

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

ACTS 18:24-19:7

Last week in our study of the **Book of Acts**, we saw that Paul had met a couple named Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth. We saw that Priscilla and Aquila took Paul into their home and also allowed Paul to practice his trade of tentmaking with them.

We also saw when the Apostle Paul left Corinth and went to the city of Ephesus that Priscilla and Aquila accompanied him there. And when Paul left Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila stayed on in Ephesus. We're going to see today that just as Priscilla and Aquila were God's instruments in Paul's life, they will be His instrument in another in need of their help.

So far in the **Book of Acts**, we've been introduced to several believers. We've met Barnabas and Silas. We've met John Mark and Timothy, and Priscilla and Aquila. Today, we're going to meet a man named Apollos.

(By the way, I've taken the liberty to end our lesson today with **verse 7 of chapter 19**. We'll finish **chapter 19** next Sunday.)

Acts 18:24-28...

Here we see several facts about this man, Apollos. We see Apollos was an educated man ("eloquent" NAS; "learned" KJV). Apollos more than likely had acquired a degree from the university...probably even a master's or a doctorate.

Apollos also had a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. Alexandria, Egypt was a center of learning. Although Scripture doesn't tell us this...it's believed by some theologians that Apollos had been influenced by Jewish philosopher named Philo. Philo was a master at handling the Old Testament and may have had a part in translating the Old Testament into Greek.

Well, not only was Apollos an eloquent man...educated in the Scriptures...but Apollos had also been instructed "**in the way of the Lord.**" **Verse 25** tells us Apollos was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, and that sounds really good until we read the last phrase of that verse... "**being acquainted only with the baptism of John.**"

Now, what **was** the baptism of John? The baptism of John was a baptism marking repentance. But, the baptism Jesus commanded believers to follow is a baptism associated with the work of the Holy Spirit in enlightening a person...producing repentance, yes...but also in drawing that person to Jesus.

When you and I follow Jesus in believer's baptism, the picture we're portraying is the fact that we've listened to the wooing of the Holy Spirit. We've believed in the death, burial and the resurrection of Jesus Christ and because we've put our trust in the finished work of Jesus and have believed the Gospel we are being obedient to Him in baptism.

Apollos only knew about John's baptism, and he also had taught others what he fervently believed. **So, here's this man...eloquent, educated, enthusiastic and excited...but his teaching is incomplete.**

Apollos was telling everything about the Lord that he knew...and he was accurate as far as he went...but he didn't know enough.

Apollos was telling everything about baptism that he knew...but he just didn't know enough.

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

John's baptism was linked to **repentance**.
Christian baptism is linked to **regeneration**.

John's baptism pointed forward to One who **would come**.
Christian baptism pointed back to One who **had come**.

John's baptism announced the Holy Spirit would come into the **world**.
Christian baptism announced the Holy Spirit has come into my **heart**.

Somehow, Apollos had heard John the Baptist. He had heard him preach about the coming Messiah. Apollos believed John the Baptist was preaching truth. Apollos believed the Messiah's coming was soon. But somehow, Apollos didn't know that indeed Jesus had already come and been crucified, had risen, and before He ascended into heaven had commanded that believers be baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Somehow, Apollos had missed the fact that the Holy Spirit had been sent to indwell believers.

And may I say to you that without the Holy Spirit in our lives we would be in a hopeless situation. How does anybody live the Christian life? He or she lives the Christian life by walking...guided not by the flesh, but by the Spirit.

So, Priscilla and Aquila were faced with a dilemma. What were they going to do? How were they going to straighten this man out? I mean, here is a man of eloquence and ability and education and enthusiasm... Should Priscilla and Aquila oppose him? Should they rebuke him?

I believe maybe Priscilla cooked a nice meal and Aquila invited Apollos to their home for dinner. Maybe during the course of the meal they very gently explained to Apollos that the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world...this Lamb of whom John the Baptist had so faithfully preached... had come. He had **already** shed His precious blood and he had **already** been raised and he had **already** ascended back into heaven and I believe they told Apollos that he could be saved if he would only trust Jesus.

I believe they explained to him why a believer should be baptized...how it is an outward sign of an inward change and how it pictures the gospel of the Lord Jesus – the death, burial and the resurrection – and how baptism doesn't make a person a Christian but it proclaims that he is a Christian...and how it doesn't put him in the church, but baptism announces that he is in the church.

And you know what? No matter how it happened...whether it happened over dinner or not...Apollos listened and he was so grateful to his new friends for teaching him this truth that he now believed and embraced and was ready to share with others.

What a teachable spirit Apollos had! Apollos could have gotten his back up and said,
"You know, Priscilla and Aquila, I really hate to mention
this, but I have a Ph.D from the University of Egypt
and what did you say you do? You're tentmakers,
aren't you? And you're going to teach me? I don't
THINK so!!"

But, Apollos received and believed, didn't he? Apollos very humbly sat at the feet of these tentmakers. Apollos learned from Priscilla and Aquila that being "religious" and educated and

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

eloquent and passionate about one's beliefs are not enough. Apollos is a prime example that "religion" is not enough. Apollos was willing to learn...He was willing to be taught. He was willing to confess he was a sinner in need of a Savior and because of this he got saved...got his theology straightened out and went forth and preached the truth to others.

