

Changing Your City

Acts 19:1-20

Thank you for joining me today. I'm so excited as we get into God's Word together. We're getting it into our lives so we can get it out of our lives into the world around us. And today is going to be especially exciting. So I want to encourage you if you're in a place where you can pull out your Bible, take some notes. Let's do that. And be sure to share this with some others so that They can get in on what we're learning, how we're growing, the difference that's being made in our lives, and the difference we can make in lives around us. And we are walking through the Book of Acts. We've gotten way into it. We don't have far to go now, but we are in Acts chapter 19. We're going to be looking today at Paul's ministry in the city of Ephesus. This is a dramatic ministry that zeroes in on seeing people saved and we're going to see revival, what revival looks like. And so as Paul is walking into Ephesus, He was entering into the capital city of the Roman province of Asia. And it was a city that was powerful. It was beautiful. It was also very superstitious. And here you would see the Temple of Diana. or Artemis is one of the seven wonders of the ancient world and so you see Paul going into this city and you see the difference that God is gonna make as he uses Paul's life in such a dramatic way and we're gonna see how God brings adventure and excitement and change to a city And that's the great adventure of the Christian life. When you are in the middle of His will and you're saying, God, use my life, He's going to use you. It's going to be so exciting. And walking into the city of Ephesus, you can imagine that it was an exciting city, but it was

nothing like what would happen when Jesus came to change that city. And so... It was empty. The city had everything, and yet it was empty without God. But that was about to change. And it started with people who thought that they knew God, and they got together in the name of God. They'd been baptized by John the Baptist. So let's begin to look at Acts 19, starting in verse 1. We're going to be going through verse 20 today over the next half hour or so. So here's what it says. While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. So Paul and Apollos missed each other. They didn't run into each other at that point. When Priscilla and Aquila told Paul about Apollos, I'm sure he was very excited to know that there was someone else in ministry who was fired up for the mission of Jesus. And through the years, Paul and Apollos would become close friends who always wanted to see each other often, but they missed each other here at this point. And as Paul was serving in Ephesus, you see he was completely committed to reaching people with the good news of Jesus. He was bringing the message of salvation, and his whole life was focused on reaching those who were lost, without direction. They were hopeless. And they were really, their future was bleak. It was dark. And so let's look first at what is involved in being saved. As we look at Paul's ministry, we find some great insights into the process of salvation and what it is and what it's not. So in verse two, it says, there he found some disciples and asked them, did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? And they answered, no, we've not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit. So Paul asked them, then what baptism did you receive? John's baptism, they replied. Paul said John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is in Jesus. And on

hearing this, they were baptized in the name of, So when Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. There were about 12 men in all. And Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. But some of them became obstinate, which means stubborn, stubborn. uh hard-hearted and they refused to believe and they publicly maligned the way so Paul left them he took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus so What do we need to know about salvation here? Well, first we see that salvation involves believing in Jesus and receiving his spirit. So while he's ministering there in Ephesus, he comes across these 12 disciples They were unchurched. They weren't connected with the Christian church at Ephesus. They were either out there drifting. They were meeting for worship in another part of the city. They were unknown to the church and Priscilla and Aquila. And it reminds me of people today who they're like, I want to be a Christian, but I don't need the church. And I'm going to, you know, separate myself and we're going to do our own thing. And what that inevitably leads to is confusion. And it leads to just you're drifting. It's like, you know, we're the body of Christ. But if you think about it, a Christian without a church, it's like an arm detached from the body. We're supposed to function together. And so because they were not connected to the Christian church, they were just partially right. So these disciples weren't connected with Apollos or else he would have taught them about Jesus. And Paul's asking them, did you receive the Holy Spirit today? when you believed. And so some people would say, well, you get the Holy Spirit sometime after you believe, but that's not what the Bible teaches. But what was happening was these disciples were

