

Acts 18:23-19:10 – Mighty in the Word

Get on the Bus – Wow, what a passage! *Isn't it nice of Tony to give me this text and then head out of town to Austin, good friend huh?* Well I am going to try and tackle this and if you aren't satisfied or have further questions email them to me at tony@idcraleigh.com!

- **Unbeliever – if you are here, what a Sunday** – *one thing you will see is we don't skip tough passages but also be encouraged today if you don't know much about the faith but want to know more* – all of us in here have been in that place and God has placed people in our lives to explain to us the Way more accurately and that is what I hope to do today!

Pray – We don't just want to hear a man's speak we want to be changed by the word of God...

Opening Illustration – **Isn't it amazing to look back at highlights and notes in old bibles or in our notebooks and be embarrassed about what we used to believe?** All of us at times have needed people help us – it may even have been over something like Baptism (Jon and Maddy)

- **I remember my twin brother telling me of how he had to do this with one of my nieces Maddy** – she was captivated by baptism and he walked in one day when she was 3 and saw her talking to Cinderella saying **“Do you believe in God?”** (Well that's not enough) Well I baptize you my sister Cinderella in the name of the Father and the Son” (she forgot the Spirit like a good/bad Baptist) but *there was a further problem with the baptism, she just kept holding her under the water!* **Suffice it to say there were a lot of things to correct** – Like for one, no one is going to let you baptize them if you keep them under the water!
- **But this is the normal pattern for the Christian whether you are saved young or in older age** – *It starts out by you receiving the gospel in a moment then growing more in your faith as God puts people in your path to explain it more accurately* – that is what is going on this passage!

Main Idea – We need to be mighty in the Word for each other and for the World – **We must be Word-driven disciple makers who teach and receive gospel instruction** (after all this is the commission our Great King has given us!)

(READ V. 23) Context – In this text we will see 3 persons who we see are Mighty in Discipleship through the Word in 4 different scenes:

First Paul doing Follow Up Discipleship as we set the Context – **Paul has returned to his sending church to give an account of his 2nd journey** – we see many great lessons for missionaries in these chapters we have been going through: 1) Like if you leave us **come back to us** and let us rejoice with you 2) **Don't do this on your own**, involve the church and the elders – this is how to be a sent one! 3) And next we will see **follow up** with those disciples you have made and churches you have planted!

- **Paul now leaves for his 3rd (and what would prove to be his last) journey again sent by his home church where he will initially go through and strengthen the churches he planted** (*we must continue to do this w/ the Harvests and RCF's*) – **We see Paul is not only concerned with converts but also for their maturity and progress in the faith** (Must keep these two together)

And after strengthening the existing churches he follows his pattern of going to a leading City and heads back (keeping his promise) Ephesus – **This was the principal city Asia minor as it was a commercial Center but more than that a leading center for Pagan Religion**

- *The pride of the city was the Temple of Artemis (or Diana) which was 4x the size of the Parthenon and one of the 7 Wonders of the World* **(PICTURES AND MAPS)**

A note before I jump in – these are not easy verses and I am going to give you my best but you all (as Begg says) are sensible people who can and should examine the scriptures for yourself to see if what I say is true – so you have homework!

I. (READ 24 – 25) Aquila and Priscilla: Mentoring Discipleship (18:24-26)

Here for the first time we are introduced to Apollos (who is mentioned surprisingly in only 10 verses in the Scriptures) – *a man from Alexandria who Luther proposed may have been the writer of Hebrews (we will see why in a minute)*

- Alexandria (MAP) was the intellectual center of the World and had a world-renowned library – *In addition it was where the LXX was translated as well as being home to famous philosophical scholars like Philo, and later religious scholars like Clement, Athanasius, Origin, and more*

A Powerful Description is given of Apollos:

- **An Eloquent Man** – **what a thing to be said of someone – that Matt is an eloquent man** – *well it also carries the idea of learned or skilled which is not surprising seeing he is from Alexandria*
- **Competent or Mighty (NKJV) in the Scriptures** – **he was a great learner, particularly of the OT – Can this phrase be used of you? Are you a Berean? (Discernment???)**
- **Instructed in the Way of the Lord** – **The Greek word gives the source of our word catechized – the idea is that of learning through echo or repetitious sound** – Catechizing is a good method of discipleship (FBA! Broadus)
- **Fervent in the Spirit** – **He was passionate about the ways of the Lord** – he was not only educated but enthusiastic and these don't need to be in opposition
 - o **Illustration** – **we will be passionate about the things we are enthralled by** – *Kids about Toys or my little niece when she hears the Sofia the First theme song come on, or Grandparents with Grandchildren* – We must have save fervency with our faith if we believe it!
 - o **This phrase is also one of the reasons I think he is a Christian – in the Greek text Luke includes a definite article which seems to indicate The Holy Spirit** – *in fact all the things said of him are the kind of things that would be said about a believer (mighty in Scriptures, fervent in the Spirit, teaching accurately about Jesus)* – Those in Ephesus on the other hand don't have the Spirit nor teach accurately about Jesus which is why I conclude they are not believers!
- **Teaches Accurately about Jesus** – **He also combines great fervor with teaching about Jesus accurately which is a rare combination** – *too often churches are divided in those that are either teaching churches (where education is important but worship, and prayer aren't) or they are marked as fervent emotional churches where teaching isn't as present* – **may we be a combo of both enthralled with the message with our emotions and our minds!**
- **Powerful in Rhetoric and Debate** – **he combined all of this with a persuasive and convincing speaking ability** – As we say he could shuck the corn!

