

Series: **The Original Church Planter**  
Today's Title: **"Gospel Clarity & Mission Resolve"**

June 25, 2023 – Acts 19:1-10

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**Objective:** To encourage Christians to be faithful in sharing the gospel of Christ.

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- Starting Associate Pastor search – Plant Pastor search

### ***Opening Prayer***

Last week we discussed how in the book of Acts, we see a transition period.

We see the transition from Judaism to Christianity.

The transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant.

In His providence, God makes this transition – one that He had planned before the creation of the world – and He hinted at it through the prophets of the O.T. (See Joel 2:28-29).

***But people struggled to make this transition.***

I won't repeat what I said last week.

*If you don't remember what I said – or you weren't here last week – you can use the app or go to our website and watch the sermon from last week – or skim my manuscript.*

***But people struggled to make this shift.***

They ended up having 1 foot in the Old Covenant – and 1 foot in the New Covenant – for a period of time.

This transition period is the reason why we have to be careful when reading the book of Acts.

*We must be careful not to think everything we read is **prescriptive** for all believers in all eras.*

There are certainly some prescriptive things in Acts, but most of Acts is descriptive – describing the events of the early Church as the Apostles of Jesus and followers of Jesus were faithful to the mission Jesus gave to “...make disciples of all nations...baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit...teach these new disciples the commands of Jesus.”

(Matthew 28:19-20).

A few weeks ago, we read how Paul was on his way back to Jerusalem – ultimately headed back to his home church in Antioch, Syria, to give them a report on his 2<sup>nd</sup> church planting trip – and the new churches planted in Athens, Corinth, and in Ephesus. He couldn't stay in Ephesus at this time – but he expressed his desire to return to them.

**18:19-21**

“And they came to Ephesus...When they asked him (Paul) to stay for a longer period, he declined.

But on taking leave of them he said, “I will return to you if God wills,” and he set sail from Ephesus.”

In the next verse (18:22) he arrives in Israel at the port of Caesarea – goes up to Jerusalem, and then down to Antioch, Syria.

This is the end of his 2<sup>nd</sup> trip.

In 18:23 Luke tells us – and it's easy to miss this – but Luke tells us Paul departed on his 3<sup>rd</sup> church planting trip.

“After spending some time there (in Antioch, Syria), Paul departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.”

Then, in **vs. 24-28** the scene switches to Ephesus – and Luke gives us the account of Apollos, which we covered last week.

**Turn to Acts 19:1-10 – p. 928**

In **chapter 19**, we rejoin Paul on his 3<sup>rd</sup> church planting trip. Luke gives a summary statement of his route, as he returns to Ephesus – which was always his intent – God willing – as he stated in **18:21**.

**Read 19:1-7**

This is very interesting.

It seems that something wasn't quite right with these “disciples”.

Remember, Paul didn't have any interaction with Apollos – Priscilla and Aquila had.

We don't know if he heard about Apollos or not.

But there was something about these disciples – something about their faith which prompted Paul to question them.

“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”

We don't know what prompted this question from Paul.

But it was the right question – because it revealed something wrong with what they knew about the gospel.

What they were taught – the gospel message they heard – was incomplete – lacking.

What they knew wasn't wrong – it was just part of the story.

**The details and accuracy of our message matters.** vs. 1-7

This passage can be a bit confusing – and it is used as one of the primary passages for charismatic theology regarding the Holy Spirit.

But remember – Acts is describing a period of transition – so we must be careful not to take everything as prescriptive – or even normative.

***What I do believe*** – These verses do not describe the normative way the Holy Spirit works and indwells those who believe in Jesus.

### **Passages that speak of indwelling at conversion**

**Ezekiel 36:26** – Ezekiel prophesied of the New Covenant – and the Holy Spirit's presence with each believer.

“And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you.”

**1 John 4:13, 15** – The Apostle John wrote of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life.

“By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.”

**Titus 3:5** – our salvation is made possible by the Holy Spirit's work of bringing spiritual life to our dead soul.

“...He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit...”

**Ephesians 1:13-14** – Paul writes of the Spirit sealing the believer in faith – at the moment of their conversion.

“In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory.”

**Normative:** The Holy Spirit indwells believers at the moment they place their faith in Christ.

But these guys didn't have the Spirit!!

Their answer to Paul's question:

“No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

That is a problem!!

