

Why Doctrine Matters in our Mission - Acts 18:18-28

Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

I have heard it stated! Doctrine is boring and doctrine divides. We would draw more people and church would be a lot more interesting if we inspired people without a whole lot of that doctrine stuff. Makes sense. Anytime we do the work of clarifying our beliefs and determine clear lines of doctrine, that act by definition will divide those who agree with those doctrines and those who do not. So, shouldn't we avoid doctrine and just preach about Jesus?

Our story this week follows Paul as his third missionary journey comes to an end. He travels from Greece back to Syria where he will visit Jerusalem and then make his way back to Antioch by way of Ephesus. Ephesus was a major sea port in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey), a significant city in that day. Paul has taken Priscilla and Aquila with him, and they remain in Ephesus as Paul finishes his voyage. But the story takes a quick excursus from the narrative about Paul to tell us about a young preacher named Apollo, who apparently could bring it. The guy waxed eloquent, or as the old country churches would say, the boy could shuck corn. He shows up in Ephesus after Paul leaves and begins to preach in the city and synagogue. Luke tells us multiple encouraging things about this young preacher. First he is Jewish, and from the city of Alexandria. Alexandria is a city in northern Egypt. It was known as the capitol of knowledge and learning in the ancient world, known for the famous Library of Alexandria (which Nicholas Cage found in *National Treasure*). At the time of the New Testament the city had a significant Jewish population, and it had also become the epicenter of Jewish thought and philosophy. The Septuagint (Greek translation of Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek) had been translated in this city, and at the time of the New Testament the most significant Jewish philosopher in the world lived there, a man named Philo. We are told that Apollos was an eloquent man. "Eloquent" is a translation of a Greek word *logios*, which meant learned and skilled in logical thought. So he was educated, knowledgeable, and maybe had even been influenced and taught by Philo. Apollo had been instructed in the way of the Lord, was fervent in spirit, and the thing he taught about Jesus were accurate. So he wasn't a false teacher, but something was amiss. The text shares that he knew only of the baptism of John. This infers that he knew Jesus was the Messiah, but may have been unclear about the implications of the resurrection, and of the need for Jewish people to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus for their salvation. I can imagine Priscilla and Aquila, the tent making couple going to synagogue and being thrilled to hear this young preacher make much of Jesus among the Jews. Yet, as they listened they realized something was amiss. While this young man was incredibly gifted, like a young padawan, he needed more training for his discipleship. Gifting was not enough, he needed to have his doctrine shaped so he would more clearly and accurately preach Jesus. So this loving Christian couple pulled the gifted pastor aside, probably taking him to their home for meals to invest the true Gospel into Apollos's life. In other words, the investment of doctrine was a key aspect for his discipleship and to prepare him for fruitful ministry. And a fruitful ministry Apollos did have, as he continues to preach in Ephesus, and is eventually sent with the Gospel back to Corinth.

Doctrine matters. Without careful discipleship in our core beliefs we can be passionate, and give our lives to the wrong Jesus, a Jesus who cannot save. It matters that we train our pastors and teachers in the core doctrines of the Christian faith and teach them to hold those doctrines with precision. Charles Spurgeon once said that a mist in the pulpit will create a fog in the pew. Anyone leading the church needs to proclaim the person and work of Jesus with clarity, reminding people that he alone is God who became man, lived the perfect life as our representative, and then died in our place for our sin, rising on the third day in victory over sin, death, and the grave. There is no other way to salvation and redemption other than Jesus, but for all who believe, repenting of sin and trusting in Jesus there is the

promise of forgiveness and heaven. And we show this through our Trinitarian baptism. So we need to train leaders in doctrine, and in their precision they will disciple others with clarity. Think of doctrine as the fuel for our discipleship, the wood for the fire. The wood is not the fire, nor is it the goal of our faith. Those who only focus on doctrine may have a nice wood pile, but often lack the actual fire. On the other hand, without doctrine, any true fire creating passionate love for God and neighbor will eventually die out if it is not fed by the glorious doctrinal truths from the Scriptures.

So we constantly need Priscilla and Aquilas, people who know and love Jesus deeply, who spend time in the Scriptures and have thought about theology. We need these people to invest the doctrines of the Gospel into others. These people are to listen to preaching and teaching in our church carefully and when it goes awry or is off just by a smidgen they should lovingly correct. We need people to grow in their own faith so they can pass the truths of the faith on to others as they do life with them and teach them. And as a church we must be intentional about continually adding wood to the fire so that our passion for Jesus that drives our discipleship stays aflame.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Leviticus 17	Leviticus 18	Leviticus 19	Leviticus 20	Leviticus 21	Leviticus 22	Leviticus 23

Reading from this past week: Acts 18:18-28

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Acts 19:1-20

Family Worship

Song - *O Great God*

<https://youtu.be/gOPbanJKWE8>

Gospel Project

Unit: Warnings to the People

Story: Isaiah Warned of God’s Judgment

Big Picture Question: What is repentance?

Answer: Repentance is turning from sin and turning to Jesus?

Scripture: Isaiah 22, 48

New City Catechism

Question #42: How is the Word of God to be read and heard?

Answer: With diligence, preparation, and prayer; so that we may accept it with faith and practice it in our lives.

Verse: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Scripture

Acts 18:18-28

- When you hear the word “doctrine” what do you think about?
- Why is gifting not enough for those who preach and teach the Gospel?
- What did Priscilla and Aquila do that impacted Apollos and his ministry so deeply that Luke felt in necessary to include it in the narrative of Acts?
- Who has served you by investing the doctrines of the Christian faith into your life?

Prayer

*Pray that we would be a church that loved true doctrine which would be the fuel for our discipleship.

*Pray for those who are involved in the Leadership 222 Cohort this year.