

Awakening

Acts 19:1-20; July 22, 2018

Context:

- Today, we're continuing our series through Acts as we look at Paul's missionary journeys and see the gospel spread to city after city.
- Last week we look at Paul's work in Corinth and zeroed in on two truths:
 - God's got you (cf. 18:8-9).
 - God's got them (cf. 18:10).
- Paul's 2nd Missionary Journey comes to an end in 18:18-22 (READ)
 - Syria and Cenchreae (Sin-cree-aay)
 - Ephesus
 - Paul refuses to say in Ephesus long through he does promise to return "if God' wills" (18:21).
 - Paul does leave Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus to watch over his labor there (18:24-28 shows this). In fact, there church met in their home (cf. 1 Cor. 16:19).
- Paul's 3rd Missionary Journey begins in 18:23 and this sets the context for our passage today (READ 18:23-28 - show map).
 - 18:23: Antioch to the regions of Galatia and Phrygia
 - 18:24-28: this section provides the backdrop for Paul's upcoming ministry in Ephesus.
 - Ephesus:
 - It was a strategically located city and as a result played an important role. It was the capital of the Roman province of Asia. It was on the main trade route east from Rome.
 - There was a temple and shrine of Artemis, one of the major pagan goddesses. This shrine was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.
 - Apollos
 - A Jew, eloquent, competent in the Scriptures, fervent in spirit (enthusiastic), an accurate teacher concerning Jesus.
 - Caveat: he knew only the baptism of John. This is the link between this passage and Paul's upcoming ministry in Ephesus.
 - Priscilla and Aquila
 - They take Apollos aside and correct him, bringing him up to date about the baptism of Jesus
 - This all sets the stage for Paul to arrive in Ephesus, a city where he spends three years doing ministry.

Read Acts 19:1-20

The Point: When God awakens people through the Word, transformation is evident.

I. The Word of God awakens and brings full knowledge of the Spirit (1-7).

Similar to Apollos, Paul came across some “disciples” who only knew about the baptism of John.

How are we to understand Apollos and these disciples at Ephesus?

- On the one hand, there’s language that seems to indicate they were already genuine believers.
 - The text doesn’t say that Apollos was asked to believe or repent.
 - The text says that Apollos knew about Jesus and taught accurately about him (I’m assuming this included news about his death and resurrection).
 - Luke calls them “disciples” (19:1).
 - Paul assumes that they have “believed” (cf. 19:2).
- On the other hand, there’s info that seems to indicate that they were not already genuine believers.
 - The text says that they “have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”
 - Other passages in the NT teach that if you don’t have the Spirit, then you don’t belong to Jesus (cf. Also Tit. 3:4-5; 1 John 4:13).

Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (John 3:5 ESV)

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. (Romans 8:9 ESV)

- They only knew about the baptism of John
 - At a minimum then, they would’ve known this from John’s baptism:

As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, John answered them all, saying, “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (Luke 3:15-16 ESV)

- This means that they probably knew:
 - That there was a Holy Spirit. What they didn’t know was that this promise had been fulfilled and the Spirit had come. In other words, they were ignorant of Pentecost.
 - That John’s role was pointing forward to the greater one who was still to come, Jesus.
- What’s not clear is how much they knew about Jesus.

What happens?

- Paul baptizes them and then they receive the Spirit when Paul lays his hands on them.

- As a result, they begin speaking in tongues and prophesying (cf. 2:4; 8:17; 10:45-46).
- Their experience is similar to that of Pentecost in Acts 2. It confirms that the Spirit has come and shows that they are now completed in their faith.

Summary thoughts on this issue:

- Both of Paul's questions imply that what has happened here is an extra-ordinary anomaly. This isn't a pattern that would happen today.
- The normal pattern today in how a person receives the Spirit is that it happens when they repent and believe. This is what Paul assumes in his question in 19:2 and aligns with his teaching in his letters.

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14 ESV)

- The worst case is that they were merely disciples of John and not true followers, looking forward to the Messiah to come, similar to OT believers. The best case is they are nominal Christians caught in this transition and need their faith completed with full knowledge and reception of the Holy Spirit.
- Have you:
 - Responded in repentance and faith? If so, you've received the Spirit
 - Been had Christian baptism, which happens after you repent and believe.

II. The Word of God builds up and spreads through Paul and the church (8-10).

These verses provide an overview of Paul's ministry in Ephesus:

- He spends three months in the synagogue boldly "reasoning" and "persuading" them about the "kingdom of God."
 - Paul speaking about the "kingdom of God" is his way of making a case for Jesus as the Messiah.