Has it occurred to you that our Heavenly Father uses different types of folks? I mean, here were Priscilla and Aquila...probably not very well educated, the only degree they held was their AUG – "Approved Unto God" degree - but they knew truth from error and were willing to take a very educated man aside and teach him. Here was Apollos...so sure he's been teaching the right things, yet willing to be straightened out...willing to turn his life over to Jesus...and eager to share this with others.

Paul later wrote how we are to correct a brother we see in sin. Now, Satan would have us believe that we have no business correcting anybody...I mean, doesn't he come at you and say, "Why, what business do you have correcting anybody...you've done the same thing yourself." But, when you stop and think...that's all the more reason to correct someone...we can tell them of the sad results of that sin firsthand.

Let me also say this...not only do Christians need to rebuke and admonish each other...they also need to encourage and exhort each other. I had lunch with a young lady yesterday. She used to be in our church but has moved away. She can't find a good church. She can't find mature Christian friends and even though she loves her job and her location, she is starving for the support and affirmation and encouragement that Christians give each other.

Doesn't Scripture tell us that "iron sharpens iron"? The bottom line is that God has designed each one of us in such a way that we need each other. Let's don't forget that!!

God can use anybody who is willing to be used. And it takes all types of folks to get the job done. God has chosen to use you in your particular position in life. Are you willing to be used? Am I? Would you and I know enough truth to take aside someone who is teaching error and lovingly reprove them?

Another thing...God doesn't use all people the same way. Paul later wrote the Corinthians that some folks plant, and some folks water but it is God who brings forth the increase. By the way, when Paul wrote that he said, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth." God used Priscilla and Aquila. God used the great apostle Paul. God used Apollos...and He can use you and me!!

Let me just say this before we go on. We've looked at this from the view that Apollos was lost before his encounter with Priscilla and Aquila. There are two different views about this. Some say that Apollos was saved as those Old Testament folks were...looking forward to the Cross. But, of seven commentaries that I read this past week in my study for today, five of the seven agreed that the teaching of John the Baptist was not sufficient to save anyone, and I tend to agree with the majority in this case. Maybe you don't agree with that...so, I challenge you to do your own research on this subject this week and determine for yourself if you believe Apollos' salvation came when Priscilla and Aquila took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately or if he was saved before then.

Well, let's read on and find out what we can about the twelve men in the first part of **Acts**
19.

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

Acts 19:1-7...

Now, we need to understand what's happening here. Remember when we started the lesson today I reminded you that Paul had come to Ephesus with Priscilla and Aquila. Then, Paul left Ephesus and Priscilla and Aquila stayed. Well, Paul came back to Ephesus and over in the next chapter, we see that Paul stayed in Ephesus for three years!!

In **chapter 20**, Paul said,

"...for three years I went house to house and I solemnly testified both to the Jews and to the Greek repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ..."

That was Paul's message. Everywhere Paul went Paul would preach and teach repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

I don't believe Paul just sauntered up to a group of men and casually asked, "Hey, did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

I believe Paul saw a group of twelve men or they had come to hear Paul preach and at some point Paul introduced himself to them. Maybe he said something like...

"Hi there..(or Shalom)...I'm Paul. I'm a preacher. I was in Ephesus awhile back and I stayed just a short time. I've been gone and now I'm back to continue the work that's been going on for some time. Priscilla and Aquila have been here. Maybe you've heard of them...They teach the same thing I teach...that man is a sinner and needs a Savior... that there's a way for man to be reconciled to God."

And these guys probably said, "Oh, we already believe all that!"

And I believe then, Paul said,

"Well, tell me...did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? I mean when you believed did the Holy Spirit of God come into your life?"

How bold of Paul! I remember one time when a freind called my husband and asked him to ride with him over to Arkansas for a revival meeting he was preaching. Well, he preached a great revival sermon and gave the invitation and asked us all to bow our heads and my husband said that before he knew it...he was going up and down the aisle asking each person if they knew for a fact that they were saved.

He asked him about that on the way home and he said, "You know I don't know why I did that...I've never done it before." He just felt led, as Paul did, to ask a very bold question!!

See, Paul had probably already sensed the answer to his question. Now, I know we can't always be certain...but many times the Holy Spirit in us will bear witness if another person has the Holy Spirit in them, doesn't He?

On the other hand, if you see someone with absolutely no joy, no peace, no fire, no longing to do God's will, no excitement about the things of God, no passion for Jesus...what are you going to believe about that person?...that he has the Holy Spirit or not?...that he is saved or not saved?

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

Well, when these men told Paul they've never ever heard that there is a Holy Spirit...does Paul go into a long dissertation about the Holy Spirit? Does Paul say, "Well, let's start working on getting the Holy Spirit into you..." Does Paul say, "You know, if you just ask Him, He will come in..."

NO!! Paul points them to Jesus. In essence, Paul said, "You men say you've been baptized?" They said, "Yes." Paul said, "Well, tell me about it." They said, "We were baptized into John's baptism."

