

Acts 18 (Part 2): 23–28 and Acts 19: (Part 1): 1-7 • The Ministry of Apollos

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Paul has, the apostle Paul has completed his second missionary journey as of our last study last week. And that's where we're picking it up in verse 23, so look with me there.

Acts 18:23. It says, “*After spending some time there, (and there refers to Antioch, which is essentially home base for Paul) he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.*”

²⁴ Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. ²⁵ He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶ He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. ²⁷ And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, ²⁸ for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ (or the Messiah) was Jesus.” (ESV)

We're going to stop there for right now. Let's pray and open our hearts.

Father, as we dig into Your Word this morning, we just really pray for Your Holy Spirit to lead and guide in all that we receive here today.

Lord, we believe that Your Word, this Word, the Bible is the Word of God and we need to receive spiritually and be open to what You are saying to us. So fill us with grace and understanding we pray, nourish our hearts.

We thank You and praise You in the name of Jesus, our Savior, amen. Amen.

You'll notice here in this last section of Acts 18 that Luke begins in verse 23 by saying that, "*After spending some time*" back at home there and which is home base now for Paul there in Antioch, "*he departed*" again.

Now he is starting his third missionary journey. This is the third time he has gone out. And it says that he "*went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, ...*"

And, of course, these are the areas in north central Turkey, it would include cities like the other Antioch. There were several, Phrygia Antioch. It would include Iconium, and Derby, and Lystra, and those sorts of places. And in fact, it's some of the cities that would be involved when you read through the Book of Galatians. These are some of the cities that he wrote to in that book.

And you'll notice here at the end of that verse, that Luke says that Paul, as he moved through those cities, he strengthened the disciples, "*all the disciples.*" I want you to think about that for a little bit. I want us to pause there for just a bit.

And the reason I want you to pause with me right there is because it's important that we don't skip over the important point that is being made here. And that is that Paul felt it necessary to go back to these places where these churches had been established in believers were now gathering together as the body of Christ and Paul went back to strengthen them.

The reason that's important is because he knew that those people needed what you and I also need, and that is to be strengthened on a regular basis. And we forget that sometimes. We..., and I've gotten a lot of notes from people over the years who, or talk to me, will tell about a time in their life where they backed away for whatever reason from fellowship with the body of Christ. And you might even be one of those.

And if you had the opportunity, you might be able to even get up and tell how it affected your life. It affected even your thinking. It affected your joy and your peace because you weren't getting what you knew you needed to get, and that was the regular strengthening that comes from being together with the body of Christ, being in the Word, praying together, worshiping together as the body of Christ.

And one of the things that we see as we read through the New Testament is that we need each other. But you know what's interesting? When you talk to people who have withdrawn from fellowship, from the church, they just, they don't go

to church anymore. They call themselves believers, but they don't go to church anymore.

And one of the main reasons, and not the only reason by any means, some people just wander away because, life gets busy or whatever. But there's a healthy number of people who stay away from church fellowship because of people or something that happened at church. They got offended, they got hurt, somebody said something, somebody didn't say And they get hurt and they don't want to get hurt again, and that's understandable, any number of things.

And so they say, well, I'm just going to stay home and read my Bible and I'll just worship the Lord here by myself, and I'm not going to get hurt like that again. And they're right. They probably, they may not get hurt just like that again, but they're also not going to be strengthened the way they should be getting strengthened by being together with the body of Christ.

Paul talks about the body of Christ is literally likened to a physical body like your physical body, with a head and hands, and arms, and feet, and eyes, and ears, and he talks about that body. And he says, the one part of the body, think of, think about it from a physical standpoint, if part of your body could speak to another part of the body, it wouldn't be able to say, I don't need you. We need the parts of the body.

And in that spiritual sense of understanding, we know that we need one another. The only problem is we make each other crazy sometimes because we can..., we're a place full of sinners who all need Jesus really badly.