What a resume? In a striking economy of words he gets a glowing review but there is a hitch!

(READ 25B AND 26) – **All of these wonderful things said about him but there is a problem he is ignorant about something as profound as Baptism** (*he knew only the baptism of John which was only a baptism of repentance*) – *it is likely he was unaware of the baptism commanded by Jesus after his resurrection initiated at Pentecost and this has led it seems to something deficient in his doctrine that needs to be corrected*

- **He is not yet fully matured so God in his kindness sends to him two manual laborers who notice this defect in his theology** – **Who are these two? Well they are a married couple with rhyming names (isn't that cute? I guess I am looking for a Kate!)**
- **They out of concern for a brother and the truth (and I love this phrase) “explained to him the way of God more accurately”** – we see even speaking boldly about Jesus is not enough without more accurate understanding

Aren't you thankful for brothers and sister who will do the awkward work to show a brother a more excellent way – **this is a sign of love so that he would be more accurate in handling doctrine** – *we should all want PRECISION in theology because it is simply a matter of knowing Him better!*

- **Even though Apollos was gifted he wasn't beyond instruction** – *we should take note of that in evangelical life (I think too often we are either on one hand to scared to correct or on the other obnoxious jerks who want to correct every little thing)* – **We must realize there is a way for correction and need for it!**
- **It is noteworthy that both of them explained the way of God more accurately to him** – **we see here that both men and women are capable and called to give instruction in the Word without violating 1 Timothy 2 even correcting the most gifted of teachers** (Illustration: *This should take place in our GG's, I learn often from women like Laura Thigpen and Shauna Sigmon – so ladies be Mighty in the Word for the good of your brothers!*)

This scene is instructive for both correctors and the corrected –they did not correct him in public but they took him in private (some translate to their home) – THIS IS WHAT I DO EACH WEEK WITH TONY!

- **For the corrector – Be bold but also gentle as the goal is not to shame or humiliate but lovingly correct** (Illustration: *This is what I would do with the misbehaving student in Class*) – We need more brothers and sisters offering gentle corrections to one another so we can be shown a more excellent way
 - o **There are times to be rebuked publically as Paul does** – *but this is mostly for heresy from a teacher or leader! It is best to handle these things privately* – which also demonstrates that what is most important to you is not being right or even seen to be right but this is done out of love!
- **For the corrected – We must have the spirit of Apollos** – *we must see that for our growth we need to allow people the freedom to speak in to our life and theology (proverbs fool or wise?)*
 - o **We see here a man of superior ability humbling himself before two day laborers** – **he doesn't say who do you think you are, I am a better speaker than Paul (the bible will one day call me mighty)** – No he takes the posture of a learner
 - o **This heir of superiority or man of God theology we have sometimes in evangelicalism is so counter the scriptures** – *pastors who think they are above correction because of how big their church is! That is sickening! THAT IS NOT THE SPIRIT OF APOLLOS)*

Christian this is how the penny drops – *all of us at times have been overwhelmed by theological words (all the 'Ations) – but then suddenly over time the penny begins to drop as God puts people in our path*

(Illustration: I felt like this when I first got to seminary just overwhelmed and I remember one time asking one of the biggest goofballs about a word... **but then over time things began to fall in to place if we will have the Spirit of Apollos**)

II. (READ 18:27-28) Apollos: Watering Discipleship (Apollos waters the seeds Pual has already planted in Corinth)

Now we see because these two loved a brother enough and because he received correction humbly he will now be used mightily in Corinth as now his gifts are coupled with more accurate understanding – *our correction is not for it to just stay with us, but so that we can then pass it on so others can grow in maturity*

- **If the sermons we preach, discussions we have in GG, songs we sing, etc just stay in these rooms or just stay in Raleigh then we are missing the point of accurate understanding** – **this is the point of the church building each other up so we can be scatter to build up others!**
- **He goes now with the endorsement of the brothers by a letter (which used to be a common practice)** – *And I love the interconnectivity of the Church*

How was he used, I love this phrase – He greatly helped those who through grace had believed – could it be said of us... and see that ALL OF US PLAY A PART in the growth, some plant and others water!

