

(Through the Bible) Acts 18-19

by Chuck Smith

Paul's ministry in Corinth was marked by his preaching, baptisms, and evangelism, as well as his encounters with the Lord and his experiences with the Jews and the Greeks.

Duration: 1:25:07

Scripture: Ezekiel 3:18, Acts 18:5

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Faith Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker encourages the audience to continue studying the word of God and to let it dwell richly in their hearts through faith. They emphasize the importance of comprehending the depth of God's love and continuing in His love by abounding in good works and growing in maturity in Jesus Christ. The speaker also mentions a situation where Paul was advised not to go into a theater due to confusion and chaos among the people. Despite this, Paul ordered the evacuation of the theater, which later caught fire. The sermon highlights the power of God and the importance of believing in Him. The speaker also mentions special miracles performed by Paul, including the use of his aprons, and references Jesus' promise of rivers of living water flowing from believers' innermost beings through the Holy Spirit. The sermon concludes with a reminder that God's work in our lives is not finished with just a subjective experience, but also includes an objective work of the Spirit.

Transcript

Let's turn now to the 18th chapter of Acts as we continue our study through the Bible. At the end of the study last week, the end of chapter 17, we found Paul speaking to the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers there on Mars Hill proclaiming to them the glory and the marvels of the unknown God whom they worshiped ignorantly. And we found that again, Paul's message left them with sort of divided feelings.

Some believing and remaining with Paul and others sort of scoffing and going their way. Now after these things, Paul departed from Athens and he came to Corinth. Now why Paul departed early is not stated.

He was actually waiting for Timothy and Silas to join him. But from the account, we find that Timothy and Silas did not join him until he was at Corinth. He had sent for them to come quickly.

Paul just evidently didn't care that much for Athens. And so he went on down to Corinth, which was the capital of vice in the ancient world. Whenever in the Greek plays they would depict a Corinthian, they would usually have them drunken in the plays.

It became sort of a byword to say, well, he lives like a Corinthian, which means a person was living a very sensuous kind of a lifestyle. The city of Corinth was a Roman city under direct Roman rule, though it was, of course, in Greece and was sort of a center of commerce. The nation of Greece, it's almost like a waistline there at Corinth in that there's only about five miles at the most, maybe two miles from the one sea to the other.

Greece is very narrow. It comes to a very narrow point there at the area of Corinth so that the ships coming from the east would usually come and deposit their cargo. And then it would be taken overland and then again by sea to Rome.

And it saved them going around the Cape at the lower end of Greece, which was very treacherous sailing. In fact, they used to have a saying, if you're going to sail around the Cape, then make out your will before you go. So, the common passage of the goods from the east to Rome and vice versa was through Corinth as they would bring it across land at this narrow portion of Greece.

Nero attempted to build the canal at this narrow point, but did fail. But later that canal was built and there is Corinthian Canal today where ships can pass through and save, like the Panama Canal, the great distance of sailing around the Cape of Good Hope. Of course, it isn't that far around Greece, but they can save hundreds of miles of shipping by coming through the Corinthian Canal.

A very wicked city indeed at the top of the Acropolis above Corinth was the Temple of Aphrodite, which remains do exist in ruins at the present time. The Temple of Aphrodite had 1,000 priestesses who were nothing more than public prostitutes, who in the evening would come down into the city of Corinth and the revenue from these prostitutes went to maintain the Temple of Aphrodite there at the top of the hill. So, Paul came to this city known for its licentiousness or its sexual indulgences for the lustful living of the people.

And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, who was born in Pontus, but had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla because Claudius had commanded all of the Jews to depart from Rome. Now, this command of Claudius was given in 49 AD. So, how long he had been here in Corinth is not stated, but had lately come from Italy as the result of this decree to get the Jews out of Rome.

And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them and he wrought for by their occupation they were tent makers. Now, Paul was a Jewish rabbi and it was said that every man should have a trade. This was a common feeling among the Jews.