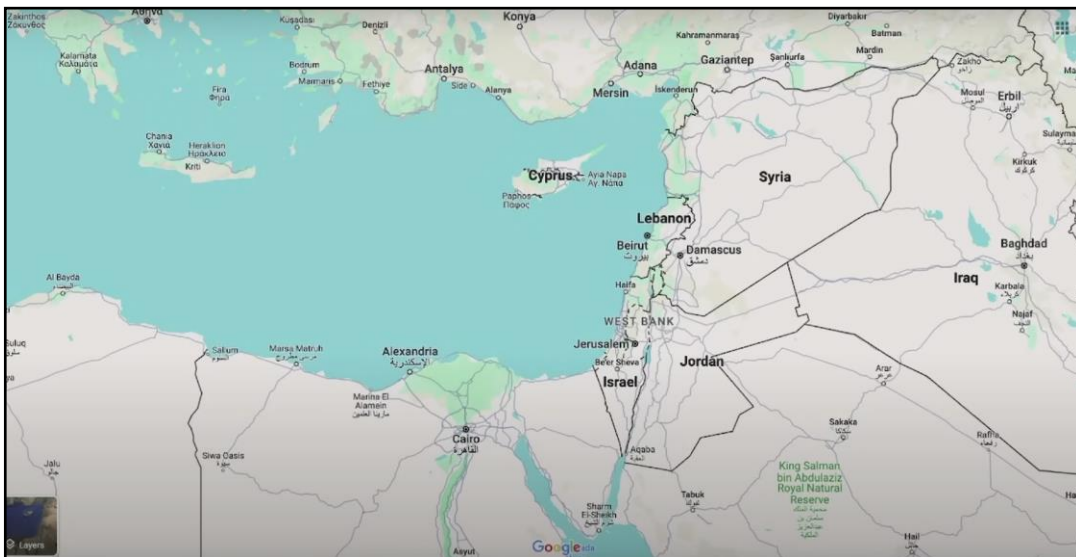
And we do things and we say things. And we offend people and it's going to happen and if it hasn't happened yet, it will. So just buckle up and be prepared. And understand that even though these things happen, I need these people. I know you might say, well, I don't need the grief and I get that, but we need one another and the gifts, and the abilities, and the strengthening that we receive from one another.

And that's why Paul went back to these places where they had established churches to strengthen the believers. And you and I need that on a regular basis as well. You know what I mean? I guess it would probably be cool if, you got saved and you didn't have any needs from that point on, but that's just not reality.

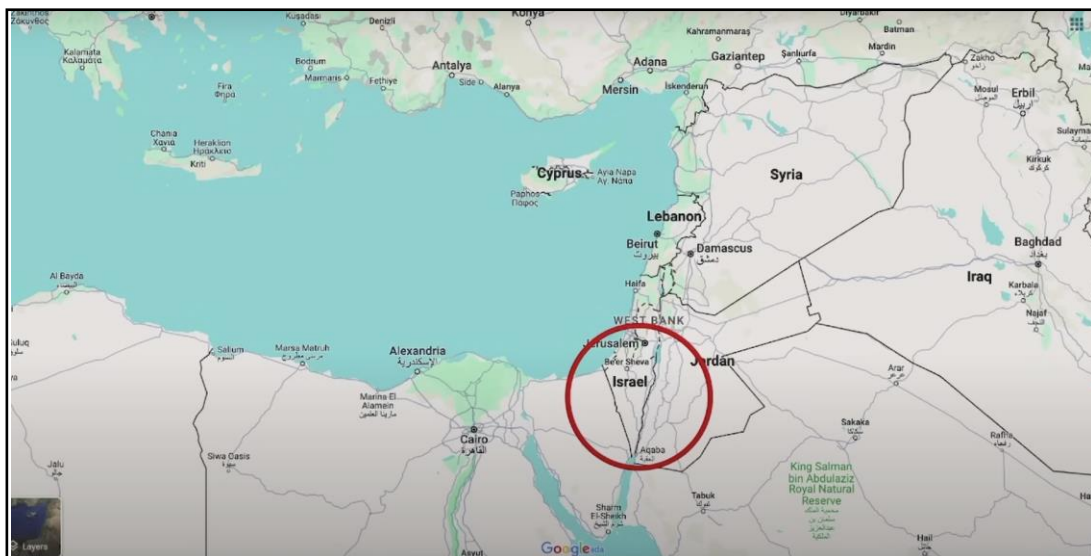
Luke goes on here and you'll notice that he immediately brings us to Ephesus here in verse 24. He says, *“Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria,*

