

Paul in Ephesus - Baptism

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[0 : 0 0] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on June 13, 1999 The preacher is Phil Muleman His sermon is entitled Paul in Ephesus And is from Acts chapter 18 verses 24 through to chapter 19 verse 10 Well let's pray Our gracious God we do thank you for your word We pray that it would feed us and inspire us tonight Help us to understand this passage And may we go out better equipped to serve you In Jesus name we pray Amen Well you may like to have your Bibles open at 902 I think it is the Pew Bibles As we look at these words that Ian read to us Now the words that are read to us are taken

Well let me start again During Paul's second missionary journey The gospel of Jesus has for the first time landed on European soil Now Wilma you've got a map here And this has just come at the conclusion of Paul's second missionary journey And last week we saw Warwick talked about some of the places that Paul went to He talked specifically about Thessalonica and Berea And then Paul came down to Athens and Corinth Now we've bypassed Athens and Corinth here And Corinth is going to be returned to later on in the year And Paul has gone over to Ephesus And then he's gone down to Caesarea and up to Jerusalem And then he goes He went up to Antioch which is north of Jerusalem And he stayed there for a while And then he headed out on his third missionary journey And we read If you go back a little bit in chapter 8 in verse 23

After staying there After spending some time there He departed and went from place to place Through the region of Galatia A little bit north And Phrygia Strengthening all the disciples To places that he'd visited before Now on his third missionary journey The apostle starts out all alone He has no Barnabas or Silas with him this time Which he had on his previous journeys But he's heading out to familiar ground Up to Phrygia and Galatia and so on And he's heading out to minister To his dear friends Whom he personally had led to Christ And he created churches and so on And the reason for him going His purpose is to strengthen the churches Now Paul loved to venture into new territories But he never forgot the need to strengthen those That he had already won into the kingdom And he went to the churches in Galatia and Phrygia

Teaching them the word of God For it is the word that strengthens And that is what builds Christians up It is the knowledge of the word of God The knowledge of the things that we read in scripture And obedience to it And that is why it is so important That we become people Who are saturated with the knowledge of the truth Of the word of God And this is the instrument that produces maturity And Paul as an apostle Well knew that And he well knew that there is no chance for maturity Without the word of God there to strengthen us You cannot grow as a Christian Without a continually increasing understanding Of the word of God And there is no chance for effective evangelism For each of us To continue without maturity As Christians either And today I think that we see so many instances

In which there is an attempt To whip up What I think An artificial kind of evangelism Without laying the groundwork Of maturity Though any Christian can witness Right from the day that they become A committed Christian There can be no effective Continuing evangelism Without the spiritual growth Which involves maturing In the understanding of the scriptures Reading of the word And so on So I've digressed a little bit But I've just tried to explain That the apostle Paul He went off on his third missionary journey To strengthen And encourage The churches that he'd previously set up Now the next section Which was read to us tonight Is a kind of a parenthesis Which Luke inserts In this account of Paul's ministry To explain what happened When Paul finally reached Ephesus Let me read to you Verses 24 and 25

[5 : 05] Now there came to Ephesus A Jew named Apollos A native of Alexandria He was an eloquent man Well versed in the scriptures He had been instructed In the way of the Lord And he spoke with burning enthusiasm And taught accurately The things concerning Jesus Though He knew only the baptism of John Now Apollos here is a Jew As Luke tells us He had been trained in the Jewish schools Of Alexandria in Egypt Now Alexandria was a large population Had a large Jewish population And it was there some 200 years prior That the Greek translation Of the Old Testament scriptures were written And This Apollos Was an eloquent man And he had become A powerful speaker He was well versed in the scriptures But this Apollos Knew only the baptism of John Now

That was a lot And it was the truth about Jesus But it was not the whole truth About Jesus The term The baptism of John Means The message which John the Baptist preached Now When John the Baptist If you went back Into the Gospels The beginning of the Gospels When John the Baptist Went out into the wilderness Of Judea And began to preach Just before Jesus' earthly ministry began The inhabitants of Jerusalem And the cities of Judea Were taken by John the Baptist's message They were really astounded By what he had to say And the people of Judea They went out to hear John's message John didn't Come to them so to speak They went to him Which indicates That his message Was a startling one For his day Now today John the Baptist's message Does not appear to us To be so startling

