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ACTS

SAVING A CITY

ACTS 19

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Paul's 3rd missionary journey
 - 1. Returns to Ephesus – Last visit they begged him to stay - “I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing.”
 - 2. On this trip he spent over 2 years preaching and teaching – the most time spent in a single city
 - a) Of all the events that took place in Ephesus, Luke decides to record what we have before us in the text
- B. Ephesus – which is in modern day Turkey – was the third largest city in the Roman Empire with a population of 250,000 during this time – right off the coast of Asia-Minor – the Holy Spirit discouraged the apostles from traveling to Asia is just for a time
 - 1. Worshipped Diana (Artemis) - a goddess of fertility, magic, and astrology
 - a) Excavated inscriptions portray that Artemis as a savior who was able to answer prayer. She was considered an extremely powerful deity with the ability to compel the passion of a woman toward a man
- C. The practice of magic was also popular in Ephesus, primarily among the poor and uneducated
 - 1. Believed in an unseen spirit world that influenced every aspect of life
 - a) Belief in magic and spirits was so prevalent in Ephesus that the term “Ephesian writings” was used to describe any document that contained magic formulas or spells
 - b) The kind of worldview that made individuals vulnerable to exploitation

Acts 19:1 And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples 2 he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” So they said to him, “We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.” 3 And he said to them, “Into what then were you baptized?” So they said, “Into John’s baptism.” 4 Then Paul said, “John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.” 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. 7 Now the men were about twelve in all. 8 And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. 9 But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. 10 And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

II. THE HOLY SPIRIT CAME UPON THEM

- A. There is disagreement regarding this passage which points to even broader disagreements about the Holy Spirit and what it means to be baptized in the Spirit
 - 1. The baptism of the Holy Spirit takes place at the moment of salvation and regeneration

- a) ***John 3:5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."***
 - b) ***1 Cor 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. Example of Cornelius and his family – while Peter was sharing the message that all who believe on the name of Jesus Christ will receive forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word
- 3. Through this lens, the above disciples were disciples of John, they had only been baptized into repentance – what we are seeing here is their actual conversion – believing for the first time in Jesus Christ
- B. Another view is that there is a second baptism of the Holy Spirit
 - 1. We have another passage we must deal with - In Acts 8:12 we read of a group of Samaritans who "believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, [and] they were baptized, both men and women." However, when we get to Acts 8:16, we find that "the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."
 - a) Disciples waiting in the upper room - they were followers of Jesus
 - b) You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you - and you will be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth
 - 2. The conversion experience is followed by a later and distinct experience of the Holy Spirit
 - 3. We receive the Holy Spirit at the moment of our salvation but there is a second immersion of the Spirit that empowers us to live out the Great Commission
- C. What do we do as Christians? We pick our sides, run to our corners, and take out our weapons
 - 1. Some of you are waiting for me to agree with your side and some of you are waiting to be offended by my position
 - 2. That is not the point of the passage. We love our formulas, but this text is not giving us a formula
 - a) On one hand you have the apostles laying on of hands, on another you have the Spirit falling through the preaching of the gospel, some are being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, some are baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit
- D. Not about a formula, it is about knowing and understanding and trusting the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ
 - 1. ***2 Peter 1:3 AMP For His divine power has bestowed on us [absolutely] everything necessary for [a dynamic spiritual] life and godliness, through true and personal knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.***
 - a) Paul writes to Galatians – if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit and you won't fulfill your sinful desires. If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. Then goes on to describe the fruit of the Spirit.
 - 2. Acts 18 ends with – ***Acts 18:24 Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. 25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took***

him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. 27 And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; 28 for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

3. The question isn't is there only one baptism or is there a second baptism – the question is “do you want the presence of God to saturate every area of your life?”
 - a) Do you want to be empowered by Him, directed by Him, convicted by Him, encouraged by Him, enlightened by Him, and in awe of Him?

III. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

- A. This all comes back to a proper understanding of our relationship with Jesus
 1. Many claim to believe in Jesus, but they have a wrong understanding of their relationship to Jesus – that limits their spiritual growth, missing the spiritual fruit described in Galatians, there doesn't seem to be life in their walk
- B. Life For Jesus
 1. Looks spiritual, sounds spiritual – often encouraged by church leadership
 - a) Often done under our own strength and our own power
 - b) Leads to discouragement and burn out
 - c) The feeling that something is missing – possible what Paul saw in these disciples – what Aquila and Priscilla saw in Apollos

Acts 19:11 Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, 12 so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them. 13 Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.” 14 Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?” 16 Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. 17 This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. 18 And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. 19 Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. 20 So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

