



G R A C E

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

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THE BOOK OF ACTS

Sermon Notes

Paul's Third Missionary Journey, Part 1

Paul in Ephesus

Acts 19:1-12

February 3, 2008

- I. The Disciples [of John] Receive the Holy Spirit
- II. Paul Teaches Daily in the School of Tyrannus
- III. The Word of the Lord Spreads – and Unites

- ❑ I remember in seminary one day, sitting in class, and one of the students asked the professor, “Do you really believe that the health of a church is directly related to its size [number of members]?” To this question, my professor responded by saying, “Well, healthy things grow.”
- ❑ There is certainly some truth to this statement; however, churches must always pray for *healthy* growth rather than simply *growth*.
- ❑ In fact, we read in Scripture of “certain persons [who] have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.” [Jude 4]
- ❑ Therefore, healthy growth in a church must always include **unity based upon a common commitment to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ**. Without this, growth will likely lead to division.
- ❑ In the Book of Acts, as the early church continued to grow, in accordance with the words of Jesus in Acts 1:8 [“...but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”]; **as will be clear in Acts 19, the Lord ensured that such growth never threatened the unity of the universal church – the Body of Christ**.

- ❑ As Baptists, we often hear of the “autonomy of the local church”; and although this is important, we rarely hear of the importance of unity within the Body of Christ – that is, the universal Church – the “one holy catholic and apostolic Church” according to the Nicene Creed.
- ❑ Yet, as we read Scripture, it is clear that unity in the Body of Christ, in both the local and the universal bodies, is of supreme importance to God.
- ❑ In fact, as Paul later writes to the Ephesian church, “There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all” [Ephesians 4:4-6].
- ❑ Thus, as Paul boldly proclaims the Gospel in Ephesus during this third missionary journey, he does so in the hope and prayer that as men and women are saved by the Lord Jesus Christ, they would be united in the same Gospel, under the same Lord, sharing the same faith.

I. The Disciples [of John] Receive the Holy Spirit

- ❑ Luke begins Chapter 19, in **Verse 1**, “It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and come to Ephesus, and found some disciples.”
 - Luke begins Chapter 19 with a reference to Apollos: “It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth...”
 - After Priscilla and Aquila privately instructed Apollos, giving him a “fuller picture” of Christ – no doubt including His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension – the young preacher left for Achaia. This was the region in modern-day Greece that included Athens, Corinth, Sparta and Delphi.
 - Therefore, as the reader begins Chapter 19, Apollos is now in Corinth – the place where Paul originally met Priscilla and Aquila.
 - The reference here to “the upper country” likely indicates that Paul traveled through the Cayster River valley as opposed to the way of Colossae and Laodicea.
 - W.M. Ramsay writes that Paul “taking the higher-lying and more direct route, not the regular trade route on the lower level down the Lycus and Maeander valleys” traveled and eventually arrived at Ephesus.

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- Then, Luke states that Paul “found some disciples.”
- This is a difficult phrase to deal with. It begs the question: “Disciples of whom?”

- Many scholars and commentators assert that these men are disciples of Jesus who, like Apollos, have an incomplete understand of His life and ministry [which would include His death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and sending of the Holy Spirit].
- Others, however, assert that these are merely disciples of John the Baptist, citing passages, such as Luke 5:33 and Luke 7:18-19.

“And they said to him, ‘The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink.’ Luke 5:33

