

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 58

I. Exposition of Chapter Eighteen (Continued).

A. Verse 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.”

1. Even though verse 25 states that Apollos “...taught accurately the things of the Lord...”, there was still some things that he did not yet know. One thing was he only knew of “...the baptism of John” and, apparently not Christian baptism or the baptism in the Holy Spirit.
2. So, Aquila and Priscilla probably explained these two doctrines, at least, so that he would know “...the way of God more accurately.” It’s worth mentioning that they did not try to bring this correction to him publicly, but “...they took him aside...” and shared with him.
3. The fact that Apollos was open to correction reveals that he was a man with character and humility.
4. Concerning this event, Dr. Stanley Horton writes:

“Priscilla and Aquila were present and heard him. They did not say anything to him in the synagogue but took him aside to give him further instruction. The Greek also implies (and the NIV and others so translate) that they welcomed him and took him home with them. Then they explained God’s way to him more precisely. Just what they said, Luke does not go into here, but the next chapter deals with twelve disciples who were in the same position, with the same need for instruction, and details are given there... Looking ahead, we can see that Apollos must have been baptized in water on the authority of Jesus (as in Matt. 28:18–19). Then they must have prayed for him to be baptized in the Holy Spirit as in Acts 2:4.”¹

B. Verses 27-28 – “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; for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.” – The ministry of Apollos, no doubt, ended up being stronger than ever after receiving the truths shared with him by Aquilla and Priscilla. The word “vigorously” means; “intensely” and “powerfully.” Regarding this Dr. Constable writes:

“Armed with his new understanding, Apollos proceeded west, where he ministered at Corinth and ‘Achaia’ by watering the gospel seed that Paul had planted (1 Cor. 3:6). The Christians in Ephesus encouraged him by providing letters of commendation that introduced him (‘wrote to the disciples to welcome him’) to the Corinthian church (cf. 2 Cor. 3:1).”²

II. Exposition of Chapter Nineteen.

A. Verses 1-7 – Paul ministers to twelve believers the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

1. Verses 1-2 – “And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples 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.’”

- a. Some scholars think that when it mentions “disciples” here it’s referring to disciples of John the Baptist based on their response in verse 3. But Paul seems to recognize them as believers (disciples) of Jesus when he states; “...when you believed...”. They were probably in a similar situation as Apollos.
- b. Paul asks, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” – Of course, we know from other Scriptures that every true believer does receive the Holy Spirit dwelling in them the moment they receive Christ (I Corinthians 3:16; 6:19-20; II Corinthians 6:14-18; II Timothy 1:14.)
- c. In the book of Acts, it is to be understood that when the receiving of the Holy Spirit is mentioned, it’s referring to what is also called the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the filling of the Holy Spirit and sometimes the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- d. Their response to Paul’s question is: “We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.” This response seems to surprise Paul.
- e. Dr. Horton adds some interesting thoughts pertaining to this:

“The disciples’ reply, ‘No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit,’ may be translated, ‘But we have not even heard if the Holy Spirit is.’ The meaning, however, does not seem to be that they had never heard of the existence of the Holy Spirit. What godly Jew or interested Gentile would or could have been so ignorant? It is more likely that the phrase compares with John 7:39. There, the condensed phrase ‘it was not yet Spirit’ means the age of

¹ Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 314.

² Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Acts* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2019), 372.

the Spirit with its promised mighty outpouring had not yet come. From this we see that these disciples were really saying they had not heard about Pentecost or the availability of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. In fact, several ancient manuscripts and versions of the New Testament actually read, ‘We have not even heard if any are receiving the Holy Spirit.’ Obviously, they had not been taught about this when they were converted.”³

2. Verse 3 – “And he said to them, ‘Into what then were you baptized?’ So they said, ‘Into John’s baptism.’ – This baptism referred to here is referring to water baptism. There are some Christian groups who believe that the “formula” to use when a person is water baptized should only include the Name of Jesus Christ. However, this verse implies that when we are water baptized the Holy Spirit should be mentioned. This would line up with Jesus’ command as recorded in **Matthew 28:19**.
 3. Verses 4-5 – **Paul explains the difference between John’s baptism and Christian baptism.** – John’s baptism was one of repentance and also expectation of the One who would come after him – Jesus Christ. John was sent to “**prepare**” (**Luke 7:27 a quote from Malachi 3:1**) the people for the coming Messiah. but after the Lord came, his baptism was obsolete.
 - a. “**...they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.**” – This is one of the Scriptures used in order to support the idea of only using the Name of Jesus in water baptism. People have actually divided over this issue when it really isn’t important. This could be understood that they were baptized by the authority of the Lord Jesus for that is what is meant by invoking His Name. If this is the case then what He said in **Matthew 28:19** would be the way to do it.
 4. Verses 6-7 – “**And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Now the men were about twelve in all.**” – So now these believers had been baptized in Christian baptism followed by the Holy Spirit coming “**...upon them...**”. The physical evidence of this was that they “**...spoke with tongues (languages) and prophesied.**”
 - a. Note that Paul “**...laid hands on them...**” for them to receive this experience. The writer of the book of Hebrews lists the laying on of hands as one of the six foundational doctrines of Christ (**Hebrews 6:1-2**). The “**hand**” is sometimes used by Biblical writers to describe that which is associated with vast power, authority, strength, and blessing.⁴ The laying on of hands is an act in which one person places his hands upon the body of another person, with some definite **spiritual purpose**. Normally this act is accompanied either by prayer, or by prophetic utterance, or by both. Through the laying on of hands one party imparts, or transfers, something to another. (**Examples: Genesis 48:14-16; Leviticus 16:21,22; I Timothy 4:14; Mark 16:18**).
 - b. Note that it also says that they “**prophesied.**” – The meaning of this word is “**to speak under the influence of divine inspiration, with or without reference to future events**”⁵ This was not something that happened every time someone was baptized with the Holy Spirit. (**cf. 2:4; 10:46**).
- B. Verses 8-10 – Paul continues his Ministry in Ephesus.**
1. Verse 8 – “**And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.**” – As seen previously, Paul first goes to the Jews as they gather in their synagogue.
 - a. The word “**persuading**” means; “**to convince someone to believe something and to act on the basis of what is recommended**”⁶ – This indicates that some of the Jews were believing on Jesus.
 2. Verse 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.**”
 - a. “**...hardened and did not believe...**” – “**hardened**” means; “**to be stubborn, in the sense of refusing to believe**”⁷
 - b. The “**Way**” was the first title used to describe Christians (**cf. 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22; John 14:6**).
 - c. The school of Tyrannus was a Gentile lecture hall, basically across the street from the synagogue.⁸

³ Horton, *Acts*: 318-319.

⁴ B. O. Banwell, “Hand,” ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 443.

⁵ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 439.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 422.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 765.

⁸ Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 343.

3. **Verse 10** – Paul remained there for two years and everyone, whether Jew or Greek heard the Gospel.