

Friends, don't get me wrong. By no means do I count myself as an expert in all of this, but I've got my eyes on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back.

Philippians 3:13-14 The Message Bible

First Love Ministries, Inc.

Prayer Study #247

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

CHAPTER 19

Disciples of John Receive the Holy Spirit

1. And it happen, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples
2. He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."
3. And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism."
4. Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."
5. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
6. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.
7. Now the men were about twelve in all.

Paul had promised the Ephesians in Acts 18:21 that he would return again to them, if God willed it. In ministry it is so important that we keep our promises and do what we say we are going to do.

These disciples were Jewish proselytes who had been baptized in John's baptism. John's baptism was for the repentance of sin. His baptism was before the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. His baptism was Nameless and was ordained by God temporarily. It was incomplete and was superseded by the baptism that Jesus spoke of in Matthew 28:19-20: *Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age. Amen.* John's baptism, however, was a necessary stage. William Barclay says this, "John's preaching was a necessary stage, because there are two stages in the religious life. First, there is the stage in which we

awaken to our own inadequacy and the fact that we are deserving of condemnation at the hand of God. That stage is closely linked to an endeavor to do better that inevitably fails because we try in our own strength. Second, there is the stage when we come to see that through the grace of Jesus Christ our condemnation may be taken away. Closely linked with that stage is the time when we find that all our efforts to do better are strengthened by the work of the Holy Spirit, through whom we can do what we could never do on our own.”

The baptism that Jesus spoke of was initiated after the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord and involved the Name of Christ. This is a permanent baptism and identifies the believer with Jesus’ atonement on the cross for our sins. It is symbolic of the burial of the old self-life underneath the water.

I believe that we are wrong to become legalistic about baptism. Although Jesus was immersed, there is evidence that others were dipped or poured on. Also, some are *Jesus Only* people and do not recognize someone baptized in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. How silly, to me! Frankly, baptism is not based on mere words or a formula, but to the identification of our need to be washed cleaned by the blood of the Lamb.

At this particular water baptism, Jesus, through the laying on Paul’s hands, baptized these new Christian believers in the Holy Spirit, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. These gifts are just as important today, and there is no evidence in scripture or early Church history that they ceased with the death of the last original apostle.

Paul Teaches in Tyrannus’s School

8. And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.
9. But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.
10. And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

Because there was opposition in the synagogue, Paul changed his speaking place to the school of Tyrannus, a philosopher. It is thought that he worked at his trade all morning and all evening and taught here from 11AM to 4PM. In these cities at that time everything stopped at 11 AM and did not continue until late afternoon because of the oppressive heat. It has been said that more Ephesians were asleep at 1 PM than at 1 AM. If this is true, the pattern

shows how eager Paul was to preach and how eager Christians were to hear him. They in effect gave up their lunch and nap time to hear Paul. It is thought that Tyrannus had been converted, or he would not have given his place for Paul to speak. There is also speculation that he was a physician and met Paul through Dr. Luke. At any rate Paul was able to preach here for two years.

Previously the Holy Spirit had forbidden Paul to preach in Asia (Acts 16:6-7), but now it was God's timing and will. Ephesus became a great church, later pastored by Timothy and probably attended by Apostle John. From this church many churches were established all over Asia. They became so significant that the Lord gave seven of them a specific word in Revelation 1:10-12

Miracles Are Performed at Ephesus

11. Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul.
12. So that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.
13. Then some of the itinerate Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches."
14. Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so.
15. And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?"
16. Then the man, in whom the evil spirit was, leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.
17. This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.
18. And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds.
19. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver.
20. So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

These were not ordinary miracles. The Lord is the same yesterday and today and forever (Hebrews 13:8), and I believe that, if there is a precedent in the Word, it is also for today. I am, however, wary of those who send out

clothes in the mail because they have touched their own bodies. And I quickly point out that the scripture says that God worked these miracles, not Paul.

Obviously the Sons of Sceve were trying to *talk the talk* without *walking the walk*. In those days people believed that all illnesses and diseases, especially mental illnesses, were the result of evil spirits. There were exorcists who earned their living by casting out spirits. The way they did this, however, was not godly. They would use the name of a more powerful spirit which would overpower the less powerful spirit and take its place. The Sons of Sceve were quacks and got their just due.

This incident that the enemy meant for evil backfired on Satan. When the people saw the reality and power of the Name of Jesus, they were full of fear and brought their books and charms to burn. This was very significant and indicated that revival had come to the city because these books and charms were used by many to make a living and were very profitable.

Kevin Connor says that a better and more literal translation of verse 15 reads like this: *Jesus I acknowledge (ginosko) and Paul I am acquainted with (epistamai)-you belong to neither and have the authority of neither!* Remember that demons, as well as the Holy Spirit, can and often do speak through human lips.

Timothy and Erastus Are Sent to Macedonia

21. When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."

22. So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time.

In his epistles Paul makes clearer why he wanted to go to Jerusalem. The church there was very poor. Paul wanted to take a collection up from all the Gentile churches in Asia for the church in Jerusalem. There were two purposes for this. First, he wanted all the churches in Asia to feel their connection to the one Body of Christ. Secondly, he wanted to teach them the joy of giving.

Demetrius Causes Uproar at Ephesus

23. And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way.

24. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen.

