



Wisdom & Maturity – Part 2

Understanding the Work of the Holy Spirit

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Well, you don't have to be around Christianity very long to hear the modern-day parable of the foolish Christian who went looking for wisdom. He wanted direction for his life and so he thought he'd go right to the Bible. I mean, nowhere else than the Bible to get direction for your life. The first book of the New Testament just opens up to whatever he finds at the top of the page there, Matthew 27 verse 5, it said, "And he went out and hanged himself." You've heard this parable, right? It's disturbing. So he flips ahead. He gets down to Luke Chapter 10. The top of the page in Luke 10 on his Bible was verse 37, which says, "And you go and do likewise." Thinking, well, you know, three is a godly number. I need another passage to understand God's will. So he flips ahead to John Chapter 13 versus 27 was at the top of the page on the right-hand side that time, and it said, "What you are going to do, do quickly."

You've heard that? I heard it in junior high camp. I heard that story a dozen times. And of course, it's something you can teach in junior high because you think, well, of course you just can't go flipping through your Bible to find God's will for your life. You've got to understand it, you've got to interpret it. You've got to look at it in its historical context, the grammar and the words and all of these things that you learn even in Sunday school, that you don't just find Bible verses randomly to figure out what you should do in your life. Well, that's an unwise approach. It's the right source. It's the unwise approach to that right source that is the problem.

Well, there's another problem on a different level, a little bit more sophisticated, but it's going on a lot in modern Christianity, and surely you've seen the effect of it, and that is that people going to the right source, but they're coming to it with the wrong approach and with the wrong assumptions. The topic I'm talking about is the one we encounter in our passage today, at least it's highlighted in such a remarkable way in Acts Chapter 19. The topic is the Holy Spirit. You don't have to be around very long in Christianity to say, wow, there's a lot being done in the name of the Holy Spirit. A lot of words, a lot of actions, a lot of stuff that you can only imagine that the Holy Spirit is going to say, "That wasn't me." Right? So there, you know, what is that all about?

I mean, it is certainly in the last 120 years of Church history just kind of been magnified so much so that some of you are to the place where I would never want to say anything against any of that, because, you know, I know what they're going to say. They're going to say, "You're putting God in a box," and "Don't you believe in the Holy Spirit?" And so a lot of people are like, "Well, just let it go." And I'm not trying to be divisive this morning. I'm not trying to cause any wars here. And I'm certainly not being condescending. I'm not in any way trying to make small of something that many people have learned.

But there's a pattern of looking in Scripture, particularly when it comes to the Holy Spirit, which is just a fraught and fertile place for people's minds to just go all kinds of directions because when we see texts that deal with what the Holy Spirit is doing, they're remarkable. And you think, wow, that, as John Wimber once said, if you know who he is, "I want to do that



stuff. When do I get to do that stuff?" And so often reading what God has done, or in this case what the Holy Spirit has done and then to assume, well, then, of course he's going to do that now and it becomes an expectation, that has caused a lot of problems, if not a lot of discouragement and disillusionment and being disenchanted with Christianity altogether because they're going it doesn't seem to comport. What I read here is not what happened there. And I'm thinking, you know, if Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever, I mean, come on.

And I'm thinking, okay, well, you've got to stop and slow down and think there's a little bit wiser and more mature way to look at Scripture, which is not putting God in a box. It's trying to understand what's happening in the Bible. And that's no more putting God in a box than you putting God in a box, as I often say, by going to Costco and buying a flat of water bottles instead of me going, "Well, where's your faith? Go into your backyard, take a stick and strike a rock. Get all the drinking water you need." I'm like, "Well, it's in the Bible. It's in the Bible. That's how it works. And if it's not working for you, it must be something wrong with your faith." And I hope you would say, "Well, I get it, it's in the Bible and yes, that's what God did, but that's not really what we're supposed to do. Or is it?"

And if you get enough people saying, "Well strike the rock," or, you know, "Why are you buying cornflakes for your kids? Go out to the back lawn every morning, scrape up what you can get. It's called manna. It's in the Bible. It's provided for you. You've read it, right? What, you don't believe the Bible? You don't believe every word of the Bible." What direction? If you came to me and my office and you said, "I need direction, pastor. Are you going to help me? Give me some direction and wisdom for my life." And I say, "Great. Go out every morning, and you want to know what to do with your day, you look for the pillar of cloud if it's daytime or at nighttime you look for the pillar of fire, and wherever that goes, you just follow it." I hope you'd know how it sounds. That just doesn't sound right.

Well, it's in the Bible. We read all the passages. It's about the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. You'd have to admit it's biblical. Right? You'd have to admit it's biblical. But I think it wouldn't take long for you to say, "Well, I've been hitting the rock and I've been scraping the lawn. I've been looking on the horizon and I don't see any of that stuff." And sometimes it's like the emperor who has no clothes. Remember the Hans Christian Andersen story? Like, eventually you start saying, "Well, maybe you are getting water out of the rock. Or maybe you are getting your cornflakes off the lawn. And maybe it's there. I just... I don't want to criticize it if you see it there." I think it's very mystical, very subjective.

You've heard the old line I heard a lot when I was a kid. "Every promise in the book is mine." Have you ever heard that one? Every promise of the book is mine. You can go to a Christian bookstore, you can go online, you can go to the Christian section of the Amazon or whatever, and get a book on the, like, "The Christians Bible Promise Book." That's a good title, it has probably been used 100 times. And you know what you'll never find in it? Most of the promises of the Bible. Because when you're curled up in your Afghan, you got your Bible open and your journal's out, and your highlighters are lined up and you pull out your Christians, you know, Bible Promise Book. You get God's, you know, promise book for Christians. You're not going to find in it like this: "And I will give you the choicest land in



Egypt." It's a Bible promise given to God's people. Or "You will become like a wild beast and you will go out into the fields, you'll eat grass like an ox." That won't be in there.

