

# Lesser Known Characters 02 Apollos - Teachable

by Joseph Balsan

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*The sermon highlights the teachability of Apollos and the importance of being receptive to spiritual instruction for growth in faith.*

**Duration:** 51:00

**Scripture:** Matthew 3:11, Matthew 11:25, Luke 10:21, Acts 18:25, Romans 12:1, Colossians 3:23, 1 Thessalonians 5:17

**Topics:** "Salvation History", "Atonement Theology"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the reason why God waited 4,000 years before sending his son into the world. He explains that when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, God promised the coming of his son to die for that sin. However, God waited because if he had sent his son immediately, mankind may have believed they could save themselves. So, God gave humanity 4,000 years to try and redeem themselves, but ultimately, man was unable to save himself. The preacher emphasizes that Jesus' death on the cross fulfilled all the sacrifices and types of the Jewish system, and his cry of 'It is finished' signifies that the price for sin was paid in full.

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## Transcript

Acts 18 and verse 24, And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at 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.

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, or Jesus is, the Christ. May the Lord bless to us the reading of his word.

Now we mentioned last night that we were going to look in the evenings at some vignettes of virtue in the New Testament. Seldom spoken of characters, and we were looking last night at Anna as an example of one who teaches us the wonderful lesson of abiding in Christ. And tonight I would like to speak to you, the Lord enabling me, concerning this person who is brought before us, who is brought before us in more

portions than what we have here in this 18th chapter of Acts.

And that is this man Apollos, a contraction, it is believed, of Apollonius, who was a Jew from Alexandria. And we realize that this man was a remarkable man. We find in the epistle to the Corinthians that he was the man who was one that some of the Corinthians were following after because he was so eloquent.

But the thing that I would like to bring before you tonight as the expression that I would like to emphasize that appeals to me so much in the life of this man is his virtue of receptiveness, or teachableness. And I think that's all the more remarkable in view of the fact of the character of man that this man Apollos was, that he was teachable. And teachable to the extent that he was willing to be taught by those who were, you might say, academically, intellectually, and in many other ways perhaps as inferiors, but who were his superiors in their spiritual knowledge and in their spiritual experience.

And after all, that is the way that we learn today in the school of God. We learn through spiritual instruction as it is taught to us by those who are spiritual, by those who are instructed in the things of God. Remember that the Lord Jesus said in the 18th chapter of Acts, "...except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Now there the Lord Jesus Christ brings before us that after we are converted, we are to be as children.

That does not mean that you and I are to be childish, I'm sure that you have heard this before, but we are rather to be child-like. And I remember one time shortly after I was saved, as I told you the other night, why I was a Roman Catholic before I was converted, and one day why the Catholic priest came to visit us in our home. It was his custom to visit his parishioners once every year.

I think that elders ought to do that in every assembly of God's people, at least visit all of God's people in an assembly at least once a year. I read very recently of a couple who were in the assembly for 20 years, and elders had never visited them in all those 20 years to have a Bible reading with them or to pray with them. How unfortunate an assembly is if it has those who have no care or no heart for the people of God.

Well, this priest came to visit us every year, and it happened that I was home alone with my mother and sister. I was still in my mother's home. My mother was in the basement washing clothes, and when the priest came in, why, of course, my sister ran downstairs, knowing I was a Christian, to tell my mother that the priest had come.

And so as I shook hands with the priest, he said to me, Well, I haven't seen you in our young people's meetings for a long time. How come? I said, Well, I don't go to your church. He says, Well, I thought you were Catholics.

I said, Well, my folks are, but I'm not. You're not? Well, why aren't you a Catholic? Well, because I've been converted, and I know the Lord Jesus Christ is my Savior. And so we began to talk, and so he raised some question or something, and I don't remember what it was, but I knew that I had an Englishman's New Testament, and you know that's the Greek with the English underneath.

And so I opened this book, and I said, Well, you see, this is how it is in the Greek, and this is what it says in the English. And he sort of smiled, and he said, Well, you know, he says, When I used to study Latin in school, why, he says, why we used to do that in translating Latin. He says, Do you realize that I've gone 22 years to school to learn to be a priest? He says, I went eight years to grammar school, I went four years to high school, I went four years to college, and I went six years to seminary in order to be able to teach as

a priest.

And so I turned in the Bible to Matthew chapter 11, and I said, Do you notice what the Lord Jesus said here? He said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast kept these things from the wise, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. He closed his book, he left the house, he didn't even bother to pray with us, to bless the home as was the custom of the priest, and the next Sunday while in church, he proceeded to tell people, Beware of these people who are always quoting and following the Bible.

Beware of these people who so teach and listen to the voice of the church. Thou hast kept these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.

