

Series: Acts, Part 9- Date: November 14, 2021

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- **Today we finish Paul's second missionary journey-**
- **Our focus is an almost parenthetical description Luke gives us about a powerful Christian teacher named Apollos- a teacher whom for all his passion and skill, didn't yet understand the full message of the good news about Jesus Christ.**
- **We left Paul in Corinth, and story begins with a...**

✠ A short stop in Ephesus

Acts 18:18-22 Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sisters and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchreae because of a vow he had taken. ¹⁹ They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. ²⁰ When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. ²¹ But as he left, he promised, "I will come back if it is God's will." Then he set sail from Ephesus. ²² When he landed at Caesarea, he went up to Jerusalem and greeted the church and then went down to Antioch.

- **FIRST, what's with this vow Paul took, and why did he cut of his hair? HONEST ANSWER? We really don't know, and doesn't seem to be essential part of the story. MOVE ON.**
- **Paul, Priscilla, and Aquila sail across Aegean Sea to Ephesus. Once again Paul goes to local synagogue, and spends a brief period there demonstrating Jesus is their messiah. Paul tells them he would return if it was God's plan- which in fact, would be, as he will return to Ephesus in his third journey.**
- **So, Paul leaves A&P in Ephesus, and sails back to Israel, ending his journey back in Antioch.**
- **NOW, at this point Luke actually introduces Paul's THIRD missionary journey, but then pivots to this interesting detail about a man named Apollos, and his relationship with Priscilla and Aquila**

✠ Enter Apollos...

Acts 18:23-28 After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

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

- **OK. Who is Apollos? We are told he is a Jew with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures, meaning the Hebrew Bible/OT. Like Paul, he recognizes how the OT prophecies clearly point to Jesus as the Messiah.**
- **ALSO like Paul, he is a bold and passionate speaker. Apollos ultimately will travel back into Achaia, the same region Paul just left, where he will become a significant leader in the church in Corinth.**
- **But we're going to focus on what Luke tells us in verses 25-26. Apollos taught about Jesus accurately, but he was missing something- his message was incomplete- and when he started speaking in the Synagogue, he meets Priscilla and Aquila, who think**

- “Wow- this guy is an amazing teacher, but he doesn’t have the whole story- we need to bring him up to speed. So, P&A bring Apollos into their home, where they explain to him the way of God more adequately.
- **WHAT WAS IT Apollos didn’t know? Let’s start with-**

✠ What Apollos did know: The first half of the Gospel

- **Luke says Apollos only knew about JOHN’s baptism. What does that tell us? In Luke’s Gospel, we see this**

Luke 3:3 *He (JtheB) went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.*

John’s baptism was about repentance and forgiveness.

- **Think about basic concept of the Gospel.**
- **Human condition. We come into this world separated from God, spiritually dead and in bondage to brokenness of sin. Common term is we are SINNERS. Ephesians 2- “without hope and without God in the world”. That’s the bad news.**
- **GOOD news is that through the cross, Christ did everything necessary to cover all the offense of our sin- that we might be completely forgiven and brought back FULLY into a right relationship with God, at peace with God. This is called the ATONEMENT. From Romans 3...**

Romans 3:22 *There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith.*

- **And there is the key- God’s gift of mercy and forgiveness must be received, by FAITH. And essential to that step of faith, to BELIEVE, is the step of REPENTANCE.**
- **REPENTANCE is the conscious choice to turn away from ourselves as our own God, and, more importantly, by faith, turn TO GOD as our LORD and our God. Turning from ourselves as our source of life, and instead turning to GOD as our source of life, truth, and identity.**
- **WHEN WE DO THIS, the scripture says we are forgiven. FULLY TOTALLY. Our sin-debt issue with God is taken care of, forever.**

Romans 4:7-8 *Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. ⁸ Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them.”*

- **Apollos knew this. He preached it emphatically. And church...**

Forgiveness is good news! But it isn’t the complete gospel.

- **So now let’s turn to the ‘WAY OF GOD’ that P&A explained more adequately to Apollos.**
- **To quote the title of my favorite book, this is...**

✠ The rest of the Gospel

- **This is so essential... I’ve written it out...**

The first half of the Gospel is what Jesus, through the cross, has delivered us *from*. The rest of the Gospel is what He has delivered us *into*. In Christ, the disciple has been brought from DEATH to LIFE, and this New Life is the Life of Christ, dwelling in union with us by His SPIRIT.