They're very selective about what they put in the Christian, you know, God's Promise Bible Book. You understand that, right? We don't have those promises because the editors immediately know, well, it doesn't matter if it's a promise. It's got to be a promise we like. It's got to be a promise that's good. It's got to be a promise that sells. And it's not just selling Christian books. It's selling sermons from platforms. And people are ready to buy the good promises. Sadly, so often they're appended to our hopes and not the realities of expectations built on Scripture. I mean, you want to talk about like a Christian's guide to taxes. And I say, great. Here's what the promise of Jesus is. Go put a hook into the sea and pull out the first fish you find. You'll find all your taxes in the mouth of the fish. Again, do you believe that? Of course they believe it. Is that what Jesus said? Of course it's what he did. Is that what he told his disciples? Yes. Are you his disciples? Yes. Do you have taxes? Yes. Do you need the money for taxes? Yes. I have the answer. It doesn't sound right.

There are a lot of things that we're buying that really don't sound right because they're not right even though they're in the Bible. But we are looking at them much like the guy reading three Bible verses from Matthew and Luke and John. And of course, he dismisses it because it can't be. It can't be. Well, it can't be because you're not approaching the text the way you ought to. And many people don't approach the doctrine or the practice and the work of the Holy Spirit and how that all interfaces with Christians today in a biblical way.

Now, I don't want to hack anybody off, but I just think that's how we need to at least say, okay, the pattern is already set. If for nothing else just the common sense that I understand that what God did does not mean that's what God does. And it doesn't in any way negate that God is the same in his character and his nature yesterday, today and forever. We just have to get that. I mean, that even itself, I mean, it moves out of some immature quoting of a Bible verse to thinking that we've got to put all these pieces together to understand what the Bible would have us expect and what we should think about these doctrines in this case of the Holy Spirit.

Now, I warned you about this when we started studying the book of Acts back in 1970 or whenever we started. (audience laughs) I said, do you remember the title of the book that has been appended to it throughout Church history. It's always been called The Acts of the Apostles. And I said, just please remember, these are the acts of the apostles. And the acts of the apostles are the acts of the apostles. And this is a history and the history of what God did with the apostles and through the work of the apostles is something we should understand when we read it. Now, can we inject ourselves here and say there's some principle that bridges between what's happening here and what I should expect today? Yes. And when we can find those, that's my job as the preacher to help you see that this is a transferable principle and this should be applied to our lives.

And there are other times like today when you shouldn't. And you shouldn't, not because, well, you know, your pastor doesn't have enough faith to see these things happen. Because there are people, trust me, there are people doing these things, but they don't seem to do



them for long because in reality, it doesn't deliver. It disillusion. It disenchant. It discourages, it frustrates. It allows our critics to call Christians commensurate.

And it's time for us to at least say, let's work at least to think and be reasonable and at least hold at abeyance some of our preconceived ideas because I grew up in this church, or I've heard this person, or my best friend's a Pentecostal or charismatic or whatever. I need to say, okay, what should we expect? Let's just think if we can about a passage where God is using the apostles in some extraordinary way and some interesting things are happening, things that are not normative in the rest of the New Testament, and we'll see why God might be doing the things he's doing in this passage.

So let me read for you with some comments from Acts Chapter 19 verses 1 through 12, 1 through 12. Not 1 through 10, 1 through 12. And I know the editors here have set up this next section with a subject heading, a narrative heading over verse 11 and didn't take those first two verses because they all summarize what Paul is doing here in Ephesus. We'll look at Ephesians today at some point.

All right. You know where we've been. We're at the beginning of the third missionary journey. We started last week in this eight-part series or whatever it is. And the first section here was all about Apollos and Priscilla and Aquila. Now Priscilla and Aquila help Apollos get his act together. He's confined in his thinking about the message of Christ based on the message of John the Baptist. And off he goes after getting things together. He's an amazing speaker. He goes off to Corinth across the Aegean Sea there.

Paul shows up right behind and he's coming through Asia Minor, which is modern-day Turkey, he's headed to the western coast here where Apollos just was and that's how it starts. Verse 1. Are you ready? Chapter 19 verse 1. "And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country." I'm assuming he's starting down this Roman road from Antioch. I didn't give you a map this week, but Antioch, Antioch of Pisidia there in the middle of modern-day Turkey. And he's going to head down to the coast, the Aegean coast to Ephesus, near the coast. Right near the coast.

So, he comes to Ephesus. And I told you this is a big city. This is a quarter of a million people lived there in the first century. And you've got the temple to Artemis or Diana, depending on thinking Roman or Greek. But it's four times larger than the Parthenon, it's huge. And it's attracting people from all over. It's a big city, an urbanized place in the ancient world definition. "And there he found some disciples. And he said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?'" That's a strange question, right? Because if I say when you believed you would know that he must mean when you believed in Christ. And by that that means like you put your faith in Christ. We still use that language today. Are they believers? And what we mean is do they believe or trust in Christ for their salvation?

