

Let's open our Bibles tonight to Acts 19. We continue our verse by verse and chapter by chapter journey through the book of Acts.

It is a narrative written by Luke, the doctor. It is a document that just documents for us the growth of the early church through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon new believers who then, filled with God's Spirit from Pentecost forward, take us for the first, almost, generation - thirty years of the history of the early church. The primary focus of the book is the preaching of the good news of Jesus - first to the Jews, then to the rest of the world. I think if you just sit down and read the book, and you realize it's thirty years of history, you'll stand in awe of what God did through the lives of the early saints: great passion, great sacrifice, unbelievable conversions and miracles, God's love set into the hearts of the people where they loved their enemies and risked their necks to get the Word out. And, in it all, we get to see the kind of church that God would like to establish - because we see it here - and also the kinds of people God will want to use.

The book itself is broken up basically into two sides. The first fifteen years or so are the establishment of the gospel amongst the Jews, first at Jerusalem and then going out from there. When Saul of Tarsus gets saved and then kind of disappears from the scene, the narrative turns pretty much to the salvation of the whole world - God's intention from the beginning. So Peter is sent, miraculously, to the house of a Gentile - Cornelius. Men of Cyrene and Cyprus take the gospel 300 miles north to Antioch in Syria, and people just begin to get saved. The big conference in Acts 15 is about, "How do Gentiles get saved? We thought God had chosen the Jews. Shouldn't everyone be a Jew first?" And it came to the right conclusion. No. God saves by grace. All of us, whether we're religious or not, need a Savior. And so that became the turning point. And from that time, Antioch in Syria, 300 miles to the north, became the center of church life, really in the world. Jerusalem was there, but all of the church efforts to bring the gospel out came out of Antioch. Paul took three extended, long missionary journeys that you can begin to read about in verse 4 of chapter 13; it ends in chapter 21:15. That whole thing is just the coverage of three trips out. And a couple years with Barnabas, mostly in Galatia (today Turkey), six years out with Silas and Timothy and others - Luke, where Paul spent a long time in Europe for the first time; traveled 2700

miles or so. Every time, he went back to Antioch to give a report. He really, as a missionary, stayed tied to his local church. I think it's very important to know. And then the third and final journey took place almost within months of his return after a six year out on the second journey. And from 55 through about 57 A.D., Paul spends much of his time going over where he's been, and he spends an inordinate amount of time in Ephesus, which is the subject of this chapter. The whole chapter, here, covers nearly three years of ministry - give or take a couple of months depending on where you add them up. Paul was able to say later on, "I was with you for three years" (Acts 20:31). So most of them are recorded here. And so that'll be the bulk of what we're looking at. In fact, this whole chapter - for the next, at least, two or three weeks - is going to be Paul in Ephesus. And I think anybody that took the trip with us to the "Footsteps of Paul" last year (from the church) would tell you it had to be the highlight stop of the tour - to see the ruins in Ephesus; they're phenomenal. They are like just peeling back history. It's the most amazing thing that we ever did. We sailed out of Greece and went across the Aegean, and we went to Ephesus; it's an amazing place. If you ever get a chance to go, I would highly suggest it.

Well, last week we finished Paul's second missionary journey. We have maps. Those of you who have been here with us, I'm sure, have them. If you don't, check with an usher or at the back counter afterwards, and we'll make sure that you get them. The second missionary journey of Paul was highlighted by a couple of things. Number one - they ran into young Timothy, which you should get to know him from the books that Paul will write to him. And, by the way, Timothy, when Paul is arrested, will go to this church - Ephesus - and become their pastor. So the history, I know I'm giving myself seven or eight minutes to tell you history every week just to keep you informed, but these are things that will come back, I think, with you to get a better picture of the New Testament as a whole. Luke joined Paul in Troas, which happened to be on the coast. Paul was called to Europe. They went to Philippi first. There were three very notable conversions there. And the ministry took a while to develop, but after some time, Paul was arrested, and so was Silas with him. And they eventually moved down the road; they left Dr. Luke there, if you will; asked him to just stay and oversee the work. They went 100 miles down the road to Thessalonica, where Paul could only spend three weeks before he was run out of town. You'd think in three weeks a church would just die. I mean, what effort can you put in for three weeks and make it work? But the church thrived. Not only did they thrive, but for the next many years, many decades, they were at the forefront of carrying the gospel out into the areas in

