

Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. 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 fervour and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. Acts 18.24-25.

What a great God we have! Last Sunday we saw how, when Paul was in Corinth, the enemies of Jesus Christ used the law and the courts to shut him up, just as the authorities today are using so-called equality and human rights laws to shut us Christians up. Paul seemed trapped, but his enemies hadn't reckoned with God who used Gallio, the unbelieving Roman proconsul, to dismiss the case and the Jews as vexatious litigants. There's a great message of hope for us today here. You might think that people in power seem to be turning against the Church. You might be tempted to throw up your hands in horror and despair at the way things are going in our society. But don't! The outcome doesn't depend on us. God is on the throne. He raised up Gallio the unbelieving Roman governor to deliver Paul from his enemies. That same God will deliver us.

In our next passage in Acts we read how Paul left Corinth after 18 months, and journeyed on to Ephesus, and then to Antioch, thus completing his first missionary tour. In Ephesus we meet a new person called Apollos. What is striking about him, as you can see from v24 was that he was a very *clever* man ... Apollos was a powerful speaker, v28... (No-one knows who actually wrote the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, but it was Martin Luther who first suggested it could have been Apollos).

Clever as Apollos was, there were gaps in his knowledge at this stage, v25... We read in v26 that it was our friends Priscilla and Aquila who filled him in ... I want you to notice

that 'Priscilla and Aquila'. Notice how Priscilla comes first, and that's the way also in vv18 and 19. I really do get cross when people who have never read the Bible insist that it is anti-women. Here is yet another example where the woman comes first, *and* is clearly in a teaching role to a man!

So God raised up the unwitting Gallio *and* this incredibly brainy man with the golden mouth, Apollos. It was hard for Jews to accept that this carpenter Jesus, crucified like a criminal on a Cross, could really be the Messiah promised in the OT. They needed fellow Jews like Paul and Apollos, people with deep knowledge of the OT and huge brains, to help them, v28...

But Apollos was more than just a brainbox and a good speaker. V25 tells us that he spoke 'with great fervour'. We don't want fanatics in the pulpit frothing at the mouth, but we do want preachers who see the seriousness of preaching Jesus Christ. Too much of our preaching really is 'take it or leave it'. We preach each Sunday as though it really doesn't matter that much whether people believe or not. It's just life-style choice. No! This is about The Truth. It's about what is really real, and to reject Christ is to reject reality and to live a life of delusion. The Taliban whose hearts seem filled with hatred and violence desperately need the Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace and Love, in their lives. Corrupt politicians who *still* don't seem to 'get it', desperately need the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Truth, in their lives. So do those business people who think that greed is good and 'your word is your bond' is only for wimps. So do those countless people whose lives are being destroyed by drug and alcohol abuse. So

do those who no longer see any meaning in life. Our people desperately need the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

But it's not just because Jesus is in their own best interests. It's because there is such a thing as Hell. Jesus isn't all meek and mild. He spoke of hell and judgement. Today we would call it 'accountability'. There's a final accountability for all of us. Are you right with the Lord? *That's* why Apollos spoke with such fervour and passion. People's eternal destinations are at stake here. And it's important to get it *right* about Jesus. There's an awful lot of tripe spoken about Jesus from our pulpits, no doubt well-meant, but it is sentimental wishful-thinking, not Biblical, v25...

Atheists love to dismiss the Church by making wild accusations that we're all hypocrites in Church and that we're all a bit thick. This is a favourite device of Professor Richard Dawkins. Never forget that he only got a Second! A slightly more scholarly form of this argument states that the very first converts in the NT were mostly poor people, uneducated, and women. I've already shewn that this is nonsense. Let me remind you of Lydia, the business-woman made rich by selling purple. Go back to 13.1, p1107. Remember Manaen, brought up as foster-brother with King Herod no less? Luke was a doctor. Paul wasn't exactly thick, nor was Apollos.

I'm not saying that you need to be clever to be a Christian. The only qualification for being a Christian is to repent of your sins and put your trust in Christ' blood. Even children like Robin and Isabel, baptised this morning, are included in God's family. What I *am* saying is that it is *not*

true that only dim, weak and emotionally challenged people are taken in by Christianity. Clearly from the very beginning, as we see in *Acts*, bright people like Apollos came to Christ.

Ah, you say, but that was a long time ago. We're smarter now. No! It's the same God, and Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and for ever. I look at this congregation and I see people who are PhDs, consultants, graduates in all the sciences, financiers and business people who 2000 years later still accept the claims of Christ. For every scientist who cannot possibly accept Christianity, I can produce another scientist who can. How do they explain that?

God called the brainy Apollos to know and love Jesus Christ. And he's still calling Apolloses today. You're a Darwinist, so you couldn't possibly be a Christian? Let me introduce you to Prof Simon Conway Morris, FRS, Professor of Evolutionary Palaeobiology at Cambridge. He's a Christian. So is Dr Denis Alexander, Fellow of St Edmund's College, and former Chairman of the Molecular Immunology Programme at the Babraham Institute, Cambridge. Last year he published *Creation or Evolution- Do We Have to Choose?* And what about Francis Collins, former Director of the Human Genome Project who in 2007 received the US Presidential Medal of Freedom? He's a Christian too. Are these people *all* deluded thickoes?

Jesus the Saviour, Jesus the Truth is still changing lives. He's still welcoming children like Robin and Isabel. He still speaks 2,000 years later to the Apolloses of our day, to the greatest minds of our age. He still calls us, and wants every knee to bow and every tongue to confess him as Lord.