

## Acts

### “Jesus” The Sequel

#### III.) Chp. 13-28 “Witnesses to the end of the earth”

*Chp. 15-18:21 Traditions and the road less traveled (2<sup>nd</sup> trip)*

*Chp. 18:22-28 The royal route to Rome (3<sup>rd</sup> trip)*

#### **18:18b-28**

#### **“Getting in shape for the New Year”**

##### **I.) Intro.**

##### **II.) Vs. 18b-23 Committed to exercise**

##### **III.) Vs. 24-28 Personal trainers**

##### **I.) Intro.**

Every year at this time, right after that second helping of another slice of “French Apple” pie, I start thinking “*Ok it’s time that I really get in shape this year!*” Now if you are anything like me you say something like, “*Right after New Year’s day*”, or “*Maybe better to wait until after Martin Luther King day*”. Then, I just keep on going through the months. It seems to me that **motivation** is the problem. I’m just not motivated, as I should be. I notice that the younger the people are generally the more motivated to exercise they are as appearance is still very important to them. Webster defines appearance as “*The act of coming into sight; the act of becoming visible to the eye.*”

On the spiritual front we need a right motivation from the Lord to get into great spiritual shape as well. Perhaps it can come from the perspective I found in the lyrics of Third Days song, “My Heart”. It goes like this, “*My heart makes me wonder how much longer ‘Til, You’re coming back to take me away.*” “*I search the sky and then I try to imagine You there. Looking on anticipating You’re standing by and knowing I will join You in the air until then I’ll be waiting.*” Perhaps this is the year He will be “coming into sight becoming visible to the eye”. In this passage Luke is going to show us how Apollos and the guys at Ephesus got in spiritual shape.

## II.) Vs. 18b-23 Committed to exercise

Vs. 18b The ministry in Corinth continued after Gallio's decision (Vs. 14-18a) but Luke tells us that Paul decided to leave them and head for Jerusalem because he had taken a vow.

Paul the man who had stood up in the council and defended grace above the law is now taking a vow? Paul's vow was **not** an attempt to be justified by the law but rather an outward sign of an inward commitment. Luke does not tell us what kind of vow this was but based upon the cutting of his hair and his need to go to Jerusalem this was, most likely a Nazirite vow. The word literally means a "**separated one**". Numbers 6:2-5 is where we first hear it mentioned, there we are told that a person who makes a special vow of being separate to the Lord was not to eat or drink from anything of the grape vine. And during the days of their vow they were not to cut their hair. At the end of the vow the hair would be cut and burned as a sacrifice a symbol of offering one's self to the Lord. In Judges 16:17 we are told that Samson was a Nazirite for life as was John the Baptist (Luke 1:15). When you understand this vow you will understand the story of Samson much better as the secret of Samson's strength was not his hair but rather what the uncut hair symbolized **his commitment to the Lord!** And of course *those that are committed to God are always people of great strength.* So when Samson broke his commitment to the Lord he became weak as other men.

Vs. 19-22 Look at this passage again and you will see what will cause you to be committed to spiritual growth.

- Vs. 18 Paul had a great Pastoral ministry going in Corinth but he is going to leave it behind.
- Vs. 19-21 He goes to Ephesus, where he wanted to go at the start of his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey three years earlier and the Holy Spirit would not let him. Now he goes into the synagogue opens up a discussion with them and instead of getting mad at him they ask him stay longer with them. But no, he has got to fulfill the vow in Jerusalem.
- Vs. 22 Finally, he lands at Caesarea by the Sea instead of Antioch and goes up right away to Jerusalem to complete that vow before he greets the brothers there and only then does he leave to Antioch. **All of this because of this vow!**

#### **Proper motivation:**

The Nazirite vow was a pledge of commitment and devotion to the Lord. Paul's source of commitment was **not** to ministry but to the Lord! It was away of saying thank you to the One who alone deserves the praise. Paul's commitment to spiritual health was not:

- So he would be a complete pastor in Corinth,
- An effective evangelist in Ephesus,
- Or a marvelous missionary in Antioch.

No! Even though Paul was those things, he understood that more important than anything was his own commitment to Jesus. **His relationship to the Lord came before his service before the Lord!**

Commitment must to be the One who alone is your strength and not to get something in order to be strong. **Most of us fail in our plans to get in shape because we**

**make a vow in order to make us something that we aren't.** Our commitment is **not** to a program but to a Person.

- As much as Paul loved the sheep in Corinth, **he loved the Lord more.**
- As much as he enjoyed seeing his countrymen come to Jesus in Ephesus, **he loved the Lord more.**
- As much as he wanted to share of the Lord's work with those who had sent him out in Antioch, **he loved the Lord more.**

The bottom line is Paul **was committed to the MASTER more than ministry!** The key to getting in great spiritual shape is to make your commitment to Jesus not to a program or a Church.

Vs. 23 Luke tells us that Paul starts out on his 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey as he most likely stayed in Antioch for the better part of a year, we will pick up his journey more in chapter 19. There are two points in this verse:

1. Paul starts this journey out by him self. Barnabas, who went with him the first time and Silas, who went with him the second time aren't with him. This again speaks to Paul's commitment to the Lord and not to ministry.
2. Paul's purpose was to "*strengthen all the disciples*". As much as Paul loved to see folk's won to Christ **he never forgot those who were already won.** He devoted this third missionary journey to training and equipping those who had been won to Christ during the three years of the second trip.