Because We as Christians today Living Post Calvary Post The cross Have the full blown presentation Of Christianity Right there before us But to the people of John the Baptist's day The message That he preached Hit them Like a sledgehammer And his message Consisted primarily of Three great truths First That before God Forgiveness of sins Is possible And it is brought about By repentance And secondly That John Had the people Express their repentance In baptism Which was the symbolic Act of cleansing And third Was his announcement That there was Someone Coming Who would complete The work That he That John The Baptist Had begun You see Repentance Is just a beginning With God

It's as far as We human beings Can go by ourselves But That in itself Does not give us life Repentance Would achieve Forgiveness of sins But it would not give us Any positive ground Of action Any power By which to live And that's what John announced Would be available When Jesus came He says in The Gospels The one who is more Powerful than I Is coming After me I am not worthy To stoop down And untie the thong Of his sandals I have baptised you With water But he Will baptise you With the Holy Spirit He will Pour out into you That which it takes To live As God asks And John is in effect Saying that I can't do So This Apollos Knew this much About John He knew about The baptism

Of John But he perhaps Knew nothing Of the cross Nor of the resurrection And he did not know Of the coming Of the Holy Spirit On the day Of Pentecost Which we read about In Acts chapter 2 And his message Was basically Incomplete He announced The word about Jesus But he said Nothing about Those three essentials Which make it possible For the word of Jesus To be experienced In our own life That is his death His resurrection And the coming Of the Holy Spirit So Luke now Goes on to record What happens next In verses 26 to 28 He began Apollos He began to speak Boldly in the synagogue But when Priscilla And Aquila Heard him They took him aside And explained The way of God To him more accurately And when he wished To cross over To Achaia The believers Encouraged him And wrote to the disciples

[10:08] To welcome him there On his arrival He greatly helped Those who through grace Had become believers For he powerfully Refuted the Jews In public Showing by the scriptures That the Messiah That is the anointed one By God Is Jesus Now here In the synagogue In Antioch Began a most excellent Christian practice And that is Inviting a preacher Home to dinner Should invite a preacher Home to dinner Everybody Aquila and Priscilla In this area Were Christians And here they are In the synagogue And they hear Apollos Preach Jesus He preached the things Concerning Jesus Very accurately As we're told But they soon learned That there was Something missing In the words That he was proclaiming So they did a beautiful thing They invited him home

To dinner with them And helped him With his problems Now I don't know Which to admire More in this situation Aquila and Priscilla Or Apollos These two Christians Aquila and Priscilla Aquila and Priscilla Not long Christians Themselves Were led to Christ By Paul When he was in Corinth And they don't Scorn Apollos For his incomplete Preaching They don't write Letters to the editor About him Or reject him Or criticise him But instead They invite him home And lovingly And wisely Expound him A more accurate Presentation Of Christ And I think That that means That they went back Into the Old Testament Scriptures They showed How the Old Testament Indicated The death And resurrection Of Jesus Christ And the coming Of the Holy Spirit As well They expounded

The scriptures To him So that his faith Would rest Not merely Upon their testimony Of the historic Occurrences That have occurred But also On the predictions Of the Old Testament As well But as I said I really don't know If they were greater In all this Than Apollos Or whether Apollos was Because he was Willing to sit He was willing To sit Under their teaching And humbly Listen to what They had to say He had been Speaking in the synagogue Or wherever And they'd take Him aside And they'd Correct him On his teaching And he's humbly Willing to listen To what they Had to say What amazing news It must have been To Apollos That the message Of John the Baptist Had been fulfilled And naturally Apollos Needed time To digest These facts And to rethink It all for himself To process it all And there's no

Indication here That he immediately Began to preach This new truth At Ephesus Rather He desired to go Over to Corinth So the Christians In Ephesus There they sent Letters of Recommendation with him So that the Christians in Corinth Would also Would receive him And we read That he was a Great help to them When he got there Because he was a Man who knew The Old Testament Scriptures He'd studied In Alexandria He was eloquent In the words That he knew And so on arrival In Corinth He greatly helped Those who Through grace Had become believers And he did What he could do Best Answering the Arguments of the Jews Right in public Proving from the Scriptures That Jesus Was indeed The Christ And how much More could he Do this now Armed with The new facts That he had Learned Concerning the Lord Jesus Christ In Paul's

First letter To the Corinthians Paul acknowledges The fact that He had planted But Apollos Had watered And it was God Who made The work Of the evangelism So and going Over there Grow And Paul The apostle Paul Was grateful For the ministry Of this Mighty man Of the scriptures Who could thus Confirm and strengthen The word That Paul had Planted there Back in Corinth Previously Well Paul's Been off the Scene for a Little while And we Now see In verses Chapter 19 Verses 1 To 3 Paul appears Again on the Scene and we Read While Apollos Was in Corinth Paul passed Through the Interior regions And came to Ephesus Where he Found some Disciples He said to Them Did you Receive the Holy Spirit When you Became Believers They replied No We have not Even heard

