

Paul in Ephesus

Acts 18:24-19:7

INTRODUCTION: Last week we saw Paul in the city of Corinth. When he completed his work in Corinth. He took with him Aquila and Priscilla and journeyed to Ephesus on the way back to Antioch. His time in Ephesus was brief and they urged him to stay longer, but he declined and promised to return at a later date.

Now Chapters 18-19 occur about 25 years after the stoning of Stephen.

So at this point the Church had spread all over the Mediterranean. Churches had been planted in most of the major metro areas.

The passage we are in today is a highly controversial passage. Entire movements have been launched with this a misinterpretation of passage as a key catalyst.

- The pentecostal movement when suggests that if you do speak in tongues you are not saved bases, incorrectly its argument in this passage.

If you are going to correctly understand what is happening here, there are three things you must understand.

1. Progressive Revelation - God's full plan of redemption (the Gospel) was progressively revealed from Eden through the day of Pentecost (the establishment of the Church)

EXAMPLE: In the Garden God promised to make right all that went wrong in Eden, through the Seed of the Woman... we are told that a Son would be born... he would crush the head of the serpent and in the process he would be wounded... bruised.

Now to be saved at that period - you had to believe that... God would do the saving, through a man, who somehow would be wounded in the process.

EXAMPLE: Later in Genesis we see God reveals more insight. Abraham has a lesson on a mountain when he is about to sacrifice his son and God intervenes and says I will provide a substitute. So there we see that God is going to save via a substitutionary sacrifice of some sort.

EXAMPLE: We see more at the passover, the blood of the sacrifice will save us.

EXAMPLE: We see more through the time of the Kings - God makes known that one day he would send His "Anointed" King to rule on an eternal throne. So there the idea of a Messiah becomes understood.

EXAMPLE: We are told more and more, even minute details in the prophets, where he would be born, how he would be born, even the exact time he would enter into the city for the triumphal entry.

EXAMPLE: We see in the NT John comes preaching- and he identifies that Jesus is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

EXAMPLE: We see the Gospel explicitly in the Gospels, then codified and indoctrinated in the epistles.

QUESTION - Could someone be saved after the day of Pentecost only understanding and believing the same amount of revelation that say Moses possessed? NO! WHY? More had been given...

A person is required to understand and believe as much Gospel revelation as God had given to humanity in order to be saved.

Matthew 13:18–19 (ESV)

¹⁸ “Hear then the parable of the sower: ¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.

So it is vitally important that a person hears, and understands what God has done, one cannot believe what they do not understand and one cannot understand unless it is explained to them.

ILLUSTRATION: I will hear people say sometime - “preach the Gospel at all times and if necessary use words” that is a unbiblical and ridiculous statement. NO ONE EVER got saved by a good example. They get save by good news - the Gospel.

Ok so that’s the concept of *progressive revelation*.

Then you have to consider the fact that the first century, like our own was relatively transient.

2. The Transient Nature of the First Century - People were traveling quite often, on land and sea, journeys that could take years. When you get to your destination you didn’t stay a week you stayed months or even years.

So here is what would happen. Jerusalem as the epicenter of the Jewish world was a place that those who believed in the God of Abraham, Issac and Jacob would pilgrimage to, the same way people do today. It was a great desire for people to go to Jerusalem for Passover. Some people would work their entire life for that privilege.

So imagine hundreds of thousands of people traveling to Israel during the time that John the Baptist was preaching in the wilderness. He was all anyone was talking

about. So what would you do? You would travel out to hear him, many were baptized. THEN, thousands of them returned to their homes in Africa, Europe, Asia... So do you see that they had a measure of revelation? Maybe they even saw John point out that Jesus was the Greater who was to come after him.

So these disciples of John would continue learning the OT, the only bible they had, studying, praying, being faithful to what they had heard.

BUT - Revelation continued after they departed. Jesus dies on the cross, he is buried and raised again... he commissions his follow to go into all the world and make disciples...on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit is given.

MEANWHILE - back in Africa, our pilgrims only know the older, incomplete revelation.

3. Dispensational Requirements - Dispensation means how God dealt with people in a particular an age of time...for example -

- a. from Adam to Abraham all you had to know and understand was that God was somehow going to send a man to set right what went wrong in the Garden.
- b. From Abraham to Moses - you had to understand something of the covenantal nature of faith, expressed through circumcision.
- c. From the time of Moses - you had to understand something of the previous dispensations, but also that grace would be provide via a sacrifice.

With each period of Revelation, it is required that a man understand and believe what God has revealed up to that point.

NOW - back to our pilgrim to Jerusalem. They understand and believe up to the Baptism of John, so they know something of a Messiah. But they did not know that Messiah would die on a cross as the substitute, and be raised from the dead. Nor that God sent his followers to evangelize the world, nor that the Holy Spirit was given to make that possible.

So, throughout the Roman Empire - there were men and women who were at various levels of understanding when it came to saving faith.