So he's assuming, even with that title, like "you believe," you're already trusting in Christ, I want to know did you get the Holy Spirit when you believed. Now for the rest of Paul's teaching, as he writes back to where he just came from in Galatia, we know that he knows that the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness. You know those passages from



Galatians 5. Is that why he asked this? Maybe in this very secularized place in Ephesus, with all this pagan worship going on, maybe he thinks you guys don't seem to have the restraint of sin that you should have. Whatever the reason why, and there are lots of theories as to why, he asks an out-of-left-field question, at least from our perspective, as we're reading through the text. I mean, you've never asked that question of someone. "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

And they said, an even more surprising answer, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." Wow, the passage already, it's like getting weirder and weirder. What do you mean you haven't heard there's a Holy Spirit? And he said, where'd you get this information about Christ from? "Into what then were you baptized?" Now, again, there are so many parenthetical statements here, but... When we have a baptism up here I always have the big, long explanation about what baptism is and what it isn't. And I use the word baptism, and I say it's one of those transliterated words like apostle or like angel, where we're really saying the Greek word in an anglicized way and we haven't translated it. And "Baptizo" we say baptism, I always ask you what does it mean? We get down to what it means, and that is it means "to be placed into."

Now, we're assuming here because we're about to talk about John, that we're talking about being placed into water. The baptism, the much more important baptism, the thing that he writes back to Ephesus and says there's one of, the one baptism is being placed into the Body of Christ, as I'll try to prove in a minute from the book of Ephesians. So to be placed into. So like they say we haven't even heard of this. "Well into what then were you baptized?" Were you baptized into the Holy Spirit? Were you placed into this relationship with the triune God? It could mean that or it could mean you had a baptism, that's why I heard you were believers. Well, what kind of baptism was it? And maybe it...

So, it could go either way here. Nevertheless, their answer is "John's baptism," which we would expect after reading what we read last week in the bottom of Chapter 18 about Apollos. "And Paul said, 'John baptized with the baptism of repentance.'" Now we explained that last week, but remember that's what he was saying. He's preparing people to receive the Messiah by trusting in him. He kept pointing ahead, saying, "I baptize you with water, but there's one coming after me. I'm not even worthy to untie his straps of his sandals and he will baptize you." Do you remember what he said? "In the Holy Spirit and fire." And fire in this particular case, though those analogies do sometimes connect with the Spirit. In this case fire, as he says in the next verse there in Luke Chapter 3, he's talking about judgment. God's going to gather up and he's going to winnow into his barns and take all this chaff and he's going to burn it.

So people there who hated what John was doing, they opposed what John was doing, he called them vipers, snakes. And so Jesus is going to come, like Simeon said when he held the baby Jesus in his arms, Jesus is going to be the thing that separates people "for the rise and fall of many in Israel." You're either going to go in one camp or the other. Just like he will at the end of time when he does it, literally, he's going to separate the peoples like a shepherd separates sheep and goats. Two different categories. So you're either going to get placed into the Spirit or by the Spirit. That's the problem with this little word, this preposition in



Greek, "En," Epsilon Nu, which means "in with" or "by," nevertheless, we'll get to that. You're either going to be placed into the triune God by the triune God or specifically by the Spirit into Christ, or you're going to be placed into God's judgment.

So there's enough even there if you really knew John's baptism, you would know there was the Holy Spirit. So that was a weird response. But they said we were baptized into the baptism of John, and they said, well, that was a baptism of repentance. Good. But you need to remember, Paul says, he was telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is Jesus. Now, maybe they had less information than Apollos, which it seems like perhaps they did. Nevertheless, they claim to be believers. Paul calls them believers. And so he is going to do more work here. This is a short little summary of what happened historically. Probably a lot of words were said here before verse 5, but we're having an explanation of the fullness of the doctrine of the fact that John was preparing, you had to repent, he was casting his attention now to Christ, who was going to be the "Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world," as we said with Apollos, to live in our place, to die in our place, to be buried, and to be resurrected, vindicated through this miracle of resurrection. And that's where this all leads.

So John's baptism was good, but he kept pointing to the one where he says, "I must decrease. He must increase." He's the one that you put your trust in. I'm not the one from the Old Testament Messianic promises. He's the one. I'm from the Malachi promises, he didn't say that. But that's what he was as Jesus said. But Jesus is the one of the Isaiah 53 promises and all the promises of the Old Testament Messiah, all the way back to Genesis, all the way through even Moses' writings, the prophet that was to come.

So, this he explains, and whatever was lacking, and we don't have all that. We can only guess what all was lacking. What happens is they hear what Paul says, verse 5, and "they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." Now, again, I don't think it's definitive. Does this mean they're baptized into water? If it does, it implies that they were now placed into Christ and we see in the rest the Scripture those are not always synonymous in time. But the point is, you have about... Now, I should make this statement because you got such curious minds. There's no mention of Apollos being re-baptized or being baptized. You're baptized with John the Baptist then you put your trust in Christ and you follow him all the way to Matthew 28, the end of his life and earthly ministry, the Ascension. And he says, "Go make disciples baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit." Did they then go, "Oh, I got all these people who got baptized under John, and they followed Christ, they trusted Christ, and we're all here after the burial and resurrection of Christ. We're going have a massive baptism this afternoon." It didn't happen.

The apostles, no record of them being re-baptized. None of the disciples during Jesus' ministry who trusted in him. Apollos didn't get re-baptized. So are they getting baptized? If they are getting baptized in water here, then whatever they got "put into" in terms of their philosophy, thinking, theology, it was an insufficient knowledge to save them. Or they are believers that Paul, maybe it's more than a courtesy, he thinks they are believers, but there's something lacking here. Maybe there was something they didn't have, some demonstration,



something, and what happens is he says, you need to be baptized here in a way that is clearly the fullness of the theology of the New Testament.