came to Ephesus. (and) He (describes him there as) ...an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures.” We'll talk about that here in just a moment, but I want to tell you a little bit about Alexandria, where Apollos came from.

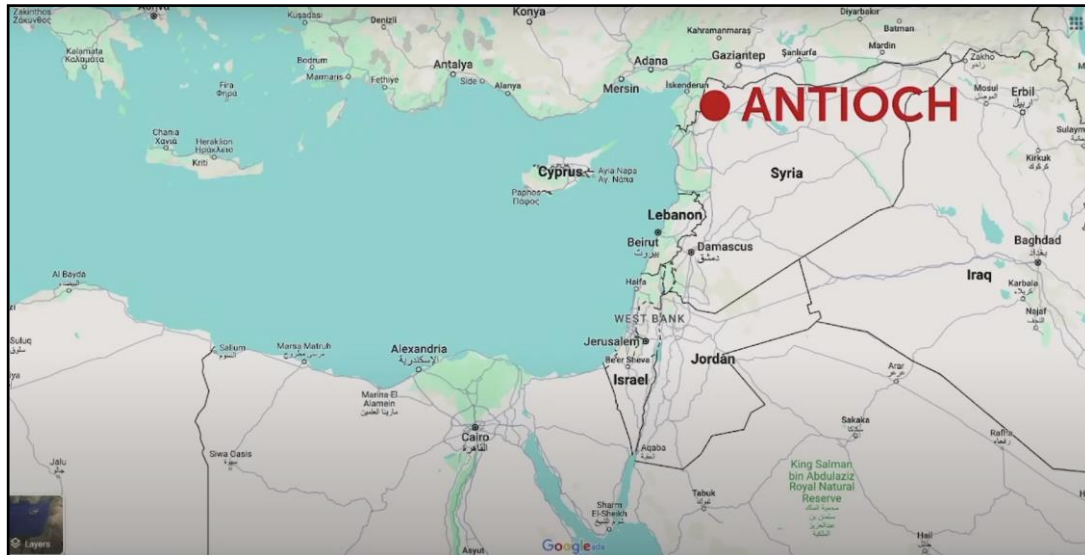
I'm going to start by putting a map like I've done many times in our study of Acts up on the screen. By the way, this is a Google map, which is the current Middle East. You can see, most of Turkey there, a good healthy portion of it. And on the left side of the lower screen, there's the top of the continent of Africa.



Just to get oriented here, we'll circle Israel for you. Little sliver of a country. And yet so much time and attention is focused on that particular nation, and you well know why.



Here we'll also show you where Antioch is. That's where Paul essentially left from, for each of his journeys outward. This was, as I've told you before, really the place where Christianity was centered, right now. It was no longer in Jerusalem. It was in Antioch of Syria.



And then Ephesus is over on the other side of that element or that continent there. You can see that's where Paul is going.



And then let me highlight Alexandria for you. That's the city of Alexandria, and it is there in that northern part of the continent of Africa. Part of Egypt.



It was founded by Alexander the great. That's why it's called Alexandria. He founded it in 331 B.C. and it became the center for what we call the Indo European civilization. Which is to say it became the intellectual and cultural center of the known world at that time. If you were somebody, you either probably came from Alexandria or you were educated in Alexandria.

And that was the case in fact, for Apollos, he came from that city. Luke describes him in verse 24 as *“an eloquent man.”* That means he was articulate in his speech. And it also says he was *“competent in the Scriptures.”* And that just means he knew his Bible.

Now, remember, his Bible is the same as your Old Testament so it was the Hebrew Scriptures. He knew the Hebrew Scriptures. He was competent in them.

