

The Power Of God's Word

Acts 18:23-19:20

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You know, over the years of ministry that I've had, I'm more convinced than ever before that the Bible is the Word of God, and that when God's Word speaks, God speaks. If you want to hear God speak, you open the Bible—God speaks through what He has spoken. The Bible says about itself, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." That inspiration means that it is actually God breathed. Peter said that holy men of God wrote as they were carried along, or borne along, by the Holy Spirit. I think the greatest need in the world today is for them to hear the Word of the Lord.

I find it interesting that the first time satan is recorded in the Bible as speaking, he actually said, "Does God really say that?" The first words recorded in the Bible out of the devil's mouth is that he's attacking, questioning, or coming against the Word of God. That's really where the battle has been for all these ages—satan wanting to attack, deny, or weaken the Word of God.

Our job, as we see Paul tonight, is to get out God's Word. We're going to close in Acts 19:20, where Luke says, "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." I love that statement. That's my prayer and desire that in our church, in our homes, in our families, in our hearts, in our community, in our nation, and in our world that mightily will grow the Word of God and prevail.

We've been traveling with Paul, Timothy, Silas, and Luke. Last Wednesday night we came to the end of the third missionary journey. I don't remember that I specifically pointed that out (and I want to do that), so as you back up to Acts 18:18 it says, "And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria," this is Paul leaving Corinth (Acts 18) on his way back to his home church in Syria. It says, "...and with him Priscilla and Aquila," the husband and wife tentmaking team, and Paul had shaved "his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow." We don't know anything about that other than what we read right here in the text. For some reason Paul took a vow—you wouldn't touch any dead bodies and you would abstain from wine—of consecration, so he shaves his head.

"And he came to Ephesus," I want you to notice that because tonight's going to be all about what God's Word does in the city of Ephesus, but he only stays at this point, at the end of his second journey, for just a short time and then comes back to Ephesus in Acts 19:1. It says, "And he came to Ephesus, and left them there," that is, Priscilla and Aquila stayed in Ephesus. They got a house and worked making tents. They did ministry and encouraged the believers there. "...but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. 20 When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not; 21 But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem," it would be the feast of Passover, "but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus," so a very short stay there. They wanted him to stay. Paul says, "No. I have to get to Jerusalem for the feast." It could've been tied in with this vow that he took in which he shaved his head, and he

could've met with other leaders and so forth from around the world and shared with them at the Passover. He wanted to make his way to Jerusalem, so he leaves Ephesus.

Notice verse 22. "And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch." That is the end of the second missionary journey. I didn't point that out last week. That's why I backtracked and gave it to you. It doesn't really say it in the text, and it's hard to detect unless it's pointed out. It's kind of a challenge to determine where does the second journey end and the third journey begin. The second missionary journey ends in Acts 18:22, and then the third missionary journey begins tonight, our text beginning in verse 23.

In the sections that we're going to cover tonight (if you're taking notes), I want to give you three ways God's Word and its power was manifested. The first way we see it manifested was the power of God's Word for correction or for instruction. The Bible is good for instruction and correction to tell us what is right, what is wrong, how to get right, and how to stay right. This runs from Acts 18:23-19:7. Let's look at it. Follow with me beginning in verse 23. It says, "And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples. 24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures," there they are, the Word of God, "came to Ephesus." As I pointed out, beginning in verse 23, and it really kind of kicks in in verse 24, that is the beginning of the third missionary journey. Paul had three missionary journeys. This is the third missionary journey, and it runs from Acts 18:23-21:16. Chapter 20, when he meets on the beach with the elders at Ephesus, is one of my all-time favorite passages in the Bible. I'm so excited to get there. I can't wait!

