No, if God wanted us to be the First Century Church, we'd be the First Century Church. He's decided that we be the 20th Century church.

Now, we want to live by biblical doctrine, but I'm not interested in going back there. I'm not interested in having trouble over what I eat like Peter did. I'm not interested in going over to the temple in Jerusalem and making vows like Paul did and having to take a Nazarite vow and cut all my hair and haul my hair half way across the world so I can burn it properly in Jerusalem. I'm not interested in all the trappings of Judaism. I'm not interested in that, and if people are going to say, "We got to do just like we did in the Book of Acts, man, they can lay so many things on them, it'll confuse the issue, you won't believe it. These people who are always in the framework of whatever you want to call it, Charismatic Movement, always want to adapt the Book of Acts to everything. They're going to get themselves in a lot of trouble if they're really honest about doing that.

Now, the Book of Acts then gives us the history of the early years as the decaying Judaism faded away and the New Covenant came into fullness. Let me hasten to say that salvation is not a process,

but the transition often is. I told you last week that just because you can get saved doesn't change all your habits. That takes time. That's what growth is all about. And the same thing was true in Judaism. They were saved and then they grew away from Judaism gradually.

Now the Holy Spirit knows how important it is for us to understand this transition. And it's important historically for us to get a good view of the Book of Acts, and a healthy view of what God is doing. And so, here in verses 18 through chapter 19 verse 7, the Holy Spirit just stops in the middle of everything and shows us some people in transition. And we saw last week the first one in transition is Paul. This week, we're going to see the second one, Apollos. Next week, we're going to see the third, which is a group of twelve disciples of John the Baptist. They're all in transition.

Now, let's just be reminded first of all of Paul in transition. The first point, Paul in transition. And we saw this beginning in verse 18. Paul has just finished his ministry in Corinth, great ministry, blessed of God, he was protected. It says, "and Paul, after this, tarried a good while." You remember that he was dragged before Gallio and the Jews were going to try t get him banned from everywhere and Gallio said, "It's your problem, not mine. I'm not going to judge in this matter." Gallio really protected him. The Spirit of God did it. And Paul was so excited about it that he stayed in Corinth. "Then it was time to go. He took his leave of the brethren. Sailed from there to Syria." Now, Syria was where Antioch was, so he was going back. This was the end of his second missionary journey, 1500 miles toward Syria. Just south of Syria is Palestine and Jerusalem, and he was going there too. But he was sailing home. "And he took with him Priscilla and Aquila," that wonderful couple that he had met there in Corinth, Christian people.

"Paul cut his hair in Cenchrea for he had a vow." Now, here you see Paul in transition. You say, "What is he doing?" Christians are supposed to have vows. You're right. You don't find anywhere in Paul's epistle where he says, "Go, make a vow and then cut your hair." Nope. Not at all. Well, you say, "What is this?" This is an Old Testament thing. This is Numbers chapter 6. This is a Nazarite vow. We saw this last week. You say what did people take a Nazarite vow for? Remember, I told you they took it out of gratitude to God for some great deliverance and he had just experienced a great deliverance in the city of Corinth and very likely took a 30-day Nazarite vow. And a Nazarite would touch nothing from the fruit of the vine at all. He would restrict himself to holiness under God. He would let his hair grown as an outward sign to others and to himself, touch no dead body. It was just an abstinence from everything in order that he might set himself unto God to express his gratitude for God's deliverance. This was common in the Old Testament. We studied that in detail last time.

And you see, here's Paul. You say, "He's a Christian. What's he doing?" Sure, he's a Christian, but as a Christian, he's also a Jew. He's been a Christian a little while. He's been a Jew all his life. And he's saying to himself, "I'm grateful to God for what He did, and the way that I know best how to show Him how grateful I am is to do what all good Jews do." And the high point of their thanks is to take a

Nazarite vow, and so he did what a Jew would do. Because that was his life, that was the way he thought.

Now, later on in Corinthians he says, "Separation under God is not a matter of a 30-day vow." He says, "Come out from among them," and what? "Be separate." I mean, it's a way of life. But here, he's still operating, at least in some sense, in transition, not much unlike Peter who had a little trouble adjusting to Gentiles. Paul adjusted well to them, but still held onto some Jewish things.

