

The Acts of the Holy Spirit 22 – Paul in Ephesus – Chapter 19.

In addition to being a man of faith, Paul was a man of action. From the time he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, when he changed his allegiance for all of time and eternity, he was rarely in one place for long. He was a man driven by his God-given command – to take the Gospel to the Gentiles. He took his Commission literally and continued through trial and tribulation – when comparing his work to that of those who call him a fool and who boast in a worldly way, he wrote of his life:

'....I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five

times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move, I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have laboured and toiled and often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and often gone without food. I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin and I do not inwardly burn? **2 Corinthians 11:23-29.**

Wow what a testimony yet many in today's world are suffering in the same way and honoured to do so!!

This was how he was until he knew that he had finished what God intended for him to complete: 'For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for His appearing'. **2 Timothy 4:6-8.** Then he was content to go to be with the Lord. Nobody could take his life until it was time for him to go – until he had completed his commission. Could you and I say that of our lives? Could we say that we know what God has commissioned us to do? Will we possibly be able to say that we have worked at it with all our might and that we have finished the race? We cannot answer these questions for others, but only individually for ourselves, for only you know of your own relationship with God. Only you know what He has given you to do.

Paul knew that his life was never going to be easy again even before Ananias, in fear and trembling, obeyed God and went to the man who had split families, dragging people off to prison and death for becoming Believers, **Acts 9:10-16.**

So Paul's life was now in a new phase – his third Missionary Journey. He could not keep away from those he cared for so passionately, those he had risked his life for, literally, those who had responded to the call of Jesus on their lives and had become Believers in the most difficult of circumstances – in riots, in prisons, under persecution and who still remained faithful to their Lord and Saviour. Paul's entire



existence was focussed on extending God's Kingdom and strengthening those who were young and weak in the faith.

This Missionary Journey was to be one of almost four years and was accomplished by walking, by ship and on horseback. The roads were at best wide tracks, at least some of the countryside unknown to this traveller, seasoned by his previous journeys. As **Chapter 19** of Acts takes up Paul's story, we find the worldwide nature of the Gospel explained. Apollos was now at Corinth in Achaia preaching the Gospel. Paul on the other hand was tramping through the interior of Asia Minor also preaching the Gospel, and encouraging the Believers, finally arriving in Ephesus. He found some Believers there. On his last trip he had been unable to spend any more time reasoning with the Jews in the synagogue, but had promised to return to Ephesus (**Acts 18:21**). Paul was now fulfilling his promise. When you and I promise to return and continue our discussions with those who are interested in knowing more, we should endeavour to keep our promises. When we do, we may be surprised to learn that God has already built on the foundation that we laid, and that our return gives us the opportunity to encourage the new Believers to go further.

There is always further to go with God. Until the end of our lives we will continue to learn more of Him; when we go to be with Him in Heaven, we will go on exploring the unending riches of his grace, mercy and love. God never designed His Kingdom to be finite; He designed it to be like Himself – infinite and boundless full of people and complete in every aspect, expressing more than we could ever experience. Have you experienced that fullness and expansiveness of God; have you opened up your life to Him, given up your life's ambitions in exchange for His ambitions for you, traded in your worn out and tired life for His action-packed excitement? You can do just that and gain a whole new lease on life so that when you finally meet God face to face, and you give account for your life, you will hear Him say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.....' **Matthew 25:21 (NKJV)**