- **How was he of help? He came preaching tips for better living? No – *Straight Gospel that was for the good of the believer, not just the unbeliever!***
- **He greatly helps them by refuting the Jews and showing clearly from the OT that the Christ is Jesus – *He is a Christocentric Preacher (likely showing that Jesus was the suffering servant and the promised one of 2 Samuel 7)* – This is likely why Luther thought he was the author of Hebrews!**

III. (READ 1-4) (19:1-10) Paul: Evangelizing and Multiplying Discipleship

Now we come to this tough scene where Paul meets some disciples of John (likely left Palestine before Jesus' ministry began)– *one could be thrown off at first because they are called disciples but if take in whole context and don't get thrown off by verse divisions we will see these are disciples of John not Jesus (I do not think they are believers – they don't have the Spirit and Romans 8:9 says: "But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him" nor did they teach accurately about Jesus)*

- **And something in their behavior sparks Paul to ask two questions – **Did you receive the Spirit and who's Baptism?** *Paul here breaking a cardinal rule in our society asking someone about their religious beliefs!***
- **But notice here Paul links the Spirit with Belief and links Baptism with Belief (I went back and studied Baptizo!) – and his questions indicate his assumptions that who have believed have received the Spirit and those who have been baptized have received the Spirit – he took it for granted that baptized believers receive the gift of the indwelling Spirit indicating that he does not think they are true followers or that something is terrible amiss here!**

They get both questions wrong – They don't know about the Spirit (*likely meaning his role in the New Covenant Community because as disciples of John they would have heard of the Spirit which also indicates that seem to have no knowledge of Christ, His death and Resurrection, nor Pentecost*) **and they have the wrong Baptism** (*only John's which was incomplete as it was simply preparatory stressing man's sinfulness and need for the one to come – they now needed to embrace the sin-bearer and the full gospel!*)

- **We see here it is possible to know a good deal about the things of Christianity and not be Christians – which is why we are called to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith which means true belief and true obedience (Lordship)!**

(READ 5-7) Upon hearing that John's message has been fulfilled in Christ they believe and experience new birth and they testify to this in submitting to Christian Baptism – *a clear sign of their conversion is they receive the Spirit!*

- **Their speaking in tongues (with Tongues in NKJV – what else would you speak with?) and prophesying was a verification that they had indeed received the Spirit – *God clearly shows they now have indeed been born again and this is manifested in sign gifts validating their conversion!***
- **We see here a Mini-Pentecost since they had never heard of Pentecost – *As we will see in a minute tongues does not accompany every conversion (this is not normative) but throughout Acts when Gospel is breaking in to a new place Tongues follow* (Acts 2 – Pentecost/Jews, Acts 8 – Samaritans, Acts 10 God-fearing Gentiles, Acts 19 – Full Gentiles as the blessings of Pentecost have reached all the way in to Asia Minor!)**
- **And it closes with an interesting note – there were about 12 men in all likely giving further validation!**

A Few Notes on Spirit Baptism – or as some use this text to argue a 2nd Blessing of the Spirit:

- 1) **Be careful making things in Acts Normative for us – *particularly when you have one seemingly passing verse that is confusing as to whether they were Christians – some have argued from this text***

that there are two stages beginning with Regeneration/Faith and then at a later point receiving the Spirit but that is not what is going on here

- a. **Don't make this normative because the pattern in relation to Believing, receiving the Spirit, and water baptism because it is so varied in the Acts of the Apostles** – *In some places the Spirit is received immediately with water baptism but no hands are laid on and tongues are nowhere mentioned, in other places the Spirit is received after baptism but now laying on of hands while again no tongues evident, in other the places the Spirit is received before baptism but hands are not laid on but tongues are present* – as Bloesch says **“Discerning a separation of Spirit baptism from conversion is terrible amiss and holy unjustified”** and again as **Paul points out in Romans if one does not have the Spirit they are not a Christian!**
 - b. **Instead of focusing on the abnormality here, let's focus on the common elements that are in place for every Christian even if the order can sometimes vary: Repentance, Faith, The Indwelling Spirit, and Baptism as a sign of faith in Christ**
- 2) They are almost Christians but not Christians (even Charismatic commentators like Michael Green agree with this) and this position has zero scriptural backing – at the moment of conversation you are baptized in the Spirit and have all of Him – *1 Cor 12:13 “For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.” Paul doesn't say some of you have been baptized in the Spirit and some not...no ALL!*
 - 3) The doctrine of 2nd blessing misses the person and work of the Spirit and is dangerous because it teaches a two tiered Christianity – **the Spirit is given not to bring disunity but rather unity!**

