

## THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

### MINISTRY NOTES

- A. The Third Missionary Journey
  - 1. Paul sought to revisit churches from his earlier missionary journeys in order to encourage them.
  - 2. He headed west to Asia Minor to minister at Ephesus where he was prevented by the Holy Spirit from ministering at the beginning of his second missionary journey.
- B. Completion of Paul's Second Missionary Journey
  - 1. It is important to set God ordained ministry priorities.
  - 2. Allow other Christians to live out their faith as they believe God is leading them.
  - 3. Be willing to learn from others.

### AT EPHEBUS, ACTS 19:1-20

- A. Paul's initial ministry in Ephesus (1-7)
  - 1. Paul arrived in Ephesus (1a), *And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus.*
    - a. Apollos was at Corinth.
      - 1) He left Ephesus Paul before arrived.
      - 2) Paul had only heard about Apollos from Aquila and Priscilla.
    - b. Paul arrived in Ephesus.
      - 1) He took the northern more direct route from the east into Ephesus.
      - 2) It went through Galatia and Phrygia as mentioned in Acts 18:23.
    - c. Importance of Ephesus
      - 1) It was the key commercial center of Asia Minor.
      - 2) It was a key religious center, T. Constable, *The greatest glory of Ephesus was that she was the guardian of the most famous pagan temple in the world...Ephesus was a hotbed of religious superstition and occult practices.*
      - 3) It became Paul's base of operations for his third missionary journey.
      - 4) Also, it was the key base for ministry for Timothy and even the Apostle John, A. Robertson, *John the Apostle seems to have spent the closing years of his ministry in Ephesus and neighborhood. The Book of the Revelation of John is addressed to a circle of seven churches in this province of Asia (Rev. 1:11), a list which by no means includes all in the province. It is clear, therefore, that Paul made no mistake in choosing it for his present headquarters.*
    - d. Thomas Constable, *Luke's account of Paul's third missionary journey is essentially a record of Paul's ministry in Ephesus, the city he probably tried to reach at the beginning of his second journey (cf. 16:6).*
  - 2. Paul questioned some disciples of John the Baptist (1b-3)
    - a. Paul encountered some men who he assumed were disciples (1b), *There he found some disciples.*
      - 1) He must have met them with a group of believers.
      - 2) He assumed they were Christians until he found out that their understanding was deficient.
    - b. He asked them two questions to determine where they were spiritually (2-3)
      - 1) Had they received the Holy Spirit when they believed? (2), *And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.*
        - a) Paul asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed.
          - 1] The correct translation is *when you believed* not *since you believed* as is found in some translations.
          - 2] He was assuming they were not saved but not convinced they were saved.

- b) They said they had not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.
  - 1] They probably meant that they had not heard that the Lord had given the Holy Spirit as John had predicted.
  - 2] John the Baptist had clearly predicted the coming work of the Holy Spirit, Matthew 3:11, *I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*
  - 3] Their response to his question would make it clear as to where they were concerning their faith.
    - a] Romans 8:9, *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.*
    - b] 1 Corinthians 12:13, *For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*
  
- 2) Into what had they been baptized? (3), ***And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They said, “Into John’s baptism.”***
  - a) Paul asked them into what had they been baptized.
    - 1] Their baptism must be deficient if they were not aware of the working of the Holy Spirit.
    - 2] His question would pinpoint what they knew since he now knew more about what they didn’t know.
  
  - b) They said they were baptized into the baptism of John.
    - 1] This response identified them as God-fearers not believers.
    - 2] Thomas Constable, *Like Apollos (18:25), they had been baptized as a symbol of repentance only.*
    - 3] These men only had one side of the coin of salvation, repentance toward God but not faith in Christ.
    - 4] Kenneth Gangel, *Since these men had no idea what happened at Pentecost, they had not taken that step. The separation between their initial faith (whatever that was) and the present time was due to ignorance.*
    - 5] John Stott, *They understood neither that the new age had been ushered in by Jesus, nor that those who believe in him and are baptized into him receive the distinctive blessing of the new age, the indwelling Spirit.*
  
- 3. He instructed them concerning the difference between the baptism of John the Baptist and that of Jesus (4), ***And Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.”***
  - a. Paul informed them that John offered a baptism of repentance.
    - 1) John directed people to turn their hearts to God in preparation for what He planned to do in the lives of those who seek Him.
    - 2) John’s responsibility was to direct people on a path to the coming Messiah, Jesus, Mark 1:7-8, *And he preached, saying, “After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”*
    - 3) Scripture emphasizes that the baptism of the Holy Spirit accompanies faith in Jesus Christ.
  
