

Acts 19_pt1

by Bill Gallatin

The sermon explores Paul's ministry in Ephesus, emphasizing the necessity of the Holy Spirit for empowerment and effective witness in a believer's life.

Duration: 1:08:40

Scripture: Luke 11:9

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the powerful ministry of Paul and how it impacted lives. The focus is on how to help people let go of the wrong things in their lives and how God operates through His Spirit. The speaker emphasizes the importance of a life of prayer, fasting, and a deep walk in the Spirit, rather than being consumed by worldly activities. The sermon also mentions the supernatural power of demons and their ability to overcome and prevail against humans. Additionally, the speaker highlights the significance of receiving the Holy Spirit and being sealed with the promise of eternal salvation.

Transcript

Let's turn to Acts chapter 19. Paul now, you remember earlier in his ministry, he had this tremendous desire to go to Asia, but the Holy Spirit forbid him. It just wasn't the Lord's timing.

And so the Lord brought into his path a very wealthy merchant from that area, and used her, touched her life. I think her name was Lydia, and she was an extremely wealthy merchant from Ephesus. But time has gone on now, and churches have been planted.

Paul has been up in the area. Remember, he's going to Phrygia. As we left off the last chapter, Apollos has come on the scene.

And Priscilla and Aquila have given him more light and led him into a deeper walk with the Lord, beyond John's baptism and the initial things of salvation. This mighty man from Alexandria in Egypt. Now, Ephesus, where Paul is going now, and it's interesting, he went back into Phrygia, which is in the mountainous region and central area of Turkey.

Today it's Turkey. In your Bibles, it's referred to as Galatia or Asia, Asia Minor. And so Paul is moving about in there by foot some 200 miles, coming to the coast from inland Turkey, over the mountain ranges, and he's coming to Ephesus.

Now, Ephesus was the principal gateway or the principal city of Asia. It was one of the most amazing cities in the known world then, outside of Rome and Alexandria in Egypt. It was the area of the Temple of Diana.

Much paganism and occultism and witchcraft in Ephesus. The Temple of Diana, and you remember, it was formed because of the Babylonian priesthood that had left Babylon and come to the Mediterranean with their mysteries, and then began to bring that religion or those mystery religions of Babylon into the Mediterranean. And one of the principal deities of Babylon, you remember throughout all the Old Testament, the thing that God forbade the Jews to worship was Aphrodite or Ashtaroath or Esther, and they would build their groves over, and over and over again, all through Jewish history, God had to deal with His people drifting back into that worship of the Goddess of Heaven or the Queen of Heaven that originated in Babylon right at the Garden of Eden, right after the Garden of Eden.

Firmly entrenched in mankind, and practically every religion that ever formed because of Babylon, there was some area or sub-deity or principal deity where man needed to worship a female deity, and she was usually referred to as the Queen of Heaven or the Goddess of Heaven. Now, it really took a stronghold in Ephesus. As they worshiped her, they had built a magnificent temple, some 418 feet long, 239 feet wide, over six stories high, of solid white marble, 127 columns surrounding this gigantic temple.

It was four times larger than the Greek Parthenon. And this is where God was leading Paul now to share the gospel with Christians that were already there. And so, we pick up in chapter 19, Paul coming to Ephesus and noticing something quite interesting.

And it's interesting, you can perceive the same thing today. It came to pass that while Apollos was at Corinth, now remember, he was mighty in the scriptures and eloquent, and now he really knows a greater measure of truth concerning Jesus Christ, the Messiah of the Jews, the Savior of the world. And so, he's in Corinth.

And remember, as you turn and get to Corinth, Paul had the right to correct them. They were so enthralled by the anointing on Apollos that they began to form a sect and follow after him. Your first signs of denominationalism, being enamored with a leader that God has used, and people attaching themselves to the leader, not necessarily the leader all the time forming it or claiming to be the head of it, but man putting him there and placing him there on the pedestal.

You remember, Paul had to reprove their carnality and their childishness of saying, we're of Apollos, we're of the Apostle Peter, or another sect, we're of the Apostle Paul, because of the way God used them. And actually a competition with each other, and they're all believers. And Paul says, well, we're really nothing but instruments in God's hand.

One plants the seed, another waters, and another brings the harvest. But it's God that does it all. God's the one who does the saving and has done it all.

So it's wrong to exalt somebody that God is using. And so he comes to Corinth, or Ephesus. Paul, having passed through the upper coast, came to Ephesus and he found certain disciples.

Disciples of Jesus Christ. They had some heard something. We don't know what they knew, but they had decided to put their trust in Jesus Christ.

It does not say they are disciples of John. They are disciples of Jesus Christ. And Paul noticed it.

They did believe that Jesus Christ was the Messiah that was to come. But, much like Apollos, they needed more light. They were just responding to the light they'd received.

Where they heard the gospel, no one knows. Where they were. But when Paul saw them, he knew they were believers in Jesus Christ.

And he noticed something about them. Even though they were believers, he noticed there was a dynamic and excitement and a zeal and a fascination about their life. It just seemed like, you know, they just had no real excitement or life about them.

And he noticed something in their life. And so he said unto them, Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed? Well, certainly they didn't believe that John was the Baptist. And some commentaries wrestling with the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a separate experience after conversion do their darndest to try and work around this thing and say, Well, they were disciples of John.