You can't live the Christian life without the Spirit's power!

You can't have the Fruit of the Spirit working in your life – if you don't have the Spirit's presence in your life!

Being a Christian isn't about trying harder.

It isn't about doing good.

It's about being in Christ.

Relationship with God – through faith in the finished work of Jesus.

Being a Christian is about your state of being – your status as a child of God – a co-heir with Christ.

*When you believe in Jesus as your Savior for the forgiveness of your sins – based on Jesus' atoning death*

*on the cross and His resurrection – at that very moment you are saved, and the Holy Spirit indwells you.*

These guys were “disciples” – and they had “believed” – but the question is “disciples” of who?

What exactly did they “believe”?

There is a good amount of debate as to whether these “disciples” who had “believed” were Christians – disciples of Jesus – or were they disciples of John the Baptizer?

Were they Christians? **I’m not sure.**

Were they followers of John the Baptizer? **I’m not sure.**

Were they taught by Apollos – before Apollos had his theology corrected and his gospel clarified by Priscilla and Aquila (18:26)? **I don’t know.**

Remember... Acts is a book recording this great transition from Judaism to Jesus – from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant.

There are other passages in Acts where we’ve seen where the Spirit’s indwelling presence was delayed.

**We see in Acts 8:9-17** – the ministry of Philip as he shared the gospel with those in Samaria many men and women believed in Jesus – and they had been baptized in the name of Jesus – but they had not yet received the Holy Spirit.

Peter and John arrive (8:14) and they prayed for them – and laid their hands on them – and they received the Spirit!

This is part of the great transition.

There was a great divide – great hatred between the Jewish people and the Samaritans.

They each had their own temple.

God orchestrates the Apostles – Peter and John – to be the means by which these new believers receive the Spirit – to create unity and to tear down the division between these 2 groups.

**In Acts 10** – Peter takes the gospel to a Gentile named Cornelius – and he, his family and friends who heard Peter receive the Spirit – and then they are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

These are unusual instances – to make a larger point – in this time of transition – that the followers of Jesus must be unified – not divided into different camps – and it affirmed the Apostles with the power of God – to make it clear to everyone that they had the message from God – a message that was trustworthy and true.

Back to **chapter 19** - these “disciples” didn’t know about the Spirit’s indwelling presence – and then Paul asks them another question.

vs. 3-4 - “And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They said, “Into John's baptism.”

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.”

Paul realizes if the message they heard was incomplete – lacking – then maybe their baptism was also – and he was right.

As we discussed last week.

**The “baptism of John” was one of expectation – preparation for the Messiah.**

Repent – get ready for the Kingdom of God – the Messiah is coming.

John the Baptizer was an O.T. prophet – he was pre-Christ / pre-cross / pre-resurrection.

**The baptism of Jesus** – a N.T. baptism – is one of celebration – of new life – of resurrection!

Just like Apollos – these men were standing both in the Old Covenant – and the New Covenant.

So, Paul moves them completely into the New Covenant and the grace of Jesus Christ.

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.



It's so important for us to make sure the details and accuracy of our message is true to the gospel.

The doctrines of the Church matter.

Understanding theology – the study of God – matters.

Teaching the commands of Christ is 1 of the 2 primary charges Jesus gave His Church.

Knowing what we believe – is extremely important for our everyday life.

If our belief is wrong – then our faith will be invalid or severely hampered.

**2 Timothy 2:15-17**

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene.”

**vs. 23-26**

“Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels.

And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil...”

**Acts 20:27** – *Paul, speaking with the elders from Ephesus.*

“...for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.”

**vs. 29-31**

“I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.

Therefore be alert...”

When you’re looking for a church, the 2 most important things to look for are:

1. A high view of the Bible as God’s inspired, authoritative Word as the guide to faith and life.
2. A high view of Jesus – His deity, sinless life, atoning sacrifice on the cross, His bodily resurrection. He is the Messiah – the only Savior – the hope of every person. He will reign over all for eternity. HE is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

If a church holds to these 2 things – the rest of their theology and doctrines are probably in-line with the Bible.

**The details and accuracy of our message is really important.**

Our heart’s intent is not more important than the truth. The truth of the gospel – being accurate in our handling of the gospel – is the bare minimum we must attain to.

Also notice the order of faith and baptism here.