Beginning here in Acts 18:23, we find that Paul sets off on his third missionary journey. This Antioch, over here to the far right, is where Paul begins—Antioch of Syria. This is where Paul begins and technically ends every one of his missionary journeys. Antioch of Syria was the sending church. Paul takes off on this trip and heads all the way through the area of Galatia. This is also known as Asia. This is the same route that he went through on his second missionary journey. These are churches that were established, too, in this area on his first missionary journey—Lystra, Derbe and those churches. In this area right here, by the way, and I'll make mention of them in just a minute, would be the seven churches in the book of Revelation 2 where John writes to the seven churches in Asia. They would be located in that area. In this third missionary journey, Paul is going back not so much to evangelize, he does that, but more so to encourage, strengthen, build up, and to edify the believers that have already come to Christ. He spends more time on this third journey than he has any other. He spent at least three years traveling on this trip. It was a long journey. As we're going to read and I'll point it out in the text, he travels across to Ephesus. That's where we're going to spend the night in the book of Acts, the ministry that is in the city of Ephesus. (You can take down the map.)

We all know about the letter of Paul to the Ephesians, right? You've read the book of Ephesians. Well, that's the city of Ephesus that Paul comes to and spends so much time in his ministry there. Here it says, "...and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia," that's

modern Turkey, “in order, strengthening all the disciples.” He was going back through those churches with the Word of God teaching, instructing, encouraging, and strengthening them. No doubt, they prayed and studied God’s Word. This is the way the church gets strong—the Word of God and prayer. I call it the dynamic duo—praying to God, hearing God speak through His Word, and growing in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As he came finally to Ephesus (verse 24), it says, “And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.”

Paul comes to Ephesus, but he’s not there yet. He’s going to be coming to Ephesus. The text is kind of confusing. Let me explain it to you. It starts in Acts 18:23, the third missionary journey, and then it’s parenthetical, from verse 24 down to verse 28. Verse 23 picks up in Acts 19:1; and when we get to Acts 19:1, I’ll explain it to you. I know you’re probably thoroughly confused already, but just buckle your seatbelts, hang tight with me, and it’ll make sense. Acts 18:24 is kind of like, “Meanwhile, back at the ranch.” We talk about Ephesus before Paul even really comes there. He left Priscilla and Aquila there and went back to Jerusalem, and he’s coming around the other way.

It says, “And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.” This is the introduction of this amazing New Testament character by the name of Apollos. He was a Jew born in Alexandria, Egypt, which was a very, very, very large cosmopolitan place. It was at the top of the north coast of Egypt. It was an intellectual city. It had universities. It had a great, great library of 700,000 volumes. It was like the intellectual capital of the world. It was on par with Athens. Athens was more philosophical, and Alexandria was more intellectual. It was a university town, so he was a very well-educated individual, and he comes to the city of Ephesus.

Ephesus itself, too, is the capital of the Roman Empire in this area. It’s a prominent city. It’s a very large city. It had about 300,000 people at this time. It was known for its commerce, wealth, and its treasures. Primarily, it was known for one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. That one seven wonder of the ancient world was known as the Temple of Diana. It was also known as Artemis. This temple was 418 feet by 239 feet. It had a hundred columns which stood over 50 feet high. Inside of its sacred enclosure were a thousand sacred prostitutes, the worship of Diana. It also had a bank or treasure in it where they kept the wealth of all of Asia. It was a very, very prominent place. It was a very wicked place, and Paul came and would actually spend three years in the city of Ephesus, but he hasn’t gotten there yet. It doesn’t happen until Acts 19.

The focus now is on this guy by the name of Apollos who is going to be used by God there in Ephesus, but first there are some things that need to happen in his life as he needs to get instructed and taught through the Word of God. It says (verse 25), “This man was instructed in the way of the Lord,” notice the word “Lord” is all capitals. It’s Jehovah or Yahweh. “...and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. 26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more

perfectly. 27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia," which is Corinth, southern Greece, "the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: 28 For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ," or the Messiah.