And that's why they didn't understand or know about the Holy Spirit. Well, John plainly taught that there was one mightier than he coming that would baptize them with fire and the Holy Spirit. He says, I indeed baptize you with water.

But there's one coming after me that I'm not even worthy to unloose his shoe latchet. And he's going to baptize you with fire and the Holy Ghost. Now, speaking of Jesus Christ.

Now, you remember, and ten years after this. This is about 54 AD. Ten years later, Paul's writing back to this area, that great letter of the Ephesians.

And he reminds them, he writes back to them, letting them know that there are these different experiences. Jesus himself, you remember, before he even returned to the Father after the resurrection. You remember what he did.

It says he breathed on the disciples, or the apostles, and he said, Receive ye the Holy Spirit. But then he instructed them. Now, they had the Holy Spirit in them.

They were sealed with the Holy Spirit. He said, Receive ye the Holy Spirit. And he did it for a specific reason.

Then he said something else. He said, Now, I want you to tarry in Jerusalem and wait from the promise of the Father. You wait for that promise that is going to come upon you from on high to empower you.

Or the baptism of the Holy Spirit. There are three experiences you remember. It's clearly taught in the Bible.

There's the para. The Greek word is para, or the Holy Spirit comes alongside you to work with you, to bring you to a point of conviction and understanding of sin and the need of redemption, and then revealing that the only way to redemption is through Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone. Then there is that experience that Paul writes about ten years later that Jesus gave them.

When you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God comes in and seals you. It's the engagement ceremony by the Spirit of God Himself that you're wed or engaged to Jesus Christ. Turn to Ephesians chapter 1. You know something? I forgot to pray, didn't I? Or did I? I forgot to pray.

Did I? You know what? Let's pray again because Satan's up to something here. Let's pray again. And everybody agree with me, okay? Father, we pray that you'd bind a spirit of distraction and confusion in our midst as we're going to bring out something wonderful that Satan does not want anyone to know about.

So, Lord, we pray that you grant to us all ears to hear and attention, that there be no distractions, people getting up and walking out or walking down the aisles, and distracting others. Lord, we want to sit at your feet and receive the fullness of your blessings and your love. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Ephesians chapter 1. And this is ten years after what we're looking at tonight in the book of Acts, that Paul writes back to them. He brings out the marvelous truth of foreknowledge and predestination.

We're seated in the heavenlies. And then in verse 11, notice in one what Paul writes to the Ephesian believers. As John brings out in John chapter 1 that God grants us life not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit of God.

God's the one who does the saving. It's not ourselves. And then in verse 12, that we should be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ.

When you put your trust in Christ as Savior, when you realize you're a sinner and there's no hope for eternal life apart from Christ, not good works, not joining a denomination, not joining Calvary Chapel, or submitting to water baptism, or anything like that. There has to be a true rebirth, a conversion, a new life, a recreation in life through Jesus Christ. And that's simply by asking God to save yourself, to forgive you as a sinner.

And remember again, we don't ask Christ to save our souls to save a marriage, or help our financial situation, or make things better in our life. There's only one reason for coming to Christ. I know I am a sinner and I need salvation.

I am damned. That's the only reason someone should accept Jesus Christ. And if someone has accepted Christ under some other message, I doubt your salvation.

That is a cheap gospel just to get numbers and people to join the ranks and show up. To pad the figures. Make it easy.

Just come forward and whatever you need, God's going to give it to you. Just put your trust in Jesus. No way.

That is not in the book of Acts. That's not in the gospels. You see, it's a sin issue.

And I realize I'm a sinner. Then, what does God say? Then, Jesus teaches, Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness after salvation. And all these other things I'll throw in.

Whatever you need in life after that, you know, for fulfillment, I'll take care of it. God will meet your needs. You can turn to Him for anything after that.

But initially, there's only one reason for salvation. You trust in Jesus because, I need a Savior. I know I'm damned.

I'm doomed. There's no hope for me. And then, notice what takes place.

Paul describes exactly what Jesus did to the apostles when He said, Receive ye the Spirit. Some 30 years earlier. In whom you also trusted.

After that, you heard the word of truth. That you're in need of a Savior. You are eternally damned apart from Christ.

But you are eternally saved in Christ. And all sin forgiven. And all remembrance of any guilt, past, present, or future.

God says, I will never remember again. I'll never be brought up again. So, when you hear the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, the good news of your salvation, eternal salvation.

In whom also, after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. Which is the earnest. In other words, the down payment.

And that's the Greek word. It's the same Greek word that's used today in a Greek marriage. It's the wedding band.

The engagement ring. That's placed on the finger of the bride in a Greek wedding. So, the engagement ring or the wedding band of God's promise that you're wed to his son Jesus Christ.

Is the entrance of the Holy Spirit himself sealing you. It's God's promise. It's the down payment.

It's the earnest money. The promise of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession under the praise of his glory. In other words, until Jesus Christ comes at the rapture.

Or until your life is over in his life. If it's before the rapture. You are sealed.

You belong to God. You are engaged to him. And God the spirit himself is the seal.

And he comes and dwells within you automatically. You don't have to ask for it. That's the N experience.

E-N in the Greek. That's what Jesus did to the apostles before he returned to the father. Before Pentecost.

He said, receive ye the Holy Ghost. They were saved. But then he said there's something else that needs to take place.

