



31 | ACTS 18:18-19:7

THIRD JOURNEY, SAME SPIRIT

There is no power without the Spirit.

Outline

- 1. SET SAIL IN THE SPIRIT (18:18-22)**
 - His Team
 - His Thankfulness
 - His Target
 - His Tenderness
 - His Tribe
- 2. STRENGTHEN LEADERS FOR THE SPIRIT (18:23-28)**
 - We Need Healthy Churches
 - We Need Healthy Discipleship
 - A Cultured Disciple*
 - A Converted Disciple*
 - A Committed Disciple*
 - We Need Healthy Duplication
- 3. SOLIDIFY THE SPIRIT'S WORK (19:1-7)**
 - The Place of the Spirit's Work
 - The People of the Spirit's Work
 - The Proof of the Spirit's Work

Call to Worship

Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! ⁷ For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his voice, ⁸ do not harden your hearts.

—Psalm 95:6-8

Songs

Christ Our Hope in Life and Death
By Faith
Spirit of the Living God
King of kings

Scripture Reading: Ezekiel 36:22-28; Ephesians 5:15-21

Announcements

WELCOME: We are glad you are here! Be sure to grab a Welcome Packet if you are visiting with us.

GIVING: You can give over Zelle through your bank with no fees (use secretary@livinghopechurch.net). We also have a collection box on the Welcome Center. Malachi 3, “Test me in this” Proverbs: **“Give of your firstfruits.”** We believe blessing comes by putting God first.

Introduction

The Holy Spirit is on the move. We are called to be a Spirit-filled church. Our heart’s desire is to see each member of the body of Christ **controlled and directed by the Holy Spirit**. In Acts 18, Paul returns from his second missionary journey and then begins a third. The Spirit has to do the work of resurrecting dead sinners by the word of the gospel. But a curious thing occurs in this passage. Something is missing. There is **a lack of understanding of the Holy Spirit** that is holding the church back. Once they understand, the church leaps forward in fruitfulness.

It reminds me of the great **John Wesley**. He was the son of a clergyman, Samuel Wesley, and the unusually godly and dedicated Susanna Wesley. After a privileged upbringing, John attended Oxford and became **professor of both Greek and logic**. He also served as his father’s assistant and was **even ordained by the church**. Yet, **something vital was missing**.

While at Oxford he was a member of the “Holy Club,” a group so nicknamed by the other students because they seriously attempted to cultivate their spiritual lives. Finally, he accepted an invitation to become **a missionary to the American Indians** in the state of Georgia, *where he utterly failed*. Forced to return to England he wrote, **“I went to America to convert the Indians; but, oh, who shall convert me?”**¹ The great John Wesley was missing something.

Thankfully, he had encountered some **Moravians** whose living faith deeply impressed him. So, upon his return to London, he sought out one of the leaders and, to use Wesley’s words, he was “clearly convinced of unbelief, of the lack of that faith whereby alone we are saved.” On May 24, 1738, at the age of 34, Wesley wrote in his journal:

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street where one was reading Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me, that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.²

Now he knew what was missing: the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit! John Wesley’s “warming” was the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Amazingly, until Aldersgate, John Wesley, a man who knew more theology and was more dedicated than

¹ John Wesley, *The Journal of John Wesley: The Founder of the Methodist Movement*, ed. Percy Livingstone Parker (New York: F.H. Revell, 1903), journal entry from 24 January 1738.

² *Ibid.*, journal entry from 24 May 1738.

most believers, did not know Christ or the saving power of the Holy Spirit. He was **in the church but was unconverted**. Wesley was like many today. They have the form of godliness, but they do not have the life and warmth of the Holy Spirit. This is a life and death issue.³

In our passage, Paul finishes one missionary journey and ventures out on a third. The launch out and the people he meets highlights the one thing that the various people were missing. Some didn't have correct teaching on the Holy Spirit (Apollos) while others had never even heard of the Holy Spirit (12 disciples of John the Baptist in Ephesus). We find a pattern where Paul is utterly reliant on the Holy Spirit, and the church expands and grows beyond any human comprehension as people experience the power of God's Spirit.