- However, **Verses 2 – 4** give more insight into the spiritual nature of these disciples.
- “He [Paul] said to them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ And they said to him, ‘No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.’ And he said, ‘Into what then were you baptized?’ And they said, ‘Into John’s baptism.’ Paul said, ‘John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.’”
 - The reader is not told what it was that caused Paul to ask the “disciples”, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” However, it must have certainly been something that Paul observed in them.
 - Upon meeting these “disciples” Paul would have discussed with them the nature of their discipleship. He would have certainly asked them about the nature of their *belief*. From these conversations, Paul would have quickly discovered that their understanding of Jesus Christ, like that of Apollos, was greatly deficient.
 - Therefore, Paul asked them a most fundamental question, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”
 - The disciples’ answer to this question gives the reader great insight into their spiritual status – “No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.”
 - The answer of the disciples is clear: “No.”
 - Yet, one must be careful when interpreting the second part of their answer: “...we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.”
 - As disciples of John the Baptist, these twelve men would have been familiar with the Old Testament. As such the “concept” of the Spirit of God, or the Holy Spirit, would not have been foreign to them.
 - Furthermore, John the Baptist himself declared, in John 1:33, “I did not recognize Him [Jesus Christ], but He who sent me to

baptize in water said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.’”

- Therefore, the words of the disciples, “...we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit” should be taken as “We have not heard that the Holy Spirit has come” or “We have not heard that the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit has come.”
 - In short, these disciples did not have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
 - Thus, even though they were similar to Apollos in their lack of full understanding concerning Jesus, they were fundamentally different from him in that he was “fervent in Spirit...teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus...” [Acts 18:25] [*The phrase, “fervent in Spirit” is quite possibly a reference to the Holy Spirit.*]
- Therefore, it appears that these “disciples” were not yet Christians, that is followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Many scholars refute this assertion, saying that they were “Old Testament saints...followers of Jesus...believers...who had yet to receive the Holy Spirit.”
 - Yet, throughout the New Testament it seems rather clear that, **if one does not have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, then he or she is not a Christian.**

“However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. **But, if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.** But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”
Romans 8:9-11

“In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – **having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.**” Ephesians 1:13

“These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit.” Jude 19

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?” 1 Corinthians 6:19

“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, we were all made to drink of one Spirit.” 1 Corinthians 12:13

“He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior...” Titus 3:5-6

“The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, but the Spirit whom He has given us...By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.” 1 John 3:24; 4:13

- Commentator David Williams writes, concerning Paul’s question:

“His [Paul’s] criterion for what distinguished the Christian is significant. So, too, is the way in which his question is framed. It implies that the Holy Spirit is received at a definite point in time and that that time is the moment of initial belief (the aorist participle, *pisteusantes*, being construed here as coincidental with the verb, *elabete*). The same thought is expressed, for example, in Ephesians 1:13: ‘Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit’ (cf. Acts 11:17). No space of time is envisaged between the two events; nor is the possibility entertained of believing without also receiving the ‘seal of the Spirit.’”

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- Following the disciples’ initial [negative] reply to Paul’s question [‘Did you received the Holy Spirit when you believed?’], the Apostle asked them, “Into what then were you baptized?” **Verse 3**
- Their response to Paul’s second question revealed their true spiritual identity: “Into John’s baptism.”
 - Therefore, they were disciples of John the Baptist, not Jesus Christ.
- After realizing the truth of their spiritual status, Luke writes, in **Verse 4**, that “Paul said, ‘John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.’”
 - What is significant, here, is that Paul does not go on to instruct these ‘disciples’ concerning the Holy Spirit. Rather, he explains to them that the work of John the Baptist, like the entire Old Testament, pointed to Christ.
 - Therefore, **Paul exalts Jesus Christ**, knowing that just as John the Baptist baptized with water, so, **Jesus Christ will baptize all who believe in Him in the Holy Spirit** [John 1:33].
- Then, in **Verses 5 – 6** Luke writes, “When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying.”

- This passage, along with several others in the Book of Acts, has led many modern-day believers to assert that this is a normative, typical, repeatable, event. That is, that one receives the Holy Spirit, often after initial belief, through the laying on of hands; and that this receiving of the Holy Spirit is then authenticated through the speaking with tongues.
- **Yet, such an interpretation demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of not only the nature of the Book of Acts, but the very nature of God Himself.**

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1. First of all, **this is the last time in the Book of Acts that believers will speak in tongues** in conjunction with (a) belief in Jesus Christ; (b) receiving of the Holy Spirit; and (c) the laying on of apostolic hands.