Well, as I told you in the Old Testament, the hair that he cut off had to be taken to Jerusalem and burned with an offering in order to complete the vow, and so he's got to hustle to Jerusalem. When he came to Ephesus, apparently the ship stopped there, left them there, left Aquila and Priscilla to get some work going in Ephesus, but "he himself entered into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. When they desired him to tarry a longer time with them, he consented not bade them farewell, saying, 'I must by all means keep the _____ that comes in Jerusalem.'"

Now, he had to get to Jerusalem because he had to burn his hair and he wanted to get there for the feast. This vow was so important to him that he cut his work short there in Ephesus, at least in part, to fulfill it. Now, this shows us the character of Paul in terms of his Jewishness. He was in transition. Now, notice when it says in verse 21 at the end, "But I will return again unto you if God wills. And he sailed from Ephesus."

Now, you know, it's something interesting to keep in mind about Paul. Paul taught that you're saved by a sovereign act of God. Ephesians I, "He believed his salvation was sovereign." But you know what else he believed? He not only believed that God was in control of his salvation, he believed that God was in control of his service. He said, "I'll come back to you if" what? If God wills. Listen beloved, it is not just sovereignty in the area of salvation where God is active, it is also in the area of service. It is also in the area of service. God rules your life in terms of placing you in that place that He wants you to be, if you yield it to Him.

Let me show you what I mean by that. Paul was so conscious of the will of God that it pops up all over the place in his conversations. In Romans 1:10, he writes the Romans. "Making a request," he says--I've been praying is what he means--"If by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you." He says, "I want to come to you if that's God's will. I don't want to come if it isn't, just if it is." Then in Romans 15:32, "That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God." In I Corinthians 4:19, he wrote, "But I will come to you shortly if the Lord will." In Philippians 2:24 you have the same thing. He says, "But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly."

Now, Paul believed that his service was also directed by God as well as his salvation. You say, "Well, how in the world did he ever get to believe in that?" Simple principal. Simple principal

expressed in two Old Testament passages. Listen. Psalm 37:5, "Commit thy way under the Lord. Trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass." If you commit your way to the Lord and trust in him, then what happens will be what He made happen. And you have another passage similarly in Proverbs 3:6. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall," what? "Direct thy pass." When a person's life is yielded to God, then God's in control and he'll wind up where God wants him. You know, in James, a most interesting passage. Most interestingly. Listen to this. James 4:13, he starts out, "Come now." I like that. "Oh, come on," he says. "Come on you that say, 'Today or tomorrow. We will go into such a city and continue there a year and buy and sell and make money.'" He's making plans. Yeah, we're going to go to a new town and make a lot of money next year. We're going to be there a year and so forth and so forth. He says, "Come on, you know not what shall be on the next day, for what is your life? It's a vapor that appears for a little time and vanishes away. You ought to say, 'If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that.'"

You know, Christians, it wouldn't hurt us a bit to say that a lot. Instead of saying, "I'm going to do this," it would be better as a reminder to us to say, "If the Lord wills, I'm going to do this." I think we need to make ourselves conscious of the fact that we are at all times yielded into His plan. And just that little phrase, somewhere plastered in the front of your brain may help you to remember that you're yielded to him. Don't go making your plans without the phrase "if God wills." If God wills.

Jesus operated on that basis. Matthew 26:39, "Nevertheless, not my will," What? "Thine be done." And Acts 21, a most interesting incident. Verse 11, listen to this. Agabus was a prophet and sometimes prophets in that day dramatized their prophecies and Agabus did. "He came unto us," Paul and his friends, "Came unto us. He took Paul's belt and he bound his own hands feet." Agabus ties himself up and he says, "Thus sayeth the Holy Spirit so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." That's a pretty dramatic illustration. "And when we heard these things," Luke says, "Both we and they of that place besought him not to go to Jerusalem." Paul, don't go, don't go. They loved Paul. They wanted him not bound. Don't go, the Holy Spirit says you'll get bound if you go there. And Paul said, "Now what mean you to weep and break my heart?" What are you trying to do making me sad? "I am ready not to be bound only but to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." And when he would not be persuaded, we see saying, "Thy will of the Lord be done." But the point is, these people had a watchword. The will of the Lord be done, the will of the Lord be done. And that's a watchword that ought to govern our lives.