- **The context here strongly indicates this is what Apollos didn’t understand- and, it’s something many believers don’t understand today.**

- **THE TRUTH, the miracle, that by the Holy Spirit, Christ is PRESENT and ACTIVE in the life of every believer. RIGHT NOW. Listen to Eph...**

Ephesians 3:16-17 *I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.*

- **THIS IS NOT a result of the cross secondary to forgiveness. Far from it- THIS IS THE PURPOSE of forgiveness. CHRIST came to this earth, He lived, He sacrificed his life on the cross and rose again, defeating death and paying the debt of our sin, SO THAT ALL WHO BY GOD'S GRACE would believe, may come to know Christ... NOT just as our source of mercy and promise of heaven when we die, but as source of LIFE ITSELF, RIGHT NOW, IN THIS LIFE.**
- **Christ didn't just give His life FOR US. He has, and continues to give His life TO US.**
- **And friends, BECAUSE this is true, THIS LIFE WE LIVE RIGHT NOW, and this world in WHICH WE LIVE RIGHT NOW, MATTERS.**

– **Let me take a step back and describe this from a different perspective- the perspective I grew up with.**

- **When I was a kid at our little Baptist church in Texas, there was a song we sang a lot. It was really catchy, and it was really bad theology. Name was...**

✝ **That old time religion... It's good enough for me**

- **In a nutshell, this is what I grew up being taught was the most important thing about being a Christian.**
- **FIRST.** **Our primary identity as human beings is that we are sinners. Even after becoming a believer, we were still just sinners saved by Grace. God's Grace was amazing, but I was still a wretch.**
- **SECOND.** **THE REASON Christ came, endured cross, and rose again was so that thru our faith in Christ we would be forgiven the eternal consequences of our sin and go to heaven when we die. IF HONEST, the emphasis really was on not going to hell.**
- **IN MEANTIME, in this life, two big areas of focus.**
- **FIRST- Evangelism. PRIMARY reason God keeps us alive on this planet is to lead others to accept Christ so they too won't have to spend an eternity in hell.**
- **AND, whether a person chose to believe was to a large extent dependent on how consistently and effectively I shared gospel. If I failed in that job, then to some extent their eternal blood was on my hands.**
- **Second** **focus of life NOW was our BEHAVIOR.**
- **We were to honor God by how we lived, so that by the testimony of our lives others may see their own sin and come to faith in Christ, thus also avoiding eternity in hell. What this looked like...**
 - **Went to church. A lot.**
 - **Studied the bible, a lot. Now, this was through a somewhat traditional and legalistic lens, but it taught me a very high view of scripture.**
- **But the key point here is that our primary concept of how we pleased God was by NOT SINNING. Not engaging in morally negative thoughts and actions. As a result a big focus of life was SIN AVOIDANCE.**

- **CONSEQUENCE** is we spent a lot of time focusing on **SIN**- making sure we knew everything that was sinful, so we could be sure not to do those things.
- Of course, we talked about importance of what was good, but consistent emphasis was on not doing what was bad. **THIS** led our primary understanding of repentance to be stopping doing things that were morally bad, and instead do things that were morally good.
- **ALL OF THIS**, inevitably, led to **LEGALISM**, and legalisms constant companions: pride, guilt, judgmentalism, and fear.
- At age 19, I knew the gospel of forgiveness. I believed it was my responsibility to share this with my friends, so they wouldn't go to hell- and I carried great guilt at my failure to do so. I knew what behaviors were sinful and morally unacceptable- at least according to the bias of my church tradition.
- But what I didn't know was how to motivate myself to do all these things. I knew what my sin was, but I didn't know how not to do it. Over time the old motivators of fear and guilt wore thin, and on my 19th birthday I decided the old time religion didn't have much for me, and I walked away.
- **I NEEDED TO BE INSTRUCTED MORE ADEQUETLY IN THE WAY OF THE LORD...** and by God's grace, in the coming years, I was. I was shown that there is...

✠ The New Way

- Much of what I grew up with was important, true, good theology. There **IS** reality of an eternity **IN CHRIST** or apart from Christ. There **IS** reality of morality and great brokenness and suffering of sin.
- But part of what I learned was distorted, and much was missing. Let me give just a few contrasts.
- **Notion of OUR IDENTITY AS SINNERS.**
- Apart from Christ, our greatest problem isn't sin, at least sin defined in terms thoughts and actions that are morally wrong. These are real, but our **GREATEST** problem is that apart from Christ we are spiritually dead.
- We are without hope and without God, and so our only source of living is our **SELF**- our own mind, will, emotions, and whatever external resources we can bring to bear. The NT calls this strategy of living **THE FLESH**. As we've taught, some people have more positive flesh, and some really negative flesh, but it's all flesh. It's all **SELF**, and all morally destructive behaviors & perspectives manifest from there.
- **BUT**, as disciples of Jesus, our identity is **NO LONGER AS A SINNER**. **IN CHRIST** we are fully forgiven, new creations, perfect in Christ, Holy and dearly loved. We are the Beloved of God!
- **NOW**, we struggle with sin, and root cause is still the same. We sin when we choose to live out of our own moral strength and wisdom, rather than looking to Christ as our source of strength and wisdom.
- When we rely upon self as our source, whatever sin, bondage, or brokenness we are vulnerable to will win that moment.
- You see, **In Christ** we are no longer **SINNERS**, but we can still be selfers.
- **THE GOOD NEWS** is that we no longer have to exhaust ourselves by continually trying to reform and dress up our flesh. **THERE IS A NEW WAY, A NEW SOURCE OF MOTIVATION, STRENGTH, LIFE, and this is the NEW WAY OF THE SPIRIT.**

