

## **Paul in Ephesus: Acts 18:24-19:10**

President Trump had COVID and made two insightful statements:

First, "Don't let it dominate your life." It dominates the news and creates fear!

Second, "It was a blessing in disguise." What Satan uses for evil; God uses for blessing.

Trump's experience with COVID and his empathy and encouragement remind me of what Hebrews says about Jesus Christ as our High Priest. Hebrews 4:15: "We do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet he did not sin."

1. Acts is intended to be a paradigm/model of how the kingdom of God would be spread worldwide through the centuries until Jesus returns. Acts is open-ended. What is described in Acts is meant to continue until Christ's Great Commission is completed.
2. Acts shows us we need to know the third person of the Trinity. There is a transition from the ministry of Jesus to the ministry of the HS.
3. Acts is meant to be studied as inspired Scripture and then lived.
4. Acts is God's discipleship training manual for modern Christians. Therefore, please hear these sermons as not just historical information, but instruction. You will receive training in how to share the Gospel, how to walk in the Spirit, how to exercise biblical faith, how to pray, how to heal the sick, how to engage in spiritual warfare. This is Christianity 101.

### **18:24-28: The Ministry of Apollos, Priscilla & Aquila (P&A)**

Apollos was a Jew from Alexandria, Egypt.

He was eloquent. He had elocution. He had debate training. He knew how to make cogent (logical) arguments.

He was "mighty/powerful in the Scriptures." This ought to be a goal for every Christian!

He was fervent in spirit. He could present a cogent argument with passion and persuasion.

He had some instruction in the way of the Lord and taught accurately about Jesus as the Messiah. He still needed some facts about the life and ministry of Jesus and the baptism in the HS. He knew only the baptism of John.

He powerfully refuted the Jews in public debate proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.

He was a Christian apologist like Josh McDowell, Lee Strobel, and Frank Turek.

P&A partnered with Paul and traveled with him to Ephesus. This tent-making couple had an important "behind-the-scenes" ministry. They discipled Apollos in Ephesus after Paul left and went to Jerusalem. They probably did for Apollos what Paul later did for the disciples of Apollos who were disciples of John the Baptizer.

18:26: There is always a need to explain "the Way (of God)" more accurately. "The way of God" = the Christian faith and life. Acts 9:2; 19:9: followers of "the Way." I think this means two things: 1) P&Q told him more facts about the life, ministry, and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth (no Gospel had been written yet); 2) P&Q told him about the Holy Spirit. Apollos knew God as Father and Son, but not the third Person, the HS.

Immature believers need to have the "way of God" explained more accurately to them. I read a story about a missionary who went to an isolated village in the mountains to share the Gospel. When he got to the "unreached village" he discovered they were already Christians. He was told many years ago a villager made a long journey to the city to trade in the market and someone gave him a Bible. He brought the Bible back to the village and everyone read it and believed in Jesus Christ. The missionary discovered they had developed only three "heresies": 1) they worshiped on Saturday instead of Sunday; 2) they abstained from eating pork; and 3) they had killed all their dogs. Why? Because their Bible said, "Beware of dogs." Philippians 3:2: "*Beware of dogs,*

*beware of evil doers, beware of false circumcision...*" The missionary explained the "way of God" more accurately to the villagers just as P&A did for Apollos.

P & A's Application: Don't ever think your ministry or service for the Lord is unimportant or non-essential. You may not have an "up-front" ministry like Apollos, but you can have an effective "behind-the-scenes" ministry like P&A.

### **19:1-7: 12 Ephesian Disciples of John the Baptizer**

18:25 & 19:1-7: Apollos and his 12 Ephesian disciples were followers of Jesus as Messiah but knew only the baptism of John. They had been baptized by John. They knew that John pointed beyond himself to Messiah Jesus. They had probably talked with John about the time he baptized Jesus of Nazareth. After John's baptism Apollos and the Ephesian 12 returned home during Jesus' three years of ministry. While back home in Alexandria, Apollos probably heard news about the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth and in his own study of Scripture concluded that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah. Apollos and his disciples knew about Jesus' life and ministry, his death and resurrection, but not about the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Paul re-baptized the disciples using the trinitarian formula, "In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit." Then they received the HS the same as the disciples with speaking in tongues and prophesying.

Apollos' and the Ephesian 12's Application: Apollos was an active believer, an eloquent teacher, "fervent in spirit and competent in the Scriptures" but he still needed more. Don't ever think you know enough or have done enough in your Christian life. Don't become complacent and lazy. Don't say, "I don't need any more Bible study or Sunday school." Do you ever stop being hungry and eating? There is always more to know and do. We can always live with

more faith and obedience. The Ephesian believers needed to know the Holy Spirit!

Let's answer this question: "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" You may answer Yes, No, or I don't know.

The answer is YES or you wouldn't believe at all. Before you believe in Jesus Christ for salvation the HS is convicting you of sin and the need for righteousness (John 16:8).

Dr. Luke describes three similar incidents of receiving the HS with speaking in tongues and prophesying (praising God).

1. Pentecost (circumcised Jews): Acts 2:1-4: *When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.*
2. Roman centurion and his family (uncircumcised Gentiles): 10:44-46: *While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God.*
3. Apollos and 12 Jewish disciples of John the Baptizer who missed Pentecost: 19:5-6: *On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.*

These three incidents are interpreted two different ways.