which they found themselves. So the ministry in Thessalonica was amazing. After three weeks, they went to Berea where they found a bunch of hungry folks who had Bibles and wanted to study them. Great fruit. And God again blessed. People got saved, and it went well for a time. I'm sure that after all that Paul had faced, this was a great place to hang out. But eventually folks that were 50 miles away heard Paul was there and came to cause trouble because that's what the devil does; he causes trouble and wants to oppose. And so Paul was taken by the believers in that city, taken down to the coast; put on a ship to go to Athens, which was about 250 miles away. They left Silas and Timothy there in the town, told them to come as quickly as they could, and Paul ended up in Athens by himself. And we went over how hard that ministry time was for Paul; he was discouraged, been beat up in just about every place he called home for a while. The fruit sometimes didn't come so quickly. And so Paul was alone, and alone is hard anyway, when you're down. So, Paul tried to go up to Mars Hill and speak to the philosophers there. He had very little fruitfulness. There was some, but it wasn't what Paul was used to, certainly. And Paul just figured, "This isn't workin'. I'm outta here, too." And he packed up, and he traveled 50 more miles to Corinth, which had to be the hellhole in that time of the 1<sup>st</sup> century; they were as dirty and as debauched as a place could be. And so Paul was there for quite a while by himself. He didn't preach like he normally preached; he was very careful. He kind of beat around the edges; he didn't want to be persecuted. Finally, when Silas and Timothy came and arrived (chapter 18:5), it perked him up; he got an extra kind of excitement. It always happens when you minister with people. That's why the Lord sent them out two by two. If you're ever worried about doing a ministry, just get a friend and go with them. It'll encourage you a lot. But anyway, he went back to his old self. He began to preach, and it wasn't long before the Jews at the synagogue told him to get out. And so he did. He moved next door, to a house that was owned by a guy named Justus. Over time, as he was having services there, the head of the synagogue - a guy whose name was Crispus - came and got saved. Paul, still tentative about all the suffering that he had faced, had a visit from the Lord there in Corinth. The Lord said to Paul, "I've got a lot of people in this city. Don't be afraid. No one's going to hurt you. I've got your back." And, for the next eighteen months, Paul spent time in Corinth - teaching, ministering. It was a church that would, over the years, have lots of trouble; they never were very mature. But look where they were growing up, you know? Compared to what they came out of, they'd made a lot of progress. So, despite the opposition - some of it planned - Paul thrived there. He then left Corinth with a couple named Aquila and Priscilla. He got on a boat to sail to Ephesus; it's about 250 miles away. He got there. He began to share. People

wanted him to stay. He said, "I can't. I've got to make the feast day." He felt driven to go to Jerusalem. And so he leaves Aquila and Priscilla there in Ephesus (which is where we're going tonight), and he said, "I'll be back as soon as I can, Lord be willing." He would get back there probably in under seven or eight months; no longer than a year but probably much less than that from what we can gather from what the Scriptures tell us. So he gets on a boat, he sails 650 miles to Caesarea. He travels about 50 miles or so inland to Jerusalem (65 miles, I think, the way the Roman Road was), and then he traveled 300 more miles home back to Antioch; hung around for a couple of months before he said, "I gotta go back out."

And so we finished last week in chapter 18 (beginning in verse 23 towards the end of the chapter) looking at what was happening in Ephesus while Paul was gone. This couple, Aquila and Priscilla, had taken a fellow in named Apollos. He was an Egyptian fellow. He had met the Lord. He was at the synagogues, preaching. The thing is he had not really known anything except John the Baptist's baptism; didn't know the gospel, didn't know Jesus had come, probably didn't know His name. But he was sincere with what he knew. They took him under their wings. They trained him for a while. He got excited about what he had learned - the Lord lit a fire under him - and he left from Ephesus, and he went back to Corinth, where you will find him mentioned in those letters, there ministering for quite some time, watering what Paul had planted there for a year and a half. Meanwhile, Paul is back at his old travels. He goes to Tarsus and Iconium and Galatia and Phrygia, and then he comes back to Ephesus, maybe a year later, certainly not longer than that.

But tonight, we catch up with him in verse 1 of chapter 19. You see how quickly we're doin' this now? It's gonna run out pretty soon. And he's going to begin to minister there, and we just want to take a look at the first seven verses tonight because I think there's a principle. Because Acts is a narrative, and I've mentioned to you before, the lesson is in the report of what happens. Unlike the book of Ephesians, which is filled with doctrine that you have to kind of repeat to yourself and see how it fits together and absolutes that have to be discussed and understood (like all doctrine is, it's work), narrative tends to be a guy paintin' a picture. And you just kind of listen and watch, and, as you watch, you make your determinations of how God worked and what He wanted and what He honored and what He didn't and who He is and who He wouldn't. And then you can walk away knowing these things are important. So, we want to look at the setting and the action that is not only found here but it is repeated throughout the chronicles of the book of Acts.

