

Wings

*"Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles."
Isaiah 40:31*



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Apollos: Honor in Humility

One of the lesser known preachers in the New Testament provides us with a model of oratorical giftedness and humility coexisting in the same person. Modern preachers can learn a lesson here.

"Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately" (Ac. 18:24-26).

"Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to come to you with the brethren, but he was quite unwilling to come at this time; however, he will come when he has a convenient time" (1 Cor. 16:12).



If I had to pick one man in all the Bible to wear the label of "Ideal Preacher," Apollos would get my vote. Luke's description of this Alexandrian preacher—eloquent, mighty in the Scriptures, bold—is enough to make any preacher struggle with envy. With credentials like that, there can be no doubt

that Apollos packed the gallery every time he was scheduled to speak.

But for all his skills as an orator, there is one other quality about this man that deserves attention: his *humility*.

We see evidence of Apollos' humility when he is first introduced in the Biblical account. At that point in his career Apollos knew only the message and baptism of John the Baptist (namely, that the coming of the Messiah was still in the future). Aquila and Priscilla heard Apollos preach that message in Ephesus, and knew that he needed to be brought up to date. So they "took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately."

Many preachers would have been offended by this. Who were these lowly tent makers to think they knew more about theology than the learned Apollos? Yet this preacher did not feel threatened at all. He politely listened, and as a result learned facts that brought his preaching into closer alignment with the truth. From that day forward, Apollos became one of the great gospel preachers of the first century.

Following this encounter with Aquila and Priscilla, Apollos worked with the church in Corinth for some time. Corinth was a challenge for any preacher—even Paul struggled with their dysfunctional faith—but Apollos apparently gained quite a following there (note the "I am of Apollos" faction, 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:4). If Apollos wanted to promote himself, Corinth would have been the ideal home base from which to do so. But after a while, Apollos moved on to opportunities elsewhere.

So when Paul urged Apollos to return to Corinth, apparently in hope that Apollos could use his influence to dampen their factionalism, Apollos wisely declined (1 Cor. 16:12). He knew that a visit from him would likely turn into a celebrity contest, pouring more fuel on the partisan fire.

Let that sink in: Here is a preacher who passed up a chance to promote himself, preferring to let the gospel do its work of molding hearts into the image of Christ. That kind of self-effacing humility is rare among preachers today—but oh so needful.

— David King