Well, back to chapter 18. So he said, "I'll come back." When he landed, verse 22, at Caesarea, he went and greeted the church. Then he went to the church in Jerusalem and finished his vow, met with the church for just a brief time and then went to Antioch. And then there he started his next tour. Verse 23, "After he spent some time, he departed and went all over the country of Galatia and Phrygia, in order, strengthening all the disciples." And that's the beginning of the third missionary journey as he takes off again, going to the very same places to teach those people that they might

multiply.

Now, immediately in verse 24, we meet our second point. Not Paul in transition but Apollos in transition. And what a man he is, Beloved. This is really a thrilling thing to see, watch. Paul is on his missionary journey, he's over in Phrygia and Celisia, getting ready to go to Galatia--or I should say Celisia and then going to Phrygia and Galatia. He's moving across but meanwhile, where did he drop Aquila and Priscilla? At Ephesus. And now the scene shifts back to Ephesus where Aquila and Priscilla are.

And verse 24 is the verse in which we meet an extraordinary man, a certain Jew named Apollos, born in Alexandria, which is in Egypt, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. Now, Apollos is a Jew and he is from the city of Alexandria. Incidentally, Alexandria had a great Jewish population. At the time of Paul, probably numbering one million. There were at least four different sections or quarters in the city where Jewish people lived. And so, he was a man who had been a part of the Jewish society. He was not a Jew isolated somewhere in a Gentile area, but there was a great Jewish population there. So he was weaned and raised and so forth on the principals of Judaism.

Now, notice about him some tremendous things that are going to give you an insight into this man's life. It says that he was an "eloquent man." The word in the Greek is a very different word. It is foreign to the Bible except for this verse. It doesn't occur anywhere else. And what it means is this: it combines the idea of learning and eloquence. He not only was a fluid, most eloquent orator but his content was Class A. That's what the word means. He was a learned and eloquent man. In fact, this indicates not only his knowledge but it also indicates his ability to communicate. He was probably without equal as a speaker.

You say, "Was he greater than Paul?" Well, very possibly. He was a great preacher than Paul. Paul said to the Corinthians, in I Corinthians 2:1, "I, Brethren, when I came to you came not with excellency of speech." Paul never did really value his preaching ability. Interesting. I don't know if you ever read this verse. Interesting. II Corinthians 10:10, it says, "His letters say they are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible." So he's a lot better writer than he was a body, and he was an even better body than he was a speaker.

Now, that's a interesting little insight into the possibility that Paul perhaps was not as great an orator as was Apollos, and I'm only making the comparison because I want you to know the stature of this man. He was without peer, as far as we could see in the New Testament, as a preacher, as a speaker. Eloquent, learned man.

Now I want you to know something else about him. Oh, what a man he is! If you young men want to pattern your life after somebody, just really get a grip on Apollos. And if God's given you these kind of

abilities and aptitudes, follow in his path. He was an eloquent man, and I love this, "and mighty in the Scriptures." What a statement! What a statement. Powerful in the structures. Dunitos, from which we get the word dynamite. This man was an exploding kind of a person when it came to the Scripture. He was dramatic and dynamic. The word Scripture is graphade, always refers to the Old Testament. When it's in the New Testament, obviously, and he was an Old Testament scholar who could present it with absolute power. He was a powerful man in terms of teaching. And let me just say at this point that his power at this point was the natural. He was not a Christian at this point, so consequently, did not have the indwelling Holy Spirit. So the power in his life was expressed really through his natural abilities, not yet having the Gifts of the Spirit as we know them. Later on, when he comes to Christ and he receives the Holy Spirit and gets the Gift of the Spirit in those areas, I mean, he becomes so devastating, in verse 28, that he just wipes out a city practically. But in this point, in the natural--and by that, I don't mean that the Spirit didn't touch his life, because nobody can know anything apart from the Holy Spirit, right, in any dispensation. So, I'm not disqualifying the Spirit. He had the Spirits work in his life in a very general sense, not in the specific sense of the Gift and the indwelling that the New Testament Saint knows. But he could, in his own natural ability, speak and communicate and was learned in the Old Testament. And believe me, it didn't take him long to make an impression.