Key thought: As a church, we must not rely on mere Bible knowledge alone but experience the power of God's word through the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit, all we do is vain.

Where do we begin? Paul sets sail with the wind of the Spirit. His life is a wonderful example of a humble, broken, Spirit-filled believer that would not relent until the Spirit's power had changed the face of the world he lived in. That ought to be our attitude. Let's always be setting sail, looking for the next gospel opportunity. Paul knew that without the Spirit, nothing eternal was possible. Scripture is clear about this.

Psalm 127:1 | Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.

Zechariah 4:6 | Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.

Ephesians 5:19 | Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.

Paul knew that Christ would build his church, and the gates of hell could not be victorious. With that in mind, Paul got ready to sail for Ephesus. First, he had a few more things to do in Corinth.

1. SET SAIL IN THE SPIRIT (18:18-22)

Paul finishes up the second missionary journey and begins a third. He leaves Corinth after a year and a half and took leave for his home church in Antioch in Syria. These four pillars here really show a mature Spirit-led life.

Anything done in the flesh is worthless. Is your life filled with the fruit of the Spirit and joy? If hard times come and you find yourself filled with fear and bitterness, you are living a miserable life. Be done with your self-life and surrender fully and completely to the Spirit. Walk in the light. We can't do it alone. God gave Paul a special team: Pricilla and Aquila.

³ R. Kent Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1996), 245–246.

HIS TEAM

Paul was mature enough to know he could not live the Christian life or do Christian ministry alone. Paul always journeyed with a team, and this one was very special to Paul.

Acts 18:18a | After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila.

Who are Aquila and Pricilla? They are originally from Rome, but are kicked out when Claudius became emperor, and Jews were outlawed until he died in A.D. 54. They make their temporary home in Corinth and take their leather business on the road. It's in the leather business they meet Paul who needs leather to make tents.

Priscilla and Aquila were working people, though Pricilla is from a more upper-class family. Her name is originally Prisca, which is a name for the wealthy at that time. Nonetheless, they were **humble tentmakers**, which probably means that they worked in leather since tents were usually made of skins. They were not from the upper classes certainly. They were probably not particularly well educated. They were Jews. They had been living in Rome. But when the **emperor Claudius issued his well-known edict banishing the Jews from Rome**, Priscilla and Aquila left the capital of the empire and went to Corinth, where Paul met them.⁴ They were free to help Paul in Corinth, and as Paul leaves for Antioch, Pricilla and Aquila depart with Paul since their trade did not tie them to one spot.

It's interesting that most of the time **Pricilla** is named first, as it seems she might have been **more grounded in teaching the Scripture**. She, with her husband Aquila, will later help Apollo get grounded. This tells us that in the home a wife may have stronger gifts than her husband, but we see that Aquila is still doing the leading and protecting of his beloved wife.

HIS THANKFULNESS

Paul was so grateful for all God had done while he was in Corinth, we can see that the vision he received from the Lord did so much to encourage him (18:9-11). He wanted to do something to express his joy: he took a vow of gratitude while in Corinth.

Acts 18:18b | At Cenchreae he had cut his hair, for he was under a vow.

Before setting sail for the great city of Ephesus, **Paul had his hair cut**: he had allowed it to grow long for the duration of a **vow of gratitude** which he had undertaken.⁵

At Cenchreae, Paul had his hair cut because of a vow. When a Jew particularly wanted to **thank God for some blessing, he would take a vow**. This was not a Nazarite vow, since he would have to go to Jerusalem for that (Num 6:1-21). But it was similar to the Nazarite vow in that it was a vow of gratitude. Normally when a vow like this is carried out in full, it would mean that for **thirty days he neither ate meat nor drank wine**; and he **allowed his hair to grow**. For this vow, all we know is that Paul grew his hair out, as a way of showing gratitude. At the conclusion of the vow, **Paul's hair would be cut and burned as an offering to God**. No doubt Paul was thinking of all God's

⁴ James Montgomery Boice, *Acts: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), 313.