Now, again...what was John's baptism? It wasn't Christian baptism, was it? John's baptism is baptism looking forward to the coming Messiah. Christian baptism is baptism looking back on the fact that Messiah has already come!!

Here was a group of men who had heard the message of John. They believed what John said. They had even been baptized into John's baptism...but that's where it stopped. No one had ever come to complete the story...UNTIL NOW!!

Here were "religious" men. These men had done something spiritual but they didn't have the Holy Spirit of God in their lives...and Paul pointed these men to Jesus and they received Christ and were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verses 6-7...

Now, to say the least, this is an extraordinary incident even for apostolic times. How are we to view this particular incident? I mean, in the grand scheme of things how significant is this? Was this written to us to show us that this is the "norm"? Why did Luke write this? Are we to view this passage as many of our charismatic friends do?...as proof text that we must speak in tongues when we receive the Holy Spirit?

Well, to begin with, I believe we need to be reminded that the **Book of Acts** is not a book of doctrine. What is doctrine, by the way? If someone uses the word doctrine, what does he mean? Doctrine means **teaching**...it means **instruction on a particular principle**.

The **Book of Acts** is a book on early church history. We're not to look at the **Book of Acts** and see the things that happened there and base our doctrine on these things.

For example...**Acts 2** tells us that on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came, there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind that filled the whole house and then there appeared tongues as fire that rested on each one of the people there and then they all began to speak with other tongues.

Now, do you believe that happened? Well, of course it did!!

Has it ever happened to you?

Does this mean then that you and I have never received the Holy Spirit? NO!

The things that happened at Pentecost and the things that happened with these twelve men are unique to that day...and we're not to base our doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit on the **Book of Acts**. We're to base all our doctrine on the epistles. The **Books of Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter** and all the rest. Read these books and you'll find all the doctrine you'll ever want or ever need.

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

Most of these books were written by the Apostle Paul and that brings me to another reason Luke included this and other things about Paul.

The Book of Acts is really Luke's testimony about Paul. Paul was Luke's hero. Paul, however, was not one of the original twelve. Paul had once persecuted the church. Many unsaved Jews hated Paul with a passion and many saved Jews were suspicious of him. Many denied his apostleship. Even those who granted him his apostleship would certainly never put him on a par with Peter...

And Luke's goal was to set the record straight...All through the **Book of Acts** there is a distinct parallel drawn by Luke between Peter and Paul. Everything Peter, Paul also did.

Luke records in detail Peter's first sermon and he details Paul's first sermon, as well.

Luke records Peter's **first Gentile convert** and he records Paul's first Gentile convert.

Luke tells how **both healed a lame man; how both were imprisoned and miraculously released; how both were visited by an angel; how both were given visions from God; how both performed other miracles.**

Luke tells how Peter raised **Dorcas from the dead** and how Paul raised **Eutycus** and we could name other thing Luke reported about both men.

Why did Luke do this? Well, first of all we need to remember that Luke may have held Paul in high esteem, but it was the Holy Spirit of God who inspired Luke to write about Paul. By including these incidents like we just mentioned in the **Book of Acts**, the Holy Spirit authenticated the apostleship of Paul and I believe He did this so that **when we do read the epistles**, most of which as we've already mentioned were written by Paul, we can know beyond a shadow of a doubt that the doctrine Paul taught us are the truths we can live by!!

I'm not saying the **Book of Romans** or any of the other epistles are more important than the **Book of Acts**. I'm simply saying that the **Book of Romans** doesn't teach church history...the **Book of Acts** does. The **Book of Acts** doesn't give a doctrinal basis for the Christian faith...the **Book of Romans** does. You cannot pull a verse here and a verse there out of the **Book of Acts** and build a doctrinal position...it just won't fit!

One last thing about these twelve men...isn't God good?? I believe with all my heart that our Heavenly Father looks at the heart of each man and each woman and He knows if that person is seeking Him with all of his or her heart. If a person is seeking God with all his heart, but is confused or misled, I believe God will send someone to that person to straighten out his theology.

Let me just mention four things we can take with us from these first seven verses of **Acts 19**.

1) Christianity is not a mere acceptance of facts.

Here were twelve men who had accepted some facts but they weren't saved.

2) Christianity is not simply participating in a religious ceremony.

Here were twelve men who had been baptized in John's baptism but they were not saved.

3) Christianity is not based on something a person hopes will happen in the future.

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

Here were twelve who had been baptized in John's baptism. They were looking forward to something that had already happened. Christianity is here in the present and it's based on something that has already taken place in the past.

4) *Christianity is a real, vital, living relationship with Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit.*

Paul would later write that if we don't have the Holy Spirit living in us, then we're not saved! So, I want to ask you...did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? Well, if you've truly believed, the answer is, of course, "yes." Are you walking every day guided by Him? Do folks look at you and see the fire and the joy and the excitement and the peace and the passion for the things of God that only the Holy Spirit gives?

If they don't, maybe you better check and see if you're basing your salvation on facts you've accepted or a ceremony you've participated in. John the Baptist said that Jesus would baptize us with the Holy Spirit and with fire...and I hope other folks can see that fire on our lives...