If you've read the book of Corinthians, you've heard of Apollos. Remember when Paul was writing to the Corinthians talking about the division, their carnality, and they were divided in Corinth; how one said, "We're of Paul," and "We're of Apollos," and "We're of Peter," and then the hyper spiritual, "We're of Christ. We're not of any man." He said, "Was Christ divided? Was Apollos crucified for you?" He was talking to the Corinthians about their carnality, that they were following personalities. One of those personalities that became very prominent, a leader in the early church, was this individual that we know as Apollos. He was, as I said, from a very, very intellectual town, Alexandria, which indicates that he was a highly educated individual. Today, he would have his Doctorate or his PhD. He'd gone through the formal training. He knew the Bible very well. It says he was eloquent in verse 24, which carries with it the idea of learned or educated. So, not only was he a great orator, he could speak very powerfully, but he was also a very intelligent and highly educated individual.

Apollos was "mighty in the scriptures." That "mighty in the scriptures," is the Old Testament. You've got to make sure that you get this, okay? He didn't have the book of Acts. He didn't have the book of Romans. He didn't have the book of 1 or 2 Corinthians. He didn't have Galatians. He didn't have Ephesians. All he had was the Old Testament, so his knowledge of the Scriptures were all Old Testament. He knew the Old Testament through and through. He came to the city of Ephesus. He "was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit." The "way of the Lord," there would be the Old Testament, Jehovah or Yahweh, which necessarily means that we read into that, that it's a reference to Jesus Christ.

We're going to find out that this Apollos, everything he believed, was right but was limited. He believed correctly, but he didn't have a thorough complete total knowledge about Jesus—who He was and what He had done, nor of the gospel. He had a correct belief, but it was limited. He needed to be instructed and further taught in the Bible, the Word of God, as Apollos would be instructed by Priscilla and Aquila. We're going to see that.

Verse 25 says, "This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit," which means that he was zealous. He was red hot, and "he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John." That is a reference to John the Baptist. John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament prophets; and he, in a sense, bridged the gap to bring in the Messiah. He was the forerunner of Messiah, but he died before Jesus died on the Cross. John had only a limited knowledge and understanding of Messiah. He was pointing people to the Messiah, but he wasn't really preaching Christ's death and resurrection. He didn't know Christ had ascended. He didn't know the Holy Spirit had come. There was a lot of information that Apollos didn't have. His knowledge was lacking, and he needed more information. He was right but only as far as it goes. He knew only of "the baptism of John." He only knew the baptism of John the Baptist.

Verse 26, “And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue,” you can imagine that Priscilla and Aquila, when they went to the synagogue (it’s interesting that they would go to the synagogue. They were Christians, but they still went to the Jewish synagogue) and heard Apollos, they were kind of blown away. They thought, Man, this guy is a great speaker. He’s really smart. He really knows the Bible, but he doesn’t have a full knowledge of Jesus and what He came to do and of the gospel. It says in verse 26, “...they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.” Think about that. Aquila and Priscilla, and sometimes it’s Priscilla and Aquila (the names are switched in order), but it’s a husband and wife team. They are tentmakers. They are what we call laypeople. They aren’t highly educated. They haven’t been to the universities. They don’t have a PhD and aren’t formally trained, but they have spent time with Paul and—listen very carefully—they were born again. They had the Holy Spirit, so they sit down at synagogue. They hear Apollos preaching, and say, “Wow! This guy is great, but he’s missing a lot. He needs some more help. He needs some more information.” After synagogue was over, they thought, How can we approach this preacher without offending him? Without telling him he needs more information and turning him off? How can we draw him in?