Whatever it is, when Paul lays his hands on them in verse 6, what they didn't have, which it seems like they are believers, and what they didn't have they now have. They didn't even believe there was a Holy Spirit. They didn't know there was a Holy Spirit, not they were against it, they were ignorant. "Paul lays his hands on them," verse 6, "the Holy Spirit came on them." Now the normative Christian experience is you become a believer, just to quote Galatians 3 verse 2, you get the Spirit in you when you hear the truth of the gospel and you join that with faith in Christ, you respond to it rightly. Then the Spirit invades your life.

So much so that Romans 8 says, if you don't have the Spirit in you, you're not his child. So that's normative. This is not normative. And if you've been around a while in our church, you think back to the time we were preaching through Acts Chapter 8, we saw the same thing happen with the Samaritans. We waited until the officials showed up. It was like the T.O. from the salesman to the sales manager at the car lot and finally we can do a deal. It's like here the apostles come and now, okay, Samaritans, you're in, and they get the Spirit after they believe. And there was a gap. Again, we have a seeming gap here, and I'll show that I think that's an important observation.

Nevertheless, now there's a sign and everyone sees it, a miraculous sign. I would contend it's the third time we see this in Acts. Acts 2, the beginning of the Church where everyone there is assembled in the Upper Room. They all get this, the ability to speak where others in different countries from different places all gathered at Pentecost, where the world comes together, the Jewish world, to Jerusalem. Now it's kind of the same in a quarter of a million city where they're all coming in. There's a lot of traffic coming to the Temple of Diana, and now they're speaking in tongues.

Now tongues, the problem with the whole word is that we use it, it's an antiquated word. And if your great-grandmother heard the word and start talking about Ireland over there, "I don't speak the native mother tongue," she would know what she meant and what she meant is what this word means, and it means a language. And the language that they spoke, I'm saying, is a miraculously endowed ability to speak a language they didn't know. And in a multilingual place where they have a collection of travelers, clearly, that was something that was demonstrable, just by getting outside and speaking. And not only were they speaking in these languages, but it says they were prophesying.

Now, there's no footnote explanation of this because we've already seen it explained starting in Acts Chapter 2. Prophecy. Think when you see the word prophet, either the word "Nabi" in Hebrew in the Old Testament, or "Prophetes" in the New Testament, which just transliterates into prophet, there's another transliterated word, think this: mouthpiece. God's going to get a message and he's going to speak through the person. Okay. You think of prophecy and you think of Nostradamus or John on the island of Patmos. You don't need to think so much about telling the future, but you need to think about God speaking the truth and usually it's concerned with contemporary matters as relates to you putting your trust in him or whatever it might be, turning from sin. Sometimes it's punctuated by things in the future so you can know



this mouthpiece is telling the truth about the future, as it says in the test of the prophet in the book of Deuteronomy.

So they are prophesying. Now, what did that look like? People have written books and articles on that, but the idea is I think they're simply speaking truth about New Testament realities. And just moments ago they were so deficient they didn't even know there was a Holy Spirit. So God's Spirit coming on them gave them the ability to do something miraculous that everyone can say wow, and then to speak and to teach accurately. That was huge. How many were there? "There were about 12 in all," verse 7.

Paul then, back to all this in a minute, "Entered the synagogue for about three months and he spoke boldly," as he often goes to the synagogue. What happens in a synagogue? They're Old Testament people, they're reading the scrolls of Moses there, they're talking about the law of God. And he's "reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God." And the King has already come. His name is Jesus. He's gone away. He's called us to collect citizens for him, and he's coming back again and all of that, he's doing clearly talking about Christ.

"But when they became stubborn," verse 9, "and they continued in unbelief," here's what happened. It degenerated into ad hominem kinds of arguments. And when that happens, when they just start saying you guys are evil, you guys are just low-lives, whatever they were saying, they were "speaking evil of the Way before the congregation." I think that Paul knew we're not reasoning anymore. We're not debating anymore. Now you're just throwing stones.

And when that happened what does he do? He does what you should do. "He withdrew." Done. I mean, I'm going to argue with you about this but you're calling me names. "He withdrew from them and he took the disciples," who were in the synagogue, those who were following Christ now, and he took them "with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus." It's not a spider, Tyrannus. What? Who's Tyrannus? If you asked me who Tyrannus was, I'd say, I don't know. No one seems to know Tyrannus. There are articles and speculation and guys kind of come up with ideas. But there's no definitive answer to that.

But it wasn't unusual in cities, big cities, in particular cities like this, a quarter million people, where you would have these philosophers who would take up residence there and they'd have schools like colleges, and they would teach what they would teach and they'd have a hall maybe like this one, and they would have a place where people could come and hear the philosopher or the teacher teach. Well, Paul rents that out. And remember, he's a tent maker, so he's out there in the sun in the morning, wiping the sweat from his brow. He's got his apron on. He's working and doing his things, making tents. And of course, it's a good city, much like Jerusalem, to make tents in with all the pilgrims coming to the Temple of Diana, a very important place. He's got lots of customers. He's making a living so he doesn't have to charge the people he's preaching to. Even though he had the right to collect a salary, he doesn't do it for the sake of his missionary spirit and his benevolence for them and a model of good hard work.

So he's out there working. But then when Tyrannus is not in the pulpit, Paul's taking the hall, renting it out, the disciples are filling it, and he's teaching the word of God. Afternoon comes.