- 4. The disciples placed faith in Jesus (5-7)
  - a. They were baptized in the name of Jesus (5), ***On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.***
    - 1) The men responded by placing their faith in Jesus Christ.
    - 2) Their desire for God was now tied to truth they had not known since repentance demands faith in Christ.
    - 3) Their new found faith was evidenced by baptism in the name of Jesus.
    - 4) This is not re-baptism because they had not even understood the baptism of John but now they do.

- b. They received the Holy Spirit evidenced by speaking in tongues and prophesying (6), ***And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.***
- 1) Paul laid his hands on them.
    - a) In Samaria, Peter and John laid hands on the non-Jewish converts confirming God's gift of the Spirit.
    - b) Here, the coming of the Spirit was confirmed in a place where demonic activity was strong.
      - 1] Thomas Constable, *These former disciples of John received the Holy Spirit when Paul laid his hands on them thus obviously connecting their endowment with Paul's message and apostolic authority...It seems that God wanted to highlight the fulfillment of Jesus' promise that He would send the Holy Spirit to be in and with believers (John 14:16–18, 26; 15:26). To do so God made the coming of that Spirit obvious until the church generally appreciated the fact that it normally occurred at the time of regeneration.*
      - 2) Stanley Toussaint, *It should be noted that the reception of the Holy Spirit [by Christians] in Acts does not follow any set pattern. He came into believers before baptism (Acts 10:44), at the time of or after baptism (8:12–16; 19:6), and by the laying on of apostolic hands (8:17; 19:6). Yet Paul declared (Rom. 8:9) that anyone without the Holy Spirit is not a Christian. Quite obviously the transitional Book of Acts is not to be used as a doctrinal source on how to receive the Holy Spirit (cf. comments on tongues, 1 Cor. 13:8–14:25).*
  - 2) The reception of the Holy Spirit was confirmed by their speaking in tongues and prophesying.
    - a) Sign gifts were meant to confirm the message and the messenger, J. Stott, *...tongue-speaking and prophesying, were special to Ephesus, as to Samaria, in order to demonstrate visibly and publicly that particular groups were incorporated into Christ by the Spirit; the New Testament does not universalize them.*
    - b) The gift of tongues was the ability to share the Gospel with those whose language one did not know, J. Vernon McGee, *Ephesus was a polyglot city of the Roman Empire. There were many languages spoken there, just as there had been in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. East and West met all along that coast. . . . These men were now able to give the good news about Christ to the entire city.*
    - c) This is the last reference to speaking in tongues in Acts.
      - 1] Paul declared that these sign gifts would pass away, or cease of themselves, 1 Corinthians 13:8, *Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.*
      - 2] Early church fathers wrote that the gift of tongues tapered off in the early history of the church.
      - 3] This was due to the witness of the New Testament canon which was affirmed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.
  - 3) Thomas Constable, *God evidently gave the gift of prophesying to each of these Ephesian disciples to enable them to assume leadership of the church and the church's mission.*
- c. Several observations by Kenneth Gangel:
- 1) The coming of the Holy Spirit to a believer occurs at the time of regeneration and is not some subsequent event.
  - 2) Luke does not commonly associate the laying on of hands with baptism; in fact, in Acts we find it only here.
  - 3) The manifestation of tongues may certainly be given by God in connection with Spirit baptism, but does not commonly appear that way in Acts.
- d. There were about twelve men who came to faith in Jesus (7), ***There were about twelve men in all.***
- 1) Some want to give significance to the number of men here by tying it to the number of the disciples.
  - 2) I believe Luke was informing us of the number of men who were disciples of John and then became disciples of Jesus.

## B. Paul's ongoing ministry in Ephesus (8-12)

1. He spent three months proclaiming the Gospel in the synagogue (8), ***And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.***
  - a. Paul boldly proclaimed the Gospel in the synagogue, T. Constable, *Paul followed his standard procedure of preaching to the Jews in the synagogue at Ephesus as long as possible. Here the Jews were more tolerant than they had been in some other towns that Paul had evangelized, and he was able to continue speaking there for three months.*
  - b. It continued for three months, Stanley Toussaint, *Three months in a synagogue without a riot was something of a record for Paul. Perhaps the cosmopolitan nature of Ephesus caused the Jews there to be more tolerant.*

- c. Paul reasoned persuasively which is the best translation of the Greek construction.
  - 1) He focused on the kingdom of God as Jesus did when He spoke with the disciples after His resurrection.
  - 2) Acts 1:3, *He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.*
  - 3) Jews were concerned with the physical reign of the Messiah on earth. Paul must have focused on the dual role of Jesus as Messiah, first as suffering servant and later as King of Kings.
  