I know from experience and by no means take offense with people challenging, questioning, or trying to correct me. It happens all the time, believe it or not. It happens all the time, but it is a challenge sometimes after you preached—you’re in the emotion of the moment, you’ve shared the gospel, and your heart is stirred—and I’ll come off the stage and BOOM! the first thing I run into is somebody that wants to tell me I’m wrong or I don’t have it right, or “You don’t know what you’re talking about,” or “I want to straighten you out.” It’s kind of like, at least take me to lunch and feed me first or something, you know. I mean, at least be my friend for a little while before you want to straighten me out, okay? I’m reading in the white spaces. I think that Priscilla and Aquila said, “Well, how are we going to...” and Priscilla said, “We’ll have him over at our home for lunch. I’ll cook my favorite meal, and we’ll entice him with something to eat.” He was probably a single dude and was hungry, so they invited him over for a meal. He says, “Okay.” After they sat down, and I don’t know how they first introduced it, you know, when he was full of food they said, “You know, Apollos, you’re awesome and you’re amazing! We really respect your eloquence and your education. You really know the Scriptures, but there’s a lot you’re missing. There’s a lot of information you don’t have.”

The thing that’s amazing to me is to hear God use this couple to straighten out this intellectual, and that this preacher was teachable. It says a lot for Apollos. Apollos received the instruction and information from them. What Priscilla and Aquila would go on to tell him was that John pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God who had taken away the sins of the world. They would explain to Apollos that Jesus died on the Cross, that He paid for our sins, that He cried, “Tetelestai!” it is finished. It’s paid in full, and that He was buried and, “Apollos, Jesus rose from the dead. He physically rose from the dead. He conquered sin and the grave. He died for our sins. He was raised for our justification, and then He ascended back to heaven from Mount Olivet. The disciples were there and saw Him go, and an angel showed up and told them this same Jesus which you’ve seen go shall come in like manner.” Apollos is like, “Yeah? Yeah? This is awesome!” He’s just eating it up and taking notes, writing it down. He’s getting all this information and is just feeding on that. They’re using the Word of God to instruct this individual,

who is now getting the full message, the full gospel. I think that this is where, if you'll allow me the liberty, Apollos actually becomes a real Christian, where he actually gets born again.

There are a lot of men in pulpits today that have the education, the PhDs, the Doctorates, and the formal training; but they need the Holy Spirit. They need to know Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. They have all of the knowledge of the Scriptures, but they don't have the Spirit of God. They would've explained to Apollos, "You can be born again. You can have the Holy Spirit living inside of you, and Jesus is exalted at the right hand of the Father." They would give him the full gospel message, and now this guy is going to be a dynamo. He's going to be amazing! I would've loved to have heard Apollos preach.

Some Bible students actually believe, and it's a good possibility, that Apollos was the author of the book of Hebrews in our New Testament. Now, I believe that Paul wrote Hebrews, but I can't be sure about that. We don't know who wrote Hebrews. In my book, if Paul didn't write Hebrews, Apollos is next on the list for who wrote Hebrews because he was mighty in the Scriptures. He knew the Word of God, and now he's a Spirit-filled believer. He has the Holy Spirit living inside of him, and he knows the Word of God more perfectly.

Apollos leaves Ephesus (verse 27) and goes to Corinth. It doesn't say Corinth. It says Achaia, so it gets a little confusing. Achaia was southern Greece, and this is where the city of Corinth was. What happens is Apollos starts in Ephesus and goes to Corinth. Paul started in Corinth and went to Ephesus. You got that? I'm going to test you on this after church. They switched places. This is why when Paul wrote to the Corinthians he said, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." Sometimes someone plants, someone waters, but it's always God, the Holy Spirit, that gives the increase. They switch places is what happens. It says, "...the brethren," in Ephesus, "wrote, exhorting the disciples," there in Corinth, "to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace." He comes to Corinth and begins to minister, teach, and preach God's Word; and he helps the believers. He strengthens, encourages, disciples, and evangelizes them. Notice verse 28, "For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ," the Messiah. Here's the great man, Apollos, instructed by Priscilla and Aquila.

If God uses you to instruct the preacher, do it compassionately, gently, and humbly. Maybe you do it after you've fed him, okay? Just remember that. A full stomach, you know, he's relaxing, and now they instruct him. Then he goes to Corinth, and God uses him in such a mighty and wonderful way.