Paul writes back in I Corinthians to the Corinthians; hardly any time at all has gone by and he says unto them, "Your carnal, there are divisions among you," and he says, "Here's the divisions. Some say I'm of Paul, some say I'm of Cephas, some say I'm of Christ and some way I'm of Apollos." Do you know that in no time, he was ranked right up there with Paul and Peter in terms of the esteem of people? He was a dramatic, particularly unique man.

Now, if we were to go further in I Corinthians, we'd find some other interesting notes about him, chapter 3:6. Paul says, "I planted, Apollos watered but God," what? "Gave the increase." So, he was really in there, building on the foundation that Paul had laid. In I Corinthians 4:6, "These things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sake." So, Paul had actually worked through and in Apollos.

Now, Apollos, then, is a very unusual man. Apart from the Holy Spirit, just in his own particular physical nature and gifts in terms of abilities, he's an unusual man. But the Bible in saying that he was a mighty man in the Scriptures indicates to us that he had learned the Scripture, that he had taken some natural ability and that he had refined it and honed it by study and diligence.

Now, if I could take a little phrase and just pull it out of the Bible and say I'd like it to be a watchword for my life, that might be it - mighty in the Scripture. What a tremendous statement! What we need today in this world, not only the church, are people who are that - mighty in the Scriptures. And so many churches, we've got all kinds of people but people who are mighty in the Scriptures.

I always think about the young man who came to a Bible teacher after he taught and he was so overawed by the teaching and the strength of the man and his teaching and the ability and the power and knowledge, and he said to him, he said, "I just was so thrilled by your teaching," he said, "I'd give the world to be able to teach the Bible like that." And the man said, "Good, because that's exactly what it will cost you." And he was right. It takes a kind of commitment, it takes a measure of dedication to be mighty in the Scriptures, and I praise God for people like Apollos who set the pattern. Here was a man who hadn't even known yet the indwelling Holy Spirit, hadn't even known the Gifts of the Spirit in terms of his ministry, but was operating certainly under the Spirit's direction in the general sense, but operating in his own natural abilities and his own commitment, and came to be a mighty man in the Scripture.

And such a holy man was he that later on when he saw the factions in Corinth, it so grieved his heart that in I Corinthians 16:12, Paul had asked him to go back and he wouldn't go back to Corinth. The factions that came in Corinth weren't Apollos' fault any more than they were Peter's fault, Paul's fault or Christ's fault. But they grieved him.

Let's go a step further with the man and see what kind of knowledge he had. Verse 25, "This man was instructed in the way of the Lord." Now that's an interesting statement. It's a very general statement. Look at the word instructed. Let me show you something that I think is important. The word instructed is the word in Greek. Now, listen to see if it sounds like a familiar word. Some of you Presbyterians ought to get this. It is the verb *catecaho.* Does that sound like a familiar word? Catechism. Is that more familiar? Okay. The word *catecaho*means to teach orally by repetition. You know what the catechism is? It's a line that you read and you read the answer. You read the next line, you read the answer. Repetition, repetition, repetition. Some of you, perhaps, sat in catechism classes in years gone by.

Well, look at this, Apollos got his information by being catechized. He was taught by oral repetition. Now, I want to point out this. That's the difference between Apollos and an apostle. Apollos is not an apostle. Paul said this, and we've been studying it each Sunday now for a couple of weeks, but listen to what Paul said. Galatians 1:11, "I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not after to man, for I neither received it from man, neither was I taught *it,*but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Now, watch. The information Paul had, he got directly from Jesus Christ. The information Apollos had, he was catechized. That's the difference between inspiration and divine revelation and instruction. You see the difference? Only the apostles in the New Testament era and those New Testament writers claimed to have inspiration. Not Apollos; he learned at the foot of somebody who undoubtedly taught him, the Spirit of God, certainly in a general sense, having part in the teaching. But it was different to be catechized than, like Paul, to be isolated out in Arabia and getting all of this information directly from God.