IS THAT TRUE IN OUR DAY? Is it possible for a person to understand and even believe some correct things about Christianity, but fall short of saving faith? YES. That is why it is vitally important that you are frequently having conversations to assess where people are at in their spiritual journey and that you know how to help them take the next step.

That is what this section of scripture is all about.

Acts 18:24–19:41 (ESV)

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

What I believe is happening here is that Apollos was one of those pilgrims that understood the Gospel UP TO JOHN. So perhaps he even knew that Jesus was the Messiah... but he did not understand the cross and resurrection... this was a primary issue. When Priscilla and Aquilla explained the rest of the story, he immediately received it with joy and his faith went to a new level

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.

Now notice what they did not do - they didn't chew him out publicly, they took him aside privately, opened a bible and showed him areas of the Gospel in which he didn't have complete understanding.

Apollos to his eternal credit received their instruction and became all the more powerful in his preaching.

²⁷ 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.

Chapter 19

¹ And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. ² And 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."

Ok - so notice what happened. Paul met these men who were called Disciples. Disciples of whom? We are not told.

They are said to believe... Believe what? What are not told.

So these men are not declared to be Christians, believing in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Rather, they were loosely associate with the Christian movement. How did Paul know something wasn't right? We are not told... perhaps it was something they said in conversation, perhaps he noticed that they were really emphasizing thing that didn't matter to salvation.

- Have you ever had a conversation and little red flags go up?
- Maybe you see someone who is supposed to be a christian post something on social media that doesn't seem to line up with the Gospel.
- Maybe they are becoming a fan of a movement or a preacher that is known to be heretical.

That doesn't mean you kick them out of the church, but it certainly means you need to ask a few questions.... See what is going on...

Paul asks, "did you receive the Holy Spirit when you were Baptized?" They said, "the Holy what?"

So that was evidence to Paul that they were like Apollos, they had some understanding but it wasn't complete. He continues...

³ And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism."⁴ 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.

Pentecostal's believe that this is evidence that you must speak in tongues in order to be saved. But here is what I want you to understand.

1. **The book of ACTS is DESCRIPTION not PRESCRIPTION.**.. in other words this happened, it doesn't say go do likewise.

We see a Pentecostal type outpouring three times in ACTS - in Chapter 2, day of Pent. In Chapter 10 at the house of Cornelius. In Chapter 19 with the Ephesians... in each case the Gospel was moving into a new territory and God affirms and confirms his work with this magnificent outpouring.

That is one reason I believe we see more of the miraculous work of God in mission fields... he is confirming his work. But it does NOT say this is the case with every believer.

Every believer WILL receive the holy Spirit - Rom 8:9 if you have not the HS you are none of his.

But not every believe will speak in tongues.

That's very important - when the came to a full understanding of the Gospel, they were rebaptized. Do you see? Why? Because they weren't actually saved before.

These sort of conversations need to happen a lot in a church, or a home.

Let me show you a few areas I want to see this happen:

What does a person have to understand to be saved?

- a. They are a sinner in need of a Savior
- b. God sent Jesus to Die on the Cross for our sins, and raised him from the dead.
- c. They have repented, or changed their minds about their sin and trusted Jesus and him alone for salvation.

You say, what about the virgin birth, or the second coming? If a person is truly saved they will accept those truths when they are properly taught them, but we are not told that a person has to understand and believe those things in order to be saved.

1 Corinthians 15:1–4 (ESV)

¹ Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ² and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. ³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

CONCLUSIONS FOR PRACTICAL APPLICATION:

1. Learn the Difference between Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Issues

When trying to discern if you should take someone aside ask yourself these questions:

Is the issue - primary secondary or tertiary

- a. Primary is related to the Gospel and Salvation
- b. Secondary is related to Denominational Convictions
- c. Tertiary is a personal conviction that good people may disagree on

EXAMPLE: If someone claims to be a Christian and they explain the Gospel as a works gospel... that is a primary issue... take them aside and show them that we are saved by grace through faith, not of works... you see?

EXAMPLE: But let's say it is more of a Church or Denominational conviction - The mode of Baptism let's say... I would not go to a presbyterian brother and set him straight on that issue, unless he want to have a conversation about it. BUT if a Sunday school teacher at FBC was teaching that sprinkling is fine I would take them aside, explain what scripture teaches and our churches position and hopefully

convince them. But it is important that people leading in a church agree on secondary issues.

EXAMPLE: Then there are some things that people in the same small group may disagree on, it's fine to talk about those issues, but they are not the sort of things we would demand people line up under.

2. Make Gospel Conversations a normal part of life.

OCCASSIONS TO HAVE GOSPEL CONVERSATIONS:

- 1. When a person joins the Church or seeks Baptism -**
- 2. In your home with your family**
- 3. Before someone takes a place of leadership in the church**
- 4. As God opens the door in daily life**