They taught their sons a trade so that always if things went bad you could fall back on your trade. Paul by trade was a tent maker. And wherever Paul went, if he was going to be there any length of time, he usually got a job as a tent maker.

He was willing to work with his own hands in order to support the call of God upon his heart to minister the Word of God. I do not see anything inconsistent with that. I believe that it is good for a minister of the gospel to, if necessary, work with his own hands to provide for his needs so that he would not be chargeable, as was the case with Paul.

He didn't want to be chargeable to the Greeks. So, Paul worked there with Aquila and Priscilla, who also were tent makers. He probably got a job from them, went to work for them as he was providing for his own needs.

He often would not provide just for his own needs, but for the needs of those that journeyed with him, as was the case in Ephesus. Paul continued to work as a tent maker until Silas and Timothy joined him. And when Silas and Timothy came, they brought an offering from the church in Philippi, where the Philippian jailer was converted.

They took up an offering and sent it to Paul. And when they came with this offering for Paul, then it was no longer necessary for him to work, and so he gave full time to the ministry there in Corinth. So, Paul was the kind of a fellow, if he needed money, he was willing to go out and work with his hands to provide.

If the Lord would provide, such as he did with the Philippian offering, then he was wanting and willing to give himself full time to the work of the Lord. You remember that Paul, in writing to the Philippians, made mention of the offering, thanking them for sending the offering to him. He said, not that I particularly had a need, but I desire that fruit might abound to your account.

And I think that that is an important thing to think about and to remember when you're giving to the work of the Lord, that whatever fruit comes from the lives of those that are being supported in that ministry that you have sent to, whatever fruit comes from that goes to your account. Paul said, I thank you for the offering that you sent, not that I had a special need, but I desire that fruit might abound to your account. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he reminded them that he had labored among them, that he was not chargeable unto any of them.

Now he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and he persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. And when Silas and Timothy were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit and he testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. So, this is interesting in that it would seem that Paul was just teaching concerning God's promise of the Messiah and all until Timothy and Silas came.

And then he was moved in the spirit to go ahead and to declare unto them, having laid the foundation that Jesus is indeed the Messiah. And when they, that is the Jews, opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook his raiment and he said unto them, your blood be upon your own heads. I am clean from henceforth, I will go unto the Gentiles.

You remember when Pilate was pressed by the Jews to deliver Jesus to be crucified, he took a basin and he washed his hands and he said, I am innocent of this man's blood, see ye to it. And they responded, his blood be upon us and upon our children. Now, Paul felt that responsibility to share Christ with these people, to share Jesus as the Messiah.

We have a responsibility of witnessing. We don't have a responsibility of converting people. In fact, we have an inability to convert people.

But our responsibility is to witness. Paul fulfilled his responsibility and in so doing, he felt freed then from the blood of these people. In other words, he felt such a heavy obligation to witness for the Lord that he felt that he was sort of responsible for their salvation.

If he failed to witness, you remember that God gave to Ezekiel a special challenge. And when I say unto the wicked, they shall perish. And if you warn not the wicked, they will perish in their sins, but their blood will I require at your hands.

Now, Paul felt that very same kind of a challenge in his ministry to the Jews, but having witnessed to them now as they are blaspheming and rejecting. Paul says, all right, that's it. Not going on and arguing and

trying to press them to make a change, but just, hey, I've delivered my soul.

I'm free and innocent of your blood. And he felt that his obligation was complete when he had witnessed to them, which indeed is so. I am pressed by God to bear witness of the truth of Jesus Christ, that Jesus is the Messiah.

If a person believes that, glory. But that's the work of God's Spirit in planting faith in their heart. If they don't believe it, then I can't do anything about that, but at least I can I am free from a responsibility as a witness.

I have borne my witness. That's all God requires of me. I get paid a salary.

I don't get paid commission. I get the same pay no matter how many people you see receive the Lord. And so thus, you know, I don't feel pressed at all to push people into a relationship with Jesus.

I only bear witness of God's truth to their hearts. And then the responsibility is theirs, what they do with it. So he said, I am clean.