Now, notice what he was instructed in because it's really exciting. He was instructed in the way of the Lord. You say, now, the way of the Lord, what is that? Well, that's a difficult thing to narrow down, and I tried to do a little study on it, and I came up with something and I'll give it to you for what it's worth and see what you think. Genesis 18:19, let's go back. Hang on to this thought. Apollos was instructed in the way of the Lord. Now, some people say that that means he was a Christina. Does that mean he was a Christian? Instructed in the way of the Lord. Well, it could, couldn't it? Does it have to? Well, he was a Jew, first of all. Let's see if the Old Testament talks about that phrase. Genesis 18:19, "For I know him," This is God and Abraham here, "I know him," the Lord says, "He will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." Now, there's the first use of that phrase in the Bible. Where is it? In the first book of the Bible with the first person in Israel's history, Abraham. The way of the Lord, Beloved, is not a New Testament term. When it says, "Apollos was instructed in the way of the Lord," it doesn't necessarily mean he's a Christian at all. The way of the Lord is a very broad and general terms for Old Testament instruction in the things of God. It's very broad. It's very general.

Just to give you another illustration. Judges 2:22, and here God speaks regarding his nation Israel, that "through them I may test Israel whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk therein as their fathers did keep it or not." There you have the way of the Lord again. Very general. Talking about the standards that God sets for any people in any particular time.

I Samuel 12:23. He says, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you, but I will teach you the good and right way." Now watch. The way of the Lord is an Old Testament content. There was a path that God had laid out with ethics and codes and morality and standards, and that was the way of the Lord--a very general thing. And it goes to the Old Testament. You can read Psalm 25:8-9 and you'll find the same idea. And it's various places, but the way of the Lord is Old Testament. What it's saying there is he was instructed in Old Testament truth.

But you know what happened? The way of the Lord all of a sudden started zeroing in. In Isaiah 40:3 and listen. The prophet started to zero it in. The funnel started getting narrower and narrower with this statement. Listen. "The voice of Him that crieth in the wilderness." Who is that? Who is that a prophecy of? John the Baptist. "The voice of Him that cries in the wilderness prepare ye," - what? - "the way of the Lord. Make straight in the dessert a highway for a our God." All of a sudden, the way of the Lord starts narrowing down to Messiah, doesn't it? Whereas in the Old Testament, the way of the Lord is a broad system of rules and regulations.

The way of the Lord in general conduct starts zeroing in Isaiah 40 toward an individual who is going to announce the Messiah's coming. That individual came. Listen. Matthew 3:1. "In those days came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying 'Be converted for the kingdom of the heaven is at hand' for this is He that was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah saying, 'the

voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord.'" Now, Beloved, watch. If Apollos was instructed in the way of the Lord in terms of the Old Testament, he would have been instructed in all of the body of Old Testament truth. And if he was instructed fully in the way of the Lord, the way of the Lord focused in then on the ministry of which man? John the Baptist. So, Apollos then would've followed the way of the Lord all the way until it narrowed into John the Baptist.

I believe that Apollos was not a Christian but that he was a student of John the Baptist. And if that's difficult for you to handle just from that phrase, look at the end of verse 25. Act 18:25. It says that he was "knowing only the baptism of John." Now, Apollos then was the truest Old Testament saint. He accepted the whole Old Testament all the way down to the fulfillment of it and John the Baptist. He accepted the message of John the Baptist that the Messiah was coming. He even accepted the fact that the Messiah was Jesus. How do you know that? The verse says, "He was instructed in the way of the Lord, being fervent in the Spirit. He spoke and taught diligently the things of Jesus." The best manuscripts, the things of Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John.