The P in the Greek. There's that experience that has to come upon you to empower you that you may be a witness. Now many, many people are saved and real Christians.

But they are absolutely no witness. You wouldn't know they were a Christian except on Sunday. And sometimes on Sunday you can't tell they're a Christian.

They are either so intimidated or ashamed or afraid or malnourished in the word that you don't even know they're a believer. And they're never a witness. That's what Paul noticed about these men.

When he questioned them, yeah, they believed in Jesus. But he could tell by watching them and looking at them before he even spoke to them. There's something lacking in their life.

The dynamic. The P. The baptism. They may be sealed.

They may have eternal life. But they're no witness. And you remember when they went and waited and tarried in the upper room.

What happened on Pentecost? The Spirit of God was poured out without measure. And came upon 120 people sitting in chairs in that Bible study. And they all began to speak with tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

As they were totally immersed and baptized. John baptized them in water as he said. Then what John said, they were baptized or totally immersed in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And they might be a witness. Now the tragedy in the church today is for some reason people are afraid to admit it hasn't happened to them. Yet they know that they're not a witness.

And they know they're intimidated. When God says it's for everybody. The creator of the whole universe says, I have power for you.

That you don't need to be intimidated. You have power over Satan. And yet they don't come forward and say, you know, I know that Satan's pushing me around.

And rubbing my face and things. And I'm not having victory in certain areas of my life. And I'm not enjoying my Christian life.

I do love Jesus and I do believe. But there's just something missing in my life. Why not just admit it? You haven't been baptized in the Holy Spirit.

God says, I will do it. I want you to have it. And Jesus taught in Luke 11 to ask for it.

Now the Ephesians 1.13 experience you don't have to ask for. The apostles didn't have to ask to receive the Spirit. Jesus walked up and said, and breathed out and said, receive it.

It's going into you. Automatically the day you're converted, whether you walk down the aisle, lift the hand up, say some prayer, respond to Billy Graham or a TV evangelist, or in your local church, if you're truly converted, then the Spirit automatically comes in. You don't have to ask for that.

Paul taught it in Ephesians 1. And the Scripture doesn't contradict itself. That's for everybody that's converted. Automatic life.

Sealed. The engagement ring from God. The Spirit of God Himself.

I think that's why a lot of people have no desire to read the Word of God. They don't have the dynamic and the power, and they don't realize the excitement of what it does for them. They don't experience it.

They're still excited by the world, even though they're Christians. The Spirit of the world is more powerful. And they don't have the power to be a witness to overcome it.

And so they're attracted back into it. And they haven't got time to read the Word of God and grow and get excited about the things of Jesus Christ. And it shows in their life.

That's a shame when God has so much for us. The God of the universe has so much for us. And we take second best, or we go without simply because of our own, maybe, ignorance or just lack of, or too much pride to ask for it and say, you know, I don't think I've been baptized in the Holy Spirit.

I don't think I've had this experience. And by the way you act, whoever you are here tonight, tomorrow and Friday and Saturday, and your consistent inconsistency will show whether you're baptized really filled with the Spirit daily. And no one's going to walk around and, you know, watch you.

You know yourself, what your personal everyday walk in Christ is like, especially when you're away from other believers. That's when we need the power. And then God says, it's for everybody.

Jesus is so concerned about it, He taught it in Luke 11. Turn to Luke 11. Let's just really look at it again.

We've taught it before. And to show you, man, it's so exciting that the Word of God is so accurate. Notice Jesus is teaching about the promise of the Father or the dynamic of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

And He's saying in verse 9, I say unto you, ask and it shall be given you. Seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you.

This power and ability to serve God and not be intimidated and defeated. For everyone, not when you're five years old in the Lord or if you've had a certain ritual. For everyone that asketh, receive it.

And he that seeketh, find it. You see, the problem lies with me. I'm just too lazy sometimes.

I don't want it bad enough until I'm defeated again. And then I think about it. But you see, if I seek it really with all my heart, it says you'll find it.

And to him that knocketh it shall be opened. You start knocking on that door, Lord, I want more. I want this.

God says, I'll swing that door wide open for you. Now, Jesus knew that Satan would do everything he could to keep people from seeking this. To frighten them with rumors and stories in the church of fanaticism.

And you know what happened to Uncle Harry when he ended up in an insane asylum. He got the gift of tongues and he was never the same. And, oh, you know what happened to Aunt Sally.

And you know what they're like in that church. And Satan starts starting these stories of maybe extremism and fanaticism or crazy things. Or, you know, so and so, they opened up themselves to the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

And the devil did something for them. And they've never been the same. That's an absolute lie.

To frighten and to hinder and to nullify and keep people from even seeking it. So, Jesus taught something special here. He says, If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? What was Jesus saying there? Now, those of you that have not traveled to the Mideast, maybe those of you that don't have a Bible dictionary or encyclopedia and know what the life is like over there, the bread in the Mideast is cooked right on the ground on stone.

Now, the popular pocket bread that you have in America now in the grocery stores called pita bread is what that is. And the Arabs, the Bedouins, would be out in the desert in the wilderness and they'd take their flour and they'd start a fire and just make their little round cakes, throw it in the fire, and it would just blister and rise up and then collapse. And it would have dark brown spots, gray spots from the fire and everything.