How long does that happen? It's daily. But how many hours? I don't know. Two hours a day, five hours. I don't know how long it was, but it was done. What did he do? Sun went down. Here's what he did. Matter of fact, look this up. He starts writing New Testament letters. He starts writing the New Testament books. Matter of fact, one of the books we're quite confident he wrote here from Ephesus was First Corinthians and probably Second Corinthians. He's spending years here writing the Scriptures, building tents, teaching in the Hall of Tyrannus, whatever that was. Like us sending a church to North Texas and we're going to be in that classical academy, Founders Academy. Well they use it for school and the place we're going to be is in the gym. They play basketball there, but they're done on weekends. We're moving in and we're having a Compass there meet and teaching goes on.

So a different building. That's where they're at. The church is growing. How successful is it? Well for "two years it was so that all the residents of Asia," not every last one without exception, but all kinds of Asians from Asia Minor, "heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks." All kinds of people. Think about it. Even the Greeks who probably would never step foot in a synagogue, now because of the obstinance of the Jews in that synagogue there in Ephesus, they were going to come to the Hall of Tyrannus. It's the difference being coming to some, you know, fancy Jewish synagogue or coming to the, you know, community center. And so they came and God use that in massive ways.

Now, keep reading, even though there's a division there on the just editorial narrative heading. Verse 11, "And God was doing extraordinary miracles." It seems redundant, right? Like a miracle is, like, extraordinary. These are like, extraordinary-extraordinary miracles as you're about to read. Some of you don't even know this verse is in the Bible. Coming up. "Extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and 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." Wow. That's an extraordinary miracle.

And a frustrating one for Paul. He says, "I keep replacing his aprons. They keep stealing his aprons." I mean, this isn't a pocket square. He's not a televangelist. He's not selling them for 50 bucks on the TV. This is he's wiping sweat off of his brow, sticking it in his belt. He's got aprons on. He's building tents for people who are travelers into the town. And they're taking them and something's actually happening. And the whole point is they're coming to hear this message of Christ and the forgiveness of sins and the resurrection from the dead and the fact that there's a coming kingdom. And they keep swiping his apron. And when they do, they say, "This is Paul's apron and this is Paul's sweat on this hankie. Now, BAM, look what happens. My kid was sick, and now he's better."

You know, this guy had some debilitating illness that was evidenced by some manifestation physically, but it was a spirit just like we saw in the gospels that was crippling this person. And then, BAM, gone. That's bizarre. I mean, miracles are bizarre, but this is bizarre-bizarre. It's an extraordinary miracle. And that was going on during this period of time. So what's happening? He's teaching. He's working. He's writing the Bible. And miracles are taking place during this two-year period in some extraordinary ways. Longest reading of those 12 verses ever.



But let's just deal with a few things as it relates to the topic that I think jumps off this page every time you read it. And that is, first of all, these people didn't even know there's a Holy Spirit? Well I know some people who don't know there's a Holy Spirit because they're Oneness people or they're Unitarians, or they don't think there's a separate person, not a distinctive person called the Spirit. So let's just take 5 minutes, there's my timer, start the clock, on this first one. Right? You need to "Know Who the Holy Spirit Is." I guess I could say that there is a Holy Spirit and who he is.

Here's who he is. He's a person. He's a person. And he's described as a person in Scripture who you can offend, you can grieve him, you can lie to him as we saw in Acts Chapter 5. I mean, he's referred to as a "him." He's a "he." He's not an "it." He's not a force. This is the description throughout the Scripture of the Spirit. And then the Spirit when he's described, he has all of these divine attributes. Like, Isaiah 40 speaks of the Spirit of God as being someone that no one can give counsel to. There's no information you can give him that he doesn't know. We call that in theology omniscience. He's omniscient.

Psalms 139. You can't hide from him. Everywhere you go he's there. If you go to the highest heavens, he's there. If you go to the lowest Sheol, there, they're there. What do you call that? Omnipresence. He's omnipresent. Hebrews 9. He's called the Eternal Spirit. Who do you know who's eternal? Michael the Archangel? No. Well, I don't know. Abraham? No. No one is eternal. You are so defined outside of eternity that it doesn't matter if you are an archangel or a flea, you're not eternal. There's only one eternal one. And if you think about it long enough, it'll hurt your brain to think about how can someone be eternal. I mean, you must be bored being eternal. And being eternal is the definition of God.

The reality of the fact that God is described to us, the way he's described to us, he's described to us not only as God the Father that we pray "God our Father who art in heaven," but there's God's Spirit and God's Spirit is described in a distinctive way and he's a person with all the attributes. How about this one? Job 38. And this one should stump all of us for the first time, I mean when we hear it the first time. You've heard it, I trust. Who created the world? You, ah, Genesis 1:1. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and earth." Then the problem is you start reading passages like John Chapter 1 verses 1 through 3. "In the beginning was the Word," which from verse 14 we know is Jesus who "became flesh and dwelt among us." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the word was God." Wait a minute. You've already messed me up. And then it says "Nothing was made that has been made but that was made by the Word," by Christ. And then we see throughout the Scripture he's made all things. Wait a minute.

Job 33 does the same thing with the Spirit. The Spirit now is attributed as the creator. Here's the thing that again, Michael the Archangel and a cockroach have in common, they have a creator, someone created them, someone designed them. And the reality is there's only one person you would say that is the creator. And yet, no, the Bible says there are three persons. Well, wait a minute. Deuteronomy 6. There's one God, "The Lord our God is one." I mean, that's the whole theology of the Bible, there's only one God. It's everywhere. That's called the Trinity. And is that going to hurt your brain? It'll hurt your brain even more than thinking about God as eternal.

