

Apollos-Aquilla-Pcilla

by Carl Armerding

The sermon explores the character and ministry of Apollos, highlighting his advantages, fervency, and the mentorship of Aquila and Priscilla.

Duration: 36:19

Scripture: Exodus 19:6, Matthew 6:33, Acts 18:25-26, Acts 18:28, Colossians 1:28, Hebrews 4:12

Topics: "Apollos"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of focusing on Christ in ministry. He explains that when we center our preaching on Jesus, it draws people away from worldly things and sanctifies them. The speaker also addresses the issue of monopolizing ministry opportunities, urging for inclusivity and giving younger believers a chance to participate. He highlights the objective of all ministry should be to present Christ and leave people with a vision of Him. Additionally, the speaker praises the ministry of Apollos, who helped believers by sharing his knowledge and convincing the Jews publicly.

Transcript

And a certain Jew named Apollos, born in Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue, whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly or more accurately.

And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him, who when he was come helped them much which had believed through grace. For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures, that Jesus was Christ. As I said a minute or two ago, we've been looking at this book of the Acts, first of all, to consider some of the various ways in which our blessed Lord himself is brought before us in this book.

And we noted in chapter 1 how he is brought before us as the one who has taken up the ascended man in the glory. Then in chapter 2, we saw him as the man approved of God. In chapter 3, as the prince of life.

In chapter 4, as the chief cornerstone. In chapter 5, as a prince and a savior. And then we also took a look at two of the leading servants of our Lord as they're presented to us in this book.

That is Paul, we noticed his conversion in chapter 9. And last night we were taking a little closer look at Peter, who of course is very prominent in the first part of this book of the Acts. Tonight I want to look at a cluster of three characters which are brought before us in this passage which we have read. One of these is a young man, I take it he's young, by the name of Apollos.

And then there's a more mature couple by the name of Aquila and Priscilla. This young man has very many advantages, as you'll notice. First of all, he was a Jew.

You say, is that an advantage? Yes, that was an advantage, whether you like it or not. Because this means that this man had some instruction about the true God. He lived in a part of the world where people were worshipping anything but the true God.

And this man had the advantage of being born in a home where he could hear about Jehovah, about the living God. Just as we have today young people born in Christian homes. They may not be Christians themselves, but it's a tremendous advantage, as well as a tremendous responsibility to have been born in a Christian home.

I've often thanked God, and I thank him, I think almost every day of my life, for the fact that I was born and brought up in a Christian home. This is all the more remarkable because so far as I know, my father was the only one in his family in the old country who ever came to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as a Savior. And so far as I know, my dear mother, at the time that she married my father, was the only one in her family who knew the Lord Jesus Christ as a personal Savior.

And yet to these two people were given ten children, the oldest of whom stands before you tonight. And they brought them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. And I've always considered this the most wonderful privilege in my life.

The more I look back on it now as I'm nearing the four score line, I look back on this and I thank God for the wonderful privilege of being born in a Christian home. Now this man, Apollos, could say just as much for his home as a Jew. Because as I said there, he would learn not only about the true God, but he would learn something of the great moral principles as given to us in the Ten Commandments and some of those wonderful things in the Old Testament which must have become very useful to him after his conversion.

You know, some people, when they get converted, they can't use anything that they've learned before. But it was quite different with this young man as it was also with Saul of Tarsus. Have you ever noticed how quickly Paul began to preach after his conversion? Well, it's because his mind, his soul, was already stored, you see, with these Old Testament scriptures.

And all he needed was the light to shine upon them and show that they spoke about the Lord Jesus. And immediately he could use all this wealth of material that he had. And this to me, dear friends, is my answer to those who say, What right have you to store a child's mind with these things before he's able to decide for himself whether he wants this or not? I thank God my father and mother didn't have any such philosophy.

They laid a foundation and they counted on God to use that which they had inculcated in us. And God gave them the desire of their hearts in that all ten of their children confessed the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. And the nine of them who married, married Christian mates as well.

And so we had the making of more Christian homes coming along. I say this is a great advantage. Then the second advantage that this man Apollos had was that he was born in a university town.

This city of Alexandria was a seat of learning in his day. And anyone who was born and lived there, of course, would have the advantages of going to these schools of learning, listening to these professors. And doubtless in this way he became acquainted with the other side of life, with the other side of knowledge.