And you could throw that pita bread, maybe six inches in diameter, four inches in diameter, you could pick up that little flat piece of bread and throw it down in the sand next to some stones in the desert and you'd have a hard time distinguishing by sight which is the bread and what is the stone by the look of it. And what Jesus is saying here, when you ask for the Holy Spirit, if you ask for the baptism and the fullness of the Holy Spirit and you doubt that you have it, God's not going to let you, like some prank in the desert, pick up a stone accidentally and bite into it and break your teeth, play a joke on you and allow you to be injured or harmed by opening yourself up to the promise, the fullness of the Holy Spirit. If you ask for bread, if you ask for something wonderful from God, He's going to give it to you.

You don't have to fear. No deception with God. He doesn't play pranks on His children.

Now this always puzzled me here, especially living in our western civilization. He said, if you ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? And I kept thinking, you know, this has got to be a misprint. What's the Greeks say? What are they talking about? There's no way that a fish looks like a snake.

What's he saying there? And so I'd look at dictionaries and the Encyclopedia Britannica trying to figure out what is there that looks alike that you have to worry? And I saw the most amazing thing on television just two weeks ago that just blew my mind. I don't know if you saw this, but you know the pet stores are notorious for bringing in fish and little wiggly things from foreign countries and you throw them in your aquarium and they're cute little things this long when they're in your aquarium. Well, what happens? They begin to grow or people just get tired of their aquariums and keeping them clean and they just dump the thing out down the drain or in the creek behind the house somewhere.

They showed the news on CBS last week, a thing invading the United States through the whole southern portion of the United States. Now they've moved as far north as Washington, D.C. They are such crazy creatures you can't freeze them to death. They'll go into suspended animation in ice and then in the summer thaw come out and start moving again.

And it showed big six feet long snakes. And this guy's got them around his arm and around his neck, all different sizes and colors and designs. And it showed them going through the grass.

They're spreading all over America. And they're fish. No one knew they were fish.

Everyone was convinced they're snakes crawling up streams, going into houses. They're in the rivers. And they're from the Mideast.

And they got over into America in pet stores as cute little wiggly things in aquariums. And they're not snakes at all, they're fish. And when a river dries up, they can go weeks without water and they start slithering around ground, across the ground, until they find water again.

And they're fish. And I immediately said, Lord, you are amazing. You taught a parable.

They used to eat them. They were a common staple in the diet in Jesus' day in the Mideast. They're from that area of the world.

And then he says, Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? Now here's another interesting thing. Right out of nature, in the land where Jesus lived, and it's over there to this day. In the Mideast, there's a scorpion that the color of its body is the same color as an egg.

And it is designed by nature. God has designed this little creature that if it wants to get a prey, it wraps its tail around its body like a small egg in the sand. And when small rodents or something come to eat the egg, the scorpion springs out and strikes them and poisons them to death.

But they look like an egg because they wrap their tail around their body. And so Jesus, again, the third time is saying, Look, your Father in Heaven loves you so much that if you ask for an egg, if an earthly father would not do that to you, if you ask for an egg, he'll really give you an egg. He will not allow something satanic or deceptive to poison you or harm you.

You never have to worry about opening yourself up to the baptism or that experience of the Holy Spirit that you will have that power not to be intimidated and to be a witness for Jesus Christ. Not walk around like a wimp for a week, then show up Sunday for a booster shot around other Christians and not be afraid to tell Jesus that you love Him then. And then Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and the rest of the week, no one even knows you're a believer, yet you're saved.

That's exactly, you see, what Paul noticed. There's something missing in their life. They love the Lord, but they are intimidated and you can see it and feel it when you're around them.

Now, praise God, they admitted it. They didn't have so much pride that they denied it. They admitted it.

Now, notice what Jesus said before we leave chapter 11, verse 13. Speaking to earthly parents, if you being evil, in other words, sinners, far from perfect like your Father in heaven who's perfect in His love, know how to give good gifts unto your children as earthly parents. In other words, it'd be very rare for an earthly parent who loved his children to do the very same thing to them.

He's saying, well, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? Now, you see, there can't be a contradiction. Here He's saying there's an experience you have to ask for. In Ephesians 1, verse 13, when you're converted, there's an experience that's automatic, you see.

Now, you can't put God in a box and say, this is the way it happens all the time. It can happen simultaneously. You can ask Christ to come into your life and be sealed and baptized in the Holy Spirit at the same time.

The book of Acts is filled with different experiences, but they all received it. The thing is, have it. God wants you to have it.

Who really enjoys being intimidated and ashamed? And who enjoys then going home and saying, and having the devil condemn you? You should have shared your faith. Why didn't you say something at that checkout counter? You know the Lord prompted you to do it, and you just felt afraid. Why do you still enjoy going out in the world and doing things like that when God has so much for you through the power of the Holy Spirit? So much more fulfilling and edifying and rewarding and lasting.

And so Paul said, have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed? Well, Paul wrote the very letter ten years later saying you automatically are sealed. So that proves right there. He saw something.

They needed the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He wouldn't ask them, if you received the Holy Ghost, if he was referring to the Ephesians 1.13 experience where it comes in and seals you. This is the empowering from above that Jesus spoke of in Acts chapter 1. The promise of the Father that you may be a witness to His power from on high.

Totally immersed. Just as you were totally immersed in water baptism, now you need to be totally immersed in the power of the Holy Spirit, the oil of the Holy Spirit. Notice their honesty.