Your blood is upon your own heads. I am clean. From now on, I'm going to go to the Gentiles.

And so he departed from the synagogue and he entered into a certain man's house named Justice, one that worshiped God and whose house was joined hard to the synagogue or probably shared a common wall with the synagogue. And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all of his house. And many of the Corinthians hearing, believe them were baptized.

Now you remember when Paul wrote his letter to the Corinthians and you a students did read that epistle this week, I trust. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he said unto them who were in these little factious groups, because Apollos later went and preached to Corinth and many people were enamored of Apollos. Peter had evidently been there and some were saying, well, I'm of Peter.

Others were saying I'm of Paul and others were saying I'm of Apollos. And he said, that's a mark of carnality. You haven't grown up.

You're dividing yourself into these little factious groups. And he said, I thank God I didn't baptize any of you, but Crispus and Gaius. And if there is any other, I don't remember it because God didn't send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel.

So this Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue was one of those that Paul baptized. The other was Gaius, who was Paul's host. As Paul writing his Roman epistle, declares that he greets those in Rome from Gaius, who is my host.

So again, remembering that the Roman epistle was written from Corinth, a city that was given over to all of this lustful, licentious kind of living. We remember the first chapter of Romans as Paul describes men of reprobate minds who had been given over to the lust of their own minds and were doing all of the evil, vile things. He was only describing the way people were living around him there in the city of Corinth.

And so if you want a good view of what the Corinthian lifestyle was like, read the latter half of the first chapter of the book of Romans. And Paul is describing the life around him there in the city of Corinth, as he was writing from the house of Gaius and the two men that he baptized, Crispus and Gaius. And he couldn't remember if there were any others, for he said, God didn't send me to baptize, but to preach the

gospel.

A difficult scripture for those persons from the church of Christ to come up and wonder why we do not instantly baptize the believers. Take them immediately down to the beach and baptize them because they believe in baptismal regeneration. You're not really saved until you're baptized.

Well, if their doctrine is correct, then Paul is utterly blasphemous in the fact that he thanked God he didn't baptize any but Crispus and Gaius. And if there be any others, he said, I don't remember them for God didn't send me to baptize just to preach the gospel. So there were many people converted in Corinth during Paul's ministry there.

And yet Paul was not really engaged much in baptizing the believers. But Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all of his house and many of the Corinthians hearing believed and were baptized. However, not by Paul.

Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision. And he said, be not afraid. Now, whenever God says, be not afraid, it usually means that you are afraid.

And Paul had reason to be afraid. Just about everywhere he preached, it ended in a riot and he had been in prison. He had been beaten.

He had been stoned. And now the Jews are getting stirred up here in Corinth and they had created problems wherever he had preached. And he is probably fearful of what might happen.

And so the Lord said, be not afraid, but speak, hold not your peace, be not afraid. And what is the cure? The answer for fear for I am with thee. Oh, how the presence of the Lord and that consciousness of the presence of the Lord dispels fear.

If ever I get afraid, all I have to do is remember all the Lord's with me and fear is dispelled. Fear only comes when I lose the consciousness of the presence of the Lord. Be not afraid.

The Lord said, I am with thee and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee. I'm going to protect you, Paul. Now you wonder why the Lord didn't protect him in the other places.

Why didn't the Lord protect him at Lystra? Why didn't he protect him in some of these other places where he was beaten and in prison and all? I don't know, but here in Corinth, the Lord is saying, okay, Paul, now don't be afraid. I am with you. And no man will be as able to lay his hand on you to hurt you.

For I have much people in this city, one of the most wicked cities in the world. And there is where God has a big harvest. Where sin abounds, Paul wrote to the Romans.

They're from Corinth where sin abounds. Grace does much more abound. And he saw that overabounding grace of God in the city of Corinth as the Lord testified, I have many people in this city.

Now looking at the people in the way they lived, you wouldn't guess it, I'm sure. But yet God is able to work in those cases that we are so often prone to classify as hopeless. And God has saved so many people I've given up on.

