

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

“...about all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1).

R₂L – Resolved to Live: With a Heart for Training **Acts 18:24-28**

24 Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. 25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John; 26 and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. 27 And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace, 28 for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

A most insightful verse regarding the importance and purpose of the Word of God is found in one of Paul's letters to Timothy. In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 we read these words, words that I hope are increasingly familiar to you,

All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Indeed, Scripture, the Bible that you hold in your hands, is “profitable” – it is valuable; it is worth much. In what ways is it worthy? According to what we just read, it is the Bible that gives us *teaching*, telling us what is right. The Scriptures give us *reproof*, showing us what is not right. The Word of God gives us *correction*, revealing to us how to get right. And this holy Writ gives us *training in righteousness*, instructing us how to stay right with God. For the one who will study and apply what he learns from the Bible will grow in Christlikeness and will avoid many pitfalls in this world.

But I would like to come back to this one aspect regarding the profitability of God's word found in the phrase, “training in righteousness.” The authors of the New Testament are by no means stingy when it comes to ideas like discipleship and training. In 2 Timothy 2:1-7, Paul instructs Timothy saying,

2 You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. 3 Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. 5 Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules. 6 The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops. 7 Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

Using the imagery of a faithful teacher, of a dedicated soldier, a committed athlete as well as a die-hard farmer, Paul expresses level of commitment to know and share Christ that is to be

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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unrivaled by any other commitment in our lives. Peter, writing to believers scattered throughout Asia Minor, reminded them to **“grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”** (2 Peter 3:18a). And consider the benediction of the author of Hebrews who wrote, **“20 Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, 21 equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”** (Hebrews 13:20-21)

One thing all these verses have in common is the idea of being equipped, being trained, being prepared to do well in your service to the Lord. As we come to Acts 18:24-28, we find two believers, Priscilla and Aquila, who are resolved to see another believer trained in righteousness, discipled in the things of the Lord, equipped for every good work. Why is this text given to us by Luke? Why did God include it in the account of the early church? We have been given this text for our instruction, so that we might learn from it how we can be resolved to live with a heart for training, a heart for seeing one another become even as Apollos, **“mighty in the Scriptures.”**

But just how do we cultivate this resolve to both be trained in righteousness as well as help others be trained in righteousness? From our text, I wish to speak to you about becoming like Apollos, becoming a “FAT” Christian. The letters F.A.T. will serve as our outline this morning. If we would be resolved to live with a heart for training, we must...

I. Be Faithful (Acts 18:24)

Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures.

We learn a number of things from this brief description of Apollos. The first thing we are told is the Apollos was a Jew, a Jew from Alexandria, Egypt. Let me remind you that while the book of Acts is focused upon the life and ministries of Peter and Paul, spending most of its time following the spread of the gospel through the missionary efforts of Paul and his team, the spread of the gospel was not in any way limited at this time to the efforts of this one man and his team. The gospel was spreading throughout the world, to the remotest parts of the earth.

Remember back in Acts 8 when Philip was given the opportunity to preach the gospel to the Ethiopian Eunuch, who believed and was baptized. Where did that man go? He went back down into Africa, through Egypt and on into Ethiopia. And what did he do? He shared the gospel, Beloved, just because the Bible does not give us the details, we know that the followers of Jesus took the gospel all over the world. And interestingly enough, we know that there was an early church established in Egypt. Some of the oldest known fragments of the New Testament, dating to the first half of the second century, just a few years after the death of the Apostle John, were found in Egypt.

And it was from Alexandria, Egypt that this Jew named Apollos had been exposed to the teachings of John the Baptist, teaching that pointed people to Christ, and Apollos believed. Let me remind you that the ministry of John the Baptist was an important part of God’s redemptive plan. God had sent John to prepare the nation of Israel for their Messiah (John 1:15-34). John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance; those who were baptized looked forward to the coming Messiah (Acts 19:4). John also announced a future baptism that would come by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8) which took place on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:5). Apollos knew about the promises, but he did not know about their fulfillment.

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

“...about all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1).

How did Apollos come to know this teaching of John the Baptist? Alexandria was a center for learning. It would seem that some of John the Baptist’s disciples (Matthew 14:12; Luke 11:1) had gone there while Christ was still ministering on earth, and shared with the Jews as much as they knew. Luke informs us that Apollos was an **“eloquent man”** – perhaps it would be better to say that Apollos was a man of learning, one who had been faithful in learning what he could about the Scriptures and about Jesus.

Apollos puts many of us to shame, for at this point in time there were no New Testament Bibles with the Gospel accounts or the letters of Paul to give instruction and insight regarding the person and work of Christ. Yet, Apollos was faithful, committed to what he knew.