You can just tell, whatever Jesus has for me, whatever God has for me, I want it. They said unto him, we have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. You see, they were just in the initial stages of conversion of belief.

Responding to some way to repent of the sins and be water baptized or put your trust in Jesus as the Messiah. That's their level of belief. They probably never even had Scriptures.

They just met somebody and they shared Christ with them. Just like the woman that met Jesus Christ at the well in Samaria. Isn't it interesting? He didn't give her any doctrine.

He just told her about worshipping in Jerusalem and worshipping in the Spirit and having the Spirit and that He was the Savior. And remember, she was so overwhelmed just with the little bit of facts that Jesus gave her that day. She forgot her desire and need of the flesh, left her water pot.

Remember, she was thirsty, going after water, went all the way out of town at high noon, the hottest part of the day to get water, was so fulfilled in talking with Jesus, she left the water pot, forgot her physical need, went back to town. And what did she do? She shared what little that she knew about Jesus Christ and brought half the town back. A woman, a brand new convert, a woman, was not ashamed.

But she just knew a little. He said unto them, well, unto what then were you baptized? What experience did you have? And then they said, well, John's baptism, in other words, leaving the old religion and going through the water, submitting to water baptism, repenting of sin, and putting their trust in Messiah Jesus. That's all they knew.

Then Paul said, well, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is on Jesus Christ, or Christ Jesus. Now, as Paul went on to share with them, they all of a sudden said, you know, we want to be baptized again. Now, you remember, at the end of Matthew, which was 20 years earlier, what did Jesus instruct the apostles? He told them, lo, I am with you even unto the end of the age.

He told them at that same teaching, Mark brings out that you don't have to worry about anything. Even if you, there's no deadly serpent that can harm you. If you drink or eat any deadly thing, it will not harm you.

There's no way, accidentally, that you can destroy yourself. I'm going to watch over you. Satan can't harm you.

As long as you're one of my children, my disciples, I'm going to watch over you. He said, now I want you to go into all the world, into Judea, Samaria, all parts of the world, the uttermost parts of the world, teaching or making disciples. That's what it means.

Teaching people about me. Making disciples. And baptizing them.

And Jesus uses the singular in the name of the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost. John didn't baptize that way. And this is the only incident in the Bible that speaks of someone being re-baptized because they wanted to do it in a way they felt was the proper way.

There was no need to be water baptized after you experienced John's water baptism. In this particular case, they wanted it, and so what did Paul do? Okay, I'll baptize you in the name of Jesus. And look what he does.

When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Now, did this happen in some other time? It certainly did. You remember in chapter 8, turn to chapter 8, you remember in Antioch, or Samaria, it wasn't Antioch, it was Samaria.

Look at verse 14 of Acts chapter 8. Now, this is 20 years earlier. Now, when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, remember the persecution in Jerusalem drove the saints out, and as they were scattered under the persecution, the church grew. It's interesting, in the history of the church, whenever the government gave the church freedom and protected it, the church became backslidden and weak.

The greatest power of the church was when it was being persecuted, when God's spirit was upon them. And so the apostles were in Jerusalem and they heard that Samaria had received the word of God, and they sent unto them Peter and John, who when they were come down, they realized they were believers. They had responded to the gospel.

What did they do? They prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost, for as yet he was fallen upon none of them. Notice, upon. None of them, only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

In other words, they were water baptized because they had believed. But they hadn't been baptized in the Holy Spirit. But they had automatically, you remember, Ephesians 1.13 experience, the spirit came in them and sealed them.

So then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Ghost. And remember, that was such an enormous thing and exciting that Simon the Sorcerer, remember he wanted to pay money that he could do something like that. Now remember, he'd already been with them and they were believers.

And he didn't see anything outstanding just by receiving Christ and being water baptized. When he saw them baptized in the Holy Spirit, now he'd been with them some time, he said, wow, man, this is some experience. Hey, I want to be able to do that.

That will draw attention to me and I'll be something. I'll pay you money. And remember, Peter rebuked him.

He said, the hell with you and your money. Your heart's not right in this issue. Pray God peradventure He'll grant you repentance because your heart's not right.

The gift of God can't be purchased. God doesn't charge money for His blessings. And so Paul does the same thing to bring them into a greater understanding.

They said, well, we want to be baptized in the name of Jesus. And so Paul said, okay, fine. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them.

That's the third experience, the epee. And they spake with tongues and they prophesied. They began to adore the Lord Jesus Christ.

They began to give perfect adoration and praise. Remember, the gift of tongues is to praise God, to adore God. Prophesying? It's raining.

Everybody look now. See if you can see it. That's the only entrance outside.

The latter rain. Isn't it funny? We're talking about the outpouring of God and it's raining. Thank you, Lord.

And they prophesied or they spoke forth the truth concerning God. Now some manifest that they've been baptized in the Holy Spirit, spoke in tongues, others prophesied. And they were never the same after that.

Now, you see, that proves the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I'm not ashamed to speak for it. Their very action proved that they'd received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Now, many, many people again say, well, I've received the baptism. And our church taught it different. But their very lives prove they haven't.

Their very lives prove that they haven't. And nowhere being baptized in the Holy Spirit makes anybody act like a fanatic and act out of control. The fruit of the Spirit is self-control.