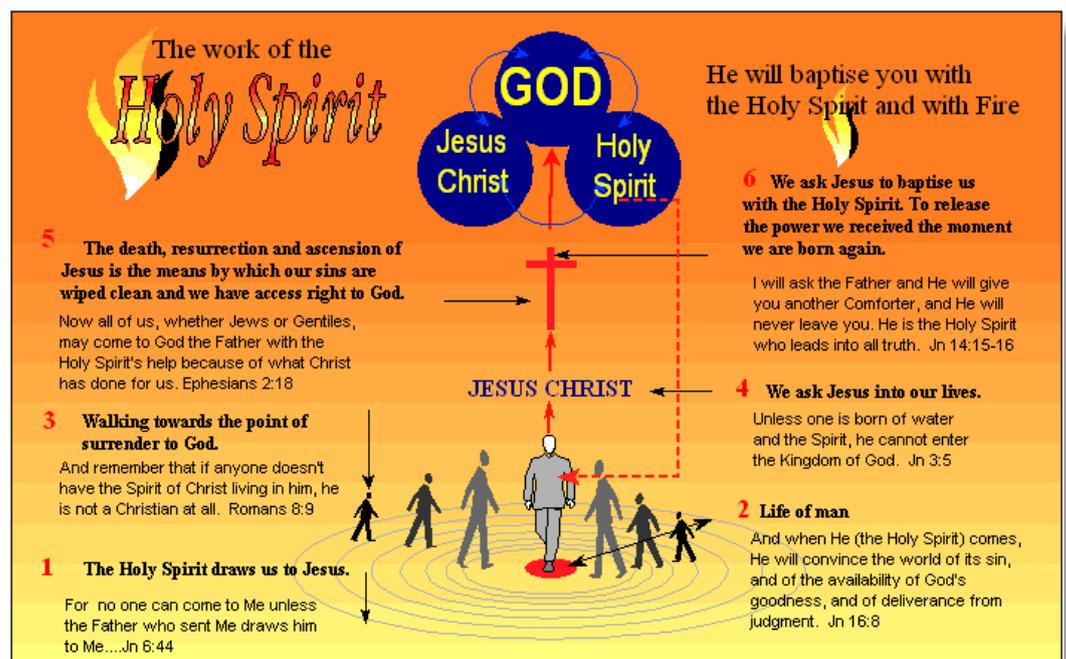
Acts 19:1- 7

Paul did not beat about the bush. He asked some straight questions: 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when (or possibly after) you believed?' Their response was both frank and revealing: 'No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.' (**Acts 19:2**). They acknowledged they had only been obedient to the extent of their knowledge at the time from John the Baptist' teaching. But 'as soon as they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.' ⁶ Then, when Paul laid his hands upon their heads, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other languages and prophesied. ⁷ The men involved were about twelve in number'. **Acts 19:3-7**.

When you and I discover something in the Word of God that we know we should respond to, do we wait, do we put it off, do we justify our stance? Or do we just get on with it (as these men did) and put ourselves in a position where God can use us again and again in His work? God only wants the best for us. He wants to strengthen us and to empower us as we learn to walk with Him. There is so much more that God wants to teach us if we will only listen to His voice. As Christians, we can only take people as far as we ourselves have come. If that is not

very far, then God will bring others in to do the work that we ourselves should have done if we had obeyed God in the first place. Let us stop paddling in the shallows as far as our Christian lives are concerned and move out into deep water where we can swim in the power of the Holy Spirit, **Ezekiel 47:1-12**.

Then we can be inundated, and empowered to live our lives with God and for God, where all that we



do counts towards forcing back the powers of darkness and helping to bring in the Kingdom of Jesus. Live in the centre of the Will of God for your lives, don't strive, but let Him guide you as you step out for Him in the direction He has planned for you to go. Don't wait around, rather get on with life, move in the general direction of where you know to be the right place for you and God will guide you on your way. That's the way Abraham did it, and David, and many others of the Old Testament examples for our lives, **Genesis 12:1**.

When the men heard what Paul had to say and obeyed the command of God for their lives, Paul placed his hands on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. This is the Normal Christian Life. Being baptised in the Holy Spirit is Normal; speaking in tongues is Normal; prophesying is Normal. So don't argue, just do it!

Acts 19: 8-12

Now that the small group of Believers were sorted, Paul got on with life in Ephesus. He did what he always did, he went to the synagogue. They let him stay for three months this time; they listened to him while he argued persuasively about the Kingdom of God, but eventually they could stand it no longer. They were convicted by what he had to say and became obstinate. They refused to believe and publicly declared that the Way that Paul was advocating was bad. You can't get much more opposed to something than they were! They had had their opportunity and had refused it, and the time had now come for Paul to move on. God is patient and loving otherwise Paul would never have been there in the first place, but He is also just. These people were wasting Paul's time and were preventing others from hearing and accepting God's plan for their lives, so Paul and the disciples left and started to meet in the lecture hall of Tyrannus, **Acts 19:9**. On his second Missionary Journey, Paul had been prevented from preaching the Word in the Province of Asia, **Acts 16:6**. But now it was time for them to hear. The fact that Paul moved out from the synagogue where the Jews and the others who met there had refused to listen any more to the Word of God gave Paul and his companions the freedom that the Holy Spirit needed to reach those who needed to hear, so Luke says 'This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the Province of Asia heard the Word of the Lord'. **Acts 19:10**

What a difference. Now everyone had heard and God was able to do extraordinary (special, unusual) miracles there through Paul. Even sicknesses were cured and evil spirits driven out of them when they came into contact with handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched Paul. (**Acts 19:11-12**) These were miracles of the same type that Jesus did when he had walked through Galilee before His crucifixion.