So, verse 1 says this, "And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' So they said to him, 'We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.' And he said to them," (twelve of them) " 'Into what then were you baptized?' So they said, 'Into John's baptism.' " (John the Baptist) "Then Paul said, 'John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.' When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." Paul, like I said, came here on his way home the last time; felt like there was a ministry here, left a couple of disciples there, and as he comes into town, he meets what really is a fruit of Apollos' ministry. You remember, we were told in the last chapter that Apollos didn't know that either; until they got a hold of him (Aquila and Priscilla), he ministered what he knew, and this was all that he knew. So I suspect that Paul comes into town, he inherits some of Apollos' disciples. That's all they know. Whereas Apollos goes to Corinth, and he inherits a whole lot of disciples Paul had left behind after being there a year and a half on his second journey. So there was a lot of interaction between the churches and the ministries and all. But what we read, notice verse 25 of the last chapter, it says, "This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John." That was Apollos. That's exactly what these twelve fellows here (verse 7 tells us there were twelve) now find themselves. So, they had been told that they needed to repent of their sins, though they may very well have been Jews. They were told that they had to acknowledge their sin. They were told that they had to confess their failures and that they should be ready for a Messiah that was coming. But it had been so little time, really, between the beginning of this book to the end of the book - less than thirty years - that there was still a lot of misunderstanding, certainly, and part of that misunderstanding was in the fullness of the gospel. And so Paul shows up, finds some pretty devout guys, and he, talking to them, realizes they're not saved. They are ready to be saved, they have admitted their sinfulness, they are willing to go that next step, but they were missing some vital information. So Paul starts with the baptism of John, which is always part of the gospel anyway - that you repent of your sins and see yourself in need of a Savior - and then he quickly turns them to Jesus as the Savior and the Lord. These twelve men listened. They were believing. They were responsive to what Paul had to say. And before the day was out, it seems, they were identifying with Jesus and receiving the Lord and being saved. Now, for most of us, that would be a pretty

good day, don't you think? I mean, you've led twelve people to the Lord today. "Thank you very much. I think I'll take a break, have some lunch and go to a movie. It's been a busy day." But for Paul, that was not the end of things; it was, in many ways, simply the beginning. Because, as you will read in the book of Acts as we continue, there was always this extremely important issue of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. And wherever you find the church at work, you find the baptism of the Holy Spirit spoken about, ministered to, people invited to call upon God's Spirit.

In fact, we read in verse 6 here, "And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Now the men were about twelve in all." If you stop at verse 5, it's a pretty good day. But Paul went beyond their salvation, beyond their water baptism, beyond their correction of their information, beyond everything that we would long to have our friends and family know - that Jesus is Lord, He'll save you. And Paul, bringing them to that point, began to pray for them, lay his hands upon them, that the Holy Spirit would fall upon their lives. For the sixth time in this - what isn't that big of a book when you start to divide it up - the early church is seen as the disciples pray for, reach out towards, and give to someone else this outpouring of the Holy Spirit so that they can better minister to others. There has been to this day, and there continues to be, great controversy in the church about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes it is words defined and definitions that we can work ourselves through. A lot of times, it seems to me when I talk to people about this wonderful work of God, there are these preconceived notions that prohibit people letting the Lord's Word be the final word about faith and practice, which it should always be. The book of Acts is God's guide, it is the blueprint for the church and for outreach, and you will find that this event - this baptism of the Holy Spirit upon the life of a believer, like these twelve believers that were baptized in water here - becomes, really, the pivotal and vital role of God's Spirit in the life of the church. In fact, the success that you find here, the fruit that you find, the establishment of the church, were all directly connected to the work of God's Spirit. I am sure that those brothers and sisters who, today, when I talk to them say, "There is no baptism of the Holy Spirit for today; it stopped with the apostles," or, "It stopped when the Bible was fully written," or, "It stopped when ....." those who don't allow and won't allow the Bible to be as current today as every other book, I'm sure that I'll find them in heaven one day because of the blood of Jesus which saves us. It's not an argument I necessarily want to push along. But I also believe that if God has for me His power to serve, I don't want to live a powerless life - to be saved but never have much influence. And because of the frequency with which

the baptism of the Holy Spirit is presented in the chronicles of the book of Acts, in the history of the early church, I think we have to take it seriously. I believe, and I'll try to show you biblically in the next few minutes, that every Christian should be baptized in the Holy Spirit. I think He is essential for your life, for your ministry, for the gifts that you need. I think if you have an overview of the book of Acts, in terms of this gift from God, that you should allow the Bible to convince you that that would be so. If you have not been baptized in the Holy Spirit, tonight, before we dismiss, I'd love to pray for you for God to fill you.

There are three relationships that you have with the Holy Spirit of God. They are expressed in the Bible by three prepositions: the word with, "*para*," the word in, which is kind of pronounced, even in Greek, "*en*" (just change the 'i' to an 'e'); and then the third one upon, "*epi*." Those three. The Holy Spirit is with us, He is in us (or at least if we believe He is with us, and we receive Christ), and He will come upon us. They are uniquely different in experience. They are all set before us very clearly, and the guidance comes from the Scriptures.

