

4. How would you compare and contrast the baptism of John with the fuller understanding of baptism taught by Jesus and the apostles?
5. What did Priscilla and Aquila do to address their concerns?
6. What is commendable about their approach?
7. What are some less commendable approaches to dealing with concerns within the church?
8. What was the result of Priscilla and Aquila's investment in Apollos?
9. What are some of the key truths you learned about the dynamics of the gospel from this study?
10. What are some of the key truths you learned about the dynamics of the church from this study?
11. How are you going to practice these truths in the days and weeks to come?



THE STORY CONTINUES

LAYING THE FOUNDATION | ACTS 18:18-28

Paul opens his letter to the Ephesians with a remarkable prayer. Before diving into an explanation of the gospel, Paul prays that God would enable the Ephesian believers to understand the depth and beauty of the gospel.

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰ he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms... (Ephesians 1:18-20)

Paul's prayer flows naturally into one of the most profound explanations of the gospel in Scripture. Paul knows, and we know, he has stretched the limits of our imagination. So his explanation of the gospel flows naturally back to prayer.

For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:14-19).

He brings his prayer to a conclusion with the wonderful benediction we often recite at the end of our services.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen (Ephesians 3:20-21).

Imagine what it would be like if these prayers were increasingly realized in our lives. What if we lived in the hope described in these prayers? What if we lived in light of the riches described in these prayers? What if we grasped the width, length and depth of Christ's love described in these prayers? What if we experienced the power described in these prayers—the same power God exerted when he raised Christ from the dead? What if we were filled to the measure of all God's fullness? Paul is quick to remind us that all of this is “immeasurably more than we could ask or imagine,” but never the less, all of this is ours in Christ. If you've every lived with the nagging suspicion that God has so much more for you, Paul's prayers remove all doubt.

When you hear these prayers, you begin to understand Paul's passion for the gospel—a gospel so simple that a child can know it, a gospel so profound that we will never fully apprehend it and never fully grow into it.

When we come to the last half of Acts 18, it seems as if Luke is simply tying up a few loose ends. He describes the end of one missionary journey, the beginning of another, and a nice ministry moment that takes place in Paul's absence. But Luke is doing so much more. He is laying the foundation for his account of Paul's ministry in Ephesus—the rich ministry experience that inspired these remarkable prayers.

It shouldn't surprise us, that the gospel is front and center every step of the way.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION (vv. 18-22)

¹⁸ Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sisters and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchreae because of a vow he had taken.

¹⁹ They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. ²⁰ When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. ²¹ But as he left, he promised, “I will come back if it is God's will.”

Then he set sail from Ephesus. ²² When he landed at Caesarea, he went up to Jerusalem and greeted the church and then went down to Antioch.

1. While Paul was unable to remain in Ephesus, he did leave two very important deposits in the city. What were they and why are each of them vital to laying a foundation for future ministry?
2. What do you think Paul emphasized as he reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue?
3. How did his hearers respond to his message?

4. Why do you think Paul is hesitant to make any promises?
5. What does it mean for us to live our lives in light of “God's will?”

STRENGTHENING THE DISCIPLES (vv. 23)

²³ After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

1. Before beginning a new work in Ephesus, Paul spent some time checking on the health and vitality of the churches he had previously planted. Why do you think this was important to Paul? What does it tell us about the heart of Paul?
2. What do you think are some of the things Paul looked for as he assessed the health and vitality of the churches he planted?
3. What do you think Paul did to “strengthen the disciples?”
4. What are some of the things we can do to “strengthen the disciples?”

DIGGING EVER DEEPER (vv. 24-28)

²⁴ Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. ²⁵ 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.

²⁶ He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

²⁷ When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers and sisters encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. ²⁸ For he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.

1. Luke goes out of his way to describe Apollos as a powerful communicator. What are some of the things Apollos had going for him?
2. Which of these are most important to you? Why?
3. What was the deficiency in Apollos's understanding of the gospel?