

## ACTS: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORK OF DISCIPLING

### XLVII. Edifying The Church By Ministering To Its Leaders

(Acts 18:18-28)

#### I. Introduction

- A. The book of Acts explains "the orderly and sovereignly directed progress of the kingdom message from Jews to Gentiles, and from Jerusalem to Rome," Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 351. We can thus learn much about aligning our ministry efforts with God's sovereign work from studying the book of Acts.
- B. Acts 18:18-28 records how a lay couple named Aquilla and Priscilla greatly edified the Church by spiritually ministering to God's messenger Apollos when Paul was unable to be present to address Apollos' needs.
- C. We thus view the passage for our insight and application for the edification of the Church (as follows):

#### II. Edifying The Church By Ministering To Its Leaders, Acts 18:18-28.

- A. Acts 18:18-22 reports that when Paul left Corinth to minister at Ephesus, he became unable to continue to minister there due to matters of concern that he needed to address elsewhere:
  - 1. After finishing his initial ministry at Corinth, Paul set sail for Syria, intending to return to his sending missionary Church at Antioch of Syria, Acts 18:18a, 22b.
  - 2. Aquila and Priscilla, Paul's coworkers at Corinth, accompanied him on this journey, stopping with Paul at Ephesus along the way where he began to minister the gospel at the synagogue in Ephesus, Acts 18:19.
  - 3. However, before he had sailed to Ephesus, Paul had cut his hair at Cenchreae, a seaport town of Corinth (Acts 18:18b) since he was under a Nazirite vow, a vow that possibly was made under duress prior to the Lord's giving him the encouraging vision of Acts 18:9-10 to continue his work at Corinth. (Ibid., p. 407)
  - 4. Thus, having faced significant stress, and desiring to return to his home sending Church possibly for his own nurture, and though the Hebrews at the synagogue in Ephesus wanted more ongoing discussions with Paul, he refused to continue with them, saying that he would return to them if God willed, Acts 18:19-21a.
  - 5. Paul thus left Aquila and Priscilla at Ephesus (Acts 18:18b-19a) while he sailed from Ephesus to Caesarea in Palestine, then went up to Jerusalem to greet the Church at Jerusalem before going to his ultimate destination of Antioch in Syria where he spent some time, Acts 18:21b-23a.
  - 6. Thus, Aquila and Priscilla were left at Ephesus by Paul likely to edify new believers there in his absence while he attended to issues of concern related to his own needs elsewhere!
- B. However, a great need arose in another messenger of the Lord at Ephesus named Apollos, Acts 18:24-26a:
  - 1. A Hebrew man named Apollos of Alexandria came to Ephesus, and he was both eloquent and competent in the Scriptures, instructed in God's ways and fervent in spirit, speaking accurately on matters about Jesus, but only with the partial knowledge of knowing only about the baptism of John, Acts 18:24-25 ESV.
  - 2. Aquila and Priscilla heard him speak boldly in the synagogue, and they realized that Apollos needed to be informed of the full truth regarding Christ for the good of the Christian Church, Acts 18:26a.
  - 3. Nevertheless, the Apostle Paul was absent, unable to address this need, creating a vacuum of oversight.
- C. Accordingly, the lay couple Aquila and Priscilla handled this situation with great tact, ministering to Apollos in such a way that both he and the Church universal were greatly edified, Acts 18:26b-28:
  - 1. Realizing that publicly correcting Apollos would only hurt his credibility before his listeners, harming his effectiveness, Aquila and Priscilla took Apollos aside to speak to him privately, Acts 18:26b.
  - 2. In private, Aquila and Priscilla "explained to him the way of God more adequately," Acts 18:26c NIV.
  - 3. Equipped with this fuller knowledge, Apollos thought it best not to continue ministering to his hearers at Ephesus where he might be errantly viewed as having wrongfully altered his former message, so he desired to cross the Aegean Sea to Achaia, probably Corinth, so believers in Ephesus wrote urging believers in Achaia to receive Apollos when he arrived there, Acts 18:27a.
  - 4. Thus, when Apollos came to Achaia, he greatly helped the believers there, strongly refuting opposing Hebrews in showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah, Acts 18:27b-28; Ibid., p. 409.

***Lesson:*** When Paul was unable to be at Ephesus to address the theological ignorance of the highly gifted Apollos, the Christian lay couple Aquila and Priscilla tactfully in private informed Apollos of the full truth about Christ so that he could be a great tool in the hands of God to edify the Church and powerfully evangelize the lost.

***Application:*** If a leader is in spiritual need but no other qualified leader is available to address that need, but laymen can do so, those laymen should tactfully address that need for the good of the whole body of Christ.