2. He left the synagogue because of false accusations (9)
  - a. Unbelieving Jews said evil things about faith in Christ and Paul moved his ministry to the hall of Tyrannus (9), ***But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus.***
    - 1) Some of the Jews would not believe and made false statement concerning the Way.
      - a) Opposition arose as it had in other synagogues on Paul's missionary journeys.
      - b) Richard Lenski, *The longer Paul applied grace in order to persuade, the worse they became...It is also impossible to force the gospel upon men who, after they have heard it, reject and revile it.*
      - c) William Larkin, Jr., *We cannot remain neutral; we are either softened toward or hardened against an oft-repeated message.*
      - d) *The Way* (Christianity) was becoming more and more identified by Jews as a separate religion from Judaism.
    - 2) Paul took the disciples with him and taught daily in the hall of Tyrannus.
      - a) He withdrew from the synagogue, R. Lenski, *It is a terrible matter for the sinner when saving grace is compelled to withdraw and to abandon him to God's judgment.*
      - b) He took those who had come to faith with him.
      - c) The Gospel was proclaimed daily in the hall of Tyrannus.
        - 1] The hall of Tyrannus was a school owned and or run by Tyrannus and operated in the cool of the morning.
        - 2] Paul had access to the classroom from around noon to 4 p.m.
  
3. Results of Paul's ministry in Ephesus (10-12)
  - a. He reached many Jews and Greeks throughout Asia as he taught there for two years (10), ***This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.***
    - 1) Paul's two year ministry resulted in the evangelization of the whole province.
    - 2) F. F. Bruce, *The province was intensively evangelized, and became one of the leading centres of Christianity for centuries afterwards...Only where there is such commitment to teach and such hunger to receive the word of the Lord will there be advances like that portrayed in the next verse (verse 10).*
    - 3) Thomas Constable, *As a result of this work, the local Christians preached the gospel and established churches all over the province of Asia. Among these were the churches of Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis in the Lycus Valley (Col. 4:13), though evidently Paul did not personally plant them (cf. Col. 2:1; 4:13)... Timothy and later the Apostle John followed Paul in ministry there. The church at Ephesus became the recipient of at least three New Testament epistles (Ephesians, 1 and 2 Timothy) and possible as many as seven (1, 2, and 3 John, and Revelation).*
  - b. God performed extraordinary miracles through Paul (11-12), ***And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them.***
    - 1) Jesus performed miracles through Paul as He did through Peter.
      - a) The sick were healed physically.
      - b) The demon possessed were delivered spiritually.
    - 2) Some of the miracles were *extraordinary* or *exceptional*.
      - a) The use of items touched by Paul which brought healing were exceptional, not the norm.
      - b) Stanley Toussaint, *Apparently the handkerchiefs and aprons were tangible symbols of God's power through His apostle; these objects had no magical powers in themselves.*

- 3) Ephesus was uniquely open to supernatural activity.
  - a) G. Campbell Morgan, *The atmosphere of the city was electric with sorcery and incantations, with exorcists, with all kinds of magical impostors.*
  - b) William Larkin, Jr., *The private side of paganism in the ancient world was the attempt to manipulate spiritual forces via magical incantations, ritual acts and paraphernalia in order to ward off evil and bring well-being.*
  - c) Thomas Constable, *Evidently it was because of the multitudes of magicians and religious charlatans that worked Ephesus that God demonstrated His power in these supernatural ways.*
  - d) These acts confirmed the message of Paul as having come from the one true God.

