

**ACTS Lesson 21: Missionary Journey #3, pt. 1 - Ephesus** **2.15.15**  
**Acts 18:23-19:41 "Incomplete Christianity Made Complete" Craig Crawshaw**

Today we commence on Paul's third and final missionary journey, taking him again through Galatia and into Ephesus, the capital city of Asia. (SEE IMAGE). He had made it to Ephesus for a short time at the end of his second missionary journey (18:19-21), promising to return "if God wills." And God did!



Paul stays in Ephesus for 3 years – the longest of any stay on his missionary journeys. There are spectacular miracles of healings brought about by just the touch of Paul's clothing. There is a renouncing of witchcraft and a subsequent public burning of their magic books. There is a huge arena of thousands of Ephesians shouting "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians" for about 2 hours – all to drown out the defense of Jesus Christ. Exiting stories, all.

But today, I am going to bypass these stories (leaving them for you to read and enjoy) and target a particularly interesting account of two occasions in Ephesus where incomplete Christianity is made complete. It is critical that we embrace the fullness of the good news of our faith – and then live it out! We don't want to be guilty of being a "partial Christian." So let's proceed with anticipation and learn what we can from this text - (Acts 18:23 – 19:7) about being made complete.

## **“INCOMPLETE CHRISTIANITY MADE COMPLETE” (18:23 – 19:7)**

**Acts 18:24-26** Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John. And he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

**Acts 18:27-28** And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him, and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

**Acts 19:1-7** It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. He said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said to him, “No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.” And he said, “into what then were you baptized?” And they said, “Into John’s baptism.” Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, this is, in Jesus.” When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying. There were in all about twelve men.

Here are two consecutive stories relayed by Luke, both which tell of “disciples” who were incomplete in their understanding of the gospel message.

### **Story #1 - Apollos (18:24-28)**

- (1) eloquent
- (2) mighty in the Scriptures
- (3) instructed in the way of the Lord
- (4) fervent in spirit
- (5) teaching accurately the things of Jesus

He was a Jew who knew his Old Testament well and was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him teaching, they noticed that something was lacking, for Apollos only knew of the “baptism of John” – that is, that we are to repent of our sins and receive Jesus, the Messiah, as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Apollos appears to have been a believing follower of Jesus. But Priscilla and Aquila perceive that there is no understanding of the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. As a Christian, Apollos had the Holy Spirit living in him – he had been baptized by the Spirit – but he didn’t know it to be true, or know the freedom from Law that the Spirit brings. Once he was graciously, and privately, taught more accurately of his faith, Apollos goes to Corinth and becomes all the more powerful in his life and presentation. The key that shows how he was transformed in his understanding is the word “grace” (v. 27). With the help of Priscilla and Aquila, he came to understand the grace of our Lord Jesus in having freed us from the law through the new covenant of the law of the Spirit living in all believers

Romans 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

Law #1: the law of the sin and of death – you sin (without Christ), you die

Law #2: the law of the Spirit of life – you have the Spirit (in Christ), you live

### **Story #2 - twelve in Ephesus**

(1) did not receive the Holy Spirit when they believed

(2) had not heard of a Holy Spirit

(3) had been baptized in the repentance of John, not in the salvation of Jesus.

Paul discovers 12 well-meaning disciples were who not yet truly Christians, for they had not received the Holy Spirit. Once these 12 believe in and receive the Jesus of whom John the Baptist spoke, they are baptized in the name of Jesus and receive the Holy Spirit. Like at Pentecost, the Spirit causes them to speak in languages and testify of Jesus (prophesying.) Now they are true believers and disciples!

### **These two stories teach us about the importance of “complete Christianity.”**

**(1)** There are some who are Christians, but like Apollos live life more by obedience and dedication to God, than by the freedom and grace of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Are you forever trying to earn God's favor? Or are you living free in knowing you are forgiven, and daily yielding to the Holy Spirit to guide and strengthen you? Christian, I urge you to embrace the “complete Christianity” of walking in the freedom and power of God's Holy Spirit.

**(2)** There are some who think they are Christians, but like the 12 in Ephesus, have never truly believed in and received Jesus as their Savior and Lord. These well-meaning people are on a good path, but have not yet been transformed into the likeness of Christ. Like the 12 in our story, they might think that the Christian life is doing the best they can to stay out of trouble and please God. If this is you, I urge you right now to ask Jesus to enter your life and make you a new creature in Him. His Spirit will fill you and take your incompleteness and make you complete in Him!

**God the Father, is God FOR us – ever nurturing, providing, protecting and guiding**

**God the Son, is God WITH us – ever loving, teaching, exemplifying, and sharing**

**God the Spirit, is God IN us – pruning, convicting, transforming and empowering**

Notice the link of these two stories – both Apollos and the 12 had been baptized in the baptism of John, which was the baptism of repentance, pointing them to Jesus but not introducing them to the fullness of Jesus found in the indwelling Holy Spirit. Law – doing the best you can – was their Christian experience. Grace - living in the freedom from the Law and dependence on the Spirit – was foreign to them. Christianity without experiencing the fullness of God's grace is critically incomplete.

### **The baptism of John (the link in the two stories):**

1. A getting ready for the coming of the Lord
2. A baptism of cleansing
3. A call to repent of sin
- 4.

### **The baptism of Jesus:**

1. A baptism of the Holy Spirit - Mark 1:8)
2. A baptism of fire (purification and refining) - Matthew 3:11
3. A baptism of salvation - 1 Peter 3:21
4. A baptism of identification with death and resurrection - Romans 6:3-11

As we close, hear Paul helping you to be complete in your faith:

**Romans 6:3-11** Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death,

so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, **so we too might walk in newness of life.**

For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin. **For he who has died is free from sin.**

Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. **Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.**