

Week of June 3-June 9

## **DID YOU?**

**Scripture Reading:** Read Acts chapter 19

Throughout our devotional study of the book of Acts, we have seen the prominence Luke places on describing the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in the early church. Today's chapter reading opens with yet another account of the Spirit at work.

Paul is on his third missionary journey when chapter 19 opens. Unlike on journey #2, this time the Spirit allows Paul to move into Ephesus and begin a ministry outreach that lasted close to three years. Great favor was upon Paul and many supernatural signs and wonders occurred during his ministry in Ephesus with the result that the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor.

Before Luke describes this powerful ministry, however, he lays out for us an encounter that Paul had with about a dozen men in Ephesus at the start of his ministry there. This encounter is intriguing in that Paul asks these disciples if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed. Since Paul declares in Romans 8:9 that it is only those who have the Spirit that are God's children, some Bible teachers argue that these men were not yet believers in Christ until after they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. They believe the Spirit was then given to these new believers at their salvation. The only problem with this interpretation is that Luke used the words "disciple" or "disciples" almost 30 times in Acts and in EVERY case it refers to genuine believers in Christ. Here, in Acts 19, Luke refers to these men as disciples, not just God-fearers. So, if Luke calls them disciples, then they must have already received the Spirit's indwelling.

So, what's the meaning of Luke's account of the receiving of the Spirit here in Acts 19, then, if they had already received the Spirit? Why was it necessary? The answer to the question is seen in the response of the disciples to the Spirit's coming upon them. Just as at Pentecost and at Cornelius' house, the outpouring of the Spirit produced the familiar visible signs of tongues and prophetic speech. This implies the purpose Luke sees is the same in all three: it was to provide power for witness and service. The indwelling of the Spirit in salvation, for assurance and holy living so prevalent in Paul's writing differs from that of Luke. For Luke, the work of the Spirit is about power. Taken together, though, Paul and Luke compliment each other and stress the totality of the Spirit's work.

Since this is the case, then from this passage we see once again God's plan to empower believers through the Holy Spirit's outpouring, including YOU! If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, then the Holy Spirit took up residence within you at salvation. But Paul's question in Acts 19 goes beyond this. He wants to know if you received the supernatural outpouring of the Spirit when you believed as well. For the approximately 12 men at Ephesus, after they spoke in tongues and prophesied, they could answer that question with a resounding yes. How about you?

**Action Step & Prayer Focus:** Did you receive the Spirit's supernatural empowering when you believed? If not, pray that the Holy Spirit would come upon you in power with the visible evidence of tongues and prophetic speech to bear witness to Christ.

**Take-a-way:** *When the Spirit's outpouring comes on a believer, it's not just a faith perception but a visible reception.*