

October 3, 2020

"The Way of God"  
(Acts 18:18-28)  
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Recently I had the opportunity to do some small things for Doug Thomas, one of our church members. As you know, he has had health issues for a long time that make it difficult for him to live alone. While cleaning a house is an easy task for most of us, it can be very difficult for Doug. Dave recruited a few church members to assist Doug in this task. When we arrived at his house and surveyed the situation, we didn't know where to start. However, as we continued to clean up the house, things began to fall into place and look much better. Today there is a big difference in his rooms. I think Doug is pleased with the improvements that have been made and he can better enjoy his daily life..

It is good for us to make a difference in the lives of those who are in need of our help. And in doing so, when we help others we will find that it also makes a difference in our lives. By performing these small acts of kindness for Doug, I better understand what Jesus meant when He said, "***It is more blessed to give than to receive.***" (Acts 20:35) Helping one another with a loving, joyful heart is the way we Christians are to live our lives.

Do you want to feel that kind of joy? Please contact Dave. At Doug's house, there are still some things that need to be done.

In the scripture today, we can see how Priscilla and Aquilla made a significant change to Apollos by doing small things for him. I would like all of us to gain spiritual wisdom from the scripture and apply the lessons to our lives of faith.

Let's see what was going on in Ephesus. Together with Priscilla and Aquilla, Paul started to spread the Gospel to those who are in Ephesus. After they worked together for Ephesus's mission for a while, Paul headed for the Antioch Church, leaving Priscilla and Aquilla there. Though Paul might have put his trust in their ability to continue the mission in Ephesus, we can imagine it would have been challenging to do that by themselves at a place like Ephesus.

Ephesus was a very prosperous city and the center of the worship to the Greek goddess Artemis (Roman Diana), the multi-breasted goddess of fertility. Imagine what it would be like to do ministry and mission in that kind of city. If you put yourselves in Priscilla and Aquilla's shoes, you would be overwhelmed by its pagan religious atmosphere and you would not have known what to do.

At that time, a Jew named Apollos came to Ephesus and started to proclaim Jesus. He came from Alexandria, where he must have heard about Jesus through John the Baptist's disciples and learned a lot about Jesus. He seems to have been 'an itinerant Jew, a commercial traveler who engaged in religious teaching as well as in trade.'

There are some descriptions of what Apollos was like. "***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.”*  
(Verse 24 and 25)

The scripture clearly shows us that Apollos had both his merits and his limitations. Regarding his merits, he was a well-educated scholar, having a good understanding of the Old Testament. And he knew about Jesus and was good at teaching about Jesus with great compassion. And in terms of his limitations, he had a limited understanding of baptism. Spiritually, he seems to have been under the influence of John the Baptist, who taught that people should be ready for the coming of the Messiah, Jesus, through repenting of their sins.

As Priscilla and Aquilla heard him, what do you think they had in mind? Yes, they wanted to help him to more deeply understand **the way of God**. They didn't think his message about 'the way of God' was wrong, but found something missing in his messages. So, they invited Apollos to their home and explained to him **the way of God more adequately**. (Verse 26)

Priscilla and Aquilla were such good people. They did not blame Apollos for falling short of the understanding of the Gospel in his public speeches. They were not cold to Apollos. They did not downplay his message. They did not feel a sense of rivalry concerning him. Instead, they wanted to help him see what he could not see and to grow in his understanding of what Jesus had done for His people. So, they opened their home to Apollos and gave him a chance to learn more about **the way of God** revealed through Jesus Christ.

By examining the challenges that Priscilla and Aquilla faced when interacting with Apollos, what challenges do we face in terms of our relationships with each other in our faith community?

I would like all of us to remember that Priscilla and Aquilla regarded Apollos as a co-worker for building up God's kingdom and were ready to help Apollos fully understand **the way of God**.

We should do the same thing as that couple did with Apollos. We are not perfect in our understanding of the scriptures, faith in Jesus, church ministries, and our lives of faith. And we have many other kinds of differences and weaknesses. Regardless, we should be on the same page regarding who we are to one another. All of us are God's children who know God's love through Jesus Christ and are called to gather together to make God's salvation known to the world and to build God's kingdom. In Christ, we are co-workers who need to encourage and embrace one another to make beautiful things happen in our relationships and ministries. Mutual trust and cooperation are the way of our Christian life.

Let's think about what differences or weaknesses among us prevent us from seeing one another as co-workers who build up God's kingdom. Let's look into ourselves and find out what makes us hesitant to build close relationships with others, especially our family, friends, neighbors, and church congregants. And let's search for what we need to do to open ourselves up to serving others and to make changes in our lives of faith and ministries.