But just because it hurts your brain, just because you can't process it, just because I say, "I want God to make sense in my mind," don't become a heretic with that mentality because you're going to somehow try to explain it like, "Well, it's kind of like me. I'm a, you know, I'm an engineer at work, I'm an employee, and then I'm a husband and I'm a father. So that's kind of like the Trinity." No, it's not like the Trinity. Not even close. Matter of fact, if you start thinking in the ways that a person has three different roles, you're going to become what has been condemned throughout church history, they've worked hard at trying to figure out what exactly does this mean? That's called modalism. Modalism. You're not like just putting on three different hats.

Let me show you a couple of passages real quick if we have time for it. Not that we will, but I'll stop wasting sentences like that and extending more time. But turn with me to this one real quick. Let's go to John Chapter 14. This section of Scripture, by the way, is so rich because Jesus is saying, "I'm going to leave you. But don't worry. I'm not going to leave you orphans. I'm going to send another." And I want you to look at the distinctiveness of this and think, well, I can't be a modalist and read a passage like this and have it even make any sense.

So, John Chapter 14. John 14 through 16. This whole section is fantastic in helping us understand the doctrine of who the Holy Spirit is. Look at verse 16. Let's start there. "I," who's the I? Look at the antecedent for that back in the context. I'm Jesus here. "I will ask the Father," so it's not like I'm going to go and deliberate with myself, no, "I am going to ask the Father and he will give you another." The great thing, even about this passage, is the Greek word it uses "Allos" is a Greek word that means the same kind in terms of quality, but distinct. I'm going to give you another of the same quality. I'll give you another. And now he is called in this passage in the English Standard Version, what? He's translated the "helper."

This is a word we see a lot and it comes up in preaching all the time. And I always like to talk about the Greek word because it paints a picture. And these prepositional compounds always paint a great picture. "Parakaleo." You know that, "to encourage" or "to exhort" with this word the "Parakletos," this noun form, it just means "para" as "next to," "kletos" as "called in." So Jesus is leaving. The Father, I'm going to ask him, he's going to send another and he's going to be called in to be with you. And he's called the helper here. So old translations, the comforter, the same word we sometimes translate encouragement or exhortation.

So there's another person coming of the same quality of the Father. And of course he keeps saying, I'm of the same quality of the Father, and he's going to be with you. He's going to be with you how long? Forever. "Even the Spirit of truth," they were more familiar with that phrase, "whom the world cannot receive." You're going to have a relationship with this third person of the Godhead that the world won't have, non-Christians won't have, "because it neither sees him or knows him." And they're sitting there thinking, I can see Thomas going, "I don't see him and I don't know him."

No, "You do know him, for he dwells with you." You've had the encounters, the convictions, you've had the sense of guilt. You've had all these things magnified, the opening of eyes to see the glory of Christ in the gospel. You've seen these things in my teaching. He has been



with you. You know enough about Old Testament better than the Ephesian twelve who we're looking at here in our passage to know who he is. He's been with you. He's been a force upon you, he's been impacting you and convicting and all these things, and he "will be in you."

Now, that's just a blazing bell-ringing phrase that should point everyone's mind back to something we quote all the time, back in the promise of Ezekiel where he says, "You've got a heart of stone. It's going to be replaced with a heart of flesh." The New Covenant promise. Now, this echoes what's going on in Jeremiah 31, where it says you're going to have now not only a new spirit, you're going to be rewired inside. As Paul said, you're going to be a new man, a new person. "And I'm going to put my Spirit in you and I'm going to have him cause you, move you, to keep my commandments." There's going to be something so internal and organic within you. It'll be me, not the Father, not the Son. It'll be the Spirit and he'll be in you and he'll move you to keep my commandments.

What's the evidence of that? When we talk about, we're going to preach about it. You know, we've been preaching. We're going to preach about it in a lot of different places. And I just started a sentence I thought, I don't know if they've announced that yet, I shouldn't say. Fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, etc. The Spirit of God is going to push these obedient virtues out into our behavior. Not without a fight, not without a battle, not without failure, the flesh is going to fight as Peter says, it's going to "wage war against my soul." There's going to be a lot of trouble going on, even in the passage about the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit, you know, it's hostile toward the flesh. The flesh is hostile toward the Spirit. The reality is he's going to be in you, a change from the inside out. This is regeneration. This is the work of the Spirit changing us.

Which, by the way, and I know this is becoming somewhat of a textual topical sermon, but go back to our text and look at verse 5. In verse 5 you have something that seems pretty normative and we're use to this. I was trying to point out in that passage a lot of things but that distinguishing ability of the Son asking the Father, the Father sending another. We have three distinguishable persons, one God, all described with all the attributes of God. We've done that in a long, long list when we think about Christ, that's a different sermon.

But now I'm thinking, okay, what is he doing? Since I was already dipping into this, this is what happens when someone trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ. "On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." Now, even if they were being dunked in water that wouldn't be done unless they were trusting in Christ and to trust in Christ is to be placed into Christ. And the Bible is really clear, just like John the Baptist said and they clearly didn't have information about this. It's the Spirit now that's going to be the agent and even part of the reception of sinners like you and I, because he's putting us into Christ.

The difference between you and a non-Christian is the Spirit of God has changed you, opened your eyes. He's given you conviction over sin. You've become a Christian because of the Spirit. The Spirit has done this work and now has taken up residence in you the Bible says in a way where a lot of what's going on in the impulses and desires of the inner person that you are is attributable to the divine God, the third person of the Godhead. That reality is something that happens the Bible says every time someone trusts in Christ.