C. Attempted ministry by impostors (13-20)

1. Jewish magicians attempted to use the name of Jesus to deliver people from demons (13-14), ***Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims." Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this.***
  - a. Some Jewish unbelievers attempted to use the name of Jesus to deliver people from demons.
    - 1) They called on the name of Jesus whom Paul proclaimed.
    - 2) They assumed that the name of Jesus carried magical power.
      - a) Richard Lenski, *These exorcists imagined that Paul somehow had discovered a far more potent name for charming, namely the name "Jesus." So they themselves undertook to use it.*
      - b) Richard Longenecker, *The use of magical names in incantations to exorcise evil spirits was common in the ancient world, and it seems to have been especially prominent at Ephesus.*
  - c. They were seven sons of Sceva., a Jewish high priest.
    - 1) Sceva was not a Jewish high priest who held office in Jerusalem.
    - 2) He may have been the head of a priestly family.
    - 3) He may have just claimed to be a high priest.
    - 4) Certainly, the sons used his title to guarantee they had supernatural powers.
2. An evil spirit overcame the sons of Sceva who tried to master him (15-17)
  - a. The evil spirit said he knew Jesus and Paul but not them (15), ***But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?"***
    - 1) The demon responded by acknowledging Jesus and Paul.
      - a) He knows Jesus, the Greek word *to know by interaction and experience.*
      - b) He recognizes Paul, the Greek word *to know about, to understand.*
    - 2) The demon did not recognize these sons of Sceva.
      - a) Knowing the name of Jesus is not enough to control a demon.
      - b) Abiding in Jesus enables His authority which alone can control a demon.
      - c) William Larkin, Jr., *From the mouth of a demon we learn the valuable lessons that Jesus will not allow his name to be reduce to a magical formula (Exodus 20:7). Only those with a personal relationship with Christ and who invoke His name in humble faith are in the correct position to see God act to drive out demons.*
  - b. The man possessed by the evil spirit overpowered them and they ran out of the house naked and injured (16), ***And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.***
    - 1) The demon possessed man attacked the sons of Sceva.
    - 2) They were overpowered and barely escaped with their lives.
      - a) Thomas Constable, *The name of Jesus, like an unfamiliar weapon misused, exploded in their hands; and they were taught a lesson about the danger of using the name of Jesus in their dabbling in the supernatural.*
      - b) Kenneth Gangel, *Apparently the exorcism business can be rather dangerous, especially when one starts using Jesus' name without being controlled by his Spirit.*

- c. People in Ephesus responded to that event with fear by magnifying the name of Jesus (17), ***And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled.***
- 1) Reports of this event raised awareness of Jesus among Jews and Greeks and caused them to be fearful.
    - a) Is this Jesus a supernatural force that they can't control?
    - b) Does He desire to do us if we don't follow Him?
  - 2) The name of the Lord Jesus was extolled.
    - a) His name became important.
    - b) Jesus was someone who must be considered when dealing with the supernatural.
    - c) I. Howard Marshall, *In a situation where people were gripped by superstition, perhaps the only way for Christianity to spread was by the demonstration that the power of Jesus was superior to that of the demons.*
3. Believers were convicted of their involvement in magic (18-19)
- a. Many confessed what they had been doing (18), ***Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices.***
    - 1) Christians publicly confessed their involvement in the magical arts.
    - 2) *practices*
      - a) The word refers to magical spells and formulas.
      - b) It was considered that divulging such secrets would cause them to lose their power.
      - c) Thomas Constable, *The fact that the converted Ephesian magicians disclosed these shows the genuineness of their repentance.*
    - 3) The demonic encounter with the sons of Sceva brought fear and repentance, Kenneth Gangel, *Until the Sceva incident, new Christians did not necessarily consider their former behavior to be that evil. Now, seeing how they should revere the name of Jesus, and how his people should avoid contact with the occult and anything that has connection with demons, they gladly rid themselves of the past.*
  - b. Others brought their books on magic and burned them in public (19), ***And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver.***
    - 1) Those who had been involved with magic arts brought their books and burned them in public.
      - a) *books*, were little rolls of paper inscribed with magical formulas and symbols.
      - b) *Ephesian writings* was a common term for documents containing spells.
    - 2) The value of the burned books was 50,000 pieces of silver.
      - a) It is not certain what the value was but it must have been a large sum.
      - b) Richard Lenski, *That was a lot of money to be consigned to the flames. It was one of the best investments these believers ever made.*
    - 3) Thomas Constable, *It is all too true that too many of us hate our sins but cannot leave them. Even when we do seek to leave them there is the lingering and the backward look. There are times in life when treatment must be surgical, when only the clean and final break will suffice.*
4. The Word of God increasingly brought people to Jesus (20), ***So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.***
- a. Thomas Constable, *As a consequence of the repentance described in the preceding verses, the church became purer as well as larger.*
  - b. Kenneth Gangel, *Truth has invaded the kingdom of Diana and is winning the battle.*

<b>CONCLUSION</b>
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- A. Repentance must be tied to faith in the truth of the person and work of Jesus.
- B. Jesus is not a name to be used as a magical formula but a person to be worshiped and served.
- C. We must confess our sins as well as separate ourselves from them.