⁵ Bruce, F. F. *The Book of the Acts. The New International Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988.

goodness to him in Corinth and took this vow to show his gratitude.⁶ This vow was also characteristic of Paul's ministry. **"To the Jews I became a Jew"** (1 Cor 9:20), and there were many Jews in Corinth as well as those he would be returning home to in Antioch soon (18:22).

As Paul concluded his time at Corinth and "stayed many days longer" he must have been so grateful to God and took the vow. He did not go to the temple and offer sacrifice, but merely cut his hair that had grown out during the Nazarite vow. He was so grateful! To the Jews he would often live as a Jew in order to win them to Christ. This vow was **a way to model Christlike love to the Jews in the Corinthian church** as well as those he was returning to at **Antioch**.

HIS TARGET

Paul was mature in the word and was willing to trust God for fruit. He had Pricilla and Aquila **set up their leather/tentmaking business** up in Ephesus, and then Paul made **a beeline for the synagogue** to proclaim the gospel from the Scriptures.

Acts 18:19 | And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there, but he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.

At that time **Ephesus was the most important commercial city** in all of Asia Minor. It stood between two mountain ranges near the mouth of a lovely river. **Major highways radiated out from Ephesus**. Just as all roads in the ancient world led to Rome, so all roads in Asia Minor led to Ephesus.⁷

Because of the great city's strategic location, Ephesus was a place of great **political importance**—the capital of Asia Minor. **If the gospel spread in Ephesus, it would spread across the world**. In Paul's day, it was **a free Greek city**, with its own senate and **duly elected civic government**. It was also a magisterial seat with its house of justice.

Its chief pride, however, was the **temple of Diana** (Artemis)—a **goddess of prosperity** and fertility—which was famed as one of the seven wonders of the world. Many traders made a great living there, making money of the pilgrims that would journey to the great temple of Diana. The Jews in Ephesus were protected by religious liberties afforded to them by the emperor Augustus.

Nonetheless, Paul would shortly return to Ephesus and start a church that would **destroy the idolatry industry in Ephesus**. We'll learn much about that in Acts 19. Suffice it to say Paul thought he was just dropping off friends in Ephesus, but it became **one the most important church plants of his entire ministry**. The list of pastors that would one day pastor in Ephesus is like a sanctified hall of fame. Paul, Apollos, Timothy, and the apostle John all pastored the church in different seasons. Later on, the John likely wrote his gospel while pastoring in Ephesus around 90 A.D. Paul's little stop over at Ephesus will turn out to be a major advance for Christianity for all of history.

⁶ William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 3rd ed. fully rev. and updated., The New Daily Study Bible (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 161–162.

⁷ John Phillips, *Exploring Acts: An Expository Commentary*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp., 2009), Ac 18:19a.

HIS TENDERNESS

Paul had a very soft heart for the Ephesians. They begged him to stay, but he had to get back to Antioch, so he declined, but he promised to come back if God allowed him.

Acts 18:20-21 | When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined. ²¹ But on taking leave of them he said, "I will return to you if God wills," and he set sail from Ephesus.

We are not told why Paul was in such a hurry to go to Jerusalem at this time, nor indeed why he felt the need to go at all. His vow might have had something to do with it. Surely, he wanted to get back to Jerusalem by Passover.

Ephesus promised to be another fruitful field but a very demanding one. Paul had **every intention of returning**, and he will return and spend the most time at any church that he's planted (three years). In the meantime, **Aquila and Priscilla could be trusted to prepare the ground there in Ephesus.**

Paul is **not under a legalistic pressure** to save the world. He really **trusts in God's sovereignty** to return to Ephesus, but he is not overwrought. He is not overwhelmed. He's at peace in the will of God. Paul was at the same time broken for lost souls and **at peace in the will of God.**

HIS TRIBE

Paul's tribe, his **forever family, is that wonderful church at Antioch in Syria.** Paul had deep relationships of love, encouragement, and accountability there with his home church.

Acts 18:22 | When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch.

