

History in the Making
“Understanding the Book of Acts-Part Thirty-Two

Coverage: Acts 18:23-19:20

Introduction: Next three weeks—Pauline ministry in Ephesus and the development of the church there (letter to Ephesians)

Before we deal with text...

— **CHURCH PLANTED** (AD 51, 52-2nd missionary trip)

And he came to Ephesus, and left them there; but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. 20 When they asked him to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent, 21 but took leave of them, saying, "I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing." And he sailed from Ephesus. Acts 18:19-21 NKJV

- **CHURCH NURTURING** (AD 57-Acts 20) Paul stops back to fellowship with and love on the church there.
- **CHURCH ENCOURAGING** (AD 62-writes letter while in prison). They were doing well. Letters to Timothy too.
- **CHURCH PRODUCING** (AD 66-the home of John-Mary cared for her there)
- **CHURCH WILTING** (AD 96-Revelation 2) lost first love

NOTE: This section of text

- **CHURCH MATURING** (Paul's ministry of 2-3 years)
- ✓ **Final word of this season of ministry**

So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. Acts 19:20 NKJV

- ✓ What were the keys to this church growth?
- ✓ Will deal with four in this message.

I. The Leadership Humbly Made Disciples

Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. 25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. 27 And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; 28 for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ. Acts 18:24-28 NKJV

A. Between his hasty visit (2nd trip) and 3rd trip to Ephesus-Apollo came on the scene

1. Traveling-merchant-type from Alexandria, Egypt
2. Christianity had spread to Egypt-well educated, trained Jew and new Christian
3. Christianity was deviated-knew only John baptism (nothing of Pentecost/Peter/Acts 2:38)
4. Masterful teacher-most primitive Gospel
5. Passion, fervor-Holy Spirit clearly at work

B. Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesian synagogue (Roman Christians expelled by Claudius)

1. Had met in Corinth-had sailed with Paul to Ephesus earlier
2. Stayed in Ephesus-heard Apollo teach-impressed but some theological concerns (took him aside privately, shared accurate Gospel)

C. So successful-commended to the Corinthian church

And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; 28 for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ. Acts 18:27-28 NKJV

1. Strong ministry there

Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." 1 Corinthians 1:12 NKJV

I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. 1 Corinthians 3:6 NKJV

2. May have written Hebrews

D. Humility marked Ephesian church (Priscilla, Aquila, Apollos)

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:1-3 NKJV

Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another. Ephesians 4:25 NKJV

Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. Ephesians 4:29-32 NKJV

E. Must characterize the growing church today-humble disciples

1. Commitment to the Word
2. Deny self-promotion
3. Teachable spirit
4. Shared aim
5. Disinterested in credit
6. No territorialism

II. Believers Pursued an Ever-Deepening Faith

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. Acts 19:1-7 NKJV

A. Paul arrives in Ephesus and finds disciples

1. Some say John's/others say not genuine
2. Luke only uses "disciples" when they are one for cause of Christ-CLEARLY FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST!

B. Paul's odd question

He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" Acts 19:2a NKJV

1. What does he mean?
2. Could not be saying if Holy Spirit entered them at salvation

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. 10 And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. Romans 8:9-11 NKJV

- a. No salvation without the Spirit
- b. Would never have said that
- c. Was speaking of a second work of the Spirit

3. Their response...

So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." Acts 19:2 NKJV

- a. They were Jews-knew about the Holy Spirit
 - b. Knew nothing of a second work of the Spirit
4. Like Apollos-had a primitive experience and John's baptism-knew nothing of Pentecost
 5. Experienced baptism in Jesus' name
 6. AND baptized in the Spirit
 7. Honestly pursued all God had for them

C. Today we have intellectualized away the pursuit of all God has for us

1. Want to pigeon-hole experience with specific evidence
2. Or, make it to emotional
3. Or, deny its existence

D. God wants us to pursue all He has for us

III. Paul Patiently and Tirelessly Reasoned with Unbelievers

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. Acts 19:8-10 NKJV

- A. Paul's initial relationship with Jews in synagogue was established in his first visits
- B. At his return-enjoyed 3 months of ministry
- C. The familiar repeated itself-too much opposition-forced out
 - 1. Ongoing rejection
 - 2. Eventually hardened
- D. Lectured them at hall of Tyrannus (popular lecturer in Ephesus-may have named building)
- E. Two years he reasoned-in school of Tyrannus
 - 1. Western text: "From 5th to 10th hour"
 - 2. Mediterranean siesta-5th hour-11 a.m.
 - 3. Paul worked while in Ephesus

Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. Acts 20:34 NKJV

- 4. Tireless-would work with his hands until 11:00 a.m.
 - a. 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.-teach
 - b. In the evening he met in houses

How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house. Acts 20:20 NKJV

- c. Worked tirelessly for the sake of the Gospel
- F. How tirelessly and patiently. Are we willing to work?

(ILL) Seems that we are making an impact

IV. The Church Treated Carefully God's Character and Power

Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, 12 so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them. 13 Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." 14 Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" 16 Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. 17 This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. 18 And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. 19 Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. 20 So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. Acts 19:11-20 NKJV

A. Paul's ministry marked by unusual manifestations of divine power-healing and deliverance

NOTE: Not materials that caused this power, but the name of Jesus

B. Others tried to mimic this power

1. Sons of Sceva

- a. Sceva was a Jewish Chief Priest
- b. High Priest was authorized once a year to utter the name Yahweh in preparation for the day of Atonement
- c. He would have high prestige among magicians

2. Not Yahweh-but name of Jesus they tried to use to exorcise the demon-"like an unfamiliar weapon wrongly handled, it exploded in their hands."

- a. The demon knew the name
- b. They had no right to use it
- c. Created only dangerous/devastation

C. Created fear, awe, respect

1. Ephesus known for magic
2. Name of Jesus won the day
3. Sorcerers confused
4. Books of spells were burned

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D. Revival came to Ephesus

Conclusion: Today still a temptation to syncretize the Gospel with pre-Christian ways of using people.

1. Formulas, incantations that are spiritualized
2. Cannot compromise-it is ONLY the power in Jesus' name

Summary Statement:

So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. Acts 19:20 NKJV

1. Reveals Gospel's triumph over the competition
2. Luke's theology places the proclamation of the Gospel at the center of any advance in Church's mission-so must we!

Life Check

- ✓ Humility?
- ✓ Deepened pursuit of Him?
- ✓ Willingness to patiently work with the lost.
- ✓ Not play with the power of God.