

29. Going deeper

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In life, you find three types of people when it comes to getting things done. The first group is the people who can not get things done well because either they just don't care to do it well, or want to do it well but don't have the capability to do so. We often call them "Underachievers". The second group of people is the people who can get the job done and can even surpass the goal if they want to, but they choose not to. They are happy with being "Mediocras." Then, the third group of people are the ones who strive for excellence. It doesn't matter what kind of situation they were in before, they even rise above the bad circumstances. They don't come up with an excuse why they cannot do, rather they look for an opportunity to do better. We call them "Overachievers."

Spiritually, we find many mediocras in Christianity. Don't get me wrong, they are nice people and law abiding citizens. But when it comes to following the Lord, they go through their motion of being Christians. They go to church Sunday often enough to meet their satisfaction... and they stop there. They have no intention to do more, because, if the truth be known, following God often gets in way of their comfortable lives, so they choose not to serve Him and the body of Christ which is the church.

There also are the third group of spiritual people, the overachievers. They don't only want to have the salvation in Christ, but also they want to know more of Jesus and what He wants them to do for His kingdom. They are the ones who are empowered by the Holy Spirit to spread the Good News of Jesus to others; they are the ones who do mighty wonderful things for the body of Christ with the help of the Lord; and they are the ones who will hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant," from the Lord Jesus when they get to heaven.

This morning we are going to embark on the third missionary journey with apostle Paul. At the beginning of this journey, Paul came across a group of believers of God who didn't know the full Gospel. As he taught them about Jesus, the Holy Spirit mightily came upon them and they were no longer the same. It is my desire and prayer that all of us desire what our Lord wants us to have in our lives, not what we want. What we desire is pale in comparison with what the Lord has in mind for us. Let's learn that from the Lord today.

A. APOLLOS – A MAN WITH INCOMPLETE GOSPEL

Acts 18:23-38 After he had spent some time there, he departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples. 24 Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. 25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. 27 And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; 28 for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

We don't know how much time Paul spent at his home church in Antioch of Syria before he started his third missionary journey. But he started his third journey like the

second one by visiting and strengthening the churches he started in the regions of Galatia and Phrygia. Paul's passion for building disciples, not merely making converts, was again evident.

In the meanwhile, there was a new Jewish preacher in Ephesus. His name was Apollos from Alexandria, the second most important city in the Roman Empire. A center for education and philosophy. The city was founded by and named after Alexander the Great and it boasted a university with a library of almost 700,000 volumes of books.

Though Apollos knew the OT Scriptures well and was able to teach the people in Ephesus with eloquence and passion, he did not have the full Gospel of Jesus Christ. Because he only knew up to John's baptism. He knew that John the Baptist was telling that the coming of the Messiah was at hand and that the Messiah would be baptizing them in the Holy Spirit after people get saved as it was mentioned in Matthew 3:

Matthew 3:11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

This means that Apollos did not know anything about the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ, or what the Holy Spirit did on the Day of Pentecost. His message was not inaccurate or insincere, it was just incomplete.

Once Apollos received the full Gospel message through Aquila and Priscilla, he was unstoppable. In fact, he was so effective that the believers in Ephesus highly recommended him to the churches in the region of Achaia, especially Corinth.

B. GOING DEEPER

Acts 19:1-7 And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples 2 he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." 3 And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." 4 Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. 7 Now the men were about twelve in all.

In our last study, we learned that Paul told the God seeking people in Ephesus that, the Lord willing, he would return to Ephesus. The Lord was willing, so Paul was back with them.

There were twelve disciples of John who understood a baptism of repentance, but like Apollos they also did not know anything about Jesus' death and resurrection, neither did they know anything about the Holy Spirit.

Why did apostle Paul ask them about receiving the Holy Spirit? This question was important because the presence of the Holy Spirit in a believer's heart is an indispensable proof that a person is truly born-again, because you can only have the Holy Spirit come into your heart when you believe on Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord.

The fact that these men did not have the Spirit dwelling within was a proof that they had never truly been born-again. The Holy Spirit within our hearts guarantees as God's witness that we are authentic children of God and not counterfeit. The Spirit also assures us that He will protect us, because we are His property .