But the dynamic is I'm no longer intimidated or ashamed. I'm a witness now. And I can prophesy.

I can speak openly about Jesus Christ. And that's what, you see, prophecy is. Speaking openly the truth concerning Jesus Christ.

Speaking forward the things of Christ. Tongues is praise, giving thanks unto God. And we already went through that in the beginning of the book of Acts.

Tongues is never God giving a message to man. Tongues is always man praising God, speaking to God. Always.

But prophecy, you see, is God anointing man and man speaking forth the things of God to man. And that's exactly what they did. And these 12 men, they were released.

No longer intimidated. No longer bound. And man, some of them just started giving perfect adoration to God, bypassing their intellect, praising God in the Spirit, speaking in tongues.

And the others, some of the men prophesied, spoke forth the wonderful things of God. And all the men were about 12. And it's interesting, this is the only place in the book of Acts or anywhere in the New Testament where somebody felt they wanted to get re-baptized.

Now does that mean you need to be re-baptized? Does that mean that people that understood what happened with John's ministry had to get re-baptized? Jesus never re-baptized anybody. Jesus never baptized the apostles after John's baptism. It wasn't necessary because they understood that going down into that water is just burying the old life.

And coming up, there was a repentance of sin of the old life and following in the Messiah, Jesus Christ. And so, Paul went into the synagogue, spoke boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. Now it's interesting, that's really a long time to be hanging around.

You don't know without creating turmoil for Paul. Three months is really a duration. Usually, it didn't take long.

One weekend or another weekend. And usually, he's in jail or there's a riot. So, God's really got to... If you look at the letter to the Ephesians that Paul wrote ten years later, you can see the benefit.

He was there some two and a half years. And man, the perfect doctrine. The letter to the Ephesians, there was no need for correction.

Just filled, rich with doctrine. Powerful, powerful letter. And so, for three months, he's disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

And when diverse were hardened, and believe not, but spake evil of that way, before the multitude he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one tyrannous. And this continued by the space of two years, so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. So, here he is in the main entrance to Asia, in this great city next to Rome, the greatest city in the Mediterranean next to Rome and Alexandria.

And it's the main trade route from the sea route going through Ephesus, and then overland all the way into Asia, into China, where all the trade routes go. And so, here's all these people coming through this marvelous city, hearing the gospel, being affected by the gospel, taking it to their area of the world or their hometown, converted. And not only that, Rome actually built a highway overland from Ephesus all the way to Rome.

So, that's the importance of why God had him stay there for two and a half years, preaching the gospel and teaching Bible studies. And notice then, God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul. Notice, Paul didn't do the miracles.

God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul. I think another thing in our maybe lack of understanding, we think that the instrument is the miracle worker. And again, we get enamored with an instrument rather than God who performs the miracles.

So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons. Now, remember, Paul never asked for money as he traveled. He never took a collection or asked for money.

The only time he'd ever receive money is if there was an offering to help the poor saints somewhere else. And then he would distribute that money or send it on. And if Paul, as he preached the gospel, if God wasn't providing for him through love offerings, he went out and got a job.

And he worked with his own hands and he sewed tents. And he would work in such a way that he could teach the Bible study at night or another part of the day. So he'd not be indebted to man.

And this word handkerchief is an English translation that has changed in our time. Now, we think of a handkerchief as that thing we stick in our hip pocket and sometimes you think you'd rather throw it away rather than wash it. It looks so bad.

If it doesn't crawl out of a hamper on its own. But Paul, the word handkerchief here is sweatband. When you're working and it's real hot, they'd put a sweatband around their forehead to soak up the perspiration from getting in their eyes as they're sewing tents and working.

And so Paul maybe had a sweatband and he'd throw it down and someone would grab the thing when he wasn't looking and run home with it and lay it on Ann Harriot or something. And it would trigger their faith and God would work a miracle. Well, that's Paul's.

Well, who's Paul? And the next thing you know they're sitting in a Bible study hearing about Jesus Christ. Or his apron. You know, his tool apron that he'd tie around his waist with his tools that he'd have his needles and maybe his knives and things to make the tent.

But you see, always that didn't happen. That isn't... When God worked miracles or gave someone the gift of miracles, another mistake I think we make is that someone's walking around and no matter... it's constantly pouring out of their life every time they reach out someone's going to be healed. That's not the case.

That's not scriptural. That's imbalance. And it doesn't work that way all the time.

God's the one who decides when the miracle's going to take place for His glory and His timing. You remember Elisha. They didn't come... You know, talk about the anointing of a man.

Remember, he had a double anointing of Elijah. Elisha was so anointed by God that when he died... And it's interesting. He died of a sickness.

He raised people from the dead. He healed noxious pottage. He made iron swim through the miraculous power of the Spirit working in his life.

You talk about gifts of the Spirit. One kid lost an ax head building a Bible school and sunk in the river and Elisha threw in a piece of wood and the thing rose and he said, God, I've got to fix it. Put it back in the hill and sharpen it.

They made fun of him one day and a bear came down out of the woods and tore up 40 kids in a teenage gang. Raised children from the dead. But then it's interesting.

He says he died of a sickness. But an interesting thing, you remember he met this real wealthy, this great Shunammite woman whose husband was a pretty wealthy farmer and she was childless and Elisha prayed for her and she had this child and so thankful and the child one day had a heat stroke and dropped dead with his dad on the farm. And the Shunammite said, Send for Elisha.