You know, the wonderful thing is that when the Lord saves us, he saves us because we are teachable, because we are receptive. But the question is, is that something that continues to characterize us as the people of God, as those who know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior? I'm sure that you have heard it said that some people's minds are like concrete. They're all mixed up and permanently set.

Now it's a sad situation when the mind of any person is like that, all mixed up and permanently set. Now the Lord certainly never intends that you and I should be that way. And so as you and I look at this man Apollos, I think that while we think of him as a wonderful evangelist, we think of him as a wonderful teacher, I would like to think for a little while this evening of Apollos as the one who was teachable, as the one who was receptive.

And the question comes to you and me. Are you and I receptive to the things and the truths that God desires to teach us? You notice it says here in the 24th verse, And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. Here we have brought before us something concerning this man Apollos.

Who was this man Apollos, who suddenly comes to Ephesus after Paul has left? And after he has left Priscilla and Aquila there in Ephesus, this man Apollos comes to Alexandria and immediately our attention is fastened upon him because this is no ordinary man. Here was a man of whom it is said he was a certain Jew who was born at Alexandria. Now Alexandria in the ancient world, we know, was in the southeastern part of the Mediterranean.

It was in Egypt, of course. It was a city which got its name because it was established by Alexander himself 300 years before our Lord Jesus Christ. But this city was a marvelous city because it was a center of commerce and it was a center of learning.

It perhaps was one of the most intelligent and one of the most enlightened cities of the ancient world. In fact, it is said that Alexandria had a library that surpassed all the libraries of the entire ancient world. It was a seat of tremendous learning where the various cultures of Jews and Greeks and Latins gathered together and where there were the schools of some of the greatest philosophers of that ancient world.

And there is no doubt that this man Apollos was the product of one of those schools. There is no doubt that this man Apollos was a very learned and a very intelligent man. It is believed that there were at the time that this is written, at least one million Jews in that city of Alexandria and here was this man Apollos and it tells us he was an eloquent man.

In other words, my friends, he was not only a man who was able to take in truth, but he was a man who was able to communicate it as well. He was a man in a manner that instructed and drew multitudes of people to him, but it was not only that he was associated with the learning of that day, it was not only that, of course, these were the Old Testament scriptures. Being a Jew he had been instructed in the scriptures, and the scriptures in that in class, and of course it says this man was instructed and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and talked diligently.

Here we have Rothschild. Now here was the man who was a Jew and yet concerning him it was said that he was fervent. This word fervent means he was boiling.

He was warm as he was going. He was fervent. And yet they are very fervent.

You see people that are associated with these false cults, and you'll see them standing on streets, you'll see them knocking on doors, visiting people, trying to communicate what they know, and we look at them and we say, well, they're in error. They believe in what they know. We see those around us and they're boiling over.

It's a wonderful question is, my friends, do these things cause us to be fervent? It is the thing that he desires that you present, is that those who are in business, he was fervent. That word diligently there, they tell us is really and truly the word accurately. He spake and taught accurately.

And these things, my friend, these two words, spake and taught, seems to be the thought that this man was speaking what he knew wherever he went. In other words, it is the thought rather of a daily, every place, every, and the being and the word taught here has a presentation of the truth. In other words, he presents to them which he communicated to them.

He spake and taught accurately. The things of the Lord. He knew only the baptism of John.

It says here, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. Now, that doesn't mean that he did not know anything about the Lord Jesus. That does not mean that he did not know anything about Jesus.

If you were to look into the Revised Version, you would find that he was authenticated by knowing only the baptism of John. He knew about the birth of Jesus. He knew about the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist.

He knew something about Jesus. He might have known something about Jesus, but it's the baptism of John. Take your place as a sinner and know only the baptism of John.

And it tells us here that when he began to speak boldly in the synagogue, they took him unto them and expound. You might say that this is the turning point in the life of this man. I wonder if every one of us has a point in our experience.

When you and I were brought, they had come to listen to this man preach as he spake and taught diligently the things which he knew. And as they listened to him speak, lacking something needed in the life and experience, they took him unto them and expounded unto him. They took him unto them.

They didn't lay hold every minute that here this couple, they sensed that there was something missing. There was something missing. You know, that poor fellow is to be pitied.

Because there was... And something that they... It says here, they took him unto them and expounded... Perfectly here is the same word in the original that is translated diligently in the 25th verse. The same. Spake and taught accurately the things which he knew.

We need accuracy in our understanding of God's Word. We need accuracy in our expressing and presenting of God. And here we find that they took him unto them and I'm sure, my friends, they must have presented to him the sufficiency and the finality of the work of the Lord Jesus.

Ah, friends, the way of God... What is the way of God? The way of God, my friends, is through the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, you think of those words that the Lord Jesus uttered on the cross when he cried. Have you ever thought to yourself, what did the Lord Jesus mean when the Lord Jesus said, It is finished.