The fact that the Holy Spirit is with all men is pretty, I think, clear to see or easy to see, I guess. Jesus said (John 16:8-11), "When the Holy Spirit comes, He will convict the world" (not the church, the world) "of their sin, of righteousness and of judgment." And then He says, "Of their sin because they won't believe in Me." The work of the Holy Spirit in the world - convince them they have to turn to Christ. "Of righteousness because I go to the Father." If you want to know what the standard is for getting into heaven and going to the Father, look at Jesus. He's the standard of righteousness. If you don't measure up to Him, good luck standing before the Father in heaven one day. "I go to the Father." By implication, "I'm received there because I've lived a sinless life." And thirdly, He says that He will come to convict the world "of judgment because the prince of this world is judged," or, if you will, with Jesus' death and the salvation that He offers, we can have victory over the devil. We, in God's power, can beat out a guy that can beat us up without God's help. So that's the work of the Holy Spirit in the world. He is with the world. In John 14:16-17, Jesus said, "I'm going to pray to the Father. He's going to send you another Helper, that He might abide with you forever. He is the Spirit of truth. The world can't receive Him, the world doesn't see Him, the world doesn't know Him."

And then He said this, "You know Him. He has been with you," ('*para*') "He shall be in you." And Jesus makes this promise of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The

Holy Spirit who convicts you in the world (when you are saved) fills you, comes to dwell within you, gives you a new heart, teaches you from the inside out the Scriptures, so that you don't need that a man teach you. That's what the Bible says (1 John 2:27). Well, then, why do we have pastors and teachers? Well, not that we shouldn't be taught, but He's the One who teaches, He's the One who drives it home. So the relationship of the Holy Spirit being with you lasts until you're born again. Then He moves in you. He's still with you, but now He's also dwelling in you. Or until you physically die. And if you haven't been saved, that'll be a horrible day. Or, if you become a reprobate; the Bible says that the Lord's Spirit will not always strive with man (Genesis 6:3). And there're certainly several indications in the Bible, examples, of people who lived vile lives; said "no" to God enough where the Lord finally just goes, "All right. Have it your way." And He removes His Spirit from them. In fact, Saul's a pretty good example of that in the Old Testament sense. So the Holy Spirit is with all of us. Right? When you go to witness to people, your confidence is the Lord is going to go before you; He's going to speak to the hearts of the people because He's with them. He's also with you, but He's with them. When you come to the Lord and you are born again, there is a change that takes place. God moves in. You become a house for God; you become a vessel for the Lord. He moves in. Great is the mystery of godliness; Christ in you is the hope of your glory (Colossians 1:27). God moves into your life. You become a bearer of God's Spirit. I mean, it's an amazing thought. Now, that was promised way back in the book of Ezekiel 36:26-27, where the LORD said (through Ezekiel, prophetically), "I'm going to give you a new heart. I'm going to put a new spirit within you. I'm going to take out of your life this heart of stone and this heart of flesh, and instead I'm going to put My Spirit within you. You're going to walk in My statutes, you're going to know My judgments, and you're going to be able to do them." Now that's pretty prophetic. That's a promise from God through the life of Ezekiel. "He shall come to dwell in you." Paul will write to the Romans (8:9), "You are not in the flesh, but you are in the Spirit if the Spirit of God dwells in you." Right? That preposition. "And if anyone has not the Spirit of Christ, he doesn't belong to Him at all." So that's the distinctive mark, right? The Holy Spirit is with everyone, but to the children of God, He has come to dwell within us. Paul would say to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 3:16), this church that he will write to often - spend a lot of time with, "Don't you know that you're the temple of the Holy Spirit and that the Holy Spirit dwells in you?" That's the difference. With us. But when we get saved, in us. Now, for the disciples with Jesus, the Holy Spirit was with them three and a half years. The account of the resurrection of Jesus - that Easter evening meeting - is found in both John 20 and Luke 24. And I



bring that up to you because there you will find the report of the Holy Spirit now entering into the lives of the people. And though the church hasn't necessarily been born yet - officially as it will be on Pentecost - these men and women, 120 or so, would be born again on Easter evening. So, in John 20 you will find the disciples hiding out for fear of the Jews after Jesus' crucifixion. He pops into the room. He commissions them, and He says, "I want you to go forth and tell the world this gospel." He then breathes on them, and He says, "Receive you the Holy Spirit," and they are born again. The Holy Spirit moves into their lives. Jesus gives them the authority to tell others how to get saved. "Whoever's sins you forgive, they're forgiven; whoever's sins you remit" (or hold on to), "they're remitted" (John 20:23). It doesn't mean you have the authority to say, "I forgive you, and I don't forgive you." But what it does give you the power to do is say to the world, as the Holy Spirit would, "You want forgiveness? You gotta find it in Christ. If you call on Jesus' name, your sins will be forgiven." You have a message to preach based upon the work of Jesus. In Luke 24, which is the other one, you find that the effects of the new birth - the Holy Spirit moving into them - is documented. For example, it says in Luke 24:45, "He opened up their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures." And so they are saved - the Holy Spirit's moved within them.