That is, he would learn something about the philosophies which were extant in those days. And do you know that five of the great schools of philosophy were already existent before Christianity came? Take, for instance, the two schools of philosophy mentioned for you in this same book, in the seventeenth chapter of this same book of the Acts. You have reference made to the Epicureans and to the Stoics.

Two schools of philosophy. The Epicureans were largely atheists. The Stoics were pantheists.

We have them with us today. There's nothing new about this so far as these schools are concerned. You say, do we have pantheists today? Oh, yes.

Christian science is a pantheistic system. They don't believe in a personal God. God is in everything.

God is just that permeating something, you know, that you can't describe, you can't name. That's pantheism. God is in this desk.

God is in this microphone. God's in that plant. This is it.

And they deny the personality of God himself. These things were extant in the Apostles' day. And in addition to that, the great schools of Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, all of these lived before the Christian era, and it's reasonable to suppose that this young man, Apollos, had some contact with these schools of philosophy because they would certainly have it there.

Whether this was a real spiritual advantage or not, that may be a moot question. But I'll say this, that he had an opportunity, at any rate, to compare what he had learned in his home and what he learned in the schools, just as I had opportunity to make the test myself and decide in favor of that which I had gotten at my mother's knee. I shall never forget when the question was put to a man who at the time was president of Wheaton College.

I'm referring to Dr. J. Oliver Buswell. He came down to the seminary in Dallas to lecture to us there on why he believed the Bible to be the Word of God. And we sat behind him on the platform and with our notebooks open, our pencils poised, to hear what this great man was going to tell us about why he believed the Bible to be the Word of God.

What do you suppose was his first reason? Because my mother told me so. And from there on he went on to, of course, other reasons as well. But here was the beginning.

Oh, my dear friend, what a wonderful thing it is to be able to plant in a young heart the seed that God can bless in days to come. So this man had an opportunity to compare both things, both the things which he learned at home, the things which he would learn in the university. Then in addition to that, I read he was an eloquent man.

He had some gifts, you see. He probably was a speech major if they had such a course in those days in the University of Alexandria. And he could make some speeches.

I can imagine his fellow students saying, Come on, Apollos, let's hear you expound on this or that subject. He might even have given some little talks, you know, on the philosophies of that day and made some comparisons we've already suggested with what he learned at home, you see. He was eloquent.

He was easy to listen to. That's what the word eloquent really carries with it, the thought not only of a nice flow of language, but that which is pleasant to listen to in the proper key and so on. He knew how to do it.

Yes, this was a natural advantage that he had. And now we come to a great spiritual advantage which led me to say what I did at the outset about the advantages of being born a Jew. You notice it says here he is mighty in the Scriptures.

Now how do you become mighty in the Scriptures? Well, you certainly don't become mighty in the Scriptures by just having a Bible lie on the table in the best room in the house. That's not the way you become mighty in the Scriptures. To become mighty in the Scriptures, beloved, we have to feed upon the Scriptures.

We have to read the Scriptures. We have to memorize the Scriptures. And do as the apostle says in Colossians, the third chapter, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.

Yes, I dare say that when this man used his eloquence to give a public speech, he was not behind bringing in some quotation from the word of God, from the Old Testament Scriptures, for he was mighty in the Scriptures. You know, it's a sad day that has come to America. When men today can quote something from the Bible in their editorial columns, we'll say of a newspaper, and one of our young people will say to us, Where in the world do you suppose he got that? And you have to tell them that the editor belonged to an old school that still knew something about the Bible.

Yes, the time was when one could quote the Scriptures and people understood them rather readily. I remember when I was a student, there was some trouble in our school and some of the professors left. And they went to another school in California and they wrote back.

They said, We who are resting on Abraham's bosom send greetings to those below. And our students said, Why did he get this figure of speech? They didn't know a thing about that story in the gospel according to Luke, you know. They betrayed their ignorance, but not this man.

He was mighty in the Scriptures. And we read that he came to Ephesus. Now, this was a place where there was plenty of room for the exercise of his gifts.

We generally think of the church at Ephesus as being a place where Paul could, shall I say, give them the very highest line of truth that they had to give. I think it's pretty generally conceded that Ephesians and Colossians are just about as high up as we can get. He comes to this place.