Romans 7:6 *but now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.*

- **Believer- you are NO LONGER A WRETCH. You are a sibling of Christ, the beloved of God.**
- **EVANGELISM. YES! We are called to make disciples, to be an ambassador for reconciliation to God, to be people of beautiful feet who bring the good news of the gospel into this hurting and broken world!**
- **But what was completely lacking in my youth- and is HARD for so many believers because it requires total trust in God's goodness- is the great truth that GOD IS SOVEREIGN. Ultimately, it is the SPIRIT that opens a person's heart to believe, not our power of persuasion. God WILL work through us to draw people to himself, BUT whether or not a person believes is in God's hands, not ours.**
- **THIS LEADS TO A CRUCIAL QUESTION. If God is sovereign over salvation- if it is true that none whom God calls to himself will be lost- THEN WHY DOES GOD CALL US TO SHARE THE GOSPEL?**
- **Many people, including myself, have wrestled with this question- there is one great, obvious, answer...**
- **It is that COMING TO KNOW CHRIST IS ABOUT MORE than being FORGIVEN and GOING TO HEAVEN WHEN WE DIE. MUCH MORE!**
- **It is about KNOWING, EXPERIENCING... Living in the GOOD of the mercy, character, love, grace, and freedom of God... the LIFE of Christ in us- NOW.**
- **THIS is what I needed to learn- and what we all need to continually learn about the entire Gospel.**
- **It's that through our participation in the SPIRIT'S presence and work in our life, CHRIST CONTINUOUSLY GIVES US both the DESIRE and ABILITY to increasingly express the character and nature of God in ALL OF WHO WE ARE.**
- **AND, when we FAIL- which we will- the Spirit does not condemn us, or cover us with shame, guilt, and self-condemnation. Religion may do this, but Jesus does not. Rather, in His Grace, the Spirit of Christ will lead us into conviction, into learning, healing, and restoration.**
- **And we can RECEIVE this grace- AND extend it to others- because we KNOW.. WE KNOW.. that we are our fathers BELOVED CHILDREN.**
- **We KNOW that In Christ we are NEW CREATIONS, for the old has gone and the new has come.**
- **We KNOW that God's love and acceptance of us, and our IDENTITY- our worth and value, isn't based on our PERFORMANCE- so the pressure is off!**
- **WE KNOW that when we turned TO CHRIST in faith, that we were crucified with Christ, and we no longer live, but CHRIST LIVES IN US, and the life we live NOW, TODAY, we live by THE FAITH of the son of God who loves us and gave his life for us.**
- **Consider Paul's full prayer we see in Ephesians 3... starting in verse 16**

Ephesians 3:16-21 *I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

²⁰*Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*

- **Let me end by paraphrasing from the end of Colossians chapter 1.**
- **God has given his church as COMMISSION to present the Word of God in its FULLNESS. This is the mystery that was kept hidden for ages and ages, but has now been disclosed- revealed- to the SAINTS- to all of us, the Lord's people.**
- **TO US God has chosen to make known among all the outsiders, outcasts, the lost and hurting people of our community- the GLORIOUS RICHES of this mystery...**
- **which is that if you believe that Christ is the son of God whom God raised from the dead, and you confess that Christ is Lord, then you shall be saved, forgiven, made a NEW CREATION- and CHRIST IS IN YOU, the hope of Glory.**
- **THIS Is our hope. This is our life, our fullness... and this is our calling.**
- **PRAY!!!**

Lord God- God of our Lord Jesus Christ, you are the glorious Father. We ask... we KEEP ASKING- that you may give us your Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that we may know you better.¹⁸ We pray that the eyes of our hearts may be enlightened in order that we may know the hope to which YOU have called us, the riches of your glorious inheritance in your holy people,¹⁹ and your incomparably great power for us who believe.

That power is the same as the mighty strength²⁰ you exerted when you raised Christ from the dead and seated him at your right hand in the heavenly realms,²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.²² And God, you placed all things under Christ's feet and appointed him to be head over everything for your church- for all of us, who are His body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Note- if you didn't recognize it, this prayer is a paraphrase of Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1:16-23.