THE WAY
ACTS 18
2026-10-25

Last week we looked at Paul in his travels from Thessalonica to Berea and on to Athens. He went to the synagogue in Thessalonica and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women. His greater success was among the Gentiles attached to the synagogue. As we've been hearing throughout Acts, many of the Jews became furiously jealous. They stirred up the rabble and charged the Christian missionaries with preaching political insurrection *"These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here…saying there is another king, one called Jesus"(Acts 17:7).* It's very impressive to see how pervasive this missionary outreach was!

Once again, Paul slipped away under the cover of darkness and ended up in Berea. the Bereans *"were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true" (Acts 17:11)*. The Jews were certain that Jesus was not the Messiah because He had been crucified. To them a man who had been crucified was a man accursed.

But the messiness isn't over. Jews from Thessalonica went after Paul all the way to Berea, no doubt, thinking they were doing the work of God. The message for us: Don't make the Scriptures say what you want them to say, but what God is saying. Paul is escorted out of Berea to Athens where he waited for Silas and Timothy.

In ten verses Paul gave a full sermon—who God is, who we are, what God wants for us and what we need to do/how to respond. Paul was "greatly distressed" to find Athens full of idols.

A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him and mock him, saying Paul was "babbling" and "advocating foreign gods" because he was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. Interesting, that Jesus was considered the "foreign god" and that preaching the Gospel was considered "babbling".

So, Paul, at their urging, went to a meeting to clarify these "strange" ideas, beginning by saying *"I see that in every way you are very religious in observing your objects of worship. I even found an altar: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD" (Acts 17:22-23)*. But "what you Athenians worship as something unknown" let me tell you about. Paul told them not how, but who could fill that void so that the "unknown" God could become "known".

He's the one who made the world and everything in it. He's the Lord of heaven and earth and isn't contained in humanly constructed buildings. He isn't served by our work as if He

needed anything. He gives all people life and breath and everything else. From one man He made every nation of people, that they should inhabit the whole earth and He determined the exact time and places for their lives.

God gave all people life and breath and everything else so people would seek Him. That's the purpose of life. Paul uses the expression "in Christ". This is the great divide in life. Either 1 has Christ or is without Him. There's no third option. In Christ we live and move and have our being.

God's not like any image made by humanity. What's most important to you is what you worship. If it's not God, it's idol worship. If Jesus isn't the foundation, life is dead. With the revelation of Jesus, God commands all people to repent, for He's set a day when He'll judge the world with justice—by the man He appointed, and proved it to all by raising Him from the dead. Jesus is still the unknown God and foreign to many people. Paul made the unknown God known.

And with that, Paul moves on to Corinth. It was a key city in Greece, located on an isthmus—it makes me so happy when I can use a geographic landform in my message. It's a neck between two larger land masses. This isthmus is less than five miles wide (the bridge of Greece) and Corinth is in the middle with two seaports on the coasts to the east and west. Because of rough waters around the south, Corinth was the central place everyone went through to go north or south. It was a great commercial centre.

And, second, you may have already heard this, it was a wicked city. The Greeks made a verb—to play the Corinthian was to live a life of lustful debauchery. On the hill of the Acropolis was the temple of Aphrodite that housed as many as one thousand sacred prostitutes who made it to the streets in evening. But the very iniquity was the opportunity of Christ.

In Corinth Paul met a couple, Aquila and Priscilla, who'd recently come from Italy because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome in A.D. 49. The cost of being a Christian. The life of a refugee—Christian or otherwise. You can't be here. We don't want you. So, then, where are we to go? You can't necessarily expect a warm welcome wherever you go. While the life of a refugee isn't limited by any means to Jews, for Jews this has been a story forever. During WWII in particular, and prior to its start, there were attempts of mass emigration from central Europe where the Nazi influence was crushing and deadly. To our shame, we were among many countries who refused Jews entry. It is unimaginable the life-struggles they endured.

Priscilla and Aquila, though, seemed to land well. And there are a few things to be said here. They, like Paul, were tentmakers. How great is God, to connect us to people with whom we can find mutual encouragement and blessing! The church here is just such an example. Are you hurting? Discouraged? Overwhelmed? Lonely? The only one in your family walking in the faith? At just such a time, God often interweaves another with you. It's not coincidence. It is the

knowledge of God of what you need. So Paul, the Jewish evangelist tentmaker is connected with Priscilla and Aquila, Jewish evangelical tentmakers! Wonder what their conversations were like!