Now, there was something else about him that we need to notice before we notice his ministry. And that is that he was, verse 25, that he was instructed in the way of the Lord. Now, the word for instructed, if you have the Schofield reference Bible, I'm reading from the older edition.

I don't have the new one here, but in the margin of my Bible it says, he was taught by word of mouth or hearsay, meaning not by revelation. That is, others had communicated this to him. He was instructed in the way of the Lord.

But I'm not so much concerned tonight about who did the instructing or the method of it. I'm concerned with what he really learned from them. He learned the way of the Lord.

And you know, dear friends, when you know the way of the Lord, you don't have to have a specific commandment for everything you do or don't do. I know when I was a lad, certain things were suggested to me that I could do. Your father didn't tell you you couldn't do them.

No, he didn't tell me I couldn't do them, but that wouldn't be his way. See? He had impressed upon me he had a certain way of doing things. And one day when I heard some people criticizing a piece of work, it was rather shabbily done.

The cuts in the timbers had not been made square. And somebody says, Oh, this is Armerding's building. And you know, my patriotism, my love for my father just, I said, My father never made a cut like that.

And he hadn't. This was somebody else who made a cut like that, because I knew from the instructions he had given me about his way of doing things. Friends, the Lord has a way of doing things.

And as I said, you don't need a special text of Scripture to say you can't do this, you can't do that. You just need to say, Is this according to his way of doing things? Any married man knows this. He's not married very long before he finds out she has a way of doing things.

And you better observe that. That is, if you want peace. Because she presides there.

And sometimes people say, I see the furniture is arranged so and so. Yes, that's her way of doing things. It's the way of life.

She likes these colors this way. She likes that bunch of flowers that way. She's got an idea how she wants it done.

I'm using this as an illustration to show you that we observe this in others, the way of doing things. The Lord has a way of doing things. And Apollos was a man who was instructed in the way of the Lord.

Now, there was one more thing we have to touch on before we come to his ministry. You know, I like this next expression. It says he was fervent in the spirit.

You know, sometimes people get excited at a football game. But when they go to a meeting, their faces are long enough to eat. As we said the other day, they could take their porridge out of a quart jar.

They think this is a sign of piety. But here was a man who was fervent in the spirit. And they remind me of a story I heard about Charles Haddon Spurgeon years ago.

An atheist went to hear Spurgeon preach one Sunday morning. And when he came out of Spurgeon's service, he was met by another atheist who said, He said, What? You in there to hear Spurgeon? He said, Yeah. Why? He said, I didn't think you believed anything he preaches.

He said, I don't, but he does. Beloved, do we believe it? Do we talk as if we believed it? In the same book of the Acts, we read, They so spake that many believed. Oh, when you present the gospel of the Lord Jesus, do it with some fervor.

Do it as though you're really sold on this thing. No matter what your hearers may think about it, they'll at least go out like that atheist went out of Spurgeon's meeting and say, Well, he believes it, even if I don't. And if ever we had a reason to be fervent about something, we have something to be fervent about here.

Because we've got the most wonderful thing in the world, in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. There's nothing to match it. You know, sometimes when they talk about the gospel being obsolete, I say, well, bring forward your proof that the gospel is obsolete.

Well, then, of course, they tell me of the failures of some Christians and so on. I say, you still haven't answered my question. Why is the gospel obsolete? And they can't answer that in the affirmative, because the gospel is still doing a job that nothing else can do.

And as I've said on more than one occasion, and probably have said it here within the last fortnight, anything that's doing a job that nothing else can do is not obsolete. And the gospel is doing a job tonight that psychiatry, psychology, none of the philosophies can do. It's saving men's souls through simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You can afford to be fervent about that. Well, now we come to his ministry. We're a long introduction getting there, but I make no apology for this, because I like to show you that there's a preparation for this.

And so I read here in the middle of verse 25, He spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord. He taught them accurately. For this word diligently is really the same word that you have down at the end of verse 26, which is translated perfectly or accurately.

He taught what he had accurately. He wasn't sloppy about the way he handled these things. He made sure of his facts.

He made sure of his references. And he taught diligently the things of the Lord, but with this limitation that he knew only the baptism of John. But he didn't make that an excuse.