So many people that I've declared there's no way they could ever be saved. And yet God saved them anyhow, in spite of my judgment. So the Lord said, go ahead, speak out, Paul, don't be afraid.

I've got a lot of people in this city. No one's going to be able to hurt you. And so he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

So he probably spent close to two years total time in Corinth. He spent another 18 months teaching the word of God among them. One of the greatest needs for the believers are to be taught in the word of God.

And I think that it is relevant that here it didn't say he spent 18 months preaching to them, but he spent 18 months teaching them. And that is the great need in the church at all times is to be taught in the word of God. Now, when Galileo was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat.

That judgment seat is still there in the city of Corinth. If you go to Corinth today, they'll take you to the middle of the town and they'll show you this one flat area. And it is the judgment seat, the very seat where Galileo was and where Paul was brought to trial by the Jews.

Galileo is a man that has received a lot of unwarranted abuse because of his response and his reaction here. But Galileo was the brother of Seneca of Roman fame. And Seneca said of his brother Galileo, there was never a kinder, more loving person who ever lived than my brother Galileo.

Now, Galileo is sitting there in the judgment seat in Corinth and the Jews brought Paul in and they said, this fellow is persuading men to worship God contrary to the law. That was their accusation. That would be contrary to the Jewish law.

And that was their interpretation of what Paul was teaching. But I'm certain that Paul, when he attempted to give his answer, would have disputed that claim. And when Paul was about to open his mouth, Galileo said unto the Jews, if it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O you Jews, reason would that I should bear with you.

But if it is a question of words and names and of your law, then take care of it yourselves, for I will not be a judge in such matters. And so he drove them from the judgment seat, these Jews that were trying to accuse Paul. And all of the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and probably the chief accuser of Paul, and they beat him before the judgment seat.

And Galileo cared for none of those things. That is, he did not stop them from beating Sosthenes. And that is why Galileo is brought into ill repute in so many commentaries.

But if you go to the secular history, you'll find that he was a very fair, honest, and a loving person. Now, Paul, after this, tarried there yet a good while. And then he took his leave from the brethren, and he sailed.

His intention was to return back to Syria. Antioch was in Syria, and his intention, of course, was to sail back to the church in Antioch. And he took with him Priscilla and Aquila, having shorn his head in Shinsrea, for he had a vow.

Now, the shaving of your head was really the Nazarite vow. And you would take the Nazarite vow when you wanted to consecrate yourself unto God for a period of time. And usually the time of the Nazarite vow was for 30 days.

So at the beginning of the Nazarite vow, you would shave your head, and then you wouldn't take a razor to your head for that 30 days. Nor would you eat any meat, nor would you drink any wine during the period of

the 30 days in which you had this vow of consecration to God. Then at the end of the 30 days, you would shave your head again, whatever hair had grown during that period of time, and you would burn it as an offering unto the Lord.

So Paul took this Nazarite vow, shaved his head to begin this Nazarite vow, probably to sort of prepare himself to go to the temple and to worship at the feast that he was endeavoring to get back to Jerusalem in time for one of the three feasts. So on his way, they came first to Ephesus. And there he left Priscilla and Aquila.

But he himself entered into the synagogue, and he reasoned with the Jews. Paul just can't stop him. And when they desired him to tarry longer with them, he consented not.

But he bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast which is coming up in Jerusalem. But I will return again unto you if God wills. You remember, James said, Go to now ye who say, Tomorrow we will do this and that.

You would be better to say, If the Lord wills, we will do this and that, for you really don't know what a day is going to bring forth. And so here's Paul saying, If God wills, I'll return again. I don't know what God wills at this point.

I don't know what the Lord has in mind, but if the Lord's willing, that's a part of God's will. I will return again. But you notice his desire.

I want to get to Jerusalem for this feast. And so he sailed from Ephesus. And when he had landed at Caesarea, which, of course, was the major port closest to Jerusalem at that particular time, the Roman port of Caesarea, and had gone up and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch.