Home sweet home—Antioch of Syria. This was the church that sent Paul and Barnabas off for their first missionary journey to Galatia. They then sent Paul and Silas on a second missionary journey to Europe. Now **Paul rests in Antioch, and then he launches out for a third missionary journey.**

How vital it is to always have a home church where you can have people who have known you for decades at a time. Families can put their roots down and have lifetime relationships. Though Paul was a single man, he had plenty of family at his beloved home church of Antioch.

HERE BEGINS THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

2. STRENGTHEN LEADERS FOR THE SPIRIT (18:23-28)

Here we're going to see how the mature apostle finds those who need some growing in their lives and how we too are to help solidify leaders for our ministry. **Paul here begins his third missionary journey.** How does Paul multiply his ministry? How do we advance the kingdom of God?

WE NEED HEALTHY CHURCHES

In order to see God's kingdom multiply and advance, we have to make sure we have healthy churches. Paul gets refreshed at his home church at Antioch, and then launches out on his third and final missionary journey.

Acts 18:23 | After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

Paul begins this third missionary journey by **strengthening the churches he had planted in the quad-cities Galatia** (Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe) and the tri-cities of Phrygia (Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis). Everywhere Paul had the same message: "Be strong!" **He knew well of the instability of the Galatian believers.** We can fill in the substance of his sermons in those cities by glancing at his epistle to the Galatians. "**Don't go back to law!** You are saved by grace and sanctified by grace, not by the law. Enjoy your freedom in Christ. Walk in the Spirit. Keep in step, moment by moment with the Spirit. There's no power in the flesh." **Paul preached the Spirit-filled life.** That's what strengthens churches.

Paul lifted up Christ in Colossae and the other cities of Phrygia. We can hear him preaching, because we have his letter to the Colossians of Phrygia—which contains some of the most exalted language in the New Testament. **To have healthy churches there must be an exalted focus on Christ.**

Colossians 1:15-17 | He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Paul solidified the leaders in the churches of Galatia and Phrygia by preaching **the gospel by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone to the glory of God alone.** This kind of Christ-centered, God-exalting preaching is what strengthens the churches. Paul was **setting an example of preaching for the pastors and elders** shepherding these churches. Do you want to grow a church? Lift up Jesus Christ!

WE NEED HEALTHY DISCIPLESHIP

While Paul was busy strengthening the churches in Galatia, **Pricilla and Aquila are holding down the fort in Ephesus,** and there they find a wonderful disciple named Apollos.

A Cultured Disciple

Acts 18:24 | Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures.

Apollos had come from **Alexandria, Egypt—a place of incredible scholarship.** Alexandria was the second most important city in the Roman Empire. A center for education and philosophy, the city was founded by (and named after) Alexander the Great, and it boasted a university with a library of almost 700,000 volumes of papyrus

scrolls.⁸ **The Septuagint was compiled there.** Apollos represented an amazing synthesis of Greek and Hebrew learning.⁹

This was Apollos' home where he had acquired the advanced learning of his day. He had gone through what we would call university and graduate school. His credentials were impressive. Apollos was one of those scholarly, eloquent men, extremely cultured and precise in his language. Most of all, he was "competent" in the Scriptures, a man of great learning. Since Apollos knew the Scriptures well, it is probable that he had been in touch with and perhaps even have studied under **the great Jewish historian from Alexandria, Philo**, who was also very learned in the Scriptures.¹⁰

A Converted Disciple

Acts 18:25 | He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.

Apollos was passionate—"he spoke with great fervor." Literally the word **means "burning" or "boiling hot."** He exemplified Lloyd-Jones's definition of preaching: **"logic on fire."**¹¹ But he was missing something. Apollos had been converted, but not yet given Christian baptism, only knowing the baptism of John. For all his scholarship, there was something lacking in his training. He knew only the baptism of John. When we come to deal with the next passage, we shall see more clearly what that means. Apollos had seen his need for repentance and have recognized Jesus as the Messiah, but he needed a **fuller understanding of the ministry of the Spirit** and of Christian baptism.¹² That fuller commitment to the church community through baptism and **filling of the Spirit did not take very long once he met Paul's good friends Priscilla and Aquila.**

A Committed Disciple

Acts 18:26 | He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

Apollos could speak clearly of the prophecies of Jesus right from the Scriptures, and he boldly spoke the gospel in the synagogue there in Ephesus, but he had only known the baptism of John. So, Priscilla and Aquila "explained the way of God" more fully.