- The other examples of this phenomenon in Acts include:
 - ◆ Among the **Jews in Jerusalem at Pentecost** in Acts 2:2-4, 9-11, 26-27. “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.” Acts 2:4
 - ◆ In **Samaria** in Acts 8:14-17. As Philip preached the gospel, and Samaritans were believing, “...the apostles in Jerusalem...sent them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit...Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.”
 - NOTE: In Acts 8, there is no record of tongues-speaking; however, we do witness the receiving of the Holy Spirit in conjunction with the laying on of apostolic hands.
 - ◆ In Caesarea, among the **Gentiles**, in the home Cornelius, the God-fearer, in Acts 10:45-46 [Peter also refers to this incident in Acts 11:15]. “All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God.”
 - ◆ Now, we observe, in Acts 19:5-6, the final case of tongues-speaking in the Book of Acts, during Paul’s third missionary journey, as he is now in Ephesus, in the Gentile-world, where he encounters some disciples of John the Baptist. Once these men believe and are baptized in the name of Jesus, they speak in tongues and prophecy.
 - With the events in Acts 19 completed, all categories of people have now received the baptism of the Holy Spirit by Jesus Christ. As the *Reformation*

Study Bible states, “This episode is an extension of the Pentecost experience to yet another group of people.”

- Some, like John MacArthur, have noted that this final group of people was Old Testament Saints, disciples of John the Baptist.
- What is clear is that, from Acts 2-19, **we have witnessed the fulfillment of Acts 1:8.**

Viewed in light of the stated purpose of the Book of Acts [Acts 1:8], each of these incidences are perfectly consistent with the overall context of Luke’s account.

It is absolutely essential that the modern-day reader understand the Book of Acts not as “more or less random samplings of earliest Christian piety and practice” and a collection of repeatable [normative] experiences among Christians in the early Church.

Rather, the Book of Acts must be read as it was intended to: as a record of the initial and once-for-all establishment of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- As Richard Gaffin writes, in *Perspectives on Pentecost*:

“One of Luke’s purposes [in writing the Book of Acts] is to document the foundational (i.e., apostolic) spread of the gospel from Israel to the nations. He is intent on recording the initial, once-for-all establishment of the new covenant church as made up of both Jew and Gentile, through the ministry of the apostles and those associated with them. Acts is to be read in the light of Jesus’ promise and statement of program to the apostles in 1:8, which has as good as a claim as any to being the them verse of Acts: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (NIV). The subsequent narrative in Acts as a whole conforms broadly to the pattern indicated here: Jerusalem-Samaria-the ends of the earth (Rome at the other end of the Mediterranean world). Luke is concerned to show that subsequent developments transpired as Jesus promised they would.”

- Gaffin continues:

“The events recorded in Acts 8, 10 (11), and 19, then, together with the striking occurrences they involve (note, however, that there is no mention of tongues in Chapter 8), are not repetitions of what took place at Pentecost as parts of a series to continue indefinitely. Rather they are elements in the initial, foundational spread of the gospel and so correlate with the events of Acts 2 as part of a unique, nonrepeatable (i.e., nontypical, nonmodular) complex of events.

Therefore, the events in Acts 2, 8, 10, and 19 are never-to-be-repeated events [just as the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is never-to-be-repeated], as the historical and redemptive context of the Book of Acts is never-to-be-repeated. The Gospel has spread from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. Acts 1:8 is fulfilled. Furthermore, as Acts 1:8 was being initially fulfilled once-for-all, God authenticated each successive “stage” of the spread of the Gospel [in accordance with Acts 1:8] with unique, once-for-all miraculous signs.

Furthermore, not only was each successive stage accompanied by miraculous signs [such as tongues-speaking], but each time, God authenticated the “experience” through the presence of Christ-appointed Apostles.