Acts 19:13-22

It is one thing to be a Believer and to use the Name of Jesus (because you have received the authority to do so), but it is an entirely different thing to do as the seven sons of Sceva did. Sceva was a Jewish chief priest, so his sons came with a reputation for having been brought up with 'religion', **Acts 19:13-16**. It is a fact that Satan and his hordes of demons must bow the knee to the Name of Jesus, **Philippians 2:9-11**. But when it is used by those who only want to do so as a magic spell or as in a horoscope, without the authority that goes with it, they should be careful of the consequences. I am convinced that these seven sons had not expected to be beaten up and badly injured so that they had to flee the house. I am equally convinced that Satan will not bow the knee to his own people; they are the ones who have already bowed their knee to him! He does not respect them for it. If you are one of those, now is the time to change sides! Repent (turn away from your wrong life, and say you are sorry), confess your sins (agree with God about what He says) and ask Him to move in and take control of your life, and you will be saved! God will begin the transformation of your life on earth, but your future destination – to be with Him forever when you die will be entirely assured. You will move from death to life. You will be entirely released from the power of your past life, and you will be assured that ALL your sins are forgiven.

This was not the case with Sceva's sons. They were playing in a league that was way too high for them. They were dealing with power that they had no idea of. It is exactly the same with anyone who begins to dabble in what they regard as small, insignificant and perhaps immaterial things. Perhaps they go to a palm reader, have their tea leaves read or get involved in tarot cards, or a ouija board, or even go to spiritualist meetings. None of these seems to be an important issue, but it is what is behind them that sucks people in. Mediums do not contact the dead beyond the grave, they access demons who pretend to be those people, and because the loved one remaining on earth is in a vulnerable position and is prepared to believe, the demonic confidence trick can be very easily completed. If you are involved in any of these things, or others that are not of God, **GET OUT NOW WHILE YOU STILL CAN!**

These people living in Ephesus had heard the Word of the Lord, and once the details of God's amazing work healing the sick, then of what happened to the seven sons of Sceva got out, **Acts 19:17-20**. The kingdom of darkness was driven back and the glorious freedom of the Kingdom of God was upheld as people began to

get rid of their dark artefacts publicly in order to live fully in the light of God's authority. Whenever the light is turned on, darkness must retreat. This is a physical law, but it applies in the spiritual world also.

Acts 19:23-41

Once the Church had begun to be established, Paul knew also that it was time for him to move on. He wanted to go to Jerusalem via Macedonia and Achaia, and he also expressed his desire to visit Rome. He decided to send Timothy and Erastus ahead to Macedonia – a place that God had called him to on his previous (Second) Missionary Journey. He had seen a vision of a man from Macedonia asking him to go to help them when he was trying to discover where to go next, **Acts 16:6-10**. But Paul decided to stay just a little longer in Ephesus. It was at this time that a riot occurred.

When people begin to understand the Word of God and to act on it, not only do their lives change, but so also do their priorities. Perhaps they determine to spend more time with their wives and children; perhaps they get rid of their pornographic magazines and media; perhaps they become more honest, but whatever they decide to do, it will have an effect on their communities, particularly when large numbers of people change their priorities together. This is exactly what happened in Ephesus. It changed their economic priorities, and Demetrius and the other silversmiths who made their living from making silver shrines of Artemis began to feel the pinch. No longer was the 'goddess' so much in demand! **Acts 19:25-26**. Now a downturn in trade can be coped with if it is just that and does not continue indefinitely, but these people were concerned that this could be permanent. What an effect the Gospel had created! **Acts 19:27**

When God moves in, those who are no gods at all but demonic influences (as is any other god) move out. Following God will affect purchasing, travel, giving, selfishness and all other manner of things. It will have economic, social and spiritual effects for the good of the family, the neighbourhood, town, city, country or continent where it occurs. There are many examples of this in the United Kingdom where, in revival e.g. the Cornish Revival in the 19th Century, the Welsh Revival from 1904 to 1907 and the Hebridean Revival in the early 1950's, pubs, dance halls, and places where Jesus was dishonoured closed down. Paul wanted to put a stop to the riot, but the people were irrational, and even Paul's friends who were officials in the Province of Asia begged him not to venture into the theatre which had become the focal point of the disturbance. Paul's influence had touched all levels of society as he preached the Gospel – so it wasn't just the sick and impoverished, and we must expect that today. Indeed we already see it as Sports personalities, TV stars, Lawyers and Government Officials take their stand for Jesus in public life alongside the poor, lonely and sick. God is no respecter of persons. The Jews were also fearful that they might be implicated in this so they pushed Alexander to the front, but that just made it worse. The crowd bayed for a further two hours 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!'. Finally, a city official quietened the crowd down. He used very worldly logic to convey to these people that it really was a futile demonstration, **Acts 19:35-39**. The problem was that he was worried that the Roman troops might be called out to quell the riot. If this happened, then the civic authorities and the area authorities would be called to account – probably to Rome and they would at the very least have been ignominiously removed from Office. In addition, the entire town would have been put under martial law taking away many freedoms, **Acts 19:40**