He goes on to tell us in verse 25 that, *“He had been instructed in the way of the Lord.”* Now that's talking about the Lord Jesus Christ. So Apollos knew his Old Testament, but he knew how it applied to the person of Jesus Christ, and he could connect the dots for people. And he could prove who the Messiah was.

So he knew that Jesus was the Messiah. He knew that Jesus was the Savior, and he knew how people were saved. And Apollos accurately was able to tell people about those things.

But, at the end of verse 25, we learned some, one of the limitations of Apollos. As far as baptisms went, he knew only the baptism of John. And what that

means is he knew nothing of Christian baptism and he knew nothing of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

In fact, Apollos really hadn't been instructed much about the Holy Spirit at all. He knew about Jesus. He knew that Jesus was the Savior, the Messiah of Israel, who had died for our sins. But that's where his knowledge stopped. We don't know why, but he came to Ephesus armed with what he did know and he started sharing the Gospel and people were getting saved. But again, he knew as far as baptisms, he knew only the baptism of John.

Now, let me remind you about the baptism of John. It was a baptism that really wasn't important for Christians to apply. The baptism of John is not for Christians. It was for Jews. The baptism of John was meant to awaken the hearts of Israel to their Messiah when He came on the scene and began to preach the good news. And believe me, the baptism of John was very effective.

Let me show you a passage from Luke chapter 7 on the screen. It says all the, and I'm reading this by the way, out of the NIV. I really like it the way it's worded here.

Luke 7:29-30 (NIV84)

All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus's words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized by John. But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.

All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus's words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized by John. But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, (why) because they had not been baptized by John.

Now this is fascinating, isn't it? It tells us here in this passage from Luke that the baptism of John was powerfully effective. Those who had repented, and that's what John's baptism was all about, had their hearts opened to the words of Messiah. Those who refused to repent of their sin, whose hearts remained hardened, rejected the Word that Jesus came and brought.

So was the baptism of John effective? Oh man, was it ever? But that's all that Apollos really knew or understood. He didn't know anything about the fact that Jesus had talked about Christian baptism. What did Jesus say? Matthew 28, up on the screen.

Matthew 28:19 (ESV)

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, (doing what?) baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...

Right? This is what Jesus had taught on water baptism. Apollos didn't know anything about this. Apollos also didn't know what Jesus had said about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is recorded for us in Acts chapter 1 up on the screen.

Acts 1:7-8 (ESV)

He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

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You'll remember in Acts chapter 1, Jesus referred to this work of the Holy Spirit as the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. A different baptism. Not baptism in water, baptism by the Spirit. And not for the purpose of making a public declaration as water baptism is, but for the purpose of empowering the believer supernaturally to witness for Christ, right?

Again, Apollos didn't know these things. So he's sharing the gospel as best he knows how, but he's leaving out water baptism. He's leaving out the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

All right, well, so Apollos is sharing with whomever he can share. He even gets invited to come and share in some of the synagogues where Priscilla and Aquila hear him speaking.

Look at verse 26 again. It says, "*He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.*"

Now, remember when it says accurately, it doesn't mean that Apollos was saying anything wrong. What he said was good. He was just leaving out information because he had gaps in his understanding. So Aquila and Priscilla drew him privately together with them and they shared what he lacked as it related to water baptism and the work of the Holy Spirit in Spirit baptism.

Now Apollos has the whole complete message and he's armed with all of it and he's going to go and he's going to do what he wants to do, which is share the Gospel.

And it says in verse 27 that, “...when he wished to cross to Achaia, (and that means to go to the city of Corinth, we're told here in verse 27 that) *the brothers encouraged him and (they) wrote to the disciples (that they should) ...welcome him.*” And when it says here that when Apollos arrived he was a great assistance to the believers there.

Verse 28 tells us that, “*he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the (Messiah) ...was (in fact) Jesus.*” So Apollos is now in Corinth. Paul is coming to Ephesus where Apollos has been and where Apollos has been preaching the Gospel, but with gaps.