And you might suspect the very next thing Jesus would say was, "Now get out there and tell someone!" But He doesn't. He says this, "I want you to wait here in Jerusalem until you be endued with power from on high when the Holy Spirit comes '*epi*' upon you" (Luke 24:49). The Holy Spirit was already with them. On Easter evening, He breathed the Holy Spirit within them. Their understanding was... ..when you understand the Scriptures, you know the Lord is with you because those things are not discerned by your flesh. But then the Lord says to these men and women, "Wait here until you get power." And for the next fifty days, they had to wait. They waited, they prayed. You can read of some of their activities. You will find Peter reading the Bible and them understanding it very well. But the Lord said to them, "I want to send you out from Jerusalem. You're going to be witness to the whole world. But wait. You need this power from on high."

Which brings us to this power from on high - the Holy Spirit upon our lives. In the Old Testament, you will find several shadows or examples or experiences of those who loved the LORD and found themselves interacting with the power of the Holy Spirit. When Moses was overwhelmed with the work, and the LORD gave him seventy helpers, he said to the LORD, "I can't bear the burdens myself." And you'll

read, there in Numbers 11:17, that the LORD said, "Well, I'm going to come down. You gather them together, and I'm going to take of the Spirit that is upon you, and I'm going to place it upon them." Same word. Right? Now this was the time before the Holy Spirit ever lived within anyone because the new birth is definitely New Testament-ish, if you will. "So they're going to help you bear the burden." And "the LORD came down" (it says in Numbers 11:25) "in the cloud. The Spirit that was upon Moses, He put upon them. And they began to speak and to prophesy, and the LORD was with them." Now, that experience of the Holy Spirit upon their lives, in the Old Testament, was not necessarily permanent. It can be with you; and God's promise is to you and me - is it permanent? Yes. But to the Old Testament saint, or non-saint even, there was no assurance that that anointing to serve the LORD would stay constant. If you read of the calling of Saul to be king, you will read that the Holy Spirit came upon Saul and that He rested upon him; and that he was not the man that he used to be, and yet he never again prophesied. The LORD came. He wanted to use Saul, but Saul was a refusing kind of flesh, so he wouldn't be used. He wouldn't obey. But for that time when the LORD said, "Here, I'll use you," His Spirit fell upon Saul to enable him to do what we need - to be a good witness, to speak for the Lord, to hear His voice. He did the same thing in 1 Samuel 16 to David. And Samuel brought this horn of oil, and he anointed David. And it says, 1 Samuel 16:13, "The Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward." Now, if you remember the story, when David (years later) got in trouble with Bathsheba and tried to hide his sin, when David was confronted and eventually had to confess to the LORD his failure (there in Psalm 51), one of the sentences that he cried out to the LORD in prayer was this, "Take not Your Holy Spirit from me." He realized where his power lie. He didn't have any guarantee that that power would stay with him. He had offended the LORD. He knew it. And yet God blessed David. In Psalm 51:11, I believe, "Take not Your Holy Spirit from me," and the LORD did not. "Do not cast me away from Your presence." So we have it in the Old Testament. We have it in the New Testament.

In the New Testament, Jesus was baptized in the Holy Spirit. You remember He showed up to John; that He went into the water, that the heavens opened, and John saw the Spirit descending like a dove upon the Son of God, and He stayed there. "This is My beloved Son, hear Him" (Matthew 3:17, Matthew 17:5). And Jesus is anointed, if you will, for the ministry He is about to undertake by the Holy Spirit (John 1). The prophets, in speaking about the Messiah, wrote (for example) in Isaiah 42:1, "This is My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the

Gentiles." Isaiah 61:1, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor," and you get those seven short phrases about the ministry of the Messiah. And then you go to the New Testament, and you see Jesus coming at His baptism to begin His public ministry, having the Holy Spirit falling upon Him to empower Him, if you will. Peter so recognized that that when he spoke, there in Acts 10:38, he spoke about "Jesus of Nazareth, who was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him." And so Jesus' miracles in the gospels were not done by Jesus the Son of God. Jesus emptied Himself; He became a man, didn't rely upon His relationship with the Father - He emptied Himself of that prerogative. He did the miracles that He did, the insights and all, by the power of God's Spirit. We know that because He's our example. We're to follow in His footsteps. We're not God, but we have the Holy Spirit to rely on to do the work in us and through us. And so for us, who follow Jesus, and even the early disciples and all, when we are born again, the Holy Spirit comes in us, and then finally He falls upon us to serve. So, if you go back to the upper room, there's 120 born again saints now told to wait. The Bible makes sense. They're reading like they've never read. "Man, it's makin' sense to me." You know, Peter preachin' to the guys - he's got all kinds of ideas. Everybody's runnin' around with the Bible. They're not to go out. And then Pentecost comes - fifty days later, ten days after the ascension of Jesus into glory - and the Holy Spirit falls upon these saints.