- C. Life From Jesus
 1. Very common in evangelical Christianity
 2. Our relationship with Jesus is based solely on what we can get from Him
 3. Using His name for personal gain – like a magic charm
 - a) We don't want Him, we want His gifts – we want His power – like Simon the Magician – saw Peter and John lay hands on people and they received the Holy Spirit he offered them money to buy this power
 4. This kind of relationship leaves us exposed and broken – our confidence isn't in Christ, it is in our things and they can't bear the weight of trials
- D. Life Under Jesus
 1. We are a disappointment, failure – we are constantly trying to earn God's love, prove we are worthy of saving
 2. Our obedience is an attempt to appease God for inadequacies
 - a) Make amends for our mistakes – we quickly learn all the good that we do is never enough
 - b) We turn Jesus' yoke into a burden that weighs us down

3. That leads us to - Life Over Jesus

Acts 19:21 When these things were accomplished, 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." **22** So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time. **23** And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way. **24** For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. **25** He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: "Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. **26** Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. **27** So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship." **28** Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" **29** So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul's travel companions. **30** And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him. **31** Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater. **32** Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together. **33** And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand, and wanted to make his defense to the people. **34** But when they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" **35** And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: "Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Zeus? **36** Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly. **37** For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess. **38** Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. **39** But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly. **40** For we are in danger of being called in question for today's uproar, there being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering." **41** And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.

IV. LIFE OVER JESUS

- A. The Temple of Diana provided a steady stream of income for many of the residents in Ephesus
 - 1. Tourists would travel to the temple, purchase these shrines, have the temple priests bless them and bring them home and place them in a prominent location
 - 2. The temple was also a financial institution – because of the immense amount of wealth that flowed through there, they were able to loan money with interest of course
- B. Perfect representation of life over Jesus
 - 1. No concern for God, His plan, His Word – this life is about me, what I can get out of it
 - a) Creation over the Creator
 - 2. You can do whatever you want with your beliefs as long as it doesn't mess with me

3. That's the problem with the gospel – it messes with things. It meddles. It brings life where there was death – it brings hope to the hopeless – it shines a light on the darkness and it brings certainty in the midst of confusion
- C. People profit off confusion
 1. In a world with no absolute truth, you can sell anything. In a world with no defined plan or purpose or reason for our existence, you can pawn off just about anything claiming it provides just that.
 2. What happens when absolute truth shows up? What happens when the true reason for our existence is made plain? Our purpose. It puts everything else that people are peddling out of business.
 - a) Those shrines are barely worth the silver they are made out of, those magic books become kindling for the fire, this temple – a waste of marble
 - b) Those who profited off that confusion weren't going to give up their livelihood that easily
- D. Paul didn't enter Ephesus demanding that people burn their books, throw away their shrines, and tear down the temple – how far would that have gotten him?
 1. The power to change the city was in the name and story of Jesus

V. LIFE IN JESUS

- A. If it's not life over Jesus, life under Jesus, life from Jesus, or life for Jesus – what is it? What is our relationship supposed to look like?
 1. ***John 15:4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.***
 2. Dwell, remain, live in Me – walk with Me – isn't that the story of scripture – God's desire to be with His people – Emmanuel – God with Us
- B. When we believe in Jesus Christ, His presence, His Spirit, makes His home within us – indwelling of the Spirit
 1. There is now the capacity for a relationship, and scripture says we can grieve the Spirit or we can quench or suppress the Spirit
 - a) Or we can dwell in the Spirit – sit with Him, walk with Him – go where He is going, do what He is doing
 - b) Paul often uses the language of joining Christ to something - Paul writes to the church in Corinth - ***1 Cor 6:12 NIV "I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"—but I will not be mastered by anything. 13 You say, "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both." The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! 16 Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." 17 But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit. 18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. 19 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.***

- C. That is what Paul was doing – we wonder how did Paul know what to say and what not to say?
1. God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.
 - a) God worked – God doing what He desires to do at this point in time for this particular audience
 2. ***John 3:8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.***
 3. Paul understood He was simply a vessel, indwelt by the Spirit of God – His responsibility and privilege was to dwell in the God's presence – there were moments of supernatural power, and preaching, and there were much longer moments of loneliness in dark, damp, dungeons – the circumstances didn't matter because he didn't find his identity or worth in what he did for Jesus. He found his identity in Jesus.

Dr. A B Simpson used an illustration which was about as good as any I ever heard. He said, 'Being filled with the fullness of God is like a bottle in the ocean. You take the cork out of the bottle and sink it in the ocean, and you have the bottle completely full of ocean, but the bottle contains only a little bit of the ocean. So it is with the Christian.' We are filled unto the fullness of God, but of course, we cannot contain all of God because God contains us; but we can have all of God that we can contain. If we only knew it, we could enlarge our vessel. The vessel gets bigger as we go on with God.