disciples, not of Jesus, they were disciples of John, and they were still looking for the coming Messiah. They weren't Christian believers yet. They hadn't even been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. So when he told them about Jesus, they received Jesus and they responded. And as they received Jesus, they received the spirit of God as well. And so they believed what John had preached, that the Messiah was coming, but they didn't know that the Messiah had already come and in Jesus. So they had repented of their sin. I'm sure they were sorry for their sin, but they hadn't yet received forgiveness from Jesus in their hearts and their lives. They did not have the living presence and the power of God dwelling in them through the person of the Holy Spirit. So notice how Paul responds to them. He didn't put down their incomplete faith. You know, he's not like, you know, coming after them because they didn't fully understand John's message. He approached them in a very positive way. And he said, yes, that's good. Repent of your sin because that's what John preached. but they responded when they heard about Jesus. They believed, they were baptized, and they received the Holy Spirit. So what do we see here? Well, one, you can be sorry for your sin. You can even be baptized and still not receive Jesus into your heart and your life. You can even confess Christ and still not be saved. When Paul looked at these disciples, guys who said they were disciples, he saw something was missing in their lives and it was visible. And he thought, I think I know what this is. They don't have the power of the spirit. They don't have the presence of the spirit. They're not producing the fruit of the spirit in their lives. Now, when you receive Jesus, you receive the Spirit. Ephesians 1.13 says, And you were also included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation when

you believed you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit. In 2 Corinthians 1.22, it says that he set this seal of ownership on us and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come so you receive God's spirit when you are saved you cannot be a Christian without having the holy spirit in your life it's the holy spirit that comes in as a guarantee of your salvation now uh because I'm not going to get into this in this particular lesson I would just say that you get the holy spirit But the Holy Spirit doesn't always get all of you. And that's why daily we need to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit of God. We need to ask Him to fill our lives. Like I like to say, from head to toe to overflow. So we ask Him, we surrender, and we open ourselves up to Him and allow Him to fill us each and every day and keep in step with the Spirit, as the Bible says. But we also see here in this passage that belief can be because they believed in the coming of the Messiah and they had repented, they had turned from their sin, but they didn't have the presence of Jesus. And there are a lot of people that do this where they think, I'm going to receive a religion. I'm going to begin to do the right things. I'm going to turn from my sin. I'm going to try to live a holy life. But if you do that on your own power apart from Jesus, it is just striving. It is just works. You've got to receive Jesus and his spirit into your life. These 12 disciples, were baptized twice. They were baptized once. know the the as followers of John in and for repentance but they were baptized they need to be baptized in the name of Jesus and that's how we baptize we baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and so make sure that you're not playing religion you're not just going through the motions and miss Jesus, you can miss Jesus. They thought by being baptized, everything was going to change in their life, but it wasn't. But then they heard

about Jesus. They believed in him and they were baptized in his name. And so somehow some of these... Followers of John the Baptist hadn't yet heard about Jesus, and they needed to receive Jesus. Listen, when you receive Jesus, you receive the Spirit. You don't get God in pieces. Jesus, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, they are three in one. And so in Acts 1.8, Jesus said this. He said, you'll receive power when my spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses. And so this is what happened to these men. They, uh, received the spirit. They began to speak and they began to witness. They began to prophesy and the word prophesy, you know, when we hear that word prophesy, we think of like, uh, Nostradamus or something, trying to predict the future. So prophesy can mean foretelling the future, but usually, the gift of prophecy means to forth tell. It means to speak the truth boldly, the truth of the word of God. And so what they did was they talked about Jesus because they were, they, they, or they became what Jesus said happens when his spirit dwelt within the people. And the city of Ephesus needed the real thing. And people need to come to Jesus with total commitment. Then that's when our lives are changed. That's when God can begin to use us in a powerful way. We also see this about salvation, that salvation involves a decision. A person either decides to accept Christ, or by default, you're rejecting Christ. So with Paul's audience, as he is speaking, as he's presenting the truth, many people rejected they hardened their hearts they refused to believe Paul was preaching for three months in the synagogue he debated with them which means that he discussed he convinced he answered questions he listened to questions and he was working to persuade people to believe and to accept the good news of Jesus and he was speaking about the kingdom of God but Many people hardened