Now, let me take you to Ephesians, as long as we're in geographic Ephesus in our minds, go to Ephesians Chapter 2 with me real quick. I just want to show you and then I'll creep, this is a weird sermon, but I going to creep even into the third point in reading this passage. If you say as I've already quoted in Galatians 3:2 or Romans Chapter 8, that if you don't have the Spirit, you're not a Christian, you think, well, then those are contemporaneous. If I trust in Christ and become a Christian, the Spirit invades my life. And the answer to that would be yes, yes, and yes. It was the promise of the Old Testament for people who were trusting in God's provision. It's the promise of the New Testament. It's just not seemingly what happened here and it's not what happened in the Samaritans in Acts 8, and it's not what seemingly happened to the disciples there in Acts 2. So those are weird situations.

But normative Christianity is the Spirit places you into a good relationship with God. And we would say, well, the disciples were in a good relationship with God. They were accepted as children and heirs of the promise, but they hadn't been filled with the Spirit from the inside out. Just like the Samaritans were good with God and yet there was a gap between their believing in Christ and the apostles showing up, and then something spectacular happening with the Spirit then invading their life. And the same happening here with these Asians.

Ephesians Chapter 2. And this, by the way, did I give you the second point yet? "Know What the Holy Spirit Does." This is normative. It's the promise. It's the expectation for what the Spirit of God is going to do in this period called the church age. Here's what he promises to do. Drop down to verse 18, Ephesians Chapter 2 verse 18. "For through him," of course, the him look back, we're talking about Christ here in this passage, his body, "we both," those near and those far. Near as the Jews, far as the Gentiles, as far as the Asians, as far as the Italians, as far certainly the Americans. Far, farthest as the Americans. "We both have access in one Spirit to the Father."

So to being in with the Father, here's normative theology, the Spirit is the means by which I get placed into this relationship with God. It's called reconciliation. Second Corinthians 5. I get right with God because the Spirit of God does that work. Christ pays the payment through his death on the cross. The Spirit puts me into Christ. So Spirit baptism is the Spirit making me right with the living God. And it's a transaction that takes place.

And by the way, why is that such a big deal? And I'll get back to the passage. I know we didn't finish reading it. We'll get back to verse 18 in a minute. Look at verse 4 of Chapter 3. Just drop down a paragraph or two. Look at verse 4. "When you read this," about his writing and what he's written, "you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has been now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." Even what they were prophesying these new believers with the Spirit and probably had to do with the realities of what Paul's here talking about. What's he talking about? "This is the mystery," verse 6, "that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise of Christ Jesus through the gospel."

This one message and faith in this message all of a sudden now makes the Italians, makes the Asians, I mean, it makes the Samaritans all heirs of the promise. How on top of that were



the Jews of the first century? They weren't. They were just hints of it. So much so that Paul can say it was a "Mysterion," a mystery they didn't have, now made clear. Jesus spoke this reality to people so now everybody knows. When you say something hard to process you need some emphasis. You need some kind of divine like BAM. Like, "Behold the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." That's what John the Baptist said. And then Jesus comes down into the Jordan River and what happens? Something spectacular. Fireworks. This image of something coming down, you know, kind of alighting on Christ is like a dove and then there's this booming voice. "This is my Son in whom I'm well pleased."

So that's hard for me to think that guy is going to take away my sin. Certainly, if you're standing there as a Roman soldier or a Pharisee. I mean, like "What? No, how can he have anything to do with what I did last year?" And God goes, BAM! These were hard truths. Hard truths to think that Samaritans were going to become Christians. Apostles then do something miraculous there making those Samaritans do something miraculous. The same things happen here in Ephesus. Acts 8, Acts 19.

Back up to the passage I promised I would read, Ephesians 2:18. "Access to the Spirit." Okay. So what? "So that we're no longer strangers." He says you, rather, and that's the Ephesians, there on the west coast of Turkey "are no longer strangers and aliens, but your fellow citizens with the saints," the holy ones, "and members of the household of God." What do you mean? We're fully in? Yeah. When that promise in Genesis 12 about the whole world is going to be blessed, you are the fulfillment of it you Ephesians.

Think about it. How? Because you're "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets." They made this mystery known. That's true. They shared the gospel. God verified it. "Christ himself," in his work was the payment for it, he "is the cornerstone to all in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple," like God inhabits this place, a temple "of the Lord. In him you are being built together," like a temple was being built, brick by brick, person by person. You and you and you and you're a Gentile, you're a Jew, you're an Italian, you're a Samaritan, BOOM, put you in this building, making this building and then God is living there. "In him you are also built together into a dwelling place for God..." Period. See the period after the word God? Say no. No. Not if you're there, "by the Spirit." The Spirit's work is taking people into Christ, taking them into fellowship with God.

One of the words used in Titus Chapter 3 verse 5 is regeneration. We're regenerate, 3:5, 6 and 7. We're regenerate, we made new. The thing Nicodemus didn't understand, I have to be born again. I have to be made new. It's not only to change my heart, he's going to put his Spirit within me. The Spirit of God is the one who brings us into relationship with God. That's his number one most miraculous thing he continues to do throughout this whole age and that's the promise of the New Covenant. It happens at the point of faith in Christ.

Back to our text. With no time left. Verse 6. "When Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them." That's the whole point that should be contemporaneous, but it's not here, with believing. "They began speaking in tongues," language they didn't learn, "and prophesying," speaking the truth. There were about twelve of them." All those he teaches in the synagogue, it gets hostile, degenerates, he goes out, rents a place, preaches in the gym, writes the Bible



at night, makes tents in the morning, people steal his handkerchiefs and then people get healed by touching them.