Now, the good thing is we don't have to wait fifty days. If you are a Christian tonight, God would love to baptize you in His Spirit. Separate experience. Need for power. And it is so exemplified in the book of Acts that you'd almost have to close your eyes and read real fast to miss it every time it pops up. In Acts 2 on Pentecost, and you know the story, it tells us in verse 2 that the disciples were sitting together. They were just waiting upon the Lord. It wasn't like this working up the Holy Spirit or some crazy kind of day; they were just sitting there together when the Holy Spirit came upon them. And everyone knew it. It gathered a crowd in the early morning. Peter stands up to give a biblical basis for the response. You will read there of men speaking in tongues in a way that everyone that was there understood in their own language; they were glorifying God. Peter, in the power of God's Spirit now fallen upon the church, preaches a three-minute message. And as he gets done, three thousand people get saved. I mean, God opened the doors to the church, to salvation, with a bang. You know? It was a big day, especially in the eyes of the saints. Of all of the manifestations - the things that you would see as

you read through the book of Acts - everything that happened on Pentecost never happened again. You will never find tongues being understood by men. You will never see tongues of fire standing on somebody's head. You will not read of a mighty rushing wind blowing through camp. Everything was unique to the introduction of this work of God's Spirit. And that's not unlike what God did a lot of times in the Old Testament - when He lit the fire for the offering by Himself, and, "Now you keep it lit. I started it, now you keep it going." So there are all of these works of God that are distinguished by things that were one-time gifts. Yet the result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the saints is repeated time and time again - boldness in ministry, power in witnessing, tongues as a heavenly language (offered to the saints so that when they don't know how to pray, they can bypass their intellect and pray with God's help), prophecy, fruit. You can go through the book of Acts yourself, and you can discover how this keeps popping up.

In Acts 4, when the church begins to be persecuted for the first time, and there are some legitimate threats upon people's lives, the church gathered together, and they asked the Lord to strengthen them for the work ahead. And you'll read there in Acts 4:31-33 that God shook the place that they were at, and they were all filled again with God's power. It's almost like this baptism of the Holy Spirit is a dynamic kind of organic experience where you go to the Lord often and say, "Lord, fill me!" and He just kind of pours you out, and, "Fill me again. Come upon me for power." And so you read that in Acts 4. In Acts 8, when the gospel was sent to Samaria because with the death of Stephen, the saints went running, and some of them carried the gospel to Samaria. News got back to the Jerusalem church there was a revival. They sent Philip to go and see how it was going. Miracles began to happen by Philip's hand. The place began to grow in ministry. God was just moving mightily. Philip had never done this before. "What's his qualification?" "Well, I make a good hamburger, and I serve tables well. If you need more water, I'm the guy to get it for you." That was his qualification; he was just faithful, and God began to use him. When word came back to the church in Jerusalem that things were going so well, and there was this great growth happening, they sent Peter and John (you can read about it in Acts 8). And they only came for one purpose; they came to pray for believers to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. That was their entire mission. "You go, make sure people are filled with the Holy Spirit." The question was, "Has anybody received the baptism of the Holy Spirit since you arrived?" and Philip says, "They're all gettin' saved." But that wasn't the issue. So they came to pray specifically for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and you might remember there was a guy named Simon the Sorcerer in town who, seeing the results of God's

Spirit, offered to pay money to have that trick, if you will, in his back pocket. "I want to be able to manipulate and move people like that." And Peter had to warn him of his wickedness and about told him where to get off. "You're really in the position where God's going to deal harshly with you. You'd better be careful." And he kind of backed away. But he saw the evidence of God's Spirit falling upon the believers in Samaria.

In Acts 9, when Paul is converted - where he receives the Lord on the road to Damascus, and a brother comes to him (a fellow named Ananias) to pray for him - we are told in Acts 9 that Paul was healed, that he was water baptized, and that he received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul will talk about the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to him, especially this gift of tongues, this private time of being able to pray to the Lord, to intercede. In like manner, Paul - like he had Ananias' hands laid on him - began to pray for others in his life. You remember that he wrote to Timothy, "Stir up the gifts that are in you that were given to you by the laying on of my hands" (2 Timothy 1:6). Paul understood that God, through laying on of hands, encouraged receiving. That's what Paul did here in our passage in these seven verses; he laid hands on these twelve guys, just asked the Lord to fill them with His power. So, Paul was baptized in the Holy Spirit.