Now, he just greeted the church. It evidently wasn't a very, he evidently wasn't warmly welcomed by the church. Paul didn't really get along too well with the church fathers in Jerusalem.

And so Luke passes off Paul's visit to Jerusalem, tells us nothing about his attendance at the feast, tells us nothing about his time there, except that he just greeted the brethren there and then came on back to Antioch, from which he had begun his journey years earlier. And after he had spent some time there, and again, Luke is indefinite as far as how long he stayed in Antioch, he departed and went over all the country of Galatia and Perga in order, strengthening all the disciples. Now, in verse 18 to 23, Luke, in five verses, covers a journey of Paul of some 1,500 miles, walking by ship, perhaps some of it by horseback.

1,500 miles passed off in just five little verses. All of the things that were accomplished in that length of time and through those journeys are something that were not recorded. They're just a portion here of the record that is left blank.

And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, who was an eloquent man and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. Now, Paul was only in the synagogue there reasoning with them. They requested that he stay longer, but he was desirous to get to Jerusalem.

So as Paul is on his way to Galatia, coming back towards Ephesus, prior to his arriving, another Jew arrived, an eloquent man, a brilliant man. He was from Alexandria, and he was mighty in the scriptures. And that word means not only had a good knowledge, but was able to explain carefully the scriptures.

This man was instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in the Spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. Now, he was no doubt a disciple of John. He knew the baptism of John.

What do we know about John's preaching? John said, I am not the Messiah. There is one who is coming after me who is mightier than I am, the latchet of whose shoes I am unworthy to unloose. And he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

So he knew that John was telling that the coming of the Messiah was at hand, and that the Messiah would be baptizing them in the Holy Spirit. But his basic forte was in the scriptures and explaining the scriptures, and no doubt showing that the time of the Messiah's coming was at hand. 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 completely, more perfectly.

At this point, I have to have great admiration for Apollo. He is a man who is mighty in the scriptures. He is a man who is fervent in spirit.

He's eloquent. He's brilliant. And yet two of the people who were there listening to him understood more fully the things of which he spake than he did himself.

For through Paul, they had come to know that Jesus was the Messiah and the empowering of the Holy Spirit in their lives. And so I admire Apollo that he was willing to listen to a couple of the congregation who understood more completely than did he the ways of the Lord. I also admire Aquila and Priscilla for taking this eloquent man and sharing the way of the Lord with him.

Notice that it does say that Aquila and Priscilla, both of them were used as instruments of God in explaining to Apollo the way of the Lord more completely. There are some who would try to exclude women from any place of teaching or instructing, but God obviously used Priscilla for that purpose and with this man, Apollos. And when he was disposed to pass unto Achaia, the brethren wrote exhorting the disciples to receive him.

Now, of course, Priscilla and Aquila had come from Corinth. And so when Apollos is now ready to go to Corinth, they wrote letters to the disciples to receive him who, when he was come, he helped them much which have believed through grace. For he mightily convinced the Jews and that publicly showing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.

So this man, Apollos, had a powerful ministry, a good knowledge of the word and ability to prove that Jesus indeed was the Messiah from the scriptures and that publicly when he came to Corinth. And that is why, no doubt, the Corinthian church began to have their favorites and said, well, I'm of Paul and others were saying, well, we're of Apollos. And God nor did Paul or Apollos ever intend that the people should take sides like this.

Paul said, I watered, I mean, I planted, Apollos watered, and God gave the increase. Now, he who plants is nothing. He who waters is nothing.

It is God. In other words, don't get your eyes on me. You that are saying I'm of Paul.

Nor should you get your eyes on Apollos. You should have your eyes upon the Lord. He's the one that's really done the work in your heart.

But man, it seems, looks to the human instrument. But Paul is trying to point them away from him and point them to the Lord. He that plants is nothing.

I planted. I'm nothing. He that waters is nothing.

Apollos watered, but he's really nothing. It is the Lord. That's the one you want to get your eyes on.

Here again is something interesting. Paul's ministry in Corinth was that of planting. Apollos came along and watered that which Paul had planted.

