

# Strengthening and Equipping the Church

*Pastor Ross S. Russell, Church on the Beach, 8-2-20*

**Text:** Acts 18:20-28

**1. God has a plan for us to strengthen and equip the church.** *Proverbs 16:9, Jeremiah 29:11, Acts 18:21, Philippians 2:13, James 4:13-15,*

Paul is asked to stay in Ephesus. He plans on returning. His goal is to plant churches, strengthen, and encourage them. But he leaves the plans to God. He says he will come back “if God wills”. We will always be safe with this response. Only God really knows what will happen next. And it’s best to let Him determine our course as we make our plans. We know now that he did in fact go back to Ephesus, but for the moment, Paul is leaving that plan in God’s hands.

**2. Strengthen each other in the church.** *Acts 18:23, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, 2 Timothy 1:3-7*

Paul went to the churches to strengthen them. We need each other. We need perspective. Sometimes we lose sight of the big picture in our small part of what God’s doing. A visiting speaker, pastor, missionary, or even a regular member of a church with fresh vision, stories of faith, encouraging words, prophetic words, manifestations of the Spirit like what Steve was teaching last week, will be a boost for a church. Sometimes a weak and discouraged brother can be given new life by your visit.

**3. Accurately explain the Gospel to equip the church.** *Acts 18:26, 1 Peter 3:15*

Priscilla and Aquila took the time to explain to Apollos the complete Gospel. His baptism was based on repentance rather than on faith in the finished work of Christ. Apollos was then able to go to Achaia and help their church! When he explained the Gospel of grace, he in turn refuted the Jews publicly. The best way to refute error is by speaking the Truth. Apollos used the Scriptures to show that Jesus was the Christ the same way Paul had been doing. Apollos was equipped for ministry, and was able to strengthen the church in Achai by proclaiming a clear Gospel.

There are people in the church that don’t know the Gospel. They may still be trying to earn their way to Heaven. We can help strengthen and equip the church by explaining the Gospel more clearly. Then they can go tell others about grace that saves us. You would be surprised how many people go to church that aren’t born again, --that believe you get to Heaven by being good. Ask if people know how to get to heaven. If they don’t know, tell them. They are all around you. You don’t have to go to church to find them.