When Peter arrived, in Acts 10, at Cornelius' house, and he realized that this was a setup that the Lord had made, and the house was full of Gentiles, Peter began to speak, and he brought six guys with him because he was pretty sure he was going to get in trouble with the Jerusalem church for preaching to Gentiles. As he began to speak, and he didn't speak long, the people so hungry for the Lord, it says, opened their hearts. And "while Peter was speaking," they received the Lord. And, it says, "the Holy Spirit fell upon" them at the exact same time. It's the only place that you really find them happening concurrently, if you will. When Peter was done, and I don't know how long he went, they then took everybody outside and baptized them in water. So you have salvation, baptism in water, and the infilling, the baptism, of the experience of the Lord coming upon them for service.

And when Peter got called out, in Acts 11, by the Jerusalem big shots who said, "Hey, what do you think you're doin', preachin' to Gentiles?" Peter went, "Pfft. I got six guys who went with me. I'm tellin' ya, we just walked in there. And just like it happened to us in Acts 2," (he didn't say that, but that's where it happened) "it happened to them. As we heard the Word, as they heard the Word, and as the Holy Spirit fell, just like that. They just heard God's Word, and they were filled."

And everybody went, "I guess that's the way the Lord's gonna work," which led eventually to that Acts 15 meeting in Jerusalem to determine, "Gosh, this is just the way God begins to save."

So, here in verse 6 of our text, he shares the gospel more fully. These men, twelve of them, receive the Lord; they get saved; they are baptized in water, and then Paul takes it a step forward. Why? Because that's what we need - God's power. It's the defining mark of the activities of the church in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. It is stamped in six different chapters with only one intent - making sure that you and I rely on the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Again here, verse 6, we see speaking in tongues and prophecy following. Paul will spend three chapters - when he writes to the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 12-14 - addressing specifically the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the vocal gifts and all, especially tongues and prophecy which are mentioned here. So the evidence for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the necessity of it, from a biblical standpoint in the review of the narrative, is overwhelming. Why do you suppose the early church made such an issue of it? Why do you suppose Jesus went so far as to say, "Now you're saved and going to heaven, but hang in here, you're not ready just yet"? And yet every place you find God's Spirit at work, there is this mention of this outpouring of God's Spirit, and the disciples, the early disciples, were so assured in their own hearts that they needed it that they took that same message to every place that they went to preach. They never left that out. That wasn't a part of the equation only; it had to be an active part of what they were doing. And they followed it to be so.

In John 7, when Jesus came to the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, the celebration consisted basically of seven days where the priests would take water up to the steps of the Temple, and then they would just let the water kind of roll down the steps. And the people were to stand and to recognize that for forty years in the wilderness, like kind of the cement, the Lord always provided for His people. The water was poured out for forty years. On the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, they didn't pour out any water; and the reason was they were to acknowledge that, at some point, the forty years were up, and the people had gotten into the Land, and there was water now; there were wells that were dug. They didn't dig 'em, but now the Lord gave them water in the Land. So, on that eighth day (John 7:38), Jesus stands up, and He cries out with a loud voice to the people, "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." And then John, because he wrote after the fact, writes down (as an explanation), "He was talking about the Spirit whom the believers

would receive; for as yet the Holy Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39). But he talked about this life where out of this life would flow rivers of living water. Very descriptive words. Not a trickle but a raging river. Right? Out of the lives of the believers, as Jesus would give His life so we could be those men and women that God would use. So John said we're more than vessels for God to fill; we're containers for God to pour out. We're more than just intakers; we also take in and then pour out, and then come back and get filled again. And this concept of the vessel is constant. So God wants you to go out into the world and splash His Spirit on the right people, at the right time, with the right words, as He kind of leads you as a container for Him. The chief purpose in the book of Acts for the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a power to be a witness. That's the bottom line - power to be His witness, to speak up, to live it out, and to have it be seen.

When we talk about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, most times people ask about tongues. That seems to be more worrisome to them than anything else. It is, by far, the least gift in the Scriptures (as far as usage). It is, by far, the only gift that is beneficial to you personally; all the other gifts are used to serve others. When people ask, "Do I have to speak in tongues to have the baptism of the Holy Spirit?" they usually go back to the Scriptures, and they say, "Do all speak in tongues?" And, no, they don't. And they read you that verse out of 1 Corinthians 12:30, and they figure that's their argument. I would say this to you - of the six times in the book of Acts baptism in the Holy Spirit is mentioned, we see the gifts of tongues in chapter 2, chapter 8, chapter 9, implied in chapter 10 (because they heard something, they weren't sure what it was), chapter 19 (here as well). So five of the six show that. We know from 1 Corinthians 14:2 that Paul, as he begins to speak about tongues, said that, "He who speaks in a tongue doesn't speak to men, but he speaks to God because only God understands him." So, from God's standpoint, the gift of tongues is a language that man doesn't profit from. Paul will go on to say, "You speak in tongues, your mind is not fruitful because you don't even know what you're saying, or you don't understand it." And if it was to be used publicly that there would have to be an interpreter or else no one would be able to say "Amen." So, a couple of provisions for tongues. Number one - it's a language that God understands, man doesn't. It doesn't help your outlook, or there's no ministry in tongues, so to speak, except you sing the praises of God in a language that you don't know, or you pray and seek the Lord in a language that you don't understand. It puts your mind on hold and faith in the forefront. And you may never speak out in a church service because then you would need an interpreter,