Now, see, here is a man who accepted all the way of the Lord in the Old Testament, accepted the ministry of John the Baptist, saw that John pointed to Jesus and said, Behold the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," and he believed that Jesus was the Messiah. You say then, "Why wasn't he a Christian?" Because he didn't know what happened in the death, resurrection and Pentecost that followed the life of Jesus. He was pre-cross. Do you know what he was doing? He didn't know anything but the baptism of John. He didn't know the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He didn't know the baptism in water that follows faith. He only knew pre-cross. He was still getting ready for Messiah. He knew the baptism of anticipation, not the baptism of accomplishment. He knew the baptism of a looking forward to, not the baptism of a fulfillment. So, he was an Old Testament saint in the fullest sense. Man, he had followed the way of the Lord all the way down until it got him to John the Baptist. It was being fulfilled. He was ready for Messiah. He was repentant. He was preaching the message that Jesus was Messiah, but he didn't know the fullness of Jesus' acts on earth or he would've understood more than the baptism of John, right? He was still getting ready for Messiah.

But you know he knew a lot. Imagine what kind of a man he must've been with that kind of knowledge and eloquence and mighty in the Scriptures. And then add to that this. Listen. Verse 25, "And being fervent in the Spirit." You take all of that knowledge, all of that holiness, all of that eloquence, and you put it in a flaming heart and you've got some kind of a man. You know when it says he was fervent in the Spirit, the literal Greek, he was boiling in the Spirit. Now, I don't think that's the Holy Spirit at all. I think that's the human spirit. He was boiling in his spirit. Boiling in his spirit. Fervent in spirit. The only other time the word fervent is ever used, that same boiling word, is in Romans 12:11 and there it's talking about the Christian's inward parts and it says, "We should be fervent in spirit." It's not talking about the Holy Spirit there and it seems a foreign word to make a reference to the Holy Spirit. You would say somebody was boiling in the Holy Spirit.

But boiling inside, flaming heart, is the idea of the phrase. What a man! It's one thing to be knowledgeable, it's another thing to know the truth. It's another thing to be eloquent. But to have that all in a flaming heart, I mean, what else could you ask for? And then to be mighty in the Scriptures. What a man! God give us more like that. Tremendous. A soul with a flame with enthusiasm.

Well, as a result, it says, "He spoke and taught diligently to things of Jesus." And there two imperfect verbs. He was speaking and teaching. And the conjunction *and,*which is the word *chi,* could be translated *even*in a situation like that. He was speaking even teaching diligently the things of Jesus. I mean, this guy was going everywhere teaching Jesus.

I want to pull a word out of here. There's so much to say about this man in these two verses, it's just staggering. See the word *diligently*? I just got together with the Lord on that word and we just had the greatest time. I just found a new word that I love. *Acrabos*in the Greek. *Acrabos.* Do you know what it means? Oh, terrific word. It means with exactness, with exactness. Now watch. It says, "He taught with exactness the things of Jesus." Just to give you a little footnote, you know there's one thing that I really can't stand, it just bugs me more than anything else, is sloppy teaching. You say, "What do you mean by that?" I mean sloppy ____ Jesus, sloppy exposition of the Scripture, where you just meander through and you don't really prepare so that you can really teach accurately. When Apollos not only had eloquence and knowledge and a flaming heart and all the information that he believed in his own heart, but on top of that, when he taught, he was careful to teach with exactness.

Well, you know, there is so much slopping teaching going on, it's just unbelievable. Sometimes I read books in print that are absolutely horrible in their interpretations of Scripture. Now, I'm not setting myself up as the judge. I'm simply saying some people don't even follow the basic patterns of instruction. Believe me, people, there's a verse that goes over and over in my mind every week when I study the Bible, and it's this - study to show yourself approved on the mends. Is that what it says? Unto whom? God. And I'll tell you, I don't see how anybody can come out and teach the Bible knowing that God is hearing every word and that is should be approved of God unless he has been diligent to the very inth degree to be sure that he's accurate and faithful to the text. You know, the sloppy, sentimental devotionalizing of all the Scriptures just doesn't get at the issues. Teach with exactness.

