

Day 82, Acts 18:18-28 & 19

by David Servant

Paul's ministry in Ephesus is characterized by his baptism of 12 disciples in the name of the Lord, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the resulting revival in the region.

Scripture: Acts 8:15, Acts 19:2, Acts 19:6, Acts 19:10, Acts 19:21

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Discipleship"

Description

David Servant delves into Paul's third missionary journey, highlighting the importance of receiving the Holy Spirit after believing in Jesus, as seen in Ephesus with the 12 baptized disciples who had not yet received the Holy Spirit. Through Paul's teaching and baptism, these disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues and prophesying. The power of discipleship is emphasized as Paul's daily teaching at the school of Tyrannus in Ephesus led to the spread of the gospel throughout Asia, resulting in extraordinary miracles and a true revival marked by public repentance and a public riot.

Transcript

It is nice to be back into the book of Acts, even if only for one day. I almost wish I had designed our chronological study so that we would not be interrupted by one of the Gospels each quarter, but I wanted to space them throughout the year rather than reading them one right after another.

After staying in Corinth for at least eighteen months (18:11), Paul headed back to Antioch, from where he originally began, concluding his second missionary journey in about two years. He didn't stay long, however, heading out on his third missionary journey that would keep him traveling for five years until his imprisonment in Jerusalem.

Paul's Third Missionary Journey

In Ephesus, Paul found 12 baptized disciples. Take note of his initial question to them: "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" Paul's question reveals two things: (1) He believed those 12 disciples had believed in Jesus. And (2) he believed there was a possibility that they had not received the Holy Spirit when they believed.

Paul also obviously suspected that those 12 disciples had not received the Holy Spirit, otherwise he would not have asked his question.

In response to Paul's question, those 12 baptized believers indicated that they didn't even know that there was a Holy Spirit (19:2). So Paul then asked, "Into what then were you baptized?" If they had been baptized "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" as Jesus instructed in His Great Commission, they would have heard of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19).

Finally the truth was revealed. They had been baptized into "John's baptism," perhaps by Apollos before he was more enlightened to the truth (18:24-28).

So Paul told them the good news that Jesus had come (25 years earlier). He then baptized them in the name of the Lord. I can't imagine anyone would claim that those 12 men were not thoroughly saved after that! By that time they were certainly all born again and thus indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Yet we next read that "Paul laid his hands upon them" and "the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying" (19:6).

So, once again, we see Scripture plainly teaches that one may have the Holy Spirit within him, but not yet upon him. Those 12 disciples were no different than the believers in Samaria whom we read about in Acts 8. You may recall that Peter and John were sent to Samaria to pray for the new believers there "that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for He had not yet fallen upon any of them" (Acts 8:15-16).

Once again the initial evidence of this Holy Spirit baptism was speaking with other tongues, and in the case of those 12 men, also prophecy. Millions of believers since then can testify of the same experience. If you have not yet been baptized in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues, you are just a prayer away!

Paul's daily teaching for two years in the school of Tyrannus in Ephesus resulted in everyone in Asia, or modern western Turkey, hearing the gospel (19:10). I can only think that was accomplished, not as a result of everyone in Asia traveling to the school of Tyrannus over a two-year period to listen to Paul, but as a result of Paul's students, whom he disciplined at Tyrannus' school, traveling throughout Asia to proclaim the gospel. That is a beautiful picture of the power of discipleship. And with the many extraordinary miracles that God was doing, Paul enjoyed a very fruitful time in a region where the Holy Spirit once forbade him to preach (Acts 16:6). It was a true revival characterized by public repentance (19:18-19) and a public riot (19:23-41)!

Take note that in Ephesus, "Paul purposed in the spirit [not in his head] to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, 'After I have been there, I must also see Rome'" (19:21). That decision, made with the Spirit's leading, set the course of Paul's ministry for years, as we will see as we continue reading Acts.

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