What does this mean for us? 1) Be confident Christian that at your conversion received the Spirit, all of Him! The same Spirit who raised our Lord Christ from the Tomb is present in you! 2) **And be confident that fresh fillings of the Spirit do happen** (pray for them constantly)

(READ 8-10) – Paul continues in his pattern of evangelism, disciple-making, and church planting in a major city – *first goes to the Synagogue and is rejected and then moves to a public place preaching about the Christ*

- It says he preaches boldly but through reasoning and persuading – need both – Knowledge and passion are not in conflict – **Faith is not against evidence** – *in fact we come to faith when God opens our minds to understand it, a faith seeking understanding*
- **And does so about the Kingdom of God** – *this doesn't mean he wasn't preaching Jesus because you can't preach the Kingdom without preaching the Carpenter King* (READ Acts 28:31)

Once his message is rejected by the Jews and the Way is maligned in the gathering (which should not surprise us Jesus said they would) – *Paul knows when to move on though it seems some have believed and he takes them with him to the Hall of Tyrannus*

- **He moves to a public place** – *we must see this there are many people who will never dawn the door of a church building, we have to go out in to public in to non-religious spaces if we are to reach the world*

Tradition believes this teaching in Tyrannus Hall took place from 11-4pm in the hottest part of the day when people in that culture would take elongated Siestas (my kind of culture especially if it has Queso) – we see here that Paul works harder than them all as he would go straight from tent making to a lecturing (over all about 3000 hours) during hottest part of the day – DUDE WAS A BEAST!

- **He later reminded the Ephesian elders that he supported himself while there:** *“You yourselves know that these hands have provided for my needs and for those who were with me”* (Acts 20:34).

This hall is either owned by Tyrannus and he would have taught there during the cooler hours (An inscription bearing his name found in Ephesus though the Hall has not been found) – **his name means Tyrant**

- **Anybody thinking about naming your next son this (Shauna with the Shaddix's)?** – *It's likely not the name he got from his parents but rather his students who thought he was tough!*
- **It says Paul reasoned or dialogued – The Greek word is where we get our word dialogue from or the fact to argue** – *His new outreach to the Gentiles was in the form of dialogue evangelism and went on for two years...his longest stay anywhere*
- **The result – the gospel spreads from Ephesus to all of Asia Minor** – *Paul as is his pattern sets up in a major city to plant churches that would be strategic centers that would multiply disciples who would go out to the surrounding areas (likely Colossae and 7 churches in Revelation are planted through this work in Ephesus!)*
 - o **This is not a command in the Scriptures but it is a clear pattern and it tells us that the most to teach a place for Christians to live and work in minister is in leading cities** – both Ephesus and Corinth – why we chose Raleigh
 - o **All of Asia hearing from Ephesus wasn't suprising because the inhabitants would travel here to buy and sell or visit temple of Artemis** – Paul would have converted some of these and then multiplied them out to their home towns for further planting!

The preaching of the gospel is not just for the good of those that believe but so that they can be mobilized for the furtherance of the gospel – Making disciples who will make disciples!

- One last note – paul used all kinds of discipling and evangelism techniques and so must we:
 - o Religious spaces
 - o Non religious spaces like market place, friendship evangelism, homes, over meals, use your skills and gifts and be creative!
 - Be involved in the community (do the PTA thing, etc)
 - o Home bible studies in Corinth – consider doing this and do it with someone in your GG
 - o Dialogue – maybe in GG this week think through dialogue questions you can ask unbelievers
- ***We must do more than just invite to church but also persevere and persuade and don't always expect quick results and we must continue to grow in the gospel so we can persuade!***

Conclusion – so let's be mighty in the Word for the good of our brothers and sisters and the lost

- And let's focus on the main message of the Scriptures of the best news in the World (3 Trees, 3 Gardens) – **Believer and unbeliever you need this message that Paul and Apollos were preaching and I will give it to you now**

Unbeliever – you may be like those in Ephesus (almost Christians or far from it) but you may now be realizing your need for Christ surrender to him today, repent and believe and his forgiveness will be yours and his righteousness will be yours – right where you sit say I am sinner who deserves the judge of God but please see me through the blood of Christ, my only pleas!

- ***Confess what brothers and sisters from Apollos until now have been confessing Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God***

Believer – we need to take from this today how to learn and teach – to continually be disciple and disciple (all of us are called to teach whether you have a pulpit or not) and have enough love for those in your life to teach and be taught

- Some may need to respond publically in Baptism

As you think back to when you are young in the faith it is funny to consider the things we once believed – it may not be revealed when you are drowning Cinderella in the Bathtub (but just pull out old bibles and see the notes you have taken) but God in His kindness sends people along our paths to show us a more excellent way

- **Lets be enthralled by the Gospel and as we teach lets be taught and as we learn, lets teach for the cause of Christ in the World – LETS BE MIGHTY IN THE WORD**