And we're going to find out here as we dip into the next chapter that Paul is going to happen upon some believers who received the Lord, but from Apollos with gaps, and we're going to see how that actually plays out.

Look at chapter 19. We're just going to look at the first few verses. Read with me here. “*And it happened (verse 1) that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus.*”

Here's Paul coming now to where Apollos had been. And “*There he found some disciples. (take note of that word) ² And he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” (circle the word, when you, or the phrase, when you believed) And they said, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”*” All right, stop there for a moment.

This is our first hint that Paul has come upon some people that Apollos had shared Christ with, but with gaps. And so he begins to question them. And he goes on here. Look at his next question.

In verse 3, “...*he said, (to them) “Into what then were you baptized?” (and) They said, “Into John's baptism.*” It's all Apollos knew so he baptized them just like he knew that John went around doing that for Israel. He thought, well, I'll

do that with some of these Gentiles. I don't care. And so he starts baptizing them.

“And (so) Paul said, (in verse 4) “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.” Paul obviously went on and explained what Christian baptism was.

And so it says, *“⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”* Now, by the way, let me tell you what it means when it says, *“they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”*

When you see that in the Bible, *“in the name of,”* it means in the authority of, okay. So what was the authority that Jesus gave them? Go into all of the world, *“make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”* (Matthew 28:19) We just read it just a few minutes ago from Matthew 28. That's what Jesus told them to do.

When it says here that Paul baptized these people in the name of the Lord Jesus, he did it in the authority that Jesus gave to baptize. All right.

He baptizes them in water Because they knew nothing of that because they'd been heard all this from Apollos. And then verse 6, he doesn't stop there. Look at verse 6 in your Bible.

It says, *“And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues (which is to speak in unknown languages supernaturally) and prophesying.”* Which of course is the supernatural ability to speak the words of God.

All right, so you'll notice that in these 2 verses, Paul fills in the gaps for these people that Apollos had left behind. Because Apollos knew nothing of water baptism or the baptism of the Spirit, Paul baptizes them in water, and lays hands on them, and prays that they would receive the Holy Spirit for empowering. And they manifested some spiritual gifts at that time. And Luke tells us. That *“There were about twelve men in all.”* There you go.

Paul coming up behind Apollos and cleaning up a little bit, filling in for the people what they didn't know.

Now, I want you to bear with me here for a minute because it would be easy, I suppose, to probably just end our study right here at this point. But in order that

I would give you full disclosure, I want to tell you something that's very important.

There are many Christians today who don't agree with the way I just taught this passage. I don't even know if it's a majority of Christians. It could be. But they, they don't believe everything that I have shared with you.

Because what I just taught you from this passage is that Apollos came to Ephesus with a lack of understanding. He knew about Jesus, because it tells us he knew, he was, he'd been instructed about Jesus. And he spoke accurately about Jesus. Okay.

It says he spoke accurately. That means he knew Jesus was Messiah. He knew Jesus was Savior and he knew what Jesus had done on the cross. So he spoke accurately to people about Jesus. Although he didn't know anything about water baptism or the baptism of the Spirit.

What I just taught you is that Apollos came and shared the Gospel, but he had some gaps. But he still shared the Gospel and what I just shared with you is that people really genuinely got saved. But there are a great many Christians today and I know this because I read a lot of commentaries. I have a lot of commentaries. And I know that there are a lot of Bible Students and Bible scholars who disagree and do not believe that the people Apollos shared Christ with got saved. They think that he whetted their appetite, got them interested in the things of Jesus, but Paul had to come along behind and seal the deal, as it were.

And it, this is a very, very popular belief, and the reason they believe it is because primarily of what Luke says here in this chapter 19, verse 6. Look with me again in your Bible, would you please? 19:6.

It says, *“And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.”* And these people, read this verse and they say, see, it says right there, they didn't receive the Holy Spirit until Paul actually laid his hands on them. And we know that people can't get saved until they receive the Holy Spirit.