and then only would it be beneficial. But Paul, in 1 Corinthians 14:4, says, "He that speaks in an unknown tongue edifies himself, whereas somebody who would prophesy will build up the church." And that's the point I'm getting to. The gift of tongues is a gift that is usable for you personally. You edify you. If you believe that the Bible says, and it does, that no good gifts will God withhold from those who walk uprightly (Psalm 84:11), then I have to believe that for us, the gift of tongues is a necessary arsenal in our backpack of seeking the Lord. And that's why you find it so often. Will you use it in an official sense? Maybe never. And that's certainly what 1 Corinthians talks about when they say, "Do all speak in tongues?" It's in the context of a group meeting and people speaking out. But if you had a gift of tongues that you knew you could worship God without understanding, you could pray perfectly in God's will without having to figure out what that was, and it allows you to just kind of step out there by faith, then you're edified, you're built up; it's a gift that is just for you and no one else. It is for you individually. So rather than, "Do I have to?" I think the question should be, "Don't I get to?" and you can get to if you want to because God makes that available to you. How does that happen? Pretty much the way you get saved. You speak out. How did you get saved? "Well, I asked the Lord to....." It didn't just happen without you opening your mouth? "No. I had to ask. I came, I confessed." Same thing with tongues. I think if you believe that, from the scriptural standpoint, this is what God has available, then you ask and then you speak out. Jesus said, in Luke 11:9-13 for example, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone?" And the answer was, "Well, of course not!" "Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish?" No! "Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?" Of course not! And then the Lord said this, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" So you gotta ask. Lord, fill me with Your Spirit. And not just tonight but every day. Lord, fill me. I can't get through a day without Your help, without Your power, without Your help in my life. You'll read there in Acts 4 (we mentioned it to you) that when they prayed, the place was shaken, they were again filled with the Holy Spirit, and they left that place speaking the Word of God with boldness. So you ask. Don't ask, wavering. Ask in faith. Be ready for the Lord to use you. The Holy Spirit is with you if you're not saved tonight. And if He's just with you, you should give your life to Christ. That's why He brought you. That's why He speaks to you. That's what He's trying to convince you of - your sinfulness and His grace.



If the Lord is dwelling in you because you've gotten saved, then you need to be filled with God's Spirit. You need the experience of God's Spirit being poured out upon your life, and you'll notice the difference. And then you can begin to ask God for those gifts that will help you to serve the Lord. It's an important lesson from the book of Acts that's just laid out time and time and time again. I think that the reason the church is not so successful today is because we've gone away from the relying on the Holy Spirit, and we've started to rely on businesses and marketing schemes and the kind of advertising that the world does to sell a car; and whatever it is, we don't any longer just go, "Lord, You work, You save, You deliver." But that's where our power lies; it lies with Him upon our lives. Don't you agree? So we need that. So, we're almost done. Right?

Let's close our eyes, for a minute, together. Next week I'll take you to verse 20, and we'll get back to the whole narrative. But before we sing our last song and dismiss you tonight, I want to give you a minute to just consider whether you've been baptized in the Holy Spirit or not. And you don't need to look around, and it's just between you and the Lord. But do you remember saying, "Lord, I need to be baptized in the Holy Spirit? I want this experience that the early disciples had, that Jesus had, that Moses was given, and the seventy elders that were with him, that David and Saul was able to experience, though he walked away from God; that scsix different places in this narrative of thirty years, this outpouring of Your Spirit. Lord, we need that in our lives." And if that's what you need tonight in your life, here's what I want you to do - and I don't want anybody lookin' around, you guys pray. If you're serious about that, "Lord, fill me," would you stand up right where you're at? And we're not gonna call you up here. I'm just gonna pray from here. But I want you to say, "Lord, fill me." And if you'll stand, I know God is gonna meet you here tonight. Just stand up right where you're at. No need to look around. It's between you and Jesus, and that's really all that matters. And if you need more information afterwards, or you want to talk to one of the pastors about your questions or things that, maybe, are concerns, then you come up and ask them. I guarantee you they know the Bible really well. So, anyone else before we pray? (Pastor Jack then prays).

Submitted by Maureen Dickson  
October 7, 2018