- The presence of an apostle at each of these stages, then, ensures the overall unity of the Church as the Gospel spreads from Jerusalem to Samaria and into the Gentile world. Apart from apostolic presence, it is possible that there would have been a “Jewish Church” and a “Samaritan Church” and a “Gentile Church.” But, it was God’s will that there would be one “universal and apostolic church” with Christ as its head.
- Warren Wiersbe writes, “By using Paul to convey the gift of the Spirit, God affirmed Paul’s apostolic authority and united the Ephesians church to the other churches as well as the ‘mother church’ in Jerusalem. When Peter and John laid hands on the believing Samaritans, it united them to the Jerusalem church and healed a breach between Jews and Samaritans that had existed for centuries.”

2. The second point that is significant for the modern-day reader to understand is that initial belief in the Lord Jesus Christ is **always** accompanied by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In other words, there is no biblical warrant for a “second blessing” or a “baptism in the Holy Spirit” experience that is separate and distinct from initial faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

- The first reason for this truth is that it is the Holy Spirit who sovereignly regenerates all believers, enabling them to “see the kingdom of God” and express faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, apart from the sovereign, regenerative act of the Holy Spirit, one could never even believe in Jesus – for he or she would remain spiritually dead.
- **Yet, this regeneration, or new birth, is also properly understood as the baptism of the believer in the Holy Spirit by the Lord Jesus Christ** [in accordance with the will of the Father]. This is the fulfillment of John 1:33:

“I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.’”

- Once again, Richard Gaffin writes:
“At the Jordan, the Spirit was given to Jesus, by the Father (Luke 3:22), as endowment for the messianic task before him, in order that he might accomplish salvation of the church; at Pentecost, the Spirit, received by Jesus, from the Father, as reward for the redemptive work finished and behind him, was given by him to the church as the (promised) gift (of the Father). The fully Trinitarian complexion of Pentecost is plain.”

- Thus, it is **Jesus Christ who baptizes us into the Person of the Holy Spirit [in accordance with the will of the Father]**. (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16; 1 Corinthians 12:13)

- ❑ Therefore, if Christians today experience a “second blessing” separate and distinct from our regeneration and initial belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, it would constitute an act of the Holy Spirit separate and distinct from the other two Persons of the Trinity [the Father and the Son]. This would, then, amount to a division in God [who cannot be divided]; and ultimately, a second god.
- ❑ Yet, God cannot be divided, and every act of God is an act of all three Persons of the Trinity – to include our conversion.

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- ❑ Luke concludes this section by stating, in **Verse 7**, “There were in all about twelve men.”
 - Some have sought to find significance in the number twelve. For example, one commentator states that these men represent the nation of Israel [with its twelve tribes]; however, it is the twelve Apostles that represent Israel.
 - It is best, therefore, not to look into a symbolic significance of this number.

II. Paul Teaches Daily in the School of Tyrannus

- ❑ After laying hands on the disciples, Luke states that Paul, in **Verse 8**, “...entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.”
 - Once again, Paul is consistently following his pattern of entering into the synagogue and boldly proclaiming the truth and fulfillment of the Scriptures and salvation in the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ [the kingdom of God].
- ❑ As a result of Paul’s preaching, Luke writes, in **Verse 9**, that “...some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people...”
 - After three months of preaching, the result of Paul’s efforts was the hardening and disobedience of the hearers. Not only this, they were also “speaking evil of the Way before the people...”
 - The expression, “were becoming hardened” is similar to what was used of Pharaoh (Exodus 8:15; 9:35) as well as the Israelites in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 2:30).
 - The ultimate result...the fruit, of their hardening was “speaking evil of the Way before the people...”
 - Once again, this is a term used in the Book of Acts, for the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