Now we continue with Paul in Acts 19 and would actually read from verse 23 straight down from Acts 19:1. "And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus," what I just showed you on the map, that he left from Antioch and traveled west across Asia, it's describing that there in verse 1. "...and finding certain disciples," we'll explain who these disciples were. By the way, these were disciples of John the Baptist. They weren't disciples of Christ. Again, they had a limited knowledge. "He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" or when you believed or

having believed, did you receive the Holy Spirit? “And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. 3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John’s baptism.” The disciples mentioned in Acts 19:1 were in the same category as Apollos. We don’t know for sure that they were disciples of Apollos, but we do know for sure that they were disciples of John the Baptist. John the Baptist basically was just preaching a message of repentance, turn back, prepare your heart, for the Lord is coming. It was a limited message.

Paul meets and hangs out with them a little bit and evidently detected, Something doesn’t seem right. Have you ever been with somebody and they claim they’re a Christian but you spend a little time with them and you say, “I don’t know if you understand what a Christian really is. You might not understand if you’re really saved,” or “Maybe you’re not really saved.” “Oh, I’m a Christian.” “Oh, you are? Great.” After a little time with them, a little conversation with them, a little fellowship with them it’s like, “Uhh, I don’t know. Did you receive the Holy Spirit? Have you been born again? Are you really saved?” That’s basically what’s going on here, Paul with these disciples. That’s why he says, “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?” Literally, having believed, or some translate that, when you believed? And they say, “We haven’t even heard about the Holy Spirit.” Pray tell me, how do you become a Christian and you haven’t received the Holy Spirit or you don’t even know about the Holy Spirit? We know very clearly from the Bible, that if you don’t have the Holy Spirit, you’re not a Christian, right? If you don’t have the Holy Spirit, you’re not a Christian. You’re supposed to say, “Right,” by the way. If you don’t know that, then you need to do a little homework, okay? You’re like, “Really?”

Paul says in Romans 8 that without the Holy Spirit, you’re not any of His. You don’t belong to Him. When you’re born again, it’s the work of the Holy Spirit, and He comes to indwell you. You’re indwelt by the Holy Spirit. You’re regenerated by the Holy Spirit. You’re sealed by the Holy Spirit, and you’re baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ. He says, “Have ye received the Holy Ghost,” and they say, “We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.”

In a Christian baptism, they would’ve been baptized in the name of the Father, in the name of the Son, and the name of the Holy Spirit—not names, but name (singular) which is a support for the Trinity—the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I believe that should be the baptismal formula. I don’t think it’s a big deal, but I think that’s the formula that Christ gave us. When you read in the book of Acts, “...they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus,” that’s not the formula, that’s the authority; and some people get hung up on that. They say, “Well, when you were baptized, you have to be baptized in Jesus’ name only.” When it says, “...they were baptized in the name of the Lord,” that means they were baptized in His authority, but Jesus said, “Go ye into all the world...baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” That’s the formula. We’re not saved by baptism, so we don’t need to get hung up on the formula, but we should follow the instructions that Jesus gave us when we baptize.

Paul’s thinking, You sure you’re Christians? If you were baptized, then you would’ve heard of the Holy Spirit. “And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John’s baptism.” That was the baptism under repentance. That wasn’t a baptism of that Jesus

has come and died for your sins, rose from the dead, and you need to be born again. That was like the message Apollos preached. It was short. It wasn't completed. It wasn't fully finished. They weren't aware of the fact of all that Jesus came and did. "Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come," so John's message in baptism was pointing forward to the coming of Jesus, Christian baptism points backwards. There's a big difference. John's baptism looked forward; Christian baptism looks backwards at the work that Jesus finished upon the Cross. Then Paul says to them, "John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance...which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."