[15 : 13] That there is A Holy Spirit Then he Said Into what Then were You baptized They answered Into John's Baptism After visiting The churches In the region Of Galatia And Phrygia Paul came To Ephesus Just as he Promised As he had Promised At the close Of his second Journey in Chapter 18 And on Arrival in Ephesus Paul found Some disciples There At least That's what They claimed To be But in Reality However They were Disciples Of John The Baptist And were Decidedly Less well Informed Than Apollos Had been And as Paul spoke With them He observed Amongst them That something Was missing And I'm Sure that There is Puzzlement In his Voice When he Says to Them Did you Receive the Holy Spirit

When you Believed Now this Question That he Asked Did you Receive the Holy Spirit When you Believed Indicates That the Normal Christian Pattern Of faith For faith In Christ Is that The Holy Spirit Is given Immediately Upon belief In Jesus In Jesus In Jesus Christ Now There's Been some Inaccurate Translations I think Of this Particular Passage Which has Created Some Difficulties For Christians Over the Years The King James Version Says Did you Did you Did you Receive the Holy Spirit Since You Believed But That's not a Proper translation The word in Greek Is clearly When Did you Receive the Holy Spirit When you Believed There is no Suggestion here That the Spirit of God The Holy Spirit Is given

After Belief in Christ God's Holy Spirit Is given When we Put our Trust in Jesus At that Particular Moment And Jesus Himself Had predicted That it would Be immediate In John 7 We are told That on the Great day Of the Feast Jesus Stood up And proclaimed That anyone Who is thirsty Come to me And let the One who Believes In me Drink As the Scripture Is said Out of the Believer's Heart Shall flow Rivers Of living Water And then John The writer Of the Gospel Of John Adds Now he Said this About the Spirit Which believers In him Were to Receive So it is Belief Faith And trust In Jesus Which brings About Which brings The Holy Spirit And we Receive That Now this Is what Puzzled Paul These people They knew Something about Jesus

They knew Of him They appeared To be Disciples Of Jesus But there Was something Missing And what It was We're not Told Perhaps Paul saw That there Was no Joy in Their lives No peace No certainty So he Asked them Did you Receive the Holy Spirit When you Believed Now this Cannot Mean that They had Never heard Of the Spirit At all For the Holy Spirit Is referred To many Times in The Old Testament And John The Baptist Spoke of The Messiah Of the One coming As baptizing People with The Spirit I think it Must rather Mean that Although they Had heard Of John The Baptist Prophecy They had Not heard Whether or Not it Had been Fulfilled So Paul Then asks A second Question Into what

Then were You baptized And they Replied Into John's Baptism So it Becomes Clear to Paul then What the Problem was They had Received John's Baptism Not a Baptism Not Christian Baptism In a Sense They were Still living In the Old Testament Which Culminated With John The Baptist And they They understood Neither the New Age That had been Ushered in By Jesus By his Coming Nor that Those who Believe and Trust in Him And are Baptized Into him Receive the Distinctive Blessing Of the New Age That is the Indwelling of The Holy Spirit So Paul begins To instruct Him Instruct these Twelve disciples In verses Four to Seven we Read Paul said John baptized With the Baptism of Repentance Telling the People to Believe in The one Who was to

[20 : 15] Come after Him That is In Jesus On hearing This They were Baptized in The name Of the Lord Jesus When Paul Had laid His hands On them The Holy Spirit Came upon Them And they Spoke in Tons And prophesied Altogether There were About twelve Of them Now Luke Here is Summarising An account For us Of what Happened Paul undoubtedly Gave them Full instructions In the Truth About Jesus And Luke Simply gathers It all up In these Phrases But Paul No doubt Told them About the Death Of Jesus And what It accomplished That is Forgiveness Of sins And then He would Have talked About the Resurrection Which made Available to Them A risen Life A different Kind of Life And then About the Coming of The Holy Spirit Who would Make all This real In their Experience Continuously Moment by