Paul made a commitment to the Lord and now a year or so later he goes back through the areas where believers **were to cause them to make stronger commitments.** If Paul were sitting next to you he would want you to show your spiritual muscles to him. What part of

your spiritual life could use some exercise, prayer, studying God's word service? A person can not grow in their relationship to Jesus with out growth in these areas. Furthermore there will be no long lasting evangelism apart from growth in the grace and knowledge of Jesus.

### III.) Vs. 24-28 Personal trainers

Chapter 19 should start right here in verse 24 as Luke is going to tell us about Apollos in Ephesus so that we will understand Paul's ministry when he arrived there himself a year later.

Vs. 24 In verse 19 we were told that Priscilla and Aquila accompanied Paul from Cenchrea, (seaport of Corinth); to Ephesus where they remained as he went on to fulfill his vow. Here for the first time we are introduced to Apollos as Luke is going to reveal four things about him.

- a. He was a Jew born at Alexandria: Alexandria was located right at the mouth of the Nile river and the Mediterranean Sea, founded by its name sake Alexander The Great. It had a population of around 600,000 with 1/3 of them being Jewish. The library there had 700,000 books and it was here 200 years earlier that the Hebrew O.T. was transcribed into Greek. *Apollos was from a cosmopolitan community known for its education and culture.*
- b. An eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures: The word "eloquent" only appears here in the N.T. and can mean either "man of words or man of ideas". And the word "mighty" is where we get our word dynamite. *Apollos was a gifted speaker and dynamite in the scriptures.*

- c. He was instructed in the way of the Lord, fervent in spirit and he taught accurately the things of the Lord: Now there is some question as to this phrase “*instructed in the way of the Lord*”. It can either mean that he was instructed in the things of God or that he was familiar with the truth concerning Jesus. It is my opinion that based upon the context of the passage that Apollos had been instructed on the truths concerning Jesus. “*Fervent in spirit*” means to “bubble over” in other words his enthusiasm matched his education. Luke wants us to know that as far as what Apollos was teaching it was right on the mark, Apollos had the right education, enthusiasm, and ethics as he spoke concerning the Lord.
- d. He knew only the baptism of John: Now here we are told the only down fall to Apollos’ teaching, it was limited. How could a guy well educated, a gifted speaker, well versed in the scriptures, teaching the things about Jesus accurately and enthusiastically be still lacking something? Well it all centers around the words “*knew only the baptism of John*.”

Apollos knew the message which John the Baptist preached and if you go back and look at John’s message you will find that he proclaimed three great truths:

1. Matt. 3:1-2, 6 **CHANGED HEART**: Matthew says that John came preaching, “*repent*” and that folks came from all over “*confessing their sins*”. Simply put John proclaimed that forgiveness of sins was only possible on the basis of personal repentance or agreeing with God about their sins. This was a radical message to those who had understood that forgiveness was made possible through the shed blood of an animal sacrifice. Although that is true the people were not

personally repenting for their sins. God spoke through John the Baptist as He had through Isaiah saying, “That the sacrifice of an innocent animal on their behalf did no good if there was no repentance in the heart!” That is why the author of Hebrews says that, “it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.” And of course repentance doesn’t just mean saying your sorry but means to change directions thus a changed heart. *So Apollos taught what he understood through John’s message, that a person needs a changed heart for forgiveness to take place.*

2. Mark 1:2-6 **CHANGED LIFE**: We are told that John came baptizing in the wilderness and that as people went out to him in the Jordan river they went out agreeing with God about their sins then they were placed under the water. In other words the people expressed this changed heart through baptism. They were symbolizing a clean heart by being placed under the water. John came announcing that as people came with a changed heart agreeing with God about their sins, that forgiveness took place. Further more that the forgiveness was seen in the cleansing symbol of baptism. Baptism showed that a person wanted to make it a clean start, wanted to show all that they were now going to live a “changed life” because of the forgiveness they had received. *So Apollos taught the truth about living a changed life if you had truly been forgiven.*
3. Mark 1:7-8 **CHANGED POWER**: We are further told that John proclaimed that there was One coming that would baptize them with the Holy Spirit. In other words John proclaimed that a changed heart and a changed life was just the beginning work. There was something more that John was not going to be able to

do and it involved the Holy Spirit. Jesus was going to cleanse with the Holy Spirit; He was going to give all that turned to Him the “power” to live that changed life that they had symbolized by water baptism. ***So Apollos taught about the need for the Holy Spirit to live the new life.***

Vs. 26 So what could be wrong with what Apollos preached that Aquila and Priscilla had to “take him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately?” What did John the Baptist not include in his message? Well he died before three great events:

- **The cross:** *It was the Cross-of Jesus that makes forgiveness of sins possible*
- **The resurrection:** *It is the resurrection that makes a changed life possible*
- **The coming of the Holy Spirit:** *It is the Holy Spirit that gives us the power to live daily this changed life*

In other words **Apollos had the right diagnoses with out ever giving the prescription. He was preaching the right program but never put it all together with the right Person, Jesus!** Priscilla and Aquila filled in the blanks of his message they acted like “personal trainers”, seeing Apollos work they liked his technique, saw his discipline all they needed to do was help him a little so that he could maximize his spiritual work out.

Vs. 27-28 The out come of the personal training secession is that he heads out to Corinth and “he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.” The wording of verse 28 means to fully stretch enabling to win the contest. Apollos who had already the right program need to just preach a person and for that God provided two personal trainers. Folk’s that is what we all need from time to time someone to come along to help us in an area that we need further instruction on.