How about you? Are you faithful to what you know about Jesus? I find a common concern among Christians is the fear that they do not know enough to serve; they do not know enough to speak to others about Jesus. Yet, here, as we will see, is a man committed to knowing and to making known; of living and living out what he knows about God, His Word and even about the little bit he knows concerning Jesus. You do not have to be a bible scholar to tell others about Jesus. Dr. Charles Ryrie, a great and learned Bible scholar, was once asked to articulate the gospel. Do you know how he responded? He said, “Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so...” Do you know a little about Jesus? Then be faithful to scatter that seed. The last time I checked, Jesus had turned a couple of little fish and some loaves of bread into enough to feed thousands. If He can do that with fish and bread, do you not also believe He can do it with His own word?

We must be faithful to do what we know God has called us to do, to make known whatever it is that we know about the person and work of Jesus. Apollos was faithful to that and as we will see, God will reward that faithfulness with even more insight and knowledge. At the close of verse 24, we find Apollos leaving his native city, and heading off to Ephesus. This brings us to the second point, that if we would be resolved to have a heart for training, we must not only be faithful, but we must also...

II. Be Available (Acts 18:25-26a)

25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John; 26 and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue.

Faithfulness implies some kind of action and the action of Apollos was to make himself available for service. Luke tells us that Apollos **“had been instructed in the way of the Lord.”** The word “instructed” here means “catechized” and suggests that Apollos had personal formal training in the Scriptures. He was available to learn, available to serve, available to make Jesus known. And evidently, Apollos was a powerful and gifted preacher! D. Martin Lloyd-Jones defined good preaching as “logic on fire.” That was Apollos. He knew how to grab an audience’s attention and hold it. He not only had something to say, he knew how to say it with power, with fervency and with accuracy. There was one problem with his availability however, that his training was limited to the facts about the ministry of John the Baptist. It was not that Apollos’ message was inaccurate or insincere; but it was incomplete.

The problem was not with what Apollos *said*, but what with what he did not say. Please do not miss this, as we can be guilty of this today; at issue is that he did not preach the whole gospel. Why? Because he simply did not know it. Nobody had ever told him. Sometimes we do

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

“...about all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1).

not share the whole gospel, not because we have never been told, but because we are simply too cold. We lack the fire and enthusiasm of Apollos who is out there saying whatever he can about Jesus, even if it was incomplete, because he wanted others to know. We can lack the faithfulness and availability of Apollos. We are cold to the fact that there are those who do not really know Jesus and would benefit from hearing the gospel if we would but share it. And for those of us who fear we might not know enough about Jesus to share Him adequately, let me remind you that you know more about Jesus than Apollos did before meeting Priscilla and Aquila. But what was Apollos doing anyway? He was preaching about Jesus!

Are you available like Apollos? Are you willing to go wherever you are asked to go; willing to do whatever you asked to do; putting yourself in the middle of a ministry, in the middle of those who are serving so that you can jump in and help, jump in and serve, jump in and share the gospel? Are you available?

So, we find Apollos faithful to learning about Jesus, available to make Jesus known, even if his knowledge was incomplete; notice with me from the middle of verse 26 the third resolve we ought to have for developing a heart for training. We must...

III. Be Teachable (Acts 18:26)

But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

So, here is Apollos, preaching away, boldly speaking and preaching about Jesus. But his message was incomplete. His message did not make that final crucial point nor call anyone to a knowledgeable response. How do you help someone like that, someone with tons of talent, someone who is faithful, who is available, who is obviously gifted for an area of service, but who is either off base or inadequate in certain areas of teaching? Do you rebuke him? Do you avoid him? I know, let us just pray for him. Notice that Aquila and Priscilla taught him and more importantly that Apollos as in fact, teachable.

It would seem that after Apollos spoke, Aquila and Priscilla invited him home for lunch, and in due time they shared something along the lines of, "Thank you for your teaching, brother. Your message was packed with spiritual meat and was delivered with power. We thank you for preaching the Scriptures and not your own opinions. But do you know that there is more to the story? Did you know that the Messiah of whom John the Baptist spoke of as coming has actually come and that He died on the cross for our sins, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life? Was Apollos teachable? Evidently so for Luke says they "explained to him the way of God more accurately." Can you begin to imagine this conversation? A gifted, powerful preacher being instructed by a "lay couple". How did Apollos respond? It would appear with grateful humility, willing to be taught the way of God more perfectly.

From this, let us note a few lessons we ought to learn from Apollos. **First**, let me remind you that you need not know everything to start serving the Lord and sharing the gospel. Never allow your level of knowledge dictate to you your obedience to be a faithful and available witness for Jesus. You and I are in process and wherever we are in the process, the mission is the same, make Jesus known as best as you are able. That is the first lesson.