Apollos had planted in Ephesus. Now, Paul is coming to Ephesus as we get into chapter 19, and he is going to water what Apollos planted. So, the glorious way by which God works in the ministry.

At one place, he may have you planting. In another place, he may have you watering what someone else planted. But again, we must keep our eyes upon the Lord because if there is to be any increase, that's his work.

All I can do is plant seed. All I can do is water seed that is planted. But any increase is the work of the Lord and is to his glory.

So, it came to pass that while Apollos was at Corinth watering what Paul had planted, Paul, having passed through the upper coast, came to Ephesus and there he found certain disciples that no doubt had been planted by Apollos. And he said unto them, have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed? Now, there are those who object strenuously to that translation and the revised version of the Bible demonstrates their objection or 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 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 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 far off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. 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've 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 hippy 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 14th 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 saith in not neither knoweth him but he you know him for he dwells with you and shall be in you. There 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 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 drawn and the Spirit is the agent that the Father uses to draw men to Jesus Christ.

But when you received Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit began to dwell in you. And every believer has the Holy Spirit dwelling within him. Paul writing to the Corinthians said, Want know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you? You are not your own.

You've been bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit which are his. Your body the temple of the Holy Spirit.

That's 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 innermost 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 Grubb 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 he 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 Grubb 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 bottled it up and there's 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. And this is the hippie.

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. Hippie, the Greek preposition means upon or over. And as I said, I have translated it overflows you.

When you're so full, you can't 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 my life, there is a flowing forth from my life of the spirit of God, like a river of living water.

If you can't say that of your life, then God has a deeper relationship for you to experience in the power and the 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 hippie experience. And so get out your concordances. I'm not going to do it for you.

Getting lazy. Get out your concordances and go back through the book of Acts and notice the hippie preposition in relationship to the Holy Spirit upon the believers. And you'll 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 hippie upon you, over you, and you shall be witnesses unto me. There are those who like the term baptism. 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'm just submerged, submersed or whatever in the Spirit of God.

And I'm just, you know, 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 a Holy Spirit if they listened to a Paulist because he preached John's message that the one was coming, was going to baptize them with the Holy Spirit with fire, but they hadn't heard that it had yet happened. We haven't even heard that that's happened yet.

And so he said unto them, then how were you baptized? Now, Jesus said, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. So Paul, you haven't heard of the Holy Spirit. How are you baptized? If it was the Apostles formula in Matthew, they at least would have heard of it.

And they said we were baptized unto John's baptism, which was a baptism of repentance. And then Paul said, John barely baptized with the baptism of repentance, but he said to the people that they should believe on him, which should come after him. That is on Christ Jesus.

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. And so when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul, now they were baptized, now Paul laid his hands upon them and the Holy Ghost came.

He came upon them and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Paul tells us that there are many manifestations of the spirit in the Corinthian epistle, chapter 12. 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 within a person's life is not tongues, is not prophecy, nor the word of wisdom or knowledge or miracles even, but is love. For the fruit of the spirit is love.

And if I speak with the tongues of men and angels and have not love, they are meaningless sounds. I might as well just 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've 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, 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.

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

And so, Paul laid his hands on them. They received the Holy Spirit. He came happy upon them and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

And there were about twelve men. And so, he went into the synagogue and he 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 they believed not but spake evil of that way.

And 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 he separated the disciples and he began to dispute daily in the school of one Tyrannus.

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'd 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 there said they used to say that there were more people that sleep at one o'clock in the afternoon than there was at one o'clock in the morning. 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'd 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, Paul Tyrannus would then probably be teaching in the school till 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 sweatband and someone would grab it and take it and put it on a sick person.

And 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 tent maker. Paul did work there in Ephesus as a tent maker to provide his own needs and those that were with him, as that will be demonstrated next week in our study as you continue into the 20th chapter of Acts. So he continued this for a period of two years so that they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

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 of product that offspring and the springing up of other churches. They're just that just seems to be the natural progression in the work of the spirit.