You know, sometimes, especially when I'm talking to younger Christians who never open their mouth in witness for the Lord Jesus Christ, never take part in a meeting. Of course, some people make it impossible for young people to take part in a meeting because they're always up there taking part and don't give the young brother a chance to open his mouth. I was in an assembly not very far away from here in Florida one day, and I said to one of the ladies there, I said, What would you like me to preach on tonight? She said, I'd like you to preach on the monopoly of the Spirit.

I said, What do you mean? Well, she said, We have in our assembly three men who get up every Sunday morning, and every Sunday morning we get these same three men. They don't give anybody else a chance. And one of the arguments, of course, is that these young men don't know.

We older ones, we know, you see. But how will they ever get to know if they don't practice? And so this man went on with his ministry, and now we come to this couple that was so greatly used of God in his case. This is Aquila and Priscilla.

Here's a couple that St. Paul mentions in at least three, yes, three of his epistles. He mentions them in Romans, he mentions them in Corinthians, and he mentions them again in the very last letter that he dictated, 2 Timothy chapter 4. He mentions this couple. You get them mentioned earlier in this same chapter, 18th chapter of Acts.

Look there in verse 2. There was a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus. Now, Pontus was on the south shore of the Black Sea in what we would call northeastern Turkey now. He may even have been one of the ten tribes.

Well, you say, but he's called a Jew. Yes, they were all called Jews. Paul called himself a Jew, though he was not of the tribe of Judah.

He was of the tribe of Benjamin, but he calls himself a Jew of Tarsus. So this doesn't prove, the term Jew doesn't prove that he's of the tribe of Judah. He may have been one of these other tribes, because St. Paul speaks of our twelve tribes instantly serving God day and night.

They never recognize such a thing as the lost ten tribes. So he may be one of them. In any case, he came from up on the shores of the Black Sea, as I said, in eastern, northeastern Turkey.

And here we find him in this city of Corinth. And they were tent makers. And some think that the tent makers here were really leather workers, because tents were made of skins in those days, and sometimes a leather worker was called a tent maker when he probably did some other things besides making tents.

And Paul was of the same, had the same training as they, making tents or leather goods. So this established a bond between these two. And I'm just wondering if Paul didn't make a great deal of this fact that he had met people who were in the same, had had the same sort of training as he, and uses this, just as we who have grown up in the engineering profession could talk to an engineer perhaps a little more freely than we would to some other profession.

To a man, a doctor of medicine, for example, I wouldn't be as free with him as I would be with an engineer, you see. And so it may be that Paul spoke more freely to them, but there is a reference to them in Romans that I think we should look at. Keep your bookmark here, please, in Acts 18, and turn with me, please, to the 16th chapter of Romans.

The epistle to the Romans, chapter 16. And verse 3. Romans 16 and verse 3. Greek Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus, who have for my life laid down their own necks. In other words, they risked their own lives.

That's what this expression really means. They risked their lives for the apostle Paul. You can just imagine how grateful he would be to this couple, whom he here describes as his helpers in Christ Jesus, unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

Thanking God for this wonderful couple, Priscilla and Aquila. And he says, likewise, greet the church that is in their house. Evidently there was an assembly that met in their house.

They had opened their doors for the Lord's people to come in when there were no church buildings, no beautiful chapels like this one here tonight. Now this is the couple, coming back to our chapter, that are about to be a great blessing to this man, Apollos. And I can almost imagine Priscilla, in the meeting as Apollos is speaking, she nudges Aquila and she says, Papa, I think we'd better have this young man come

home with us for dinner.

And he says, Yes, Mama, I was thinking about the same thing. And when they get him home there for dinner, and maybe invite him to stay all night, maybe longer than that, they have the privilege, as we read here in our text tonight, in verse 26, Acts 18, verse 26, they expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly or more accurately. And we don't read that he resisted it.

We don't read that he said, Now listen here, I've been to school over there in Alexandria, and you folks are old folks. Evidently he received this instruction very humbly. And so he becomes a wonderful minister of the Lord.

And when he's disposed to go into Achaia, Achaia is the southern part of Greece, that which we now know as Greece. The northern part, roughly known as Macedonia, in which you have the cities of Philippi and Thessalonica and so on. And down here in the south you have Athens and Corinth and Canea.

And he's disposed to go into Achaia here. And the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him. And the word for receive here is much stronger than our English word receive.