I can almost hear Priscilla and Aquila discussing it. "This man is a very able man," they must have said to one another, "but there's **something missing in what he's saying.** It's not that he's saying anything that is untrue; it is just that he doesn't seem to possess the assurance that comes from knowing Jesus in all his fullness and the baptism that is a

⁸ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 479.

⁹ R. Kent Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1996), 247.

¹⁰ James Montgomery Boice, *Acts: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), 314.

¹¹ Hughes, *Acts*, 247.

¹² William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 3rd ed. fully rev. and updated., The New Daily Study Bible (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 163.

sign and seal of a relationship with Jesus. We need to invite him back for dinner and talk with him.”¹³

What exactly did Apollos need to understand more fully? It likely means that he has been baptized with John’s baptism and is well informed of Jesus’ deeds and words to a certain point. What he lacks is both instruction in and experience of the rest of the story, notably Acts 1 and 2, including baptism in the Holy Spirit.¹⁴ He was **very likely indwelt** by the **Holy Spirit**, but had **no clear understanding of what happened to him when he believed**. He spoke about everything so clearly, but he needed to speak more clearly about the new birth and the Holy Spirit. So Pricilla and Aquilla disciplined Apollos and helped educate him in the Pauline theology of the Bible (at which time the New Testament was still being written).

Look how powerful it is to disciple each other. There are those who have all the gifts, calling, and conversion to bring others to Christ, but they need encouragement and doctrinal clarity. They also need to understand the fullness of the Spirit as Pricilla and Aquila explained to Apollos. Who’s your Apollos? Who are you helping to grow in the Spirit-filled life?

WE NEED HEALTHY DUPLICATION

Once **Apollos is thoroughly instructed**, he goes to Achaia with the blessing of the churches there, the primary of which was in Corinth.

Acts 18:27-28 | And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed,²⁸ for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

Luke tells us that Apollos was in the province of Achaia, most likely in Corinth where we understand he was also useful in “watering” the spiritual seed which Paul had planted.

1 Corinthians 3:5-6 | What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.

In essence, **Paul had for all intents and purposes duplicated his ministry**. Paul heads out to Ephesus while Apollos works at Corinth. Apollos’ role in the early stages of that church is that he got to see the true harvest at Corinth, where God gives an amazing influx of souls into the kingdom.

As the **Spirit of God works in you personally**, you will see **his work duplicated** in others, drawing the lost to Christ, and strengthening other believers.

3. SOLIDIFY THE SPIRIT’S WORK (19:1-7)

Paul departs for Ephesus and begins a concentrated effort there that will last the most of any other church: three years.

¹³ Derek W. H. Thomas, *Acts*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2011), 533.

¹⁴ Chalmer Ernest Faw, *Acts*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1993), 213.

THE PLACE OF THE SPIRIT'S WORK

Acts 19:1a | And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus.

In Paul's time, Ephesus was the commercial center of the region and the fourth-largest city in the empire. Estimations of its population range from two hundred thousand to four hundred thousand during New Testament times.¹⁵ It boasted the twenty-five-thousand-seat amphitheater, but the greatest attraction was **the temple of Diana, goddess of fertility and prosperity**. The temple was also a bank where people from all over the world deposited money. It was considered **one of the seven wonders of the ancient world**. The temple was one of the main sources of revenue. We are going to see that with the Spirit's power and the preaching of the gospel, this center of idolatry would be shut down!

The Spirit had already been working in Ephesus. There were people who had seen the ministry of Jesus and had been baptized with John's baptism but were not yet baptized in the Holy Spirit.

There is something we need to realize when we pray for a local or a person. **If we have a burden on our heart for a place or a person, that is because God is already at work there**. Whoever you are praying for, God is already there working ahead of you. The Spirit draws, we preach, and God gives the increase!