their hearts. They didn't believe it. They were disobedient to God's call. God was moving. God was drawing them. But they hardened their hearts like a rock where they were unfeeling. They were in opposition to God. They refused to believe. And listen, rejecting the gospel is not just not believing. It's worse. It is disobeying God and what God has called us. us too so also we see about salvation salvation involves protecting and helping new believers to grow new believers should be protected they should be developed they should be nurtured And so when the people there in the temple began to mock Jesus and mock the way to be saved, Paul said, okay, we're going to go somewhere else. He left the synagogue. He started using a lecture hall in a school led by a man named Tyrannus. And it was kind of you could picture it like a new church start because the synagogue was opposing the truth and threatened the faith and the belief and the growth of these new Christians. So he had to protect them and make sure they could grow in their walk. Paul was so committed to helping believers and to reaching the lost. And you see in the kind of schedule that Paul kept for his day, we can see in the book of Acts that during the day, Paul was working as a tent maker, sort of as a job in the morning hours up until 11 a.m. And then he taught... He was discipling these new believers during those hours when Tyrannus wasn't using the school because of the culture at that time, they would take naps between 11 and 4 p.m. in the afternoon. And then in the evenings, he would teach believers prayer. in their homes. So he was serving God night and day. All of his energy, all of his mind, his body, and his soul were committed to the cause of Christ and to his kingdom. And so we need to ask ourselves, we need to ask each other, have we really given our lives fully? Are we fully committed to working for God

day and night, even in our employment? You can serve God through your employment. Now, let's shift here. I want us to look at the next part of this passage and talk about eight marks of revival. You know, revival has been a huge thing, and we've seen this over the past... past year, as there's been a lot of talk of revival. How do you know it when you see it? Well, look at verse 10. It says, "...this went on for two years so that all the Greeks and Jews who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord. God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured, and the evil spirits left them." When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of Lord Jesus was held in high honor. Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed what they had done. A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to 50,000 drachmas." In this way, the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power. What does revival look like? How do you know it when you see it? Well, first, you see that there's the preaching of God's word, the truth of the word of God. And Paul preached the word of God for two years in this school, and the gospel spread all over Israel. which is modern-day Asia Minor and specifically Turkey, and the other six churches that were mentioned in the book of Revelation in chapters 2 and 3, the seven churches there in Revelation, they were probably started this time, and so was the church at Colossae and Hierapolis. So the word of God was carried throughout all of Asia during these two years. Why was this revival happening? Well, they were preaching the word of God. They weren't preaching their own

ideas. They weren't preaching their own philosophies. And God's people were committed. They were completely sold out to the mission, to reach the world. And they didn't just talk about it. They weren't just having meetings about it. They weren't just having training about it. They actually were involved in reaching out to the whole world, area of the world, wherever they could. So that's what they were doing. The word of God was being preached, but also extraordinary miracles were, uh, happening. And this wasn't just regular everyday stuff. This was extraordinary. Even the disciples hadn't seen anything like this. See, Ephesus was, uh, a center of the occult, including all kinds of dark arts, spiritism, magic, and superstition. And the people were very emotional. They were easily manipulated by their feelings. And so miracles were a necessary ingredient to get the attention of the people. Paul, imagine this, that he's in the morning, he's working in a tent making shop, he's sweating, he's having to change his apron, change his headband, and people were taking those articles of clothing and they were taking them to their sick family members or friends, and as they touch the clothes, God would heal them because of their faith, not because of the clothes themselves. We know the clothes have no power. Those items have no power in and of themselves, but God has the power and God can heal. And so that's what was happening. But then also we see not only were these extraordinary miracles happening, but also false teachers were being exposed. So in verse 13, it says that... Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, in the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out. Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. And one day the evil spirit answered them,