I know that he'll be able to raise him from the dead. And so she got on the burl and she started going toward him and Elisha, he was even surprised that when she got there that the Lord didn't tell him ahead of time. And he said, How goes it with you? And it's interesting, her child was dead, but she had such faith, she said, All is well.

Her only child that she loved was dead. And she said, All is well. Because she had faith in God.

Elisha sent Gehazi, his servant, and said, Take my staff. Get back to the house in a hurry before me and lay the staff on top of the child. And it didn't work.

God didn't raise the child from the dead. When Elisha got there, the child was still dead. Elisha had to pray for him and God worked the miracle another way.

It wasn't automatic. Just because it was Elisha's staff. But he was so anointed that when he died after his sickness, they buried him and then they were using his tomb.

Some Israelites were burying another man and a band of Moabites were coming in to attack. And they saw him. They got frightened and they dropped the dead carcass into Elisha's tomb and it bounced on his bones.

And the guy that bounced on Elisha's bones came to life and ran out. Now that's an anointing. I asked God, I want twice as much as Elisha.

But he died of a sickness. And his staff didn't raise someone from the dead. So you can't put him in a box, you see.

He does it differently all the time. And what it makes, it's so exciting and wonderful. The thing is that he's saying, Come to me.

You never know how I'm going to work this out. But I can work it out for you. Come to me.

I can work the miraculous. I want to work the miraculous. And I want to work it in your life and through your life.

And it's through the dynamic of the Holy Spirit. My heart goes out to people that really aren't enjoying their Christian experience. It is the most exciting life there is.

I just came out of three weeks of misery, but it's still exciting. I don't know what God's been putting me through, but it's been horrible. But it's still exciting.

He's been so good to me. I have no complaints. I'm really rejoicing that I'm out of it.

This is the best I've felt in three weeks. It's been wonderful. But God has His purposes.

But He was so faithful and good. He blessed me all the time in it. God is so wonderful.

How can you not enjoy walking with the Lord? How can you not enjoy the fullness of the Holy Spirit? Knowing Jesus Christ. It's beyond me. And how could you live a week without wanting more? How could you not thirst and hunger for more all the time? And then to know that God does these things, these the same yesterday, today, and forever.

And He may do it through your life. Man, not only were diseases departing because it was triggering their faith, and God was working miracles for their salvation, evil spirits went out of them. No, because there was some magical thing in the sweatband.

No, God was using it because it would get back to Paul. And they would look to Paul's ministry, Paul's life. It wasn't some magical thing in a sweatband.

But God used that as an agent to trigger faith, to work the miracle to bring someone to their salvation. There are many of you here tonight, maybe, that God in some way worked some kind of a miracle that you weren't even looking for to bring you to an awareness or maybe to inquire more about Jesus Christ. And it worked toward your salvation.

It was a stepping stone to salvation. And then certain of the vagabond Jews, I thought all of them were vagabonds, wandering exorcists, they were professional demon caster outers, exorcists. And they had all kinds of rituals and potions and weird things that you did.

You know, the true believer, all you have is the power in the name of Jesus Christ. Not a lot of hocus-pocus and stuff like that. And now notice, it's kind of comical.

Certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits in the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. Thinking that it's going to be automatic because they used the name of Jesus. But they weren't born again, you see.

You've got to be a family member before it can work. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests which did so. So these guys got a high priest with them, or a priest with them, and they're going around making some money casting out demons, they think.

And notice, the evil spirit answered and said, Well, Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you? Well, I bet they really put on the big show too with all their ritual and all their crying out to God and praying and then using the name of Jesus. Unless God's really called you, I wouldn't fool around. But if God's called you to it, greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.

Any child of God is absolutely saved. Remember, you are sealed with the spirit of God. And no demon or evil spirit is greater than the very creator of the universe who dwells in your heart and has sealed you until the day of redemption.

You see some puny demon saying, I want at that person. Get out of there, Jesus. Get out of his heart.

I'm coming and taking over. Nonsense. Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.

You are saved. What did Jesus teach? You remember when they came down off the Mount of Transfiguration? That father with his demon-possessed child, the demon kept trying to kill the child. He'd go into fits and rages, in a self-destructive mode, throwing himself in the fire and water, trying to kill himself.

And Jesus discerned right away. It was a demon. It wasn't an epileptic fit or anything.

It was a demon here. Big difference. And the spirit of God gave the discernment.

And the apostles couldn't do anything, and they didn't know how to handle it. And Jesus came and he cast the demon out just with the word. There are some powerful situations that if you're going to go into that kind of a ministry, you better have a life of prayer and fasting.

You better have a life of denial of the flesh and a sensitivity and anointing of the spirit to deal in this realm. But you will be successful. But it comes by a life of prayer and fasting.

Not movies and parties and potlucks and concerts. But a life of prayer and fasting. And a real deep walk in the spirit.

And God may do it. God does do it. And so after the demon said, well, who are you, Bob? The man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them and overcame them and prevailed against them so that they fled out of the house naked and wounded.

Now, demons have tremendous power, supernatural power. The account of the demons in the gatherings, the guys that had the thousands of demons in them. It caused a whole herd of swine to go racing down the hill into the Sea of Galilee and perish.