When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. (Acts 28:23 ESV)

- There were some who rejected his message:
 - The Greek work for "stubborn" means "to be hardened." The expression appears in the OT in reference to Pharaoh (Exod. 8:15; 9:35) and the people in the wilderness (Deut. 2:30).
 - "The threefold response of hardening, unbelief, and speaking evil indicates complete rejection of Paul's message" (Bock).
- In view of this rejection, Paul decides to withdraw to the hall of Tyrannus with the disciples for a period of two years.

- This is either a lecture hall or a school building and Tyrannus would've been the owner.
- The pattern is daily for two years. Some Greek manuscripts add that the lectures were between the hours of 11:00am and 4:00pm. This would've been the hardest part of the day, when people would take off work for a midday nap. Paul would've worked in the mornings and then preached and taught the Word in the afternoon .
- The result: the text says that “all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord.”
- Look ahead and **Read Acts 20:18-21, 26-27, 31-34** for a picture of what this time looked like.
- Ephesus was his missionary base where he made disciples and sent out laborers to take the gospel all over Asia.
- Application:
 - Consider what kind of impact you can make with a long, sustained ministry in one area.
 - Challenge:
 - Recognize and thank our SLINK inters (have them stand). Curtis Cook shared with our SLINK students: One of the things I've taken away from him is how he challenges his people. He asks, “How do most people decide where to live, especially after college?” Most people look for a job...and then try and find a church. He challenges his church and people to flip flop that. He challenged our students and said, “Why not rather find a church to invest your life...and then find a job that helps you do life and ministry with that church.”

III. The Power of God through Paul awakens an entire city (11-17):

This section focus' in on one particular display of God's work and power through Paul while he was at Ephesus.

- Luke describes what was happening here as “extraordinary.” This is a term not used to describe the other miracles recorded in Acts. Luke is highlighting that this is an “out-of-the-ordinary experience,” something very unusual. It's similar to the woman who was healed by just touching the fringe of Jesus' garment (Luke 8:44).
- What is clear is that God is the source of these works. Paul is just the mediator of God's power.
- Paul was doing healings both of disease and exorcisms, evil spirits were being cast out. This is a picture of the renewal and restoration that the gospel brings. At times, we get a foretaste in this life of what's to keep: complete healing.

In contrast to the power of God displayed through Paul, there were seven sons of Sceva, itinerant Jewish exorcists, trying to invoke Jesus' name in their exorcisms.

- In contrast to true miracles, they were trying to perform magic. Namely, they're just trying to manipulate the gods and produce some formulaic result through spells, coercion

and the use of names. Their demonic activity was confronted by the powerful work of the Spirit working through Paul.

- Bock notes the irony: “they do not believe in Paul’s gospel, yet they seek to tap into his power” (Bock).

What happened to the exorcists?

- The evil spirit whom they are trying to cast out turns on them and says, “I know Jesus and Paul but I don’t recognize you guys.” You’re imposters.
- They have completely failed and been upstaged by the power of God through Paul.
- The man in whom was the evil spirit attached the seven sons and just gives them the business. The ESV Study Bible calls this a “reverse exorcism.” The demon is driving out the exorcists.
- They are “overpowered” and “wounded,” both physically and in about every way you can image. They were completely stripped naked and left to flee. This enhances their humiliation.

What happened to the city of Ephesus?

- “And this become known to all the residents of Ephesus...”
- Can you imagine how this news story would’ve spread today? Facebook? Boston.com?
- Reverent fear fell among the people and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled.
- The entire city wasn’t converted but they were awakened to consider the real power of God.

IV. The Word of God radically transforms lives and cities (18-20).

A move of God happens among the believers at Ephesus.

- They “confessed” and “divulged” their practices (18).
- Those who practiced magic arts publicly burned their books (this made their spells public and now impotent).
 - The value of all these books totaled 50,000 pieces of silver.
 - I’ve seen different numbers for how much this would’ve been in today’s money, from \$10,000 to \$6 million. Either way, what was burned was worth a lot and cost something. The what they gained was so worth it.

The Point: When God awakens people through the Word, transformation is evident.

Conclusion:

- Jesus changes everything and as people are changed in cities, even entire cities can be transformed.
- This is a clear and beautiful picture of repenting and turning to follow Jesus.
- God isn’t done with anyone in this room. As followers of Jesus, it is our expectation, our prayer, our hope that we don’t just confess and turn from sin initially when we respond to Jesus, but we practice a lifestyle and ongoing confession and repentance.
- Any, this is one of the primary roles of the Holy Spirit in your life.

- As a result, “the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.”
 - Stott notes, “Their example also led to more conversions...” (Stott).