

Scripture Reading: Acts 19:1-10 “And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples ² he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” So they said to him, “We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.” ³ And he said to them, “Into what then were you baptized?” So they said, “Into John's baptism.” ⁴ Then Paul said, “John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.” ⁵ When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. ⁷ Now the men were about twelve in all. ⁸ And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. ⁹ But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.”

The Baptism of John

I trust you would agree that it was a blessing to have Pastor Tuuri with us over the past two Lord's Days and at our family camp! He managed to step on just about every toe he could find, but gave us much to think about and started a lot of productive discussions.

- Now I return to the pulpit with a passage that would not be the first on my list to tackle!

I say this because it is one of those passages where it is difficult to see the primary lesson that is being taught and one where there has been little agreement down through the ages. Quite honestly, much of it just does not seem to fit neatly into some of our deeply held beliefs... Something that the Scriptures will often do! God reminded the prophet Isaiah that His thoughts were not God's thoughts even when it comes to the good news: In the 55th chapter of Isaiah's prophesy we read, “let him return to Jehovah, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon. ⁸ "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says Jehovah ⁹ "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.” Or consider what the Apostle Paul says after declaring the wonder of God's sovereign election and the joy of evangelism in Romans chapters nine to eleven:

“³³ Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! ³⁴ "For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?"”

And of course the most sobering lesson about thinking we can fully understand the mind & plans of God comes at the end of the Book of Job where God humbles Job from chapters 38 to 42, which I will leave as your homework!

- Of course this does not mean that we are not to search the Scriptures and to grow in our understanding for our entire lives.

It just acknowledges that the Bible reveals the character and mind of God and that can often appear mysterious for a time... [mention the goat boiled in it's mother's milk!]

Sometimes things can even appear contradictory: But the problem lies with us and not God: If we have differing views about a truth or a passage, one of us is wrong!

- **We must always humbly remember that it could be us!**

With that said, I will try to cover what I think is being taught here in the opening portion of chapter nineteen along with some cautions about where we cannot be dogmatic.

Luke tells us that Paul returns to Ephesus: Remember that Paul wanted to come to this region at the beginning of his second missionary journey and the Spirit prevented him from doing so. He did come here after his stay in Corinth, but it was a short time and now he returns for an extended visit. Ephesus was a major city of that time sitting at the major crossroads of the empire and was home to one of the seven wonders of the world:

- **The Temple of Dianna which we will consider in a few weeks.**

Paul left his friends Aquila & Priscilla here & we recently studied the account of their work with Apollos who was then commissioned to work in Corinth. Luke tells us that Paul found some disciples and asked them a simple question: "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" Luke does not give us any details about these men, nor really whose disciples they were: Some say they were disciples of John and other disciples of Jesus, but Luke does not clearly say.

- **We must also consider WHY Paul asked this question... It was not his usual practice.**

I believe, but again cannot be dogmatic, that it was asked because there was something in their life or doctrine that caused Paul to doubt whether they were disciples of Jesus. We often do this with people we do not know well by trying to verify their testimony and it is often important to do so... [mention JW's and Mormons and tell story about out-of-body experience]

- **IF Paul's question was a sort of doctrinal test, these men FAILED with flying colors!**

Now here I think Luke is pretty clear when he tells us how they answered: "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." Those who were Jewish, those who were Gentile God-fearers, & certainly those who had become Christians would at least of HEARD of the Spirit of God... The Bible begins with the Spirit of God hovering over the waters! Even if they did not fully understand the work of the Holy Spirit, as was the case with Apollos, they would have known of Him if they were the least bit familiar with the Scriptures!

- **I think it is safe to say they were merely acting like baptized believers since Paul goes on to ask,**

"Into what then were you baptized?" And they answer: "Into John's baptism" We now have the final reference to John the Baptist and it is a fitting place to have a remembrance of the one who said that Jesus must increase and that he must decrease, something these disciples did not understand.

- **The Apostle Paul certainly did understand this progression!**

Paul tells them, “John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.”