That's why I believe, friends, that there is nothing more important than a teacher of the Word of God having the education and the tools to carefully heal with Scripture. I mean, if you got sick and you needed major surgery and you go to the doctor, you want to know that that guy knows what he's doing with that scalpel. You may get some information from one doctor and you may want to check a few other sources. And when you get on that table and they shoot you that stuff and knocked you out and you're just lying there and people are doing all that stuff to you, you want to know somebody knows what's going on.

You know, I know that physicians really work at their trade and I know that they work at it because it's a matter of life and death. And I'll tell you something, a person who teaches the Bible, if you can get so serious as a doctor about the physical life, a person who teaches the Bible shouldn't be one less serious about dealing with spiritual reality. I should be just as careful in my teaching of the Word of God as a physician is with a scalpel when only a thread exists between life and death. That's the kind of exactness that this book demands. That's why I say it's critical that men not only have a commitment to that kind of exactness, but have the proper tools to bring it about. And the best investment a church ever makes, believe me, the best investment a church ever makes in the preparation of its people for teaching the Word of God in their preparation. Though it may take some time, it's worth every penny if it's in the right place under the right kind of teaching. The greatest investment you'll ever make because exactness in the Word bears fruit.

And Apollos was an exacting teacher. There's no other way to teach the Bible than that. God help us. If you're teaching five year olds, 7th graders, I don't care who it is, that you teach with exactness the things of God. God went to tremendous expense to get His revelation down to this world, and to get it communicated, He wants to be sure that it's communicated in the way that He designed it to be. And all that means is that you commit yourself to care and diligence in preparation. Now, you have to commit yourself, but that's basic.

Everything God does is with exactness. Luke 1, when Luke was getting ready to write the Book of Luke, he say, "It seems good to me also having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first." That's revelation. Luke could write this down because God gave him absolute understanding of everything. And he says first to write unto thee with exactness, *acrabos.* This Bible, friends, is exactly what God wanted us to have. Did you hear that? It's exactly what God wanted us to have.

You know, somebody asked me the other day, just to give you an illustration, what I thought of the Living Bible. And I said, I think the Living Bible is a fine commentary. It is not a Bible. The Living Bible is one man's interpretation of the Bible. It is not a Bible, and don't substitute it for that because it does not have the exactness of giving to you the words which God placed in the Bible. It gives you one man's interpretation of it, which is fine; it's like reading a commentary. And sometimes it's helpful and elucidates the text. But don't confuse it with the Bible. It is not a Bible.

Exactness. Luke says, "I can tell you exactly, with perfect understanding, what God wants me to say." And that's the way we're to teach it, Beloved. We can't go to this Bible that God spent so many pains for getting across every word properly and foul up the words.

Now, there's another angle in this word. It's used one other time in Ephesians 5:15, which would be helpful. Paul says "See that you walk acrabos, with exactness." The Christian should live his life with the same kind of preciseness that we interpret the Scripture, with the same kind of preciseness that

God wrote it. God didn't give us a sloppy revelation, did he? And God doesn't want us to slop up his revelation and God doesn't want us to slop up our lives either. Same word in all three areas.

Well, let's go on. But that's so important. And what a man. I just want to get to heaven and sit down with Apollos and ask him so many things, but by that time, I'll be dead and it'll be too late. Anyway. He did teach the things of Jesus. I wish he had written something like how to preach, but he didn't.

But anyway, he taught the things of Jesus. He had come to the place where he believed that Jesus was the Messiah but he stopped short of the cross. He only knew the baptism of John. You say, "What was the baptism of John?" That was preparation for Messiah. Read it in Luke 1. The angels say what he'll do. Verse 16, "Many of the children of Israel will return to the Lord their God." And in verse 17, "He shall make ready a people prepared for the Lord." You see, the Jews were coming to John and they were coming by the multitudes and he was saying, "Messiah's coming, Messiah's coming," and they're saying, "We better get right. Our hearts better get right for Messiah's coming. The kingdom's coming." And they were all saying, "We repent of our sins and want to be ready for Messiah." And they were being baptized as an outward sign of their inward change of behavior. And so, they were getting ready for Messiah, getting ready for Messiah. And that Apollos. He was ready for Messiah. He just didn't know Messiah had come, died, risen and gone. So, Apollos was an Old Testament saint.