And it's 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 200 churches across the United States have sprung out of this church and are 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 churches, but we have grandson granddaughter type of churches, now churches that have spun off from churches that have spun off.

And as time goes on and the continues to work, we'll probably even go into it next generation of spin off as the word of God, you know, works mightily in the hearts of the people around the country. So here the whole area of Asia began to be evangelized as a result of the ministry of Paul there in Ephesus. And God brought special miracles by the hands of Paul so that from his body were brought to the sick.

The handkerchiefs are literally the sweat bands and the aprons and the diseases departed from them and evil spirits went out of them. Now, I believe that the value of these handkerchiefs was 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's 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 think that the bringing of a handkerchief from Paul or the sweat band, as the case may be, and laying it upon the sick person was a place of releasing faith. I know that, you know, as this handkerchief is laid on me, I'm going to be healed.

God's going to touch me, you know. And it gives us just a point of contact to release faith. There used to be a man in Los Angeles.

His name was Kelso Glover, who for years was on the radio, a deeply spiritual man that I admired. And he had the practice of sending out handkerchiefs. Now, there are some that are doing that that I don't admire.

It's sheer gimmickry. And they only are doing it in order to get you on the mailing list to get you as one of their regular contributors. And I think that that borders blasphemy.

And I cannot be in sympathy with it. I abhor it. But Kelso Glover was a beautiful, godly man, a man of prayer.

And when I was a student in college, I became acquainted with him. And many times I would pray with him as he would take a stack of little cloths and lay his hands on them and pray over them, that God would use these as instruments of stirring a person's faith to receive the work of God. And then people would write from all over requesting these handkerchiefs, and he would mail them out.

And he received a lot of interesting letters of how God had worked a healing in the life of people who had received these handkerchiefs. I remember especially one letter that he received from a lady who had requested the handkerchief. And he sent it out to her, and he got another letter back.

And in her second letter, she said, Would you please send me another handkerchief? She said, The one that you sent me, I had on my table. And she said, My son, who is an unbeliever, came by with his family to go to the theater. And he saw it, and he said, What's this, Mom? And she said, Oh, that's an anointed cloth that an evangelist sent me.

And he said, Well, I think I'll take it with me. And he stuck it in his coat pocket and went to the theater with his family. And during the movie, he said to his wife, I smell smoke.

And she said, You're crazy. You don't have any sense of smell. And it was true.

He did not have any olfactory senses. And he said, I tell you, I smell smoke. She said, I tell you, you're crazy.

You can't smell. And so he went to the stage of the theater, and he said, Ladies and gentlemen, we're having a slight problem, and we want you to all evacuate the theater immediately. And he stood there and ordered the evacuation of the theater, while his wife thought that he had gone completely insane.

Once the theater was safely evacuated, a fire broke out and consumed the theater. She said, He won't give me my cloth back. Would you please send me another one? Now, I read the letter.

You that have difficulty believing that only have difficulty because of your limited concept of God's power. For Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And Jesus said, Only believe all things are possible.

And so special miracles were wrought by Paul. And a part of this was taking these cloths, his aprons. Wouldn't that be a sort of a difficult thing every time you take your apron off to go preach someone rips off your apron.

But yet, they would take them under the sick, lay them on them, and God would work. Now, you remember in the Old Testament, the case of Elisha the prophet, when they buried him. And some time later, there was a war going on, and this guy was killed, and they tossed him into the pit where they had buried Elisha.

And when the guy landed, you know, the power of the bones or whatever, I don't know. The guy was revived and came back to life. Now, of course, a person might say, well, you know, when he landed at the bottom, you know, that jarred his lungs and he started breathing again.

The scripture would seem to indicate that there was just latent power even in the bones of Elisha. Now, I'm 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 anymore by our unbelief, but we 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'll find He'll begin to do something. He'll 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 who were exorcists. Now, Ephesus was a place of great superstition. There were all kinds of magical little amulets 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 to know different things, they had little Scriptures for all kinds of different things.

They had their little shops. And you could buy these little magical charms, which in that case, were these exorcist 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 preaches, because they had heard, no doubt, Paul in the name of Jesus commanding evil spirits to leave.