There is a clear order of faith comes before baptism.

Baptism is not part of faith – it’s a result of faith.

Baptism doesn't validate faith – it proclaims faith.

Have you understood the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Have you put your faith in Jesus as your Savior – for the forgiveness of your sins?

Have you been baptized – after putting your faith in Jesus?

**Resolve to share the gospel.** vs. 8-10

Determine that you will talk about Christ.

Paul was driven to share the gospel.

His charge from Christ was to bring the gospel to the Gentiles.

We often refer to him as the Apostle to the Gentiles.

**Acts 9:15**

But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he (Paul) is a chosen instrument of Mine to carry My name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.”

**Ephesians 3:7-8**

“Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of His power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ...”

God uniquely called and gifted Paul for his ministry.

Paul was a patriotic and hardline Pharisee – trained and mentored by the best Jewish school – and as he was

persecuting Christians, he had a dramatic conversion experience.

*He became what he had hated so much!!*

God used Paul to take Jesus and His message of love, grace, and truth, to the Gentile world.

**Paul was relentless with this task.**

He was passionate about it.

**1 Corinthians 9:16**

“For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!”

In Ephesus, as was his custom, he begins his ministry in the synagogue – the Jewish place of worship.

**Read vs. 8-10**

For “three months” Paul “spoke boldly” – and he reasoned with them and tried to persuade them about the “Kingdom of God.”

**vs. 9** – After the 3 months, those in the synagogue “became stubborn”.

The Greek verb here refers to a hardening of one’s heart – and the grammatical detail here tells us they were hardening their own hearts.

They were intentionally setting themselves against the message Paul was sharing.

Luke tells us they not only were hardening their own heart, but they also “continued in unbelief” and they were “speaking evil of the Way before the congregation...”

They were rejecting the gospel in 3 distinct ways.

So, Paul doesn't waste his time with them.

- He has told them the truth.
- He has done his job.
- He has reasoned with them for 3 months.
- They have rejected his message.
- Time to move on.

“...he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus.”

Paul takes those who do believe in Jesus with him – and they find a place where he can continue teaching and preaching about Jesus – a place called “the hall of Tyrannus”.

It's uncertain exactly what this place was – but it seems to have been a public place – and a place that didn't restrict Paul as he taught.

**vs. 10** – “This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.”

Paul was fully committed to sharing the gospel.

He was fully committed to teaching about Jesus and the commands of Christ.

If a group didn't want to listen, he would find another group.

He didn't compromise the message.

He would change his methods – but not the message!

God blessed his ministry – and for 2 years he taught freely.

His teaching about Jesus spread well beyond the city of Ephesus – into “all the residents of Asia”.

This is hyperbole. The point is many, many, many in Asia (modern-day Turkey) heard about Jesus.

### ***Apply it...***

Do you believe in the gospel of Jesus?

Or... do you believe in the idea of God – the goodness of God – the love of God?

James 2:19 - “You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe--and shudder!”

Jesus – the only Savior – God incarnate – gave His life to be a sacrifice on the cross – was buried – rose from the dead – appeared to over 500 people after His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:3-8).

What you believe matters.

Put your faith in Christ...today!!!

Do you know theology and doctrine?

Theology and doctrine are important to know.

Knowing what is true – what beliefs are false – is a theological or doctrinal issue.

Institute of Biblical Studies – starting this fall – a remote class – using Zoom – which will ground you in the truths of the Bible. Details in this Tuesday's video.

Resolve to share the gospel with someone this week.

Who is your '1'?

Who is the 1 person God has laid on your heart?

Who in your 'circle' doesn't know Christ – doesn't go to church – doesn't know the gospel?

You don't know anyone?

*Then you need to get around non-Christians!!!!*

*If we only spend time with other Christians – we can't obey the mission Jesus gave us!!!!*

- Ask questions about when they grew up – did they go to church?
- If they used to attend church – ask what happened?
- Each Tuesday, send them a link to the Connect Video.
- As you leave church today – send a text / post something on social media – inviting people to come with you next Sunday – send a link to today's service (Our YouTube channel).
- Send a link to a non-believing friend – for one of the Alien's series (website / app).

- If you really like one of the songs we sang today – find it on YouTube – or in Spotify – or one of the streaming services – and send it to someone – and tell them we sang this song today – they should come with you next Sunday.

*Close in prayer*