Well, he came to Ephesus and now I want to show you the last few verses real quickly. You'll see them right away. "And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue." He arrives and he preaches. I love it. He began to speak boldly. What else from such a man? What else. "He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard." This is interesting that they were attending the synagogue, still in transition themselves.

"When they heard, they took him under them and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." I love that. They heard him preach and he got them all the way up to the edge of the cross and quit. And they went and invited the preacher home for dinner. And they said, "Now, Apollos, did you enjoy that dinner." "Oh, that was terrific. Terrific." " Apollos, we got a few things we'd like to share with you. You know what happened after you finished your sermon? Jesus went to the cross, rose again, saying the Holy Spirit has come, the new age has been born and all this."

They explained the way unto him more perfectly. See the word perfectly? Acrabos again. Exactness. They also communicated with exactness. The only way. So, they took him from there. You know, I like the fact that they didn't write him off as a heretic. You know, so many people who are in the fundamental area like to get up in their little fundamental ivory tower with their little rifle and just shoot everybody who doesn't agree with them. "Uh-huh, another one, see. We'll get him, see." That kind of thing. If someone doesn't have full information, instead of at least going and seeing if their open to that.

Well, Apollos, I mean he was such a saint. He'd come all the way from the way of God, narrowed it down to Jesus. He wasn't going to quit now, not that. They gave him the truth of Jesus Christ. They explained away more perfectly. Listen. The way narrowed down to John the Baptist, prepare ye the way and Jesus came along and said in John 14:6, "I am" - what? - "the way." And Christianity is called in Acts 19:9, "The way." They told him the fullness of the facts regarding Christ.

Oh, man, there's the conversion of Apollos right there in those verses. And the Spirit doesn't say much about it. Why? Because it wasn't much of a change. He was already a saint. Verse 27, "And when he was disposed to pass into Achao, the brethren wrote." The sent a letter. You know where Achao was? That's where Corinth was. He took off for Corinth. "The brethren sent a letter exhorting the disciples to receive him, that he was a bona fide teacher and who, when he was come, helped them much who had believed through grace." Those last three words, incidentally, are the Methodist salvation. Believe through grace.

But look what happened. I love this. When he got to Corinth, he helped them much. Beloved, the reason I know he got saved between the time he arrived at Ephesus and the time he arrived at Corinth is this. If he hadn't, he wouldn't have been able to help the church, right? He would've been behind. He got saved. He helped the church much. But watch, 28, "He mightily convinced the Jews." And the Greek word there is so interesting. The word mightily means vehemently. It's translated into one of the Old Testament passages in the Septuagint, loudly. He just came on like gangbusters. And he loudly convinced the Jews publicly showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Messiah. He took the Old Testament and just proved that Jesus was Messiah.

Now, I want you to notice that word convince. He can't translate the Greek word. It's a double compound word and when the Greeks did that, they really wanted to get something across. What were they saying? It really translates this way. Listen. "He mightily argued them down all the time." He has crushed them by his arguments. Couldn't handle it. He totally refuted them at every point. What a complete man he was. Not only did he help the body of believers in verse 27, but he just destroyed the unbelievers with the power of his preaching in verse 28.

Well, there you meet two in transition, Paul and Apollos. And how exciting it is to see what God is doing in their lives and how grateful we are that the Spirit of God brought about the transition that they might have influence on us.

Thank you, Father, for the time this morning with these men. Thank you for Apollos who teaches us so much. Father, may this just be the beginning. With your Spirit, challenge us to get back into this very same passage and study for ourselves the character of this man Apollos. Father, we thank you for him, for such great saints throughout history who have given us a path that we can follow, a human example who patterned their lives after Thy standard. Lord, we thank you for the opportunity

that we have in this age to be servants of Thine, to follow Thee in service. Lord God, give us that same kind of commitment, that same kind of drive, that same kind of dedication that characterized those so fruitful men of old. And give us the love for Thee that pervades all. Thank you for our fellowship this morning, for our time together. We commit these trues to these and may they bear fruit in our lives. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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