THE PEOPLE OF THE SPIRIT'S WORK

God is moving among all people at all times. Some people are stuck, and the people that Paul meets in Ephesus are quite stuck. Not only do they lack understanding of baptism, but they have never even heard of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 19:1b-3 | Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. ²And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." ³And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism."

During the latter part of the **eighteenth century many colonists left Virginia** and started through the mountains to settle the valleys that lay far to the west. Fear of Indians, the death of a horse, or the breaking down of a wagon forced many to stay in the mountains. **For over twenty years these settlers** hid in the mountains, until a group of travelers straggled into the neighborhood. Naturally there was much conversation about the outside world. The travelers asked the mountaineers what they thought of the **new republic and the policies of the Continental Congress**. The others answered, "We have not so much as heard of a Continental Congress or a Republic." They thought of themselves as **loyal subjects of the British king and had not even heard of George Washington or the Revolutionary War**.¹⁶

¹⁵ P. R. Treblico, "Asia," in *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, ed. David W. J. Gill and Conrad H. Gempf (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1994), 302–59.

¹⁶ Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Let Me Illustrate* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1967), 159-160.

That's kind of **what's happened in Ephesus**. We have a group of Jews, twelve in all, according to verse 7, and they **do not understand baptism, either water baptism or the baptism of the Holy Spirit**.

After coming into contact with the teaching of John the Baptist, these men in Ephesus had become **spiritual Rip Van Winkles**. Their reply, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit," does not mean they knew nothing about the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit came on Jesus when he was baptized, and John taught that the Messiah would baptize believers with the Spirit and with fire. These men simply did not know that the promised Spirit had come. The prophecy of Joel had been fulfilled. Paul knew just what to do—he preached Christ!¹⁷

THE PROOF OF THE SPIRIT'S WORK

Paul preaches Christ, and the disciples give a Pentecost-like evidence of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 19:4-7 | And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus."⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.⁶ And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.⁷ There were about twelve men in all.

This was a mini-Pentecost. We see the Pentecost experience four times in the book of Acts: to *Jewish* believers in Jerusalem, to the *Samaritans* through Philip, to the *Gentiles* by Peter, and here to *dispersed Jews* through Paul. This was a time of ecstasy and emotional release. They praised God in other languages. Tears flowed freely. Some cried aloud for joy. They "prophesied." The word *prophecy* comes from two words—*pro*, "before," and *phaino*, "to shine." They were shining forth the power of Jesus.

Today, the gift of tongues is not an evidence for most people of the baptism of the Spirit or the fullness of the Spirit. Paul asked, "Do all speak with tongues?" (1 Cor 12:30) and the Greek construction demands no as an answer. When Paul wrote to his Ephesian friends about the filling of the Holy Spirit, he said nothing about tongues (Eph 5:18ff).¹⁸ But each time the gospel expands, this time to dispersed Jews, there is this mini-Pentecost.

Ephesus, the city with everything, had never seen anything like this. This was springtime in the church. These men praised God, which is always a sign that the Holy Spirit is at work. They exalted Jesus Christ. These men could not stop talking about Jesus. Like Apollos, they made a difference in their world.

Ultimately the presence of these Spirit-energized believers in Ephesus so **destroyed the idol industry in Ephesus** that the idol makers started rioting.¹⁹ The idol industry is gutted by the power of these Spirit-filled believers. Let us be encouraged by this. The power of the Spirit is unstoppable. As a church, let us covenant together to have soft hearts, sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

¹⁷ R. Kent Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1996), 250-251.

¹⁸ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 481.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Conclusion

The old hymn is right on when it comes to the power of the Spirit. “All is vain unless the Spirit of the holy one comes down.”

It reminds me of a story about a parade on New Year’s Day. One New Years, in the **Tournament of Roses parade**, a beautiful float suddenly sputtered and quit. It was out of gas. The whole parade was held up until someone could get a can of gas. The amusing thing was this float represented **the Standard Oil Company**. With its vast oil resources, its truck was out of gas.

Even though Christians have access to God’s omnipotence, if we do not avail ourselves of his Spirit we will run out of power.