Second, let me challenge you that because you do not know everything, you must develop a teachable heart. Are you teachable? Can someone take you aside and say to you, you need to know more; you need to understand this? It is unclear just how much Apollos knew. We know

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

“...about all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1).

he had a thorough knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord and knew only the baptism of John. What he knew about Jesus was based only on what John the Baptist had taught. It would seem that he was unaware of the significance of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, the coming of the Holy Spirit or even of the birth of the Church at Pentecost. What he knew he believed, but what he knew was incomplete. Up to verse 26, Apollos was more like an Old Testament saint than a New Testament believer.

James M. Boice tells a similar story from church history. About the time of the Reformation in England there was a man just like Apollos whose name was Hugh Latimer. Latimer was a highly educated man with a thorough knowledge of the Bible and could speak with eloquence. Eventually he was martyred for his strong faith in Jesus. But how did this learned man come to faith in Jesus Christ? Glad you asked! Before Latimer was a Christian, he was nonetheless in the church and knew the Scriptures well. He knew Jesus Christ; that is, he knew who Jesus was and much about him. But he did not know what it was to be born again. He did not know the gospel. Like many in his day, he thought that the way to get to heaven was by good works. There was a young monk who knew Latimer and admired him. This man was known as 'Little Bilney' because he was short. He did not have much education. No one thought very much of him. But Bilney was converted, and he wondered how it might be possible for him to bring the gospel to Hugh Latimer. Bilney thought that Latimer would be a tremendous force for the Reformation in England if he could just hear the gospel. So Bilney prayed about this and finally hit upon an idea. Priests were required to hear those who wanted to confess their sins. So, one day when Latimer was serving in the church, Bilney went up to him, tugged at his sleeve, and asked Latimer to hear his confession. Latimer said he would. So, they went into the confessional, and Bilney confessed the gospel to him. He told how he was a sinner, how he was unable to save himself by his own good works, how Jesus had died for him, and how now, by faith, the righteousness of Jesus had been imputed to him apart from good works. That is what he confessed to Hugh Latimer, and in that way Latimer heard the gospel for the very first time and was converted. It was an important moment in the English Reformation.

How important is it for us to be teachable. There is not one of us in here, regardless of our age, regardless of our educational level, regardless of the length of time we have been Christians that are above or beyond the need of being taught. Are you teachable? Are you available? Are you faithful?

Let us close by noting in verses 27-28 how all three of these elements, faithfulness, availability and teachability are once again seen in the life of Apollos.

IV. Be a FAT Christian (27-28)

27 And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace, 28 for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

Having been trained in righteousness by the Word of God, by a couple who themselves were faithful, available and teachable, Apollos was now to be a gospel force to be reckoned with. Before this encounter we saw Apollos as being fervent and fiery, but now this fire was coupled with the full light of truth. Notice how FAT Apollos was.

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

“...about all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1).

In verse 27 we find his faithfulness, wanting to preach and teach the Word of God. We also see his availability as he used his abilities to help God’s people. Notice how Luke says Apollos “greatly helped those who had believed through grace.” How did he help them? Through his thorough knowledge of the Scriptures now coupled with the truth of Jesus Christ. He was resolved to live with a heart of training others in the ways of Jesus.

Let me remind you, that in whatever way God has gifted you, be it an ability to preach or with hands that fix things or anything in between, you are to use it to help God’s people.

And then, in verse 28, we see the one taught becoming the teacher. If you are not being taught, then you ought to be the teacher. We find Apollos picking up where Paul left off. Remember the Jews in Corinth, how they had become abusive with Paul and forced him to turn to the Gentiles (18:6)? Notice that Apollos went about things differently. He went right after them, debating the Jews, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah. By doing this apologetic work with non-believing Jews, Apollos not only took some of the heat off the rest of the church, but he also undoubtedly convinced some Jews to come to Christ. All because Apollos was faithful, available and teachable.

There are some who believe, including Martin Luther, that this Apollos authored of the book of Hebrews. I am not sure if he did or did not, but I do know that he was a great minister for the kingdom. Paul spoke highly of him in 1 Corinthians 3:6 saying, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.” Apollos was a FAT Christian. How did he get that way? Because of other FAT Christians, namely Pricilla and Aquila. These two were willing to take a risk and make an investment. We must do the same. Our mission involves training others to be FAT: faithful, available and teachable.

How might you begin afresh this day to the resolve of being FAT? Answer two questions and you will be on your way. First, ask yourself, “*Am I right with God?*” Beloved, you cannot be of any help to others if you are not right with God. And second, ask yourself, “*Am I involved in the mission?*” Let me remind you that you were saved for a mission, the mission of making Christ known, of being His witness among the people you know. Are you using what God has given you so that the mission of Acts 1:8 is not just a verse you have memorized, but is a description of your life? May it be so to the glory of God, the exaltation of Christ and the building up of the church!

Soli Deo Gloria

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