

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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LOST IS LOST

Acts 19

September 5, 2021

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There are three points to today's message.

1. Paul encountered the fifty-percenters.
2. Paul met the imitators.
3. Paul faced the rebels.

PAUL ENCOUNTERED THE FIFTY-PERCENTERS

SCRIPTURE: Acts 19:1-7

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples ² and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." ³ So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism," they replied. ⁴ Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. he told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." ⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. ⁷ There were about twelve men in all.

EXPLANATION: In Acts 18, we read about Paul's travels through Ephesus. He stopped there briefly on his way from Corinth to Jerusalem and preached in the synagogue as was his custom. Surprisingly, the Jews asked him to stay a little longer. Because his journey was under certain time constraints, Paul declined the offer but promised that, Lord willing, he would visit them again. In today's passage, we read about his return to this important trading center.

Ephesus was home to the temple of the Greek deity named Artemis. This temple would later become known as one of the Seven Ancient Wonders of the World. During the last years of her life, Ephesus was also home to Mary, the mother of

Jesus, and John the apostle. Mary's house and John's tomb are tourist sites there today.

By the time Paul arrived, Apollos had left to preach in Corinth. If Aquila and Priscilla were still there, the Bible does not mention it. Instead, Paul is met by an interesting group of God-followers. Paul refers to them as "disciples." Of course, when we hear the term *disciple*, we typically think of the 12 men who were followers and students of Jesus. But the Greek word used here is *mathētēs*. This word originates from the word *math*, which means mental effort. Basically, a disciple is a person who has the mental effort to think things through, anyone who was a student of a specific person or philosophy.

Paul could see that they were God-followers, but when he questioned them, it became obvious that they did not know Jesus. They were disciples of John the Baptist. By the time this occurred, John had been dead about 26 years. If you remember, in chapter 18, we read that Apollos only knew about John's baptism; however, the Bible says that Apollos taught the way of the Lord and taught about Jesus accurately with enthusiasm in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit did not come upon Apollos after he was instructed by Aquila and Priscilla; he already had the Spirit at work in him. Apollos just was not familiar with believer's (water) baptism that takes place after salvation and maybe other theological points of the faith.

These 12 men may have also heard about Jesus, but when questioned, they did not know anything about the Holy Spirit, and they did not credit their salvation to Christ. Based on John's preaching, they understood that they needed to turn from their sins, but they did not realize to whom they should turn and had not made a personal commitment to follow Jesus. When Paul introduced them to Jesus, these disciples readily gave their hearts and lives to Christ and received the Holy Spirit as proof of his power working in them.

ILLUSTRATION: Paul Aurandt was born in 1918 and died in 2009. When he was about 3 years old, his father, a police officer, was killed by robbers. As a youth, Paul made radio receivers. At the age of 14, a teacher told him that she was impressed with his voice. So, he got a custodial job at a radio station. Eventually, Paul was allowed to read commercials and later became the voice of various radio segments. What began as part of World War II new casts quickly became a popular

stand-alone series that aired six times a week from 1976 to 2009. He became a staple in American radio history because of the way he presented stories. Paul Aurandt, better known as Paul Harvey, used little-known or forgotten facts and held back a key element until the very end, at which time he would conclude with, "And now you know...the *rest* of the story."

Like Paul Harvey, the apostle Paul presented these 12 men in Ephesus with the rest of the story, without which their faith was incomplete and ineffective.

APPLICATION: There are people all over our world, but especially in the United States, who understand part of the story. They believe in God and know a little about Jesus. They may even have a sense of morality, and unfortunately, they think that's enough. They *believe*, and they think that belief will save them. They are wrong.

Knowing about God and trying to be good will not get you to heaven. The Bible tells us that even the demons believe in Jesus and tremble at his presence. Salvation is not just believing, and it's not just about refraining from sin. Titus 3:4-6 says, "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior."

There is only one way to the Father and that's through the sacrifice of his son, Jesus Christ. When we give our hearts to Christ, the Holy Spirit confirms our birth into God's family and gives us the power we need to live Godly lives. These men started the day as fifty-percenters with half the knowledge they needed to be saved, but after they met Paul, they discovered Jesus and experienced the full power of the Spirit.

So he encountered the fifty-percenters. Then...

PAUL MET THE IMITATORS

SCRIPTURE: Acts 19:11-16

God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, ¹² so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.¹³ Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, “In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.” ¹⁴ Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. ¹⁵ One day the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?” ¹⁶ Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.

EXPLANATION: God gave Paul and the disciples the ability to perform many miracles in order to help draw attention to the Gospel message. When miracles happen, people tend to take notice. As we’ve already discussed, the Jews were jealous of Christianity. They wanted to cling to the belief that the Jewish faith was the sole method of coming to God. They saw Christianity as a threat to their culture, their heritage, and their system of religion. However, they could not dispute the miraculous signs that were occurring.

Through careful observation, these sons of Sceva saw a pattern. Paul invoked the name of Jesus. They decided to hedge their bets a little. If they did the same things Paul did, maybe they could drive out some evil spirits and gain a little popularity for themselves and their priestly heritage.

ILLUSTRATION: As parents, when our children play dress-up, we usually play along. If our little girl dresses up like a doctor, she may pretend to give us medicine. If our little boy puts on a monster mask, we pretend to be afraid. Of course, we know that our children are poor imitations of the characters they are trying to imitate. It’s easy for us to tell the difference.

It’s possible that some of the demons played along with this charade. The Jews may have thought that they were really making some headway if a few of the demons pretended to flee. Satan would have enjoyed the trickery as a way to distract from Paul’s Gospel mission, but one day, one demon refused to cooperate.

The sons of Sceva were not believers in Christ, and they did not claim to be. They were just copy-cats, and this demon called them out.

APPLICATION: Unfortunately, we have copy-cats in our homes, our communities, and even in our churches. There are those among us who do not have a real relationship with Christ. They bow their heads at our tables. They invoke the name of Jesus in the media. They even worship in our pews, but they do not believe the message of the Gospel. They imitate our speech, take part in our holidays and rituals, and try to do some of the things we do, but if you take the time to ask them, you'd quickly discover that they do not know the Lord.

- Paul encountered the fifty-percenters.
- Paul met the imitators.

PAUL FACED THE REBELS

SCRIPTURE: Acts 19:23-31

About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. ²⁴ A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in a lot of business for the craftsmen there. ²⁵ He called them together, along with the workers in related trades, and said: "You know, my friends, that we receive a good income from this business. ²⁶ And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that gods made by human hands are no gods at all. ²⁷ There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited; and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty." ²⁸ When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" ²⁹ Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia, and all of them rushed into the theater together. ³⁰ Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him. ³¹ Even some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, sent him a message begging him not to venture into the theater.

EXPLANATION: Remember, Ephesus was the home of the temple of Artemis. Well, this was a really big deal to the Ephesians. For one thing, it was a matter of

commerce. As Paul preached about the one true God, people began to see the light about false gods and stopped buying their shrines. Demetrius and the other merchants and craftsmen were not worried about truth. They were worried about their pocketbooks. They were not interested in knowing about Christ or trusting in him. They had no desire to be like him or his followers. They were defiantly opposed to Christ and his followers.

ILLUSTRATION: Imagine all the musicians, recording companies, and other businesses in Nashville that would suffer if the majority of people believed that country music was satanic. I am not saying that country music is satanic but imagine if someone did. If everyone stopped buying CDs or going to concerts or making music, it would severely impact our economy.

- Paul encountered the fifty-percenters.
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APPLICATION: In the city of Ephesus