- **This is a critical lesson for all the ages and I want to focus on it in a moment...**
- **But first let’s consider their reaction to Paul’s instruction:**

When these disciples hear about Jesus they are baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Paul then lays his hands on them and the Holy Spirit comes upon them giving them the same wondrous signs that were evidenced at Jerusalem, in Samaria and with the Gentiles in the home of Cornelius. And as if Luke had not given us enough to ponder, he adds that there were about twelve of these disciples! In just three short verses we have a number that is difficult to explain, men who are re-baptized & tongues manifested when the Spirit came upon them!

It is enough to make your head spin! Well as to the number, perhaps these men were an unfulfilled type of the true disciples that followed Jesus, but I would be open to other possibilities. As far as the tongues, since the manifestations that came with the Spirit were similar to those we saw at Pentecost, Samaria and Caesarea it would seem to me that we just have to keep trying to figure out how this fourth occurrence fits with the others.

- **Not something I will be able to fully solve this morning.**

What we do know is that it cannot be taken as a normative expectation for those who come to faith, since none of the thousands who were saved at Pentecost or all the other examples of conversions given here in Acts had such experiences.

- **Their being re-baptized stands in contrast with Apollos who was not re-baptized so it would seem to confirm that they were not real believers in the first place.**

However, it is one of those times where we have to consider how dogmatic we can be in a particular area: Here at Church of the King we stand with the reformers in believing that if a Trinitarian Baptism has been administered then there is no need for re-baptism. Since these men did not receive a Trinitarian baptism, it should not cause a problem, but it does make us think about what did happen with those who received John’s baptism:

- **Were they ALL re-baptized?**

In the case of the disciples and other faithful followers of Jesus, the answer seems to be no: The 120 in the upper room were not baptized with water on the Day of Pentecost.

- **However, it is hard to imagine that NONE of the thousands who were baptized on Pentecost had never been baptized by John.**

The answer seems to lie in the teaching that Paul gave these men which I wanted to come back to and focus on: After learning that they knew NOTHING about the Holy Spirit, Paul pointed them to Jesus!

- **He did NOT begin with explaining who the Holy Spirit was or what He had done or was doing.**
- **Paul told them about Jesus!**

Paul explained how John the Baptist had pointed people to Jesus... It is never enough to just be sorry that we have sinned, we must fly to the Savior for forgiveness: Only Jesus was able to satisfy the wrath of God! If I can find a central lesson in this text I think this would be it:

- **Jesus must be at the center of all that we believe and do!**

Just having all the right doctrines about the Holy Spirit memorized does not mean that we are saved if it has not brought us to Jesus, though as we see from our text, we will know who He is if we are true believers. Even having the right doctrines about salvation does not mean that we are saved if it is only academic. We are to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength and Jesus said that no one comes to the

Father but by Him...

- **Our heart must belong to Jesus!**
- **Our soul must find its only comfort in Jesus!**
- **Our mind must know and confess the real historic and reigning Jesus!**
- **And we must love and serve Jesus with all of our strength.**

The question we must ask, when we see people, including ourselves, struggling in any of these areas, is whether we help them the way the Apostle Paul helped these disciples...

- **Do we bring them to Jesus!?**

If someone has given their heart over to material things and made a mess of their financial lives, they need more than just some advice on their budget. If someone has allowed their soul to rest in some Yoga classes or exercise or some other modern fad, they need more than good advice on how to pray. If someone has gotten caught up in liberalism or even more subtle errors like the gap theory or framework hypothesis, they need more than some advice on the authority of Scriptures or the importance of having the right presuppositions.

First and foremost they need to hear what the Apostle Paul told these men:

- **People should believe on the Lord Jesus!**
- **Remember that even the Scriptures had become an idol in the lives of the Scribes and Pharisees so they could not even see Jesus there.**

Jesus Himself said, come to ME, something these disciples now do! Whether or not I have given the proper details and conclusions from our text this morning I believe there is one more thing that we can certainly take away as an application. As Christians who are justified by faith and are called to live by faith, it is appropriate for someone like the Apostle Paul to ask,

- **"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"**
- **IF they do not see evidence of the Spirit's work in our lives.**

This does not require speaking in tongues or attending miracle services...