The good and the bad. Paul is lifted up both by the arrival of Priscilla and Aquila and also by the arrival of Silas and Timothy. Paul was freed up to devote himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. And so, to the predictable bad. Yet again the Jews opposed Paul and became abusive. How many times has this movie played over? But look at the reaction: Paul shook out his clothes in protest and told them *"Your blood be on your own heads! I am clear of my responsibility. From now on I will go the Gentiles" (Acts 18:6).* And where did he go? Next door to the house of Titius Justus, a Gentile worshiper of God. Go where the soil is fertile! Even so, there were new believers among the Jews in the synagogue too. Crispus, the synagogue ruler and his entire family believed in the Lord, as did many of the Corinthians.

And God Himself encouraged Paul in a vision: *"Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city." (Acts 18:9).* You're never alone. Remember Elijah fleeing from Jezebel after he'd humble /annihilate 450 priests of Baal and then pleading to God that he was the only prophet of God left. No, no you're not, Elijah. I have 7,000 in Israel who have not bent the knee to Baal. No, no you are not, Paul: I have many people in this city. No, no you're not — I have many here for you.

Even Gallio, the proconsul, was there for Paul. He was an upstanding man, placed by God, to call out the Jews and their insidious lies. He wasn't going to aid and abet their distortions. He was well aware that Paul and his friends were not guilty of any crime. He sent them packing. Here is the indisputable value of a Christian life. Gallio knew there was no fault to be found with Paul and his friends.

After staying in Corinth for some time, Paul sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. En route, he left them at Ephesus. From Ephesus Paul went to Caesarea the near port on the Mediterranean for Jerusalem where he greeted the church, then went on to Antioch. The reason I tell you this is after Antioch, Paul started his 3rd missionary trip, beginning with Galatia and Phrygia, then back to Ephesus, where he spent almost three years.

I want to wrap up with Priscilla, Aquila. A Jew from Alexandria, joined them there named Apollos.

"He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue" (Acts 18:24).

Throughout Acts, Christianity is described as The Way of the Lord—in short, "The Way". So, Christianity means not only believing certain things but putting them into practice.

Alexandria in N. Africa (Egypt) was the home of about one million Jews. Isn't that surprising! Africa has had an important place in Christianity. In this series on Acts we noted the Ethiopian official who Phillip baptized as the Way spread out from Jerusalem—as Jesus said—"To the ends of the earth." Augustine emerged from Hippo in North Africa. Today, the followers of Jesus throughout Africa are passionate and growing in large numbers. Many of the churches in North America owe their growth to recent immigrants—many from Africa.

There's more to Alexandria than meets the eye. It was the city of scholars, specially the place where scholars believed in the allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament. That is to say, not only did the Old Testament record history, but that every recorded event had an inner meaning. So…because of this Apollos would be very convincing in speaking to the Jews because he would be able to find Christ all over the Old Testament and prove that it looked forward all the time to His coming.

Yet, like all of us, you don't have to look too far to find an area where we are less knowledgeable or adept. Later in Acts it becomes apparent that while Apollos understood the need for repentance and recognized Jesus as Messiah, he didn't yet know the good news of Jesus as the Saviour of all and of the coming of the Holy Spirit in power. He knew of the task Jesus gave us to do but he didn't fully know the help Jesus gave us to do it. Priscilla and Aquila better equipped him, growing him from one who already knew Jesus as a figure in history, to knowing Him additionally as a living presence.

And this is a good example for us all. If you're still uncertain about Jesus being who He claimed to be, ask Him to reveal Himself to you. He will do that! Speak to others here who can confirm, who can validate that He loves you and knows you completely and desires for you to come to Him and get to know Him better, more personally. You need not be a stranger any longer to His grace.

For those who know Him as He is fully known, you are not there yet. Many people come to this saving knowledge and acceptance of Jesus but then put it into cruise control, not continuing to grow in Jesus. This example with Apollos should inspire us to seek those who know more. Sometimes it will be you who knows more. Sometimes you should learn from someone else. I learn from others every week, if not every day. May that be your goal this week. Stay at the feeding trough—there's lots there.