25. He called them together with the workers of similar occupation and said: "Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade.
26. "Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands.
27. "So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship."
28. Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"
29. So the whole city was filled with confusion and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul's traveling companions.
30. And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him.
31. Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater.
32. Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together.
33. And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand and wanted to make his defense to the people.
34. But when they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"
35. And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: "Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana and of the image which fell down from Zeus?"
36. "Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly.
37. "For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess.
38. "Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another.
39. "But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly.

40. "For we are in danger of being called in question for today's uproar, there being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering."

41. And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.

There almost always is opposition to the Church when things are happening, especially when the things that are happening are beyond human understanding. Miracles often produce jealousy and fear and skepticism. Paul's presence somewhere almost always stirred up trouble. He was first opposed by the Jews, then the Gentiles, then evil spirits, and now by the commercial world. This latter group is part of the Babylonian World System that will fall before Jesus comes. They worship the god of money.

Demetrius was a businessman who made much money through his little silver shrines that he crafted for worship of Diana or Artemis. People would come to Ephesus and want to take back one of these statues, but so many were being converted that business was way down. Of course there was a demonic power behind this worship. This spirit stirred up the people into a mob.

Alexander was a convert of Paul. Many think that he also was the son of Simon the Cyrenian who carried the cross of Jesus. Unfortunately, he is also believed by many scholars to be the Alexander in 1st Timothy 1:20 and 2nd Timothy 4:14, an Ephesian coppersmith who turned away from the faith and caused Paul much grief.

The town clerk is more like the mayor of the city. He had the responsibility of keeping the town records and carrying on the correspondence. He was not trying to save Paul but his own skin because, even though the Romans were kindly rulers, the one thing that they would not tolerate was civil disorder. If the Romans moved in to squash a riot, they would replace the town leadership, and he wanted to keep his job.

30. "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.

31. "because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

32. And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, "We will hear you again on this matter."

33. So Paul departed from among them.

34. However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Athens was the center of culture and wisdom in the Old World. It was said that Athens had more gods than all the rest of Greece combined, and it was said that it was easier to meet a god in Athens than another person. Athens was like a university town, and everyone met in the town square to talk and to debate philosophy and the issues of the day.

Paul was confronted by the Epicureans and the Stoics who took him to the Aeropagus or Mars Hill. This was the site of a court of about 30 of the town elders who met on this hill to decide cases of murder and cases dealing with public morals.

According to Barclay, the Epicureans believed that everything happens by chance, death is the end of everything, the gods were remote from the world and did not care about the happenings of men, and the chief purpose in life is pleasure. The highest pleasure was that which involved no pain. Kevin Conner tells us that the Epicureans were atheistic and materialistic and worshipped the God of Pleasure.

The Stoics, on the other hand, believed that everything was God. The life in human beings was a spark of God, and that spark returned to God when the person died. They believed everything that happened was the will of God and should be accepted without resentment. They believed that every so often the world disintegrated and was burned up and started all over again.

The people of Athens charged Paul with setting forth some new and strange gods because he preached Jesus and the Resurrection. These people were not hungry for real truth but were intellectual curiosity seekers. With the Jews Paul always starts from the Scriptures. With the non-Jews Paul always starts with Creation. Kevin Conner gives us the outline of Paul's address:

Verse 22: The Athenians were too superstitious.

Verse 23: Their final confession was that God could not be known. Of course this is true, except for knowing Jesus Christ who revealed the True God.

Verse 24: God is greater than his creation.

Verse 25: God does not need anything from man.

Verse 26: All mankind was created by God.

Verse 27: God is everywhere present or omnipresent.

Verse 28: God, as a Spirit, cannot be represented by and in material things.

Verse 30: Ignorance is spiritual darkness. When ignorance is enlightened, mankind must repent.

Verse 31: Only when men believe in the True God will they be able to come to God through His Son. There is a) the Appointed Judge, the Appointed Day(Judgment Day), the Appointed Standard (the Divine Standard of Righteousness), d)the Appointed proof (Jesus who has been raised from the dead.)

Paul saw three categories of people in Athens: those who mocked; those who procrastinated; and finally, those who believed. He must have had these Athenians in mind when he wrote 1st Corinthians 1. In verse 18-25, he writes: *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Gentiles foolishness; But unto them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*

FOLLOW ME

Ira Stanphill

1953

I traveled down a lonely road, and no one seemed to care.
The burden on my weary back had bowed me to despair.

I oft complained to Jesus how folks were treating me.

And then I heard Him say so tenderly,

“My feet were also weary upon the Calv’ry road.

The cross became so heavy, I fell beneath the load.

Be faithful weary pilgrim, the morning I can see.

Just lift your cross and follow close to me.”

“I work so hard for Jesus,” I often boast and say.

“I’ve sacrificed a lot of things to walk the narrow way.

I gave up fame and fortune; I’m worth a lot to Thee.”

And then I hear Him gently say to me,

“I left the throne of glory, and counted it but loss.

My hands were nailed in anger upon a cruel cross.

But now we’ll make the journey with your hand safe in mine.

So lift your cross and follow close to me.”

Oh, Jesus if I die upon a foreign field some day,

‘Twould be no more than love demands, no less could I repay.

“No greater love hath mortal man than for a friend to die.”

These are the words He gently spoke to me,

“If just a cup of water I place within your hand,

Then just a cup of water is all that I demand.”

But if by death to living they can Thy glory see,

I’ll take my cross and follow close to thee.