It is finished. My friends, I believe that when Jesus uttered, It is finished on the cross, he was expressing that the time of man's probation had... Before he said... My friends, when... If no other sin had ever been... Because when he sinned... Hope would be bruised in the heel... He was telling... Years before he said... To save ourselves... Experience in which he tried... Man crowned all his sins. Man climaxed all his sins by taking God's... And nailing him to... In the old country, he stood up and he said that if humanity... The example of... They nailed him to the cross... We will not... Friends, when he cried, It is finished, he was telling the world... Man is untried... My friends, when he cried, It is finished, he was saying that all the types... To an end, he himself was the all-sufficient, substance, and fulfillment... Are you able to say, I know, It is finished? Yes.

Every jot. Jesus paid the price in full. My friends, this is good news.

Is it not? I'm sure they must have brought before him that Jesus came, that this Jesus who died on the cross was the one who went down into death, for sin he rose again from the dead, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish. That man received. But you know, friends, a person could receive that message and be saved, and still be in need of further teaching.

Remember that when the Lord Jesus came to the grave of Lazarus? And remember when he spoke and Lazarus came forth, bound hand and foot? Why, Jesus said to the disciples, Loose him and let him go. Only the Lord Jesus could communicate life, but the disciples had to loose and let him go. He was bound in the grave clothes.

And there are many tonight who are still bound in the grave clothes. Some years ago, I was in Waterloo with another brother holding some meetings, Waterloo, Iowa. Not people connected with the assemblies of God's people there in that city, but they were saying, Do you know so-and-so? He's with the Lord now.

He was speaking about one of these people. He says, I'll never forget that man. I says, You won't? He says, No.

He says, You know, I used to work in the bakery with him there in Des Moines. And he says, You know, he was trying to bring me on a tooth and nail. And he came and he kept drumming scriptures that I couldn't answer.

And he says, It didn't sink. Yes, they believe they're saved. But to say they're saved with an everlasting salvation, that's going a little too far.

Is it possible that a person is saved with an eternal salvation? Or am I saved today and perhaps I'm of eternal salvation? Some careless in your living who believe just that. She was saved, all right. But what's the use? What's the use? What's the use of me telling anybody else about this salvation if this is it? But she began to read the Word of God for herself.

And as she read the Word of God for herself, she began to see which liveth. She began to see that when she believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, He gave her everlasting life. She began to see something like the color of his fingers because I saw that she was a man, that she was saved.

And it was the door she had been brought into the one. Am I teachable about the truth of baptism? Mr. George Mueller was a Lutheran preacher. Or he was a Lutheran student, rather, studying for the ministry.

And one day he was in a group of people and he heard several women talking about the truth of baptism. And as he stood and listened to them for a few moments while he came up to them and he says, Ladies, he says, I am sure that you will misunderstand the teaching of baptism. And he proceeded to expound what the church taught.

And one of the ladies looked at him and she says, Mr. Mueller, she says, I want to have baptism. He says, Well, he says, I can't say that I have. I've been accepting the teachings of the church and that's what I'm learning.

She said, Mr. Mueller, don't ever talk to anybody about baptism again until you have studied the word of God for yourself and find out what the lady liked. And he began to study what the scriptures said. He began to see it was something and it was a mark of one's death and burial with Christ.

That truth, he obeyed it. Dr. Arthur Pearson, he was one of the outstanding, a man who was used of God. He was a Presbyterian preacher in Indianapolis for a number of years.

And he went over to England and he preached in Charles Spurgeon's tabernacle there. He was known on various continents. And when that man after many years of ministry studied the word of God, he saw that baptism was for a believer.

And he had never been baptized and so he determined because he saw it from the word of God that he was going to Dr. Pearson, everybody knows that you're a Christian. Everybody knows what a wonderful teacher you are. But he says, I have not obeyed this command of my Lord.

And he says, I do the thing that I say. In his elderly period of life, after many years of fruitful ministry and Bible teaching, obeyed his Lord because he saw this was what... Do you wonder that a man grows and goes on in the things of God? Ah, we find this man. It says, Aquila and Priscilla heard, they took him unto them and expound... You know, I'm glad that Priscilla and Aquila weren't like some today, Christians.

Well, after all, I'm not a teacher. Oh yes, the teacher should have these things down. The teacher should be able to communicate the truth of God accurately.

But after all, I'm not a teacher. You know, we were speaking last night about Anna and others who were in the right place at the right time. Well, Priscilla and Aquila were in the right place at the right time, weren't they? My! What they were about to reap! What they were about to see! Here was a man who was going to become a giant in the things of God and in the assemblies of God's people and in the work of God.