And they're right about that. They're right. You cannot get saved without receiving the Holy Spirit. What they are confusing and refusing to understand is that this, is not the first time the Holy Spirit has been active in their lives. And that's what really confuses a lot of these commentators.

But Luke has been telling us that these people are genuinely saved already before Paul even got there, and I want you to see it. Look at verse 1 again, 19:1. It says that, *“Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. (and) There he found (what? what did he find, it says, he found) some disciples.”*

Do you know that's the exact same Greek word that's used everywhere else in the New Testament to describe believers in Jesus Christ, born again children of God? And yet there are a lot of Christians that don't believe that. They say, well, they were disciples. Maybe they were disciples of Apollos.

Well, there's another clue, and that's in verse 2, where Paul begins talking with these people. And look what he says to them. He asked them, *“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”*

Again, the word, believed, there is the Greek word that is used in the New Testament to describe people who have put their faith in the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Okay, so there it is.

I mean, Luke has been telling us that these people are born again Christians, but yet there are a lot of people who don't want to believe that. In fact, these statements here, the usage of the word, disciples, the usage of the word, believed, it confuses these commentators and these individuals who refuse to believe it. Because they refuse to believe that there are two separate works of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.

And I want to show you on the screen what those two works are. They're very important to see.

Two Separate Works of the Holy Spirit

- Regeneration
- Empowering

They are Regeneration and Empowering.

These are different works and the Bible shows us these in the New Testament. They're easy to find. Let's start by defining regeneration. First of all, the definition is, and I wrote this myself, I'll show you the verse that covers it.

- **Regeneration** – What takes place when a person places their faith in Jesus and His work on the cross.

But it's what takes place when a person places their faith in Jesus and His work on the cross. We call it regeneration. It's called regeneration in the Bible. Let me show you this from Paul's letter to Titus. He says,

Titus 3:4-6 (ESV)

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of REGENERATION and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of (what) REGENERATION and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

You know what's interesting I found out about this single word, and it's a single word in the Greek too, that we translate, regeneration. This single Greek word is made up of two Greek root words. And they are birth and again. Birth and again. You put those two root words together and you come up with this word, regeneration.

So regeneration is about being born again, right? And of course, you must be born again in order to be saved and that happens through the Holy Spirit. It's what the Holy Spirit does in you when you put your faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

Now, you may not have felt the Holy Spirit come into you and when you were regenerated, some people will express a feeling, but it's not about feelings. And if you put too much emphasis on feelings, then people are going to go, well, I didn't feel anything when I put my faith on Jesus. It doesn't matter whether you felt anything or not.

We know that it happens because God's Word says that it happens when we come to faith. And the other thing, and we know that the Holy Spirit was given to the disciples on resurrection evening. This is recorded for us in John chapter 20. Let me show you on the screen. It says,

John 20:19, 22 (ESV)

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

On the evening of that day, (what day? Resurrection day) the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

Now, when you read that passage that we just read up on the screen, what do you think? Well, I read it and I think that Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" and they received the Holy Spirit. I mean, isn't that the logical conclusion? If you're going to take the Word at face value, you're going to say, well, they received the Holy Spirit. This is when they were born again. Right?

This is the first reference of the Holy Spirit coming to indwell believers now that Jesus has been raised from the grave.

But here's what's interesting. If you've got one of those study Bibles that puts study notes in the text, or if you even own some commentaries and you read some, and you look up John chapter 20 and you read this passage where Jesus breathed on the disciples, you're going to read some interesting comments. And it's not my desire to throw stones or criticize my brothers and sisters who think differently.

But you need to understand, you're going to read some very different things. And the reason you're going to do that is because They don't believe in the empowering of the Holy Spirit. Well, what is the empowering of the Holy Spirit? Let's define it up on the screen.

- **Empowering** – That work of the Spirit by which the believer is supernaturally equipped and enabled to be a witness for Jesus.

Empowering, the work of the Spirit by which the believer is supernaturally equipped and enabled to be a witness for Jesus.