Jesus I know and Paul I know about. Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding. And this is how God exposes false prophets. There were a lot of people who claimed to be exorcists in the ancient world. They were sort of traveling vagabonds who lived sort of a circus-type life. They made a living off of people's superstitions. And they would use God's name. And in this case, they were using the name of Jesus. These exorcists were sons of either a Jewish high priest or a man closely connected with the high priest family. And think about that. They had forsaken that high calling of God. on their lives. And we see that happen today with false teachers using Jesus' name, someone they don't even know and using that name. It's, it's like taking the Lord's name in vain. And the demon, in this case, uses the voice of the man for using Jesus' name against him. , and, Because they didn't even know Jesus. And he used the man to attack these false prophets. A true revival that comes from God will always expose false prophets. False prophets will drop the name of Jesus. They'll use the name of Jesus. They'll use the Bible. But there's no... true power. A true movement of God has the power of God behind it. But then also we see, we know this is a sign of true revival, was there's this renewal of the fear of God in their lives. The fear of God is really like the awe of God, awesome respect for the honor of God. They were captured with this sense of awe and reverence of God's power and his call to make a change in their life so that they would live differently.

We see also that Jesus was worshiped. It says the name of Jesus was held in high honor. I love Psalm 29 too which says, give unto

the Lord the glory due unto his name. Worshiping the Lord in the beauty of So revival also always results in renewed worship. It results in songs of worship and praise. And we also see true revival is going to result in many people coming to faith in Jesus. And that's what was happening here. Many people were turning to Jesus. And there was a change in their life. They got rid of the things that were unholy, that were keeping them back, that were confusing them, and were just polluting their lives. I think about that in our own day. We see the occult making a resurgence in our culture through music, through media. And just imagine if we were able to wipe out all the pornography, all the occult, all of that kind of stuff that's in our culture. Notice they didn't sell the items. They burned the items. They got rid of them because they didn't want to just pass it on to be a burden for someone else or to influence someone else. And notice how... expensive these items were. A piece of silver was one day's wage. So 50,000 pieces of silver equaled 50,000 working days or 137 years. That's how much they sacrificed. And that sounds extreme. But listen, if you've got things in your life that are holding you back from God, that are keeping you locked into the ways of the world, then you want to get rid of those. You want to get rid of those and just... there's no sense in keeping them around just do an inventory and say what is it in my life that I've been holding on to and you know what those are or maybe you need to pray about it and say God what is it that's holding me back that I need to get rid of now again those things have no power But it's in your obedience to God to say, God, I don't need this. I need you. And so it sounds extreme, but I'm telling you it's worth it. And then we see that the word of God was spread with power. It was spread in strength. And listen, if we want to see something happen in our cities, it's going to

happen when we take God's call and his mission seriously in our lives to tell people about Jesus. That's when it happens. That's when Jesus begins to change people. He begins to change the community. And so we need to do that. We need to take that seriously and speak up. I was reading about these two men that were riding first class on a train. This is a true story. They were wealthy. They were smart. They were both recognized as influential leaders. And they were both atheists. One's name was a man named Robert Ingersoll. The other was a writer, an author named Lew Wallace. And as they were talking, they began to talk about Jesus. And Lew Wallace said, Jesus really is an interesting life. He really was an interesting man and made some impact. I think it would make a wonderful romance novel to write about him as a man. Ingersoll said, well, you're the man to do it. Why don't you write a book and let's expose all this divine stuff and this son of God stuff and write him for who he is? Write him just as a man, just one of the men who lived in history. So Lew Wallace set out to do that and he began to look at the life of Christ and the more he read, the more he learned about the life of Christ, and the more he read about what he did, who he is, the more his life was changed. And one day, Lew Wallace got on his knees and said, Jesus Christ, you are Lord and I am yours. And then he wrote the novel, *Ben-Hur*, one of the greatest Christian books of all time. Jesus changes people. Jesus changed the city of Ephesus, where one of the greatest churches that history has ever known was located. And Jesus can do that. Jesus can bring change. And if your life needs changing, come to Jesus. If your city needs changing, and it does, then let's come to Jesus. Let's share him with all of our hearts, all of our passion, everything we've got because he's the one who will make a difference and he can use

us together to change our city. All right. So thank you so much for joining me today. I hope you've enjoyed it and look forward to seeing you soon.