Now, 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 whom the evil spirit was leaped on them and overcame them and prevailed against them so that they fled out of the house naked and wounded.

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 of the Jews and the Greeks who dwelt at Ephesus, and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

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 believe 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 of the men, and they estimated the price of them to be about 50,000 pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed. So, Paul had a very effective and powerful ministry there in Ephesus.

And 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. 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 communism was a total failure, and it left the church in a bankrupt state. 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. And 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.

There'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.

So he sent messages to the churches. And in the Corinthian letter, he said, now, you know, when you gather together, each one bring an offering as God has laid upon your heart. So give, and God loves the hilarious giver.

He was talking about giving to this offering that he would collect when he would go on back to Jerusalem. And at the same time, there arose no stir about that way. Again, the reference to the way.

There was no, there was no small stir. People began to get stirred up because there was a certain man whose name was Demetrius. And he was a silversmith and he made silver shrines for Diana, which is the

Latin name for Artemis, the Greek goddess, who was that little goddess with a multi-breasted goddess.

You've probably seen pictures of her, Artemis, the goddess of fertility worshipped by the Greeks. And the idea of the multitude of breast was the ability to nurse many, many children, I guess, at once the goddess of fertility. And this fellow Demetrius was a silversmith and he had been making all these little multi-breasted 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've been made wealthy by this craft. Moreover, you see in here that not here in Ephesus alone, but almost throughout all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people saying that there are no gods which are made with hands.

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 our living.

And we've been wealthy by this, but we're about to go broke, you know, this guy prevails. So when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath and they 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.

So this, no doubt, is the Gaius that have 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. And they rushed with one accord into the theater.

And when Paul would have entered into the people in, unto the people, the disciples would not allow Paul. He had guts. I mean, he was here's a big crowd of people in a riotous state and all upset over Paul.

And he's ready to go in and talk to them. You know, 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 Paul's friends, sent unto him desiring that he would not venture himself into the theater. Now, inside, some were crying one thing and some another for the assembly was confused. And for the most part, the people didn't even know why they'd come together.

You know, just one of those mob scenes where, you know, people are yelling and screaming and going into the theater and making a lot of noise. So, you know, the rest of the people just follow in and hear all the shock. They don't even know why they're there, that there's a big tumult.

And then they drew Alexander out of the multitude. The Jews putting him forward and Alexander beckoned with a hand and would have made his defense under the people. But when they knew that he was a Jew, all of them with one voice for the space of two hours, cried out, great is Diana of the Ephesians.

This temple of Diana in Ephesus was a magnificent building, 425 feet long, 125 columns, and was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was built because someone found a little black image of a multi-breasted Artemis there on the spot. And so the word went around that Jupiter had sent down this little image of Diana, and thus they built this huge temple there.

And for the space of two hours, these people were chanting, great is Diana of the Ephesians. And when the town clerk had appeased the people, he said, ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knows not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshiper of the great goddess Diana? Hey, who doesn't know, but we are all worshipers of Diana. And of the image which fell down from Jupiter, this one particular little black multi-breasted goddess that was found.

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 have a matter against any man, the courts are open and there are deputies.

Let them go ahead and implead one another. But if you inquire anything 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 gathering together. So when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly. So cooler heads prevailed when the town clerk got up and made this appeal to the people.

So this, though, did perpetrate Paul's leaving Ephesus. He had been planning to do so. It already sent Timothy and Erastus ahead to Macedonia with the letters for the people to gather the offerings for him when he came.

They didn't want any collections made while he was there. Get it all collected before I come. And on his way to Jerusalem, he was going to make the swing through Greece.

And so as we get into chapter 20, we will get Paul's quick swing through Greece and then his return near to Ephesus, coming to Miletus, calling for the elders. And this beautiful, impassioned, emotional speech of Paul to the elders of Ephesus in our study next week. Great study next week.

Be sure you read chapters 20, 21 as we continue through the word of God. And 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.

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