"When they heard this," the message about Christ Jesus, "they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus," again, that's in His power and His authority. "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied." This, by the way, is the last time that speaking in tongues is mentioned in the book of Acts. "And all the men were about twelve." There were twelve men that were disciples of John. I don't want to get bogged down. I don't want to get sidetracked. I don't want to freak some people out, but I want to be clear on what I believe is happening in this text because what is often taught is that these disciples are saved but didn't have the Holy Spirit. First of all, we know that you can't be saved without the Holy Spirit, so what is taught (and I understand it. I've taught it myself many, many, many years ago) is that they're saved, they're born again, but they hadn't been baptized in the Holy Spirit; and the baptism of the Holy Spirit is subsequent to regeneration or being born again. This is why you'll meet Christians that say, "Have you been baptized in the Holy Spirit since you were saved?" or "...since you were a Christian?"

My understanding of Scripture is that yes, if you're born again, you've been baptized with, by, or in the Holy Spirit. The little Greek preposition in is used in all those different ways. What it means is, the moment you were born again, the Holy Spirit took you out of Adam and placed you into Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12:13, Paul says, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body...and have been all made to drink into one Spirit," that we're one in Christ? But, not all Christians are filled with the Holy Spirit, and I want to make that clear. You cannot be a Christian without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The moment you're saved, you're indwelt, you're sealed, and you are baptized into Christ by the Holy Spirit. They take this passage and they read the baptism of the Holy Spirit into it, and then they have two categories of Christians—Christians that are baptized in the Holy Spirit and Christians who are not baptized in the Holy Spirit. It's not so prevalent today, but years ago sometimes those that believed they're baptized in the Holy Spirit would use the term "full-gospel." I've never thought that that is an appropriate term to use because, again, it's two classes of Christians—you've got the "have's" and the "have nots." You've got the saints and the super saints. You've got the saints and the deeper life club.

I grew up, third-generation, in a Christian home that believed that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was subsequent to, separate from, regeneration. On our way to our church, when we would go by the "have-not" churches, we felt sorry for them. "It's too bad they don't have what we have. We've got the whole dose of the Ghost. We've got the Holy Ghost. They don't have the Holy

Ghost.” I don’t believe that this passage teaches or says that. There’s no statement made about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Paul just says, “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?” I believe that these disciples are unsaved, that they’re unregenerate, that they only had the message of John’s repentance. They didn’t have the full gospel. When Paul shows up, he detects that and shares the whole gospel with them. They believe in Jesus Christ, and they’re born again. Paul lays his hands on them, and they are saved. They are filled with the Holy Spirit and, yes, they speak in tongues.

Not everyone in the book of Acts that is born again speaks in tongues. In the book of Corinthians Paul says, “Do all speak with tongues?” It’s a rhetorical question expecting a no answer. Not everyone is given that gift. I believe in tongues as a valid gift still for today. I’m not a cessationist. I don’t believe the gifts, the sign gifts, and the miracles have passed off the scene; but I don’t believe that every Christian has the gift of speaking in tongues, nor do I believe that it’s the evidence of being baptized in the Holy Spirit, filled with the Holy Spirit, or necessary for spirituality. What I do believe is that we are commanded in the Bible to be “filled with the Spirit” and that is a second experience that can happen a second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth, ongoing time.

In Ephesians 5:18 it says, “...be filled with the Spirit.” That’s a command. It’s an imperative. It’s in the present tense, “be being filled with the Spirit.” It’s in the passive voice, “Let the Spirit fill you.” You can’t fill yourself. It’s what’s called “all inclusive” in the Greek. That means, all Christians are to be Spirit filled. Remember in Acts 6 when they were picking deacons out to wait on tables? He said, “Pick men that are full of the Holy Spirit.” Why didn’t they just say, “Pick men that are Christians?” Because not all Christians are full of the Holy Spirit. To be filled with the Holy Spirit means that you are Spirit-controlled, Spirit-empowered. It’s not so much that you are getting more of the Holy Spirit, it’s the Holy Spirit is getting more of you as you surrender and yield to Him.

In this case, in this passage, I don’t believe that they were even born again. I believe that they had a lack of knowledge. They weren’t saved. They were disciples of John. They weren’t Christians until Paul came, prayed for them, and, again, laid hands on them. They received the Holy Spirit. They were born again, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues.

In Ephesians 1:13, I want you to flip there really quickly with me because this is important. I want you to note the sequence of events of believing and receiving the Holy Spirit. Paul has been delineating, beginning in verse 3, the blessings that are ours from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Then he gets to the end and talks about the blessings that come to us from the Holy Spirit. He says, “In whom,” that is, Christ, “ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.” I want you to note that you hear the Word of God, you believe, then you are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. I believe it comes in that order, you hear the Word, you believe, and then you are sealed. It all happens at the moment of regeneration. In verse 14 it says, “Which is,” the Holy Spirit is, “the earnest of our inheritance until the

redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” I believe that here in Ephesians, Paul kind of breaks down that we hear the gospel, we believe the gospel, and then the Holy Spirit regenerates and seals us unto the day of redemption. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit. If someone says to you, “Have you received the Holy Spirit?” “Yes. I’m a Christian. I’ve been born again.” Now, it doesn’t mean you’re filled with the Holy Spirit or you’re walking in the Spirit. That is a separate situation, and that’s what we want to be—Spirit-filled Christians, empowered and led by the Holy Spirit. Go back with me to Acts 19.

Paul encounters these twelve disciples of John the Baptist in Ephesus, so the Word of God is used to bring correction. The second example of the Word of God in our study tonight is the power of God’s Word for conversion as the Word is taught, as the Word is preached, and we won’t tarry on this, verses 8-10. “And he went into the synagogue,” he’s there in Ephesus, “and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. 9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. 10 And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.” Paul is in Ephesus. He goes to the synagogue and preaches the Word. The Jews finally begin to oppose it, so what he does is moves out into this rented school, this lecture hall, known in verse 9 as “the school of one Tyrannus.” For probably seven days a week, for probably five hours a day, for at least two years, Paul preaches the Word.

Can you imagine two years, seven days a week, five hours a day, sitting under the teaching and preaching of Paul the Apostle? Sign me up! I would’ve been amazing. This is more than any seminarian or Bible student ever got at any campus. They’re just being taught the Word, fed the Word, instructed in the Word. Most of the early churches met in believer’s homes. It’s interesting, here, that Paul rents out a lecture hall and is meeting there with the believers teaching them the Word of God. It’s believed that it’s during this time that the Christians would’ve gone over to Colossae, and the church of Colossians would’ve been born. That’s just a little footnote for you in your Bible that the Colossian church would’ve been birthed, and the seven churches of Asia at this time would’ve been birthed as well during this two-year...and it would be a total of three years that Paul would spend in the city of Ephesus. Again, the closing statement in verse 10 says, “...all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.” It doesn’t specifically say so, but the inference there is that they not only heard but many believed. Not everyone believed, but many were coming to faith in Jesus Christ. Our job is to do the same. Would to God that it could be said that everyone in the Temecula valley and beyond or Riverside County heard the Word of the Lord. Amen? And that from us reverberates out God’s Word, and that’s what we’re supposed to do is take God’s Word out.

I want you to note, beginning in verse 11 down to verse 20, the power of God’s Word in conviction—the power of God’s Word in correction, the power of God’s Word to bring conversion, and the power of God’s Word to bring conviction. It says, “And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul,” this is during his ministry there in Ephesus. “So that from his

body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons," this is actually what's referred to as "sweat bands." The laborers would wear a band around their heads to keep the sweat off. It was a sweat band. "...and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them." These weren't magic handkerchiefs, okay? You hear people on the radio or on television, you know, "If you send \$39.99, we'll send you this magic prayer cloth. If you touch it, you'll be healed," and all this kind of hocus pocus. That isn't what was happening, but it was just a point of contact that they were using at this time in Ephesus for God to bring healing, so through the preaching of the Word, the signs followed to confirm the gospel was preached and that Jesus Christ was alive and that He could save. It was the preaching that brought people to salvation not just these miracles; but there were also evil spirits, demonic possession, and people were being freed and released.