We've already read the time when this first happened to the believers. And by the way, it was several days, several weeks, after Jesus breathed on them and said, "*Receive the Holy Spirit.*" Several weeks later, He said this, again. We'll read it again from Acts 1.

Acts 1:7-8 (ESV)

He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will (future tense) receive power when (what happens? when) the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Jesus said this after He breathed on them, so there was something that happened after the Holy Spirit came in to indwell them. And what did Jesus say? Did He say, when the Holy Spirit comes, you're going to get saved, you're going to be regenerated, you're going to be born again? No, He didn't say that. He said, "*you will receive power when the Holy Spirit (comes) ...upon you.*" Right?

Again, this is one of the things that some believers refuse to accept. And the reason is they don't want to believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And one of the reasons they don't want to believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit is because Pentecostals have made a mess of it, frankly.

Some of you who maybe even have a little bit of a Pentecostal background, you know what I'm talking about. I have a Pentecostal background and I can tell you, the Pentecostals have really messed this up. And they've gotten so weird and so wacky, that there's a large number of Christians who don't want to believe anything about the baptism of the Holy Spirit or the gifts of the Spirit. They don't want to believe they're for today. And so they don't want to believe that there are separate works of the Holy Spirit to regenerate and to empower.

And so what happens is they get to John chapter 20, which we read where Jesus breathed on them, they didn't know what to do with it. In fact, I'm going to, in just a moment, I'm going to put a quote for you up on the screen of a very famous Bible commentator, but I'm not going to put his name up there because it's not my intention to speak against him. But if I gave you his name, you'd probably recognize it.

But he wrote in his commentary of John chapter 20, this on the screen.

“This is one of the most difficult verses in the entire Gospel. We read that Jesus breathed on the disciples and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” The difficulty is that the Holy Spirit was not given until later, on the day of Pentecost.”

— Bible Commentator

“This (he says) is one of the most difficult verses in the entire Gospel. We read that Jesus breathed on the disciples and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” The difficulty is that the Holy Spirit was not given until later, on the day of Pentecost.”

Now let me tell you something. This is not an uncommon statement. I have read this multiple times by multiple authors. They just refuse to believe that what Jesus did when he breathed on them did anything. So what they have to end up believing is nothing happened. Nothing happened. He breathed on them and was saying, in essence, just chill guys, because in several weeks, the reality of this is going to actually happen to you.

And they believe that it was on Pentecost that the Holy Spirit fell. And the Holy Spirit did fall on Pentecost, but for a different reason. And Jesus gave that reason. *“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.”* And the reason people don't want to believe that is because they're scared to death of that power. Because it makes people weird, they think. And you know what? Partially they're right.

It has made people weird and you know what, as Christians, we need to own up to that and we need to say, you know what, we acted really weird, and we blew a lot of people away, and we closed their heart and their mind from the reality of what the Bible says.

And people got so scared of supernatural miraculous gifts that they began to deny that those gifts were still operational today. And I'm willing to bet a good number of you in this room were taught at some point in your Christian life that the gifts of the Spirit died out when the apostles died off from the scene.

That's a very common teaching. They'll tell people, well, the gifts of the Spirit aren't for today. Speaking in tongues, that doesn't exist today. Miracles, those things don't exist today. Prophecy, it doesn't exist today. Why? Because we have the Bible. We don't need those things any longer, which just absolutely blows me away to think that we don't need the power of the Holy Spirit today.

I can't even begin. I mean, the darkness of this world is increasing you guys. And if we ever needed the power of the Holy Spirit, it is today.

We need His power to be witnesses and to tell people the good news that Jesus is the Savior and if they'll put their faith in Him, they can be saved. But again, there are just people that refuse to see that.

Now, why am I telling you this? And again, it's not to throw stones. It's to highlight the fact that there are times when we go to the Bible, not to see what it says, but to prove what we already believe. And that is a very dangerous thing.

My brothers and sisters in Jesus, because many of us, even though we may not know it, we have certain biases that we carry. And it might be because we just have a bias because we just decided along the way I just this is what I believe or somebody told us, this is what's true. And we didn't bother to really look it up. We just embraced it. We believed it. And we that belief became a bias.