They would break gigantic chains. They'd bind these guys with chains and they'd just snap the chains as though they were cords, just weeds in the field. And yet again, Jesus Christ.

No match for Jesus Christ. It says they believe in Jesus and they fear and tremble, James said. They know who Jesus Christ is.

And they know that Jesus Christ dwells within you when you in the authority of Christ rebuke an evil spirit. In the name of Jesus, they have to obey. They have to obey.

And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus. And fear fell on them all. And the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified as they realized that someone just going along that isn't a true believer can't do things like that.

That's why you see so many problems and people claim to be Christian and their lives are so miserable and no victory, yet they claim to be a Christian because they've joined a denomination or been told because they've been sprinkled as a child or gone through a confirmation or something like that. But they aren't truly born again. They have no power over evil in their own life and they're constantly being defeated.

That's exactly what these guys try to do. Just use the name of Jesus to have victory over Satan and one guy made fools out of them. You see, unless we're born again and God Almighty is dwelling within us, there's no victory over evil, over sin, no matter how hard we try.

It's too powerful. But it's no match for the power of God dwelling within a person's heart. No match at all.

Absolute victory. But people realize that and it created a fear and many that believed came and confessed and showed their deeds and they realized the power of Satan, the danger of fooling around with some of this stuff and God used this situation for conversion. And notice what they did.

Many of them. Now here's true conversion. This is true conversion.

And another thing that's very important to realize, they weren't told to do this. Some pastor didn't walk up and say, now we want you to get rid of everything out of your house. This is what we're going to do.

We're going to have a giant bonfire in the parking lot and get rid of all the rock and roll music. No. This was something of their own heart.

Something that when someone's truly converted, there's nothing from the past worth hanging on. When they see the work of God and the beauty of the work of the Lord, notice what they did. And it was all of their own free will.

They weren't told that this is what they had to do. God never does it that way. He leaves it up to the individual.

He'll leave it up to you to do whatever you want to do in your life. To go as far with Him as you want to. To experience as much of the Lord as you want to.

He doesn't twist anybody's arm to bless them. The devil twists an arm, especially after he gets you addicted to something. He's the one who starts twisting the arm and forcing against the will.

But never God. He always lays out and says, now look, if you want more of me, follow me. Now look at what they did.

Look at what the Spirit of God did in their hearts. Many of them which used curious arts or magical books, sorcery books, horoscopes, the occult, Ouija boards, brought their books together and burned them before all men, openly showing, I'm done with this kind of a life and this kind of a thing and I'm not ashamed to let anybody know that I had it because I'm free from it. It wasn't some mandate.

It's just that there's the witness again. There's true conversion. I'm no longer ashamed.

I don't have to hide anything. I'm not doing it anymore. And they burned them before all men.

There's that witness again. And they counted the price of them and found it 50,000 pieces of silver. They weren't even concerned that, man, you don't know how much money I spent on this.

I just won't mess with it anymore. But I might have to save it for a rainy day and sell it to somebody who's not saved. I mean, it's amazing how we rationalize because I'll just sell it to somebody who's not saved.

You know what? I've seen people struggle with it. You remember when Moses was instructing Israel. He says, when you come into Canaan land, remember they're all pagans and idolaters, and you're going to find their little statues, gold and silver.

Don't you even touch them. And don't melt them down and use them for God's glory. Don't allow the value of the gold and the silver to hinder you.

Destroy it. It's dirty. I don't want it.

And I don't want my treasury or my house dirtied with it. Destroy it. That's a big decision for some people to find out they've got some kind of an idol or some evil thing, and it's worth so much money, and they've got the challenge, now what do I do about it? These people, it wasn't even an issue.

The conversion and the love for Christ was so powerful, they openly burned it and got rid of it, even though it was worth 50,000 pieces of silver when you added it all up. And notice the response. Notice what God could do by His Spirit.

So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed. And after these things were ended, 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. So he sent unto Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus, but he stayed in Asia for a season.

So Paul's moving toward Jerusalem. Next week we find out something very interesting as the Gospel and how God works with people who have little shrines and the uproar it caused in Ephesus. Shall we all stand? This place, Ephesus, is amazing.

Lord willing, when we go to Israel this year, our tour, we're going to Ephesus. And believe me, it's a breathtaking place, even in ruin today. We'll learn more about it next week where Paul had this powerful ministry and how it affected lives.

And it's interesting, we'll learn next week, how to really get people to let go of the things that are wrong in their life. The wisdom and how God really operates by His Spirit. Not so much in attacking, but just by giving Jesus Christ in such a way that it's a no contest.

Not by condemning or attacking, but just by lifting up the truth in such a way we'll say, Man, I want Jesus. Father, we ask You to make our hearts willing not to be afraid, to yield ourselves totally as Paul beseeches the Romans. A living sacrifice, an instrument in Your hands, which is only our reasonable service.

Lord, what a delight it is to be totally dedicated and open to You. Not afraid. Allowing You to have Your way with our lives that we might be totally blessed with Your presence, Your love and Your Spirit.

Lord, what an exciting life. And so we pray for those, Lord, who aren't experiencing it yet and amazingly don't even have a desire for it. But Lord, usually we have no desire for something that we're not sure we've experienced or would really enjoy.

So You work just as You did in the book of Acts, Father. Lord, work in Your love and Your grace and make Your people willing in that power. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

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