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, 22 who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

Keep in mind that John the Baptist was the last OT prophet who ministered under the OT. The Old Covenant was ended, not by John at the Jordan River , but by Jesus Christ at Calvary. The baptism of John was important to the Jews of that time, but it is no longer valid for the church today. In a very real sense, these twelve men were like "Old Testament believers" who were anticipating the coming of the Messiah as it was mentioned in the Book of Hebrews chapter 11.

So, let's make this clear:

1) The Holy Spirit comes into one's heart : The moment a person receives Jesus Christ as the Savior in one's heart, the Holy Spirit comes into one's heart as the guarantee from God the Father that he or she will have the eternal life in Christ in heaven.

Many born-again believers stop here and live as mediocre followers of Jesus because one's selfishness and laziness. How much are they missing out on because of their stubborn heart and spiritual selfishness!

2) The Holy Spirit baptizes a believer's heart: When a person, from the inner most being, stops being selfish and yields oneself to the Lord and asks Him to take over one's life, the Holy Spirit will baptize that person with His power . It is one thing to receive Jesus as the Savior, but it is another thing for that person to make Him be the Lord of his or her life forever.

When a believer is baptized by the Holy Spirit, that person has real enthusiasm for the things of the Lord, because the Holy Spirit is dynamic and He is the power and He brings joy of the Lord.

3) The Holy Spirit comes upon a believer : When the Holy Spirit sees that a believer needs His power to witness or do His work, the Holy Spirit comes upon that person to empower him or her. This can happen many times in a believer's life as he or she needs.

All three of these can happen at the same time or separately depending on the Holy Spirit who knows the heart of the recipient.

God always wants us to go deeper. We only tend to sip the Living Water where we could drink deeply; we only drink deeply where we could immerse even partially; we only immerse partially where we could plunge in and swim. Most of us need to be encouraged to go deeper and further into the things of the Holy Spirit.

Then, someone will say, "How would I know whether the Holy Spirit is empowering me, baptizing me or not?" I like the way the British preacher of yesteryear Charles Spurgeon said regarding this: "Give a man an electric shock, and I warrant you he will know it; but if he has the Holy Ghost, he will know it much more."

Among the manifestations of the Holy Spirit's gifts are the capacity to speak with other tongues and also the capacity to prophesy. And so these two manifestations of the Spirit were taking place as Paul laid his hands upon them as a witness and as an evidence of the work of the Spirit in their midst.

Speaking in tongues IS NOT the baptism of the Holy Spirit as Charismatic Bible teachers would insist. It is nothing more than a side product that can happen. Not every believer has this Holy Spirit's gift, nor does the Bible tell us anywhere that it is mandatory for all believers.

However, I believe that according to the Bible, the most valid evidence of the working of God's Spirit in a person's life is not tongues, is not prophecy, nor the word of wisdom or knowledge, or miracles even, but is love. In Galatians 5:22, apostle Paul tells us that the fruit of the Spirit is love with 8 facets – "joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control". And he echoes this in 1 Corinthians 13:

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

C. TWO YEARS IN EPHESUS

Acts 19:8-10 And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. 9 But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. 10 And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

Tyrannus was a philosopher. He had a school of philosophy there. And Paul went daily and taught there in the school of Tyrannus. In Ephesus, it was the custom in those parts of the world, their businesses were on a split shift. They would work until eleven o'clock in the morning, and then they would close shop until five in the afternoon, at which time they would open up again.

And during the part of the afternoon where it was so hot, people usually slept. They used to say that there were more people asleep at one o'clock in the afternoon than there was at one o'clock in the morning. They must have quite a nightlife among these people.

Paul carried this on for two years, and his effective teaching equipped believers, who got the Word of God out to all who dwelt in Asia. By himself, there was no way that Paul could reach this region. But he could equip Christians to do the work of the ministry, just as he described in Ephesians 4:

Ephesians 4:11-12 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ

D. APPLICATIONS

- 1) Do not settle for mediocrity in Christianity. Take everything the Holy Spirit offers to us. Go deeper in the Lord.
- 2) Remember what we desire is pale in comparison with what the Lord has in mind for us.