As we strive to open our minds, hearts, and lives to others, God will work through us and make significant changes in our lives of faith and in our faith community.

Let's turn to the reason why Priscilla and Aquilla wanted to fellowship with Apollos. In verse 26, we see that Priscilla and Aquilla explained Apollos **the way of God more adequately**. What

does that mean? Priscilla and Aquilla seemed to think that Apollos' understanding of **the way of God** was inadequate. What made them think that about him? We can get a hint from verse 25. *"...though he (Apollo) knew only the baptism of John."*

Considering this verse, we can presume that Apollos was under the influence of John the Baptist, who admonished people to repent of their sins in preparation for the coming Messiah, baptizing people with water. Apollos seemed to say to the Christians that they should repent their sins to welcome the coming Messiah having a baptism of water. For Priscilla and Aquilla, it did not fully show the way of God, through which God's salvation could be revealed to the Christians.

They thought something important was missing in Apollos' understanding of **the way of God** and a baptism of water. They wanted him to know another kind of baptism, which shows **the way of God** fully. Then, what kind of baptism did they have in mind? We can imagine that they had a specific baptism in mind, which they had probably shared with Paul.

In Acts 9:17, we can see, the resurrected Jesus sent Ananias to Paul so that Paul could see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit. As Ananias put hands on Saul and said what he heard from the resurrected Jesus, Paul could see again and then was baptized. By receiving baptism, he confirmed that he had been dead but became alive spiritually through the Lord's grace.

And Paul confirmed what that baptism was like in Colossians 2:12. It reads, *"Christ having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead."*

Paul related baptism with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul's point was this; When Christians are baptized with the Holy Spirit, they could believe that Jesus Christ died for them, redeemed their sins, and gave them a new life through rising from the dead. **The way of God** that saves His people from their sins was done with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christians can know the way of God through the work of the Holy Spirit. This was Paul's understanding of baptism with the Holy Spirit

Priscilla and Aquilla probably shared this kind of baptism with Paul. What Priscilla and Aquilla wanted to say to Apollos was that **the way of God** can be understood by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, not the baptism of John.

Just as Apollos needed to know more about this kind of baptism, so do we. The baptism of the Holy Spirit has the power to totally change our lives. Paul is a good example of this change. In Galatians 2:20, Paul confessed that the most beautiful things happened to him through the Holy Spirit. *"I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."*

Do we have things that need to be changed by the Holy Spirit in both our inner and outer lives? Let's humbly look into ourselves! Do we not hear what God says to us? Do we ignore God's existence and expectations for our lives? Do we like to depend on our visible resources rather than God's provision? Do we pursue our desires and life goals like material achievement and success? Are we not building up a personal relationship with God? When it comes to our self-centeredness, disobedience, spiritual laziness, spiritual arrogance, indifference to others, we need

to make changes. However, we cannot change these things on our own, but the Holy Spirit can do. We need to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Let's start by asking God to help us to honestly look into ourselves and figure out what we need to change with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Recently, my cell phone was broken. The screen had had cracks a few months ago, and finally, the touch sensor did not work. I could no longer use my phone. I checked out the cost of replacing the screen. It was too expensive, and I considered buying a brand new one at an affordable price. To get help with my decision about what to do, I asked my wife and daughter what they would do if they were in this situation. Without any hesitation, both of them advised me to repair the phone because it would be cheaper than buying a new phone and would also protect the environment. I should not have asked them for their advice. Finally, I had to choose to replace the screen so that I would not be seen as a person who would waste money and not protect the environment.

One day when I looked at my repaired phone, I came to think that we are like a repaired phone. We have many kinds of brokenness in our character, relationships, ministries, and lives, but God does not give up on us because our brokenness. Instead, God wants to repair us with His love and grace. God has opened the way for us to be freed, and healed to live a new life through His son's death and resurrection, Jesus Christ.

The fact that we have many kinds of brokenness and weaknesses is not a shame on each of us but a gracious privilege through which we can turn to God and experience abundant God's love and grace. Let's not hesitate to ask the Holy Spirit to baptize us. Dare to ask for it because that is the way we live. We can live our life as long as we receive the way of God with the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

This morning, the scripture reminds us that we are co-workers who are challenged to build up God's kingdom and to serve one another, and that we should know what 'the way of God' is for each of us. Let's seek and embrace a new and fulfilling life, which is available to each of us through Jesus Christ. Let's be unafraid to pray that the Holy Spirit will be present with us and reign over our thoughts, minds, hearts, ministries, and lives.