- **It means exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit in our lives!**

It is interesting that the fruit of the Spirit is mentioned in both Galatians and Ephesians where Paul writes one of his harshest letters to those toying with heresy at Galatia and one of his most complimentary letters to the Saints at Ephesus where we now see Paul serving.

In Galatians 5, Paul tells these Saints to “stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free!” He goes on to tell them to Walk in the Spirit so as not to fulfill the lust of the flesh and he leaves NO doubt about what either would look like: Paul says the works of the flesh are manifest: adultery, lewdness, fornication, uncleanness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like”

- Paul tells them, and us, in no uncertain terms “that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

On the other hand, Paul leaves no doubt as to what we should see in the life of someone who DID receive the Holy Spirit when they believed: “ the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”

All true conversions put us in communion with all the persons of the God-head: God is our Father, the Son is our Savior and the Spirit is the Giver of new life as He fills the earth with the Kingdom of Jesus.

- We must not fear to cry out Abba Father, we must trust that Jesus has done all that is needed for our salvation & we must bear the fruit of the Spirit!
- This is the Christian life!

And it is VERY practical because the other place where the Apostle Paul mentions the fruit of the Spirit is in Ephesians chapter five.

Here we do not see a specific list like he gave the Galatians but a challenge to be filled with the Spirit so that ALL areas of our lives will be impacted!

- Paul begins with a BIG challenge, but a challenge that we are to meet because of the great salvation that Jesus has wrought:

Ephesians 5:1 “Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”

- Paul then tells these Saints to turn away from their old ways: The ways of the world.
- Paul reminds them that they have been changed:

8 “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), 10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.”

- Paul gives them the challenge that we heard from Pastor Tuuri at family camp:

15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

- As we saw in his study of festivals, Sabbaths and sacrifices there is much for us to learn!

But Paul’s bottom line is that it MUST impact our everyday lives:

17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, ...

- **Whether someone is filled with the Spirit should not be a mystery!**
- **Just as we can tell when a drunk is drunk, so we can clearly see someone living a Spirit-filled life!**

Can the person with a drinking problem fool us for a time? Sure! Just as we often have hypocrites in the Church who appears to be one of us.

- **But over time, their works are manifested!**

At times King David's actions were very sinful and at times King Saul was very righteous in his actions...

- **But in the end it was clear to see where their hearts were really at.**

Here in Ephesians, Paul does not give us a list of qualities as he did the Galatians, but rather he tells us that the works of the Spirit will appear in very practical ways.

17 "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, 20 giving thanks always or all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another in the fear of God."

- **It is to impact our relationship with God, where we can now rightly worship Him and serve Him!**
- **AND it impacts our various earthly relationships as we submit one to another!**

This impact must be seen in our Church community, marriages, families, friendships and even work relationships! [I will leave the rest of chapter five & six as some additional homework.] So it is appropriate to ask how you would answer the Apostle's question:

- **"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"**

Those of us who came to Christ later in life should be able to give a resounding YES, remembering the peace that came upon us when we first realized that our sins were forgiven & that Jesus was our Savior.

How the Word of God came alive as the Spirit opened our eyes and how we left behind the works of the flesh and began to walk in the fruit of the Spirit!

- **Not perfectly, but sincerely!**

And Lord willing, our covenant children will be able to declare that they have never known a day when they did not know Jesus as their Savior and chose in the power of the Spirit to reject the works of the flesh and to Lord willing walk in the way of the spirit in all the areas of their lives.

- **This is the very comfort that we read together in the Law of God this morning where we see God as our redeemer who loves to bless His people:**

Exodus 20:1 "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 3 You shall have no other gods before Me. 4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; 5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."

- **May we be those who walk in the Spirit and enjoy the blessings of God to a thousand generations!**

Communion Meditation:

Matthew 28: "When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen."