

Commentary on Acts chapter 19 by Chuck Smith 5.21.23

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May memory verse Psalm 119:105 (KJV) Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

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And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth [watering what Paul had planted], Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus; and there he found certain disciples [that no doubt, had been planted by Apollos], he said unto them, Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed? ([Act 19:1-2](#)).

Now there are those who object strenuously to that translation, and the Revised Version of the Bible demonstrates their objection. For the Revised Version translates this, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit *when* you believed?" The question, "Have you received the Holy Spirit *since* you believed?" would indicate a separate subsequent work of grace beyond initial saving faith. And because Baptist's doctrine declares that you receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit upon conversion and deny any further work of grace subsequent to conversion, the question, "Have you received the Holy Spirit *since* you believed?" would totally dispute that Baptist position. And so they prefer the translation, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit *when* you believed?" However, even that presents difficulty to their position, because it would seem to indicate that a person could believe without receiving. Otherwise, why would Paul ask it? The very question itself would indicate that it was possible to be a believer and not have received that fullness of the Spirit.

Now it was a very common thing to receive the fullness of the Spirit when they believed. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, when he was asked by the people, "What shall we do, seeing we have crucified the Lord of glory?" He said, "Repent. And be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For this promise is unto you and to your children and to those that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" ([Acts 2:37-39](#)).

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So he gave to them the promise of the Spirit as a experience coincident with but subsequent to their repenting and being baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins. "And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." And it generally followed, in the book of Acts, that when they believed and were baptized, that they were oftentimes immediately filled with the Spirit, as was the case in the house of Cornelius. When Peter went there, and as he was preaching unto them... actually, well, no that wasn't the pattern, was it... as he was preaching, the Holy Spirit fell upon them and then they said, "Well, who can hinder now water to baptize these people, seeing they have received the Holy Spirit? So they received the Holy Spirit and were baptized." But the general pattern was baptized and then received the Spirit.

There was a time gap in Samaria. Philip went to Samaria and preached Christ unto them, and many believed and were baptized when they saw the miracles that were done. And among the believers was a man whose name was Simon, who beforehand was a sorcerer, and had really hoodwinked the people by his sorcery, but he also believed and was baptized. Now, when the church in Jerusalem heard that the Samaritans had received the Gospel, they sent unto them Peter and John, for as yet the Holy Spirit had not come upon them, this endowment of power when the Holy Spirit came upon their lives.

And here again points out this little Greek preposition, *epi*, which signifies that empowering of the Spirit in the life of the believer to be a witness.

Jesus had said to His disciples in the fourteenth chapter of John that He would pray the Father to give to them another comforter, even the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it sees Him not, neither knoweth Him. But you know Him, for he dwells with you and shall be in you.

Here there are two Greek prepositions used to describe the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the believer. First of all, He is *with* you. Secondly, He shall be *in* you. Prior to your receiving Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit was with you. He was the One that convicted you of your sinful state. He was the One who was pointing to Jesus Christ as the answer for your sins. He was the One that was drawing you to the Lord. "For no man can come except the Father draw him." And the Spirit is the agent that the Father uses to draw men to Jesus Christ. But, when you receive Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit began to dwell *in* you. And every believer has the Holy Spirit dwelling within

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him. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, said, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you? You are not your own. You have been bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body and your spirit which are His" ([1 Corinthians 6:19-20](#)). Your body, the temple of the Holy Spirit. That is true of every believer.

But Jesus declared a time would come when those that believed on Him would experience a glorious work of God, for out of their inmost being there will begin to flow or gush torrents, rivers of living water as He spoke of that ultimate relationship of the Spirit. You see, God always looks at you, first of all, subjectively, because God wants to work in your life His work of the Spirit. But God's work in your life is never finished when it is just a subjective work. God always looks at you objectively for what He can do through your life.

Norman Grub, in his book, *The Deep Things of God*, declares that man's greatest capacity is that of a vessel. For God has created man with the capacity to contain God. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." And so he declares that the greatest capacity of man is that of a vessel that can contain God. And he goes on and got me quite excited one day when I was listening to him at Forest Home about being a vessel containing the eternal God, the Creator of the universe. Oh, how glorious. But as I began to study it, I realized that Norman Grub came short. And as I was reading the book, having listened to him, and I came again to this concept, I said, "Norman, you're wrong." The greatest capacity of man is not that of being a vessel to contain God, but it is being a channel through which God can flow to a needy world, the instrument that God can use. Unfortunately, too many of us are vessels to contain, but we've bottled it up and there is no flow going forth from our lives, and the work of the Spirit is only subjective; he's working in me, conforming me into the image of Christ. Glory, that's beautiful. I need it. I want it. But I should not be satisfied with it. I should not be satisfied until my life has become a channel from which God's Spirit is just flowing out and touching the needy world around me.

This is the *epi*. "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon (*epi*) you." The Greek preposition means "upon or over," and as I said, I have translated it, "overflows you." When you're so full you cannot contain it anymore, and it just starts to flow out from your life and continues to flow out until it becomes like a river of living water. And if you cannot look at your life and say that, "In my life there is a flowing forth from my life of the

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Spirit of God, like a river of living water." If you cannot say that of your life, then God has a deeper relationship for you to experience in the power and anointing of His Spirit upon your life. There is something more for you. That gift of the Holy Spirit, where He becomes that empowering force as a river of living water now gushing forth out of your life, and the thirsty world around you being touched and ministered to from that overflow of God's love in your own heart.

So, this is the *epi* experience. And so, get out your concordances, I'm not going to do it for you; you're getting lazy. Get out your concordances and go back through the book of Acts, and notice the *epi* preposition in relationship to the Holy Spirit upon the believers. And you will see that in each case it was an empowering and the results were that of overflow witness for Jesus Christ.

As Jesus said, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes (*epi*) upon you (over you) and you shall be witnesses unto me." There are those who like the term baptized. There are those that object to the term "baptism of the Holy Spirit." But if it means to be submersed, surrounded, overflowed with, running off from; hey I'm for it. That's what I want; that overflowing experience of God, where I am just submerged, submersed, or whatever, in the Spirit of God, and I am just totally overflowing with that power, with that dynamic, with that love.

And so, Paul questions, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They said unto him, "We haven't even heard that there was a Holy Spirit." That is, that the Holy Spirit was given. They had heard that there was Holy Spirit if they had listened to Apollos, because he preached John's message that the One who was coming was going to baptize them with the Holy Spirit and with fire. But they hadn't heard that it had yet happened. "We haven't even heard that that has happened yet."

And so he said unto them, Then how were you baptized? ([Act 19:3](#)).

Now Jesus said, "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." So Paul said, "You haven't heard of the Holy Spirit? How were you baptized?" If it was the apostle's formula in Matthew, they at least would have heard of it.

They said, We were baptized unto John's baptism [which was a baptism of repentance]. Then Paul said, John verily baptized with the baptism of

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repentance, but he said to the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus ([Act 19:3-4](#)).

So John, yes, did baptize, but he was telling you to believe on the One that was coming. And the One that was coming was Christ Jesus.

When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul [now they were baptized, Paul] had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came [epi] [He came] upon them; and they spoke with tongues, and prophesied ([Act 19:5-6](#)).

Paul tells us that there are many manifestations of the Spirit in the Corinthian epistle, chapter twelve. And among those manifestations of the Spirit are the capacity to speak with other tongues and also the capacity to prophesy. And so these two manifestations of the Spirit were taking place as Paul laid his hands upon them as a witness and as an evidence of the work of the Spirit in their midst. However, I feel that the most valid evidence of the working of God's Spirit in a person's life is not tongues, is not prophesy, nor the word of wisdom or knowledge, or miracles even, but is love. "For the fruit of the Spirit is love" ([Galatians 5:22](#)). And if I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, they are meaningless sounds. I might as well be taking and ringing a bell. The tongues are invalidated by the lack of love. "Though I have all knowledge, understand all mysteries."

Someone was asking me even this morning, and I have been asked several times, about a certain gray-haired TV evangelist, who recently has been taken off of his station but bought time on many others, what I thought about him. And I said, "I have watched him on many occasions and I have not yet seen one real evidence of Christian love in that man's life. I hear a lot of filthy communication, a lot of potty-talk. I hear a lot of vindictiveness, a lot of vengeance and anger." They said, "Oh, but he's such a brilliant man." "Though I have all knowledge and understand all mysteries, if I have not love, it profits me nothing" ([I Corinthians 13:2-3](#)).

Love is what God is looking for. That's the fruit. God is coming into His garden. He wants fruit. Now what kind of fruit is my life bringing forth? Vile, mean, rancor? Or is there that love that God is desiring? Many people bringing forth bitterness; the fruit of their life is bitter. There comes forth out of their mouth bitterness, cursings, revilings, threats, evil communications.

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Jesus is looking for love. And if I have all of these other manifestations, and if I have not love, they are none of them valid or profitable.

So Paul laid his hands on them. They received the Holy Spirit. He came epi (upon) them, and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

And there were about twelve men. And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were hardened [many of them], and believed not, but spake evil of that way ([Act 19:7-9](#)).

It's interesting that again here is the reference to the Christians as "that way." It shows that it was more than just a philosophy. It was their life. It manifested itself in their entire lifestyle, as Christianity should; it should affect your entire lifestyle.

he departed from them, and separated the disciples, and he began to dispute daily in the school of one Tyrannus ([Act 19:9](#)).

Now Tyrannus was a philosopher. He had a school of philosophy there. And Paul went daily and taught there in the school of Tyrannus. In Ephesus, as was the custom in those parts of the world, your business was on a split shift. You would work until eleven o'clock in the morning, and then you would close shop until five in the afternoon, at which time you would open up again. And during the part of the afternoon where it was so hot, people usually slept. They used to say that there were more people asleep at one o'clock in the afternoon than there was at one o'clock in the morning. It being so hot during the day, you just would find some shady place and try to sleep during the hot hours instead of working. And so you would work up until eleven o'clock and then you wouldn't work again until five o'clock, and there was quite a nightlife among these people.

Now Tyrannus would then probably be teaching the school until eleven o'clock and then after five. So Paul took the hours in between, when it was too hot for people to be working. And he would work making tents until eleven o'clock in the morning, and then take off his sweat band, and someone would grab it and take it and put it on a sick person, and then he would go to the school of Tyrannus and teach, and then at five o'clock go back and work again as a tentmaker. Paul did work there in Ephesus as a tentmaker to provide his own needs and those that were with him as that

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will be demonstrated next week in our study as you continue into the twentieth chapter of Acts.

And this continued by the period of two years; so that they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks ([Act 19:10](#)).

So as he was there in Ephesus for two years, the effect of it was that the Gospel began to spread throughout this whole area. So when Jesus addressed himself to the seven churches, these seven churches were churches that are surrounding the church of Ephesus, no doubt, that were established as satellites as the result of Paul's ministry there in Ephesus; as any true work of God seems to have as its natural product, that offspring, and the springing up of other churches. That just seems to be the natural progression in the work of the Spirit.

And it is glorious to see how that God has worked here in a very fabulous way. Through the teaching of the Word and all, God has blessed us abundantly. But the byproduct is that over two hundred churches across the United States have sprung out of this church. And now many of the churches that have sprung out of this church have become strong and churches are springing out of them. So, we not only have son and daughter type of churches, but we have grandson/granddaughter type of churches; churches that have spun off from churches that have spun off. And as time goes on and the Lord continues to work, we will probably even go into the next generation of spin-offs as the Word of God works mightily in the hearts of the people around the country.

So, here the whole area of Asia began to be evangelized as the result of the ministry of Paul there in Ephesus.

And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: so that from his body were brought to the sick handkerchiefs [or literally, the sweatbands] and the aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them ([Act 19:11-12](#)).

Now, I believe that the value of these handkerchiefs was that it gave a point of contact to release faith. I think that it is important that faith be activated. Too many times we have what is classified as passive faith, but I think that is a misnomer. I don't think you can have passive faith. I think that faith is active, or else it is not faith. But, we don't always act upon our faith. And I think that it is valuable to have a point of contact where I release faith, and I

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think that the bringing of a handkerchief from Paul or the sweatband, as the case may be, and laying upon the sick person was a place of releasing faith. "I know that as this handkerchief is laid on me, I am going to be healed. God's going to touch me." And it gives us just a point of contact to release faith.

Now I am certain that there are many things about the power of God that we have so little understanding. God help us that we would not limit Him more by our unbelief, but we would just say, "Well listen, God can do anything." And just begin to expect God to do anything. And you know, if you'll just start expecting God to do anything, you will find He will begin to do something. He will begin to do an awful lot in your life if you just begin to expect Him. Release your faith; turn it loose. Take the bridle off from God and let Him begin to work freely. Don't be afraid of what God might desire to do in your life. Give Him that freedom.

So, from Paul's body, they brought the handkerchiefs and aprons to the sick; diseases departed, evil spirits went out.

Then there were certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists ([Act 19:13](#)),

Now, Ephesus was a place of great superstition. There were all kinds of magical little emulates that you could purchase there in Ephesus; good luck charms. And the people believed a lot in these things. And there were certain Jews who said that certain writings of the scripture had magical value to help you or to protect you in certain things. So they were wrapping up these little portions of the scriptures and selling them to people. If you wanted to be wealthy then you could buy this little magical portion of scripture, and carry it on you, and wealth would start to come to you. Or if you wanted, you know, different things, they had little scriptures for all kinds of things. They had their little shops and you could buy these little magical charms, which in that case, with these exorcists Jews, were portions of scripture that were supposed to do all kinds of magical things.

and some of them took upon themselves to call upon the evil spirits in the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth ([Act 19:13](#)).

Because they had heard, no doubt, Paul in the name of Jesus commanding evil spirits to leave.

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And there were seven sons of one man whose name was Sceva, he was a Jew, and he was a chief of these priests, which did these things. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you? And the man in who 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 ([Act 19:14-16](#)).

Quite often persons who are possessed by demonic forces have supernatural strength and power. In this one case, this man possessed by the evil spirit, possessing that supernatural power, was able to overcome these seven brothers, and give them a pretty bad time; ripping off their clothes, beating them up, and sending them fleeing.

And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks who dwelt in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified ([Act 19:17](#)).

And so, God used even this experience of these fellows who were rather fraudulent. But God even used that to spread the Word.

And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them also which used [magical books,] books of the curious arts, [their books of magic] they brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed ([Act 19:18-20](#)).

So Paul had a very effective and powerful ministry there in Ephesus.

After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome ([Act 19:21](#)).

Paul had itchy feet. He couldn't stay too long in one place when the whole world was needing the Gospel. Now his purpose of leaving Ephesus to go over to Macedonia, or back to Greece, to the churches, was to collect an offering because the church in Jerusalem was going through some real financial problems. The early attempt at communal living was a total failure, and it left the church in a bankrupt state.

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Now though the church in Jerusalem, it would seem, treated Paul in a very shabby way, it was his desire to take to them financial help. And so he called upon the churches to help those in Jerusalem. It is interesting Paul never asked for an offering for himself. Nor did he ever ask for an offering to support his ministry. But he did ask them for an offering to support the poor Jews in Jerusalem. But he didn't ever ask for himself. So his desire was to go to those churches to collect from them an offering to take to the brethren in Jerusalem. And after he had taken it to Jerusalem, then his intention, "I've got to see Rome, too. That's where it's at, you know."

So he sent to Macedonia two of those that had been ministering to him, Timothy and Erastus; but he stayed in Asia for a season ([Act 19:22](#)).

So he sent messages to the churches and in the Corinthian letter he said, "Now when you gather together each one bring an offering. As God has laid upon your heart, so give, and God loves the hilarious giver" ([II Corinthians 9:7](#)). He was talking to them about giving this offering that he would collect when he would go on back to Jerusalem.

And the same time there arose no small stir about that way ([Act 19:23](#)).

Again, a reference to the way. There was no small stir. People began to get stirred up.

For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana ([Act 19:24](#)),

And this fellow Demetrius was a silversmith, and he had been making all of these little images of Diana.

And so he gathered together those men who were of the same craft and occupation and he said, Sirs, you know that we have been made wealthy by this craft. Moreover, you see and hear, that not here in Ephesus alone, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away much people, saying that there are no gods, which are made with hands ([Act 19:25-26](#)):

Now what a testimony of the effectiveness of Paul's ministry. "Not only here, but in all of Asia, this fellow has turned away many people saying that you can't make a god with your hands. And hey, this is the way we make

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our living. And we've been wealthy by this, but we're about to go broke if this guy prevails."

And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians. And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia ([Act 19:28-29](#)),

So this, no doubt, is the Gaius that had been Paul's host in Corinth when Paul wrote his letter to the Romans.

They caught this fellow Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, who were Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre. And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not ([Act 19:29-30](#)).

That Paul, he had guts. I mean, here's a big crowd of people in a riotous state and all upset over Paul, and he is ready to go in and talk to them. Oh, they would have ripped him to shreds. And so, the disciples would not allow him.

And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theatre. Now inside some were crying one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the most part the people did not know why they had come together ([Act 19:31-32](#)).

And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defense to the people. But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians ([Act 19:33-34](#)).

And when the town clerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana [hey, he doesn't know, but we are all worshippers], and of the image which fell down from Jupiter. Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly. For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess. Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him,

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have a matter against any man, the law [court] is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another. But if ye inquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly. For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse [gathering together]. And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly ([Act 19:35-41](#)).

Now may the Word of God dwell richly in your hearts through faith. That you may be able to comprehend with all of the saints what is the length, the breadth, the depth, the height of God's love for you. That you might continue in the love of God abounding in every good work, filled with the Spirit, growing into full maturity in Jesus Christ. May the Lord bless you. May the hand of the Lord be upon your life mightily this week, and may you be filled with the Holy Spirit and with power as you go forth to bear witness of Jesus our Lord to a dying world. God be with you and God bless and keep you in the love of Jesus our Savior.