Pentecostals and charismatics use these 3 incidents as proof texts for a doctrine that born-again Christians should all expect to receive the Holy Spirit as a second blessing after the first blessing of salvation and that the invariable initial evidence is speaking in tongues and prophesying. This is referred to as "baptism in/with the Holy Spirit."

Other conservative evangelical churches (Reformed and Baptist) interpret the three incidents as baptisms into the body of Christ. Paul wrote: 1 Cor. 12:12-13: *<sup>12</sup> For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup> For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*

The first group baptized into the body of Christ were circumcised Jews. The second group baptized into the body of Christ were uncircumcised Gentiles. The third group baptized into the body of Christ were uninformed disciples of John the Baptizer. These three groups received the HS with the same signs (no wind or tongues of fire) to indicate their acceptance into the body of Christ, the Church. So, Holy Spirit baptism ordinarily takes place as part of conversion. Therefore, a second "baptism" is not necessary.

Remember the principles of interpretation? Acts is historical narrative, and we cannot make doctrine based on it. Doctrine comes from the didactic parts of Scripture, mainly the epistles. I think the Pentecostal position relies too much on historical narrative and personal experience. (I think they interpret the didactic based on historical narrative. It should be the reverse.)

I prefer to call experiences subsequent to salvation "fillings of the Holy Spirit." In ACTS we see the initial experience described as "baptism" and subsequent experiences as "filled" (2:4; 4:8, 31; 7:55). Ephesians 5:18-21: *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing*

*one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

“Be filled with the Spirit” is a command and in GR it is a present active participle. It means “be filled and keep being filled.” It’s like someone who goes to a bar on Saturday and gets drunk and then does the same thing every Saturday night. A Christian goes to church on Sunday and gets filled with the HS and then does the same thing every Sunday getting refilled.

Being filled with the HS is not a static experience; it is a dynamic experience. I’m a person and the HS is a Person. It happens as we ask the Father (Luke 11:13) and submit to the Holy Spirit.

For example: I’m driving the speed limit and some impatient motorist speeds around me and cuts me off. Instead of honking my horn and making a hand gesture at the rude motorist hoping he will see it, I pray and ask the HS to control my reaction and fill me with his fruit.

\*Whenever I hear lying Democrats bear false witness against President Trump (thereby breaking the 9th commandment), I ask the HS to fill me and to control my reaction and I pray for their repentance.

\*Whenever my spouse says something annoying to me for the 10th time, I take a deep breath and ask the HS to fill me with his fruit of self-control.

\*Whenever I must submit to someone with less experience and education than me, I pray for the HS to fill me with his fruit and respond with patience.

The fruit and gifts of the HS are necessary for your Christian life. The fruit of the Spirit is your Christ-like character. Christ lived sinless perfection (he was not born with sinfulness or a sinful nature). The HS enables us to live as close to sinless perfection as possible while still living with a remnant of sinfulness in us. The fruit displaces the deeds of the flesh. The gifts of the Spirit are for

service. All the gifts of the Spirit are active today, including speaking in tongues and prophesying (both are means of exalting God).

The Bible commands us to be filled with the Spirit. The measure of being filled with the HS is not emotional experiences but daily submission to HS. Galatians 5:16-26: <sup>16</sup> *But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.* <sup>17</sup> *For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.* <sup>18</sup> *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.* <sup>19</sup> *Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,* <sup>20</sup> *idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions,* <sup>21</sup> *envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.* <sup>22</sup> *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,* <sup>23</sup> *gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.* <sup>24</sup> *And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.* <sup>25</sup> *If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.* <sup>26</sup> *Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.*

We are born of the Spirit; that is, have spiritual life in the Spirit. "Keep in step" comes from a Greek word "to stand in a row, to walk in a straight line" like a military march or line dancing. If we imagine a military march then the HS would be leading the march, "Forward, March! Left, right, left!" If we imagine line dancing... let's not.

One God is three Persons and the Person closest to you is the HS. You are a temple of the HS. Develop your relationship with the Holy Spirit. You may have an emotional experience with the Holy Spirit (*like Denzel Washington who also received a prophecy after he was kicked out of college*), but after the emotion of the experience fades away you must walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh (Galatians 5:16). Experiences with the HS apparently do not

completely eradicate your sinful nature and its desires. Experiences may diminish and suppress but do not eradicate. This happens by daily submission to the Spirit and growing the fruit.

Application: Don't ever think your ministry or serve to the Lord is unimportant or non-essential. You may not have an "up-front" ministry like Apollos, but you can have an effective "behind-the-scenes" ministry like P&A.

Application: Apollos was "fervent in spirit and competent in the Scriptures" but he still needed more. Don't become complacent. Don't say, "I don't need any more Bible study or Sunday school." **We can always live with more faith and obedience.** The 12 Ephesian disciples of John the Baptizer needed to know the Holy Spirit. Keep being filled with the HS. Keep in step with the HS. You have a dynamic relationship with the HS.

[Optional: 19:8-10: Paul quit the synagogue and continued teaching in the Hall of Tyrannus. He stayed in Ephesus for 2 years and "all the people of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks."

Application: If people remain stubborn and continue in unbelief and speak evil of Christianity, then move on. Don't waste any time on them. Move on to receptive people prepared by the HS.]