And they were going to have the privilege of taking him into their homes and expounding it. I don't like to use colored people too often as illustrators, but you know they say someone... And the colored woman's definition and expounder of the Bible was, that man sure exposes the Scriptures. It's a person who... And that's what they did.

Here Priscilla and Aquila, there in the home. This man! Was it possible that they invited him over? And perhaps as he was sitting there at the meal, they said to him, I'm listening to you. And we were just wondering about this.

Had you ever considered this? Was this the thing that they began to expound? I don't know how many of you have ever read Dr. James Gray's book on studying the Scriptures. But you know what he tells about the time when as a young student, a ministerial student, he was studying the Word of God, but he didn't seem to be getting anywhere. And he was just confounded and didn't understand.

And he came to a Bible conference. And when he came to a Bible conference, he listened to the ministry of the Word. And between sessions, as he wandered around the grounds, he saw a man sitting under a tree.

And as this man was sitting under the tree, he was reading the Word of God. And so, James Gray began to speak to him. And this man began to unfold the Word of God to him.

And as he unfolded the Word of God, why this young man asked him, How did you ever get these things? Where did you ever learn again? And he so saw that he was able to just... And James Gray at the Moody Bible Institute. He learned it from... He says, I had to learn it from a poor, common layman. But he learned it.

He learned it. Apollos learned it. And here this couple accurately... We sometimes think, well, the teachers are the ones that need to be accurate.

We, the common people, need a teacher. And shouldn't you know the way of God accurately? Are you not responsible to know the way of God accurately? Are you not responsible to learn the way of God accurately so that you're able to communicate it to others more accurately? Priscilla and Aquila did. And personally, I think this was perhaps the greatest work that they ever did, taking that man into their home and communicating to him.

And it says here, 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 to leave through grace. I want you to notice in the twenty-fifth verse we have this man, or the twenty-sixth verse, it says we have this man in the synagogue. But you notice in the twenty-seventh verse it says, 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.

Where do we find him now? We find him amongst those who are his brethren. His brethren in Christ, and he's helping them much through grace. And then notice it says, For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures, that Jesus was Christ.

He had a new message. He had a new message. What is that message? That message that says he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly in the Scriptures, that Jesus was, Jesus is, you know I like that marginal reading, Jesus is the Christ.

Not Jesus was the Christ. You perhaps heard the story of the teacher who asked the class of pupils, Who is the greatest living man? And of course, one got up and said, President so and so. Another one got up and says, Well, Willie Mays is the greatest.

The teacher says, Yes, but he's not dead. My Sunday school teacher teaches me, and the Bible teaches me, that Jesus died for our sins. He was buried.

He is living. He is Lord. He is Savior.

He mightily convinced. They tell us that the real rendering here is, He bore doubts. They had nothing.

We're living in a day today of confusion. We're living in a day today when people seem to think that the mark of intelligence and the mark of learning is to be sure of nothing. Did you ever hear about the two fellows who were talking, and one fellow says to the man who was a Christian, he says, Well, he says, You know, you can't be sure of anything.

You can't be sure of anything. And the man says, Well, if you can't be sure of anything, then you can't be sure that you can't be sure of anything. If you can't be sure of anything, well, then you are many people today, reliable, dependable, a conviction that can be based and backed and presented because it's backed.

And he was trying to bring before them the need for morality and the need for obedience to order. After he finished, one of the students got up, The principles of morality that you present to us, what is the foundation? What do you found them on? What do you base them on? Why should we do this? Why should we act so? Argument. And his whole presentation just disappeared into thin air.

Why? Because he had no foundation to base what he presented to them to believe and practice. You and I have a foundation. This is the foundation.

This book doesn't speak doubtfully. This book doesn't hesitate. This book tells you and me what is true.

We need to be receptive. We need to be open to the things. Communicate to us.

Oh, I hope it is not true of us. As it was true of Israel, when the Lord says, I made known to them, may they not be strange to you and to me. May we retain, may we cultivate the teachable spirit that is open to the truth.

Thank thee this evening for our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank thee that he said, I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. We thank thee that he said, I am the light of the world.

He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. We thank thee for thy precious word which thou hast given to us. We thank thee for thy spirit who is still here to open and take of the things of Christ and show them to us.

We remember that our Lord said, when he shall come, he shall glorify me. He shall show you the truth. He shall show you things to come.

And so, Father, we pray that we might be receptive. We pray we might be like the Bereans of old of whom it was said, they received the word of God with all gladness and then they searched the scriptures to see if

these things were so. Therefore, many of them believed.

And so, Father, we pray that we might believe. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God. We thank thee now for this time we've spent together.

Bless thy word to each one in the Savior's precious name. Amen.

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