Moment Day After Day And after He instructed Them in This way These people They put Their trust In Jesus And they Were baptized Into the Name of Jesus What happens To them Next is It's like A kind Of a Mini Pentecost Better Still Pentecost Which we Read about At the Beginning Of Acts Pentecost Caught up On them They received The gift Of the Holy Spirit And we See here We're told That they Spoke in Tons And they Prophesied Now the Laying on Of hands Speaking in Tons And prophesying I think Was special To Ephesus To this Situation that Occurred here As it was At Pentecost As it was In Samaria When the Gospel message Of Jesus Finally reached The Samaritans And the Visible signs That are

Experienced by These groups In both Situations Demonstrate Visibly And publicly That particular Groups were Incorporated Into Christ By the Holy Spirit Now the Normal Experience Of Christian Faith Is not Done in This Manner Although I Am sure That there Are instances Of people Having some Extraordinary Experiences When they Become Christians But the Norm of The Christian Experience Is a Cluster Of four Things When we Hear the Gospel And we Want to Respond To it We Respond With repentance Turning away From our Sins We place Our faith And our Trust And all Of our Belief In Jesus We receive The gift Of the Holy Spirit And fourthly There is Baptism And when You look At these

Four Things They are Together In Acts Those four Things Repentance Faith In Jesus The water Baptism And the Gift Of the Holy Spirit Come Together In Acts They're Not Separate But they're Not necessarily In that Order Either Those four Things Come Together In Acts Now today We have Baptism In the Church Which comes A little Bit later We have The symbolic Washing Of baptism At a later Stage When people Become Christians But those Four Things Are there Now as We mature In our Christian Faith And actively Live out Our faith It is Obvious That God's Holy Spirit Works In and Through Us Now there Are many People around Who say They believe In Jesus And yet Do not Show much

Sign of the Holy Spirit At work In their Lives God's God's God's God's Holy Spirit Is given Upon the Exercise Of belief And trust In the Lord Jesus Christ And that Doesn't stop With the One act Of believing God's Amen And that's We have to Keep on Trusting In the Lord And to Testify To the Spirit's Power And vitality In our Own lives And it is that continual act of believing and trusting which releases the freshness of the Spirit in our lives.

[24 : 59] Paul says in his letter to the Colossians in chapter 2, As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him.

In other words, as you have received him by an act of believing, keep on believing, walk in him, live in him, in order that you might demonstrate the power of the Holy Spirit, if you like.

So what is wrong if in our Christian lives there is no evidence of the working of the Holy Spirit? There is none of the joy, none of the grace and none of the power.

What is wrong? Well, I think it's because we're not trusting in him. We trusted in him once, maybe 5, 10, 20, 30 years ago.

But that trust has waned, has ceased. And there is now no sense of expectancy, no fresh anticipation of his working in our lives today.

[26 : 06] Now I'm sure that if I was to pass through here and ask each one of you individually, do you believe in Jesus? Most of you would say yes.

Then I would have to ask this question. Well, did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed and put your trust in Jesus? Are the signs of the Spirit of God in your life?

Are his presence, his power, his working, the freshness, the vitality, the enthusiasm, the excitement of the Spirit visible in your Christian life? If not, it's possibly because you have ceased believing and really trusting in Jesus.

There must be this expectation of his working for he makes himself available to us continually, moment by moment, to fulfil every demand that life makes upon us as we expect him to do so.

And that note of expectancy is the evidence or the sign of faith which marks the difference between the sterility, the deadness and the dullness of religiosity without the Spirit and the fullness, the freshness and the vigour and power of a Spirit-filled life.

[27 : 30] There's a song that has been sung by many children over the years to help sum up this point. And the words are, Faith is like a muscle.

Use it and it will grow. We need to exercise our faith and belief in Jesus. It comes by having an active and living relationship with God.

Trust in him with every aspect of our lives. Exercising our faith in him in the big and in the little issues every day.

Trust in him in our work, in our schooling, with our monies, with our relationships and all those. Put in our trust, our total trust in Jesus.

And only when we have complete trust in God will our worship of him be vital and the desire to share our faith, will that be real?

[28 : 38] I'm going to pray a prayer which helps us think about putting our trust and our total trust in Jesus. So let's just bow our heads and pray. Lord Jesus, how frequently we fail to understand the truth of your promise to us that you have come to live within us and that your life can be as visible in us today as it ever was in this first century time when these new Christians broke out with such startling effect upon the darkened and dying world of their day.

Grant to us a new Lord the faith to lay hold of this promise and to make visible in our lives moment by moment this same sweet freshness and sovereign moving of the Holy Spirit.

O God, we ask you to touch us, to burn away the dross and to set us afire and aflame with that which manifests the character, the life of our Lord Jesus.

And we ask this in his name. Amen.