- Therefore, as was the case in Corinth, Paul “shakes the dust off his feet” and “withdrew from them” (**Verse 9**). However, Luke makes it clear that Paul did take “away the disciples” with him.
- Withdrawing from the synagogue and the Jews, Paul “took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.”
 - We do not know anything else about Tyrannus or his school. He was possibly the owner of the school or lecture hall. Most likely, if this was the case, he was a teacher there as well. In fact, his name means “our tyrant.” Thus, it is possible that the name Tyrannus was a name the man was commonly referred to, especially his students.
 - According to the Western text, Paul would speak daily from the fifth hour to the tenth hour (that is, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.). Many scholars believe that this is quite likely, as this was a normal siesta time – the “quiet hours” – in this Mediterranean culture.
 - In fact, as one scholar [Lake] writes, “[at] 1 p.m. there were probably more people asleep [in Ephesus] than at 1 a.m.” In fact, this tradition, at least to some degree, still exists today in the Mediterranean world.
 - Therefore, if this was, indeed, the case [that Paul spoke between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m.], then he would preach/teach in a time when people would be free to hear him [as many businesses would be closed during these hours].

F.F. Bruce writes, “Tyrannus no doubt held his classes in the early morning hours. Public activity ceased in the cities of Ionia for several hours at 11 a.m., and more people would be asleep at 1 p.m. than at 1 a.m. But Paul, after spending the early hours of the day at his tent-making (20:34), devoted the hours of burden and heat to his more important and more exhausting business, and must have infected his hearers with his own energy and zeal, so that they were willing to sacrifice their siesta for the sake of listening to Paul.”

- So, it appears that Paul would work in the mornings as a tentmaker in order to support himself, and then teach/reason/lecture in the school of Tyrannus from 11:00 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and then continued ministering in the evening hours, going house to house (Acts 20:31).

III. The Word of the Lord Spreads – and Unites

- Finally, Luke writes, in **Verse 10**, “This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.”
 - Paul continued to preach for two years, and the fruit of his labor was great: “all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.”

- It is possible that all seven churches of Asia referenced in Revelation were founded during this two year period.
- Furthermore, Paul’s colleague, Epaphras, apparently evangelized this region during this time as well, reaching the cities of the Lycus valley – cities such as Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis (Colossians 1:7-8; 2:1; 4:12-13).
- Notice, here, Luke writes **all** who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord.

John Calvin writes, “Luke does not mean that the men of Asia came together to hear Paul; but that the smell [savor] of his preaching went throughout all Asia, and that the seed was sown far and wide; so that his labor was fruitful not only to one city, but also to places which were far off; and that comes to pass oftentimes, that when the truth of God is preached in one place, it sounds where the voice of the minister cannot sound, being spread abroad far and wide; because it is delivered from hand to hand, and one does teach another.”

- Calvin’s comment is certainly true; however, this is a case where **all** must be understood in light of its context.
- In fact, most English translations interpret this Verse from the Greek as an apposition. That is, “**all** who lived in Asia...” is modified by “**both Jews and Greeks.**”
- Therefore, it appears that what Luke is actually saying is “**all of Asia – without distinction of race – both Jews and Greeks [Gentiles] – heard the word of the Lord.**”
- No longer was salvation viewed as something restricted to the Jewish race, but now it went out to **all**.
- Therefore, viewed in light of Acts 1:8, Acts 19 marks the fulfillment, in a very real sense, of the words of our Risen Lord.

For now, we observe that the Exalted [Ascended] Jesus Christ has baptized both **Jews** [Acts 2]; **Samaritans** [Acts 8]; **Gentiles** [Acts 10]; and now the transitional group of men who were **John’s disciples** [Acts 19] all into one Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13).

- This was accomplished, once again in accordance with the providence of God, through Paul’s rejection in the Jewish synagogue in Ephesus. For after the Jews hardened their hearts, Paul took the Gospel message to the Gentiles, and as a result, the word of the Lord spreads – to both Jews and Gentiles.
- Because of the rejection of the Gospel by the Jews, the word of the Lord united both Jews and Gentiles.