And then somebody and we began to read the Bible and we read things like, Jesus breathed on them. But you see, I've already been taught that the Holy Spirit fell at Pentecost for the very first time.

And so I read John chapter 20 and my bias says that's a problem passage because you see, I know already that the Spirit didn't come until Pentecost. And so what I did is I used my bias to interpret the Bible. You think that's odd? Think again. It happens all the time. Instead of using the Bible to shape what I believe, and that's what we should be doing.

We should be going to the scriptures and saying, Lord, teach me today. Show me even if it upsets the apple cart of what I've been told previously. I shared in first service that I, and I've told you guys many times that I was raised in church from my earliest days. Baptized, sprinkle baptized as a baby, which frankly isn't biblical, but my parents didn't know that.

I was baptized later again when I was about 25, when I really came to Christ. But I learned a lot of things as a kid that I ended up having to unlearn when I read the Bible. My mother taught me as a child that everyone is saved, regardless of what they believe. You don't have to believe in God. Jesus died for the world, she would tell me. And we're all saved, and we're all going to heaven, because Jesus died on the cross, and she believed it with all of her heart.

And then I had to start reading the Bible and realizing, that's not true. That's not what the Bible says. And then I went to Bible college. I don't know if you know

this, but I went to a Bible college that was owned and operated by the Assemblies of God. And I learned a lot of things there that I had to unlearn later on too when I started reading my Bible a little more thoroughly. But we got to be open to that, you guys.

You can't let your bias interpret the Bible. Let the Bible interpret the Bible. Read it and believe what it says. Believe what it says, even if it challenges what you've been taught. It's those things, it's that understanding that helps us to really, truly get out of the Bible what's meant for us there.

And I believe with all of my heart is as sure as I'm sitting here that God wants to not only regenerate us, and I trust that He's done that to everyone in this room who's come to faith in Jesus, but He also wants to empower us, not that you would be weird, but that you would be strong. And that you would walk in the Spirit and witness to others through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Because if you're not doing it in the power of the Holy Spirit, you're doing it in the power of the flesh. And as the Bible says, as Jesus even said, the flesh counts for nothing. It is through the power of the Spirit that we are enabled to live. (John 6:63) To do all that He has called us to do. Amen. Let's stand together. We'll close in prayer.

Don't we live in a crazy world? I mean, just this last week, good grief. I mean, not only are we seeing all kinds of crazy things going on in politics, but the Olympics started. I don't know if you guys saw the opening ceremonies where they were openly mocking Christianity.

Hey guys, don't get upset. They'll stand before God. He'll take care of it. He'll take care of it. You don't have to. He'll respond in just the right way, but this is the world we're living in today. And we need the power of the Holy Spirit to address ourselves to this world, not in anger, not in bitterness, but with supernatural peace and love. Supernatural.

I look at the world and I get angry, but my anger isn't going to do one thing to bring somebody to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. As James tells us, the anger of man does not bring about the righteousness. (James 1:20) What's going to bring people is our love for them. The Bible says it is His kindness that leads us to repentance. (Romans 2:4)

And as we walk in this world, in the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, to love people, even though they make us crazy. We then will have an openness to share the Gospel. Let's pray.

Father God, we need You. We need all that You have for us. I thank You, my Father God, that You have given us your Holy Spirit by which we have been born anew.

But I thank You also, Father God, for this further work of the Spirit, whereby you empower us to do the work of the Gospel and to be witnesses for Jesus Christ.

And I pray my Father, God, that You would empower each and every one of us to do just that, to walk supernaturally, that the world might see a difference in our lives, and they might be drawn to the Savior.

I thank You, Lord, for Your Word. Help us always to go into the Word, allowing it to say what it says without our own biases interpreting it for us, but allowing the Word to speak for the Word.

And let us receive the full counsel of that Word. And may we be nourished and encouraged by it in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior.

And all God's people said together, amen.