So what do you have? Apostle preaching, right? Working. Even things associated with him start to become mechanisms of healing, and that's going to get attention. If I had something easy to say to you, I would not need a miracle for you to believe it. I can say easy things, even spiritual things. There are things I could say to you that are more digestible. Other things are hard. Like I said, like you can have all your sins forgiven by a guy who lived 2,000 years ago. Trust in him. He's in this book called the Bible. That's hard. You'd need things like, I don't know, a resurrection. You'd need a set of documents that have been verified. They had some kind of explosion when they happen.

I talk about preaching a sermon when there was an earthquake years and years ago. I've told the story before. I said something, and then the whole building shook. Man, I need that, like, all the time. (audience laughing) I need to be able just to kind of go like this and a 6.5 earthquake takes place. If I did, you'd start to, like, "I better listen to that guy." Because, you'd know he doesn't have the power to do that. He doesn't have the power at will to make the tectonic plates or the fault lines in our state start to move. No human being has that power. It can't be him. Then your jaw would drop if I did it multiple times. And that would be something that if it's associated with a message, it would be clearly directing me to something.

Those are the three words, by the way, that I've just described that describe these kinds of events, even down to the extraordinary-extraordinary events like handkerchiefs actually healing sick people. And here are the words. Let's start at the top. The one that I just said. It'll show you something. It's a "sign." Speaking in tongues is a sign. Speaking in a different language you didn't learn is a sign. It's a miracle. It points to something and it always has to be associated with something which in Acts 2, Acts 8 and Acts 19 were clearly needing people to go, "I'm having a hard time believing this. Samaritans? Even Samaritans can be trusting in the Jewish Messiah to be forgiven? Even those in Ephesus? Yes, this needs an earthquake. And the earthquake was these people actually being able to when an apostle showed up to do something miraculous.

That's why the delay. In that sermon I preached about the Samaritans in Acts 8, I tried to say the Spirit was late on purpose. He's never late now, but it was late then on purpose, so that there could be this thing, this miracle. They'd speak in a language they hadn't learned, they'd prophesy and speak the truth that they didn't know before. All of that to make the point that I believe it's a sign. The second word... And that's used most, over 100 times the word "sign" is used to describe a supernatural event. Not that there are that many of them in the New Testament, there are not.

The other one is "wonders," which just means your jaw drops. You're like, wow. Think of the word "wow," that's the word "wonders," and that's used like 16 times. And then the last word is the word here, this is extraordinary "miracles." The word miracle might surprise you. It's a word you already know. It's the word "Dominus." You've heard the word dominus from the pulpit, I'm sure a lot. People often talk about it being tied to the word why we call this thing "dynamite." Dynamite comes from the word dominus. Power, a powerful thing. I can't stomp



my foot and cause an earthquake. But if I could, that would be like extraordinary power, it would be a wow power. And when it's a biblical miracle, it's always associated with a message that's hard to process.

You need to "Know What the Holy Spirit Did." That's the third thing. And I'm saying he did these things for a reason. He did them for a reason. Just like when they said, "You mean to tell me this is the guy that's going to deliver the people of God out of Egypt?" Yes. "And bring you into Canaan and you have the right to live on the land." Yes. Miracles. Out of that came the Old Testament, the first five books. And Elijah and Elisha, here came all these miracles to affirm that they were God's spokesmen and be the prophets, the mouthpieces of God, and all these miracles which set up for the writings. So we had the law and the prophets and the New Testament came, Christ and the apostles, the third wave of these miraculous signs. They were signs pointing to the authenticity of the message, the message that got codified.

That's why we don't need every generation... I may need my leukemia healed. Yes, I need that. I don't have leukemia, not that I know of. It's just an illustration. We might need it but we don't need it and we certainly don't need God to supernaturally fix something as though he didn't know that he providentially led me into this in the first place. The point is these things were done spectacularly, whether it was the apron or whether it was Peter walking in and telling a guy to take his mat and walk. The reality was these were things affirming what they were doing, what they were saying, and what they would leave behind, what he was doing at night by candlelight writing the Bible.

And so we today stand on that finished revelation, which I know there's no doubt that John knew he was writing the last chapter of the last book of the New Testament, he says you can't add to this. As Jude said, maybe written as late as 80 in the New Testament near the end of the first century. It's the "faith that was once for all delivered to the saints." And John, just one last message here from God before John dies, writing us the book of Revelation. More can be said, needs to be said. There are a lot of books on the back of your notes. I hope that there's something at least that is received in the spirit that I'm trying to present it, which is an irenic spirit, a conciliatory spirit. I don't want to cause division in our church or in your home or in your friendships. I just think there are more mature, wise ways for us to deal with this than just like "I saw it in the Bible, I just want to do the Bible stuff." And more can be said. It needs to be said but I'm out of time.

Let's pray. God, help us to be good students of your word. For those who are new to even thinking differently about maybe what they've been taught, I pray that they would at least consider these words. I feel a little bit like the need for that line there in Second Timothy Chapter 2 that pondering some of this and researching some of this even as the Bereans did, I trust that many will find there's much more to what you've done in the past to allow us to appreciate what you've done in the past without us necessarily expecting that now you're going to do these things in the present.

We know what you have sent your Spirit to do in this world to convict us of sin and righteousness and judgment and to bring us into reconciliation with the Father, to place us into Christ where the finished work of atonement has been accomplished. So help us in this



regard be satisfied with the good work of the Spirit in this age and not be just grasping to feel important or to be delivered or whatever it might be from some temporal ache or difficulty or even a life-threatening problem. I just pray that we could understand and trust you even to walk us through the valley of the shadow of death and look forward to the day when we're going to be in your presence. We'll dwell in the house of the Lord forever, which is the ultimate deliverance which you promised in the resurrection of Christ. So we hope on that with ultimate faith and confidence.

In Jesus name, Amen.