One thing about Ephesus we're going to see, it was a very demonic area. It was steeped in witchcraft, the occult, and what we would call today "New-Age thinking." Notice what it says in verse 13. "Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. 14 And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests which did so. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" At that time, I would say, "It doesn't matter who I am," and I would be gone! "Never mind. Have a good day, Mr. Demon," you know. Isn't it interesting, "I know Paul."

My question is, are you known in hell? Do the demons know who you are? Are you such an aggressive and radical, evangelizing Christian that demons have you marked? They have your number. "I know that man!" He was known in hell by the demons. They said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? 16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. 17 And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. 18 And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. 19 Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces silver."

Here is the conclusion (verse 20), "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." Amen? We see the Word is forefront in everything that Paul did in his ministry. Again, we don't need to spend time on this demon-possession episode. It's kind of a mystery as to who these sons of Sceva were. Evidently, the Jews had some kind of cantations that they did for exorcism, and they saw Paul and the other believers casting out demons just in the name of Jesus. They thought, Hey! That's pretty swift. That's pretty cool. That's pretty easy. We don't have to do all this stuff. They said, "Let's try that." So, they went out and said, "In the name of Jesus, come out." The demon actually spoke through this man. It also gives you an indication of the supernatural strength in someone who's demon possessed because there were seven of them. One demon-possessed man jumps on seven of them, beats them up, and they go fleeing for their lives. The lesson of the story: Don't mess with demons, right? I believe that a Christian has the power and the authority to exorcise a demon out of somebody that is possessed, but

you better be led of the Lord. You better be full of the Holy Spirit. You better be strong in the Word, if you're going to be doing stuff like that.

As a result of seeing this, it convicted these believers, and what happened, "And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds." Jesus was magnified. I want you to notice what happens (verse 17). It says, "...and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified," that's what we want, through the work of the preaching of the gospel, the deliverance of these individuals, these demons were cast out. People were healed. "...Jesus was magnified. 18 And many that believed came, and confessed...their deeds." There was repentance and confession. This isn't for salvation. These are Christians that still had hang-ups, problems, and issues they needed to renounce and turn from. It's possible to be a Christian but still have areas in your life that you're hanging onto the old life. You're still hanging onto your old ways—some of your old music, some of your old books, some of your old friends, some of your old lifestyle. Some of the things you used to do, you carried it over into your new life; and it needs to be confessed and repented of.

So, "...they confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men." This is an awesome, awesome thing! They had this huge bonfire. They all go bringing their books and throw them into the bonfire, destroying all the books of their past life and their wicked ways. These demonic, satanic books they throw into the fire and they're turning from their sinful ways. The Word of God brought about this revival even among the Christians, "...and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver." It's very difficult to transfer that over into today's funds—some say in the millions and some say about ten thousand dollars worth of books. Needless to say, it was a pricey amount of books.

The last point is in verse 20, "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." Jesus is magnified. Many that believed confessed their deeds, and those that were still dabbling in the magic art books turned from the occult and the demonic. They had a big bonfire and burned their books. Here's the result, the benefit, the byproduct, "...mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." That's awesome!

When does that happen? When does the Word of God mightily grow and prevail? When we confess our sins and we turn from our wicked ways. When God's Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin and we're willing to break with the old life—willing to break with the sinful past—we are able to break with the sinful patterns of the old life, and we go out with the Word of God, in the power of God, and in the Spirit of God, mightily grows the Word of God and prevails. It's all about God's Word and all about us being filled with the Holy Spirit and going out of here tonight on all the highways and the byways—your jobs, your neighborhoods, and your homes—walking in the Spirit, mighty in the Word of God, sharing the Word of God, preaching the Word of God, and glorifying Jesus. Amen?