In this case the Law stood up for the Believers and the law of the lynch mob was overruled, but the ultimate Law – God's Law will prove eternally faithful, those over the years who have not been released, but instead have been tortured and killed will stand as shining examples as martyrs for their faith. **Hebrews 11:32-40**

So where do you and I stand on the issue of our faith? Are we prepared to stay strong in the face of opposition? Is Jesus the most important Person in our lives? When we die and face Him as our Saviour and our Brother, will He be able to say to us 'Well done, good and faithful servant...'? Will we join with those countless people who in our own life times have held their faith so precious that in former and current communist and other lands have stood their ground, been tortured and even died for their faith? Paul and his companions knew beyond any shadow of doubt where their allegiance lay. Their lives had been changed and enhanced forever; nobody could take away the joy of their salvation. Compared to them, what a small price we have to pay now, and yet the Bible says that:

³ If you want to keep from becoming fainthearted and weary, think about His patience as sinful men did such terrible things to Him. ⁴ After all, you have never yet struggled against sin and temptation until you sweat great drops of blood. **Hebrews 12:1-4**

The Acts of the Holy Spirit 22 – Paul in Ephesus – Challenge Questions

Please complete all questions marked with * and then complete the rest of the study. The more you look in the Word the more you will get out of it.

Read the chapter at the beginning of the week then you have time to meditate on it, rather than rushing! Make the Word your number one priority.

1. ***Read the Notes and the Bible Verses** referred to in them. Highlight the points that 'speak' to you and share with the group.
2. ***From the Notes**, what dangers did Paul say that he had been in while he had been a Christian? Did he have to go through them? As a Christian, might you have to go through trials? Based on Paul's testimony, will Jesus ever be inadequate for you? Explain your answer.
3. Did Paul know what his Christian work was? Did he ever give up? Did he know that it was time for him to finish and go home to be with the Lord? Can you explain how he knew?

Read Acts 20:1-7

4. Paul travelled through Macedonia. Can you recall if he had been there before and the circumstances of his last trip? Give Bible references. What happened last time, and why did he need to encourage people this time?
5. ***After he left Macedonia**, where did he go? How long did he stay? On the return journey, he intended to sail direct for Syria. Why did he change his mind and what route did he now take?
6. Who were Paul's companions on the way back? They sailed from Philippi after the Feast of Unleavened Bread. When did this feast occur, and what did it celebrate? How long did they stay at Troas?

Read Acts 20:7-12

7. ***What does the phrase 'breaking bread'** mean? Why is breaking bread important to us today? What does it celebrate, who should we break bread with, and how often should we do it?
8. What happened to Eutychus? Should we expect people to be brought back from the dead? Give reasons for your answer. Did Paul doubt that he would live?

9. How did Paul get to Assos? How did his companions get to Assos? Where did they all go from there? Why did Paul decide not to go to Ephesus which would normally have been on the route?

Read Acts 20:18-21

10.*What things did Paul remind them of when he spoke to the elders from the Church at Ephesus? Where did Paul meet with these elders when he lived among them? What single message did he have for Jews and Gentiles alike? How can you apply this passage to us today?

Read Acts 20:22-31

11.*Where was Paul going and what did he know was going to happen to him? Did that affect his determination? What does Paul say was the most important thing for him to complete? What is the most important thing for you to complete in your life?

12.Did Paul expect to return to Ephesus? Give reasons for your answer.

13.*What did Paul say was the responsibility of these people for those the Holy Spirit has given to them? What would happen after Paul had left a) to the Church and b) to some of the elders? Could that happen in churches today? Give reasons. How can we help prevent such things happening?

Read Acts 20:32-35

14.Paul commits the elders to God's care. What does he say that God is able to do for them? How will He do it?

15.*Paul explained to the elders from Ephesus how he conducted himself while he lived amongst them. What points does he make? How can these be applied to our lives in the 21st Century? Why does God say it is more blessed to give than to receive?

16.*Was the parting emotional? Why do you think it was so? Is there place for emotions in our Christian lives today? Explain your answer.