It really means give him a welcome. Give him a welcome. They were right back to this young fellow.

Give him a welcome, who when he was come, helped them much, which had been leaved through grace. And Paul tells us what that was. In his epistle to the Corinthians, he says, Paul planted, Apollos watered.

He was the follow-up man. He was the man who came in after the apostle had laid the foundation. And he watered the seed that had been sown and helped them much.

And the word here for helping them much is very picturesque in the original. He gave what he had, as it were, throwing it in with what they had. So in this way he helped them much.

What a wonderful ministry this. We need this kind of ministry, beloved. We need it in our assemblies.

We need men like this who can come in to an assembly and make their contribution and help those who have been leaved through grace. And then there's another ministry he has. You notice in the last verse of our scripture tonight, verse 28, For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly.

This other ministry he had was in the assembly, no doubt. But here he has a ministry which is public, showing by his wonderful philosophical arguments. Oh, wait a minute.

Wait a minute. This is not the scholar from Alexandria now. This is the Jew that came out of that humble home who had been instructed in the scriptures.

And this is his weaponry. This is his source of information. It says, showing from the scriptures that Jesus was Messiah.

That, my friends, should be the objective in all of our ministry, no matter what subject we may take up. Oh, let it lead on to that wonderful culmination, the presentation of Christ himself. This is it.

You may be able to instruct people in this and that and tell them all about the wonderful offerings in the Old Testament and the tabernacle and some of the great historical events of the Old Testament, but be sure that when you do so, you have your objective before you, and that is to lead them with a vision of

Christ as they stand up in the meeting. Friends, I want to be very frank with you. This is a burden on my heart again and again.

Oh, that one is finished with his ministry. Suppose this was the last night that one had to minister the Word tonight. Wouldn't it be wonderful to leave behind a reputation, well, he focused my attention upon Christ.

This is it. And you'll never go wrong when you do this. You'll never go wrong when you do this, because this is the kind of thing that draws people away from the things of the world.

It sanctifies them. It separates them. It distinguishes them, as the word is in the Old Testament when it says that God's people were separate.

They were distinguished. And this is the way we'll be distinguished, beloved. Not that we can talk about great subjects so much.

I'm not belittling that for a minute, but I am saying this, that here's a man with all this wonderful background that we've been talking about tonight, and he had an enviable background, the kind of a background that I'm sure any one of us would love to have, or if we have it, we're thankful for it. Yes, but let's never forget that the great objective in a man's ministry must be Christ Himself. Now, of course, there's only one way that this will be true, beloved, and that is if the Lord entirely possesses you and me, we have made our complete surrender to Him.

We're no longer our own. We're bought with a price. You know, this is a great truth to learn, that once you've surrendered to Him, you've given up all rights to yourself.

You've surrendered it all to Him, and He's to tell you where to go and what to say and what to do. This is it. And how precious is the little old hymn that puts this in so many words for us, Have Thine Own Way, Lord, Have Thine Own Way.

Shall we turn to that hymn in closing tonight? Hymn number 298. 298. Have Thine Own Way, Lord, Have Thine Own Way.

Thou art the potter, I am the clay. Mold me and make me after Thy will while I'm waiting, yielded and still. I hope we'll sing this hymn, beloved, as though we'd like to make these words our own expression of devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Number 298. Shall we rise? Have Thine Own Way, Lord, Have Thine Own Way. We trust our Father that if we've never done so before, that this may be the time of complete surrender, that we may realize as never before that we're not our own, that Christ is precious blood, and we ourselves His spirit and soul and body.

Oh, blessed Lord, keep us from living to ourselves. Keep us from just wasting our time here and not living for those days when we shall face Thee face to face in glory and long to hear from Thy lips. Well done, Thou good and faithful servant, enter Thou into the joy of Thy Lord.

Father, may these examples which we've had before us tonight, Priscilla and Aquila, this devoted couple, devoted not only to the Apostle Paul, but devoted to the ministry and using all that they had to bring this younger man into a more accurate knowledge of Thy way. Give us more apologists, Lord, men who will be willing to be taught and willing to be used of Thee to help them much who have believed through grace, as well as to publicly convince others that Jesus was the Messiah. These things we ask as we now commit

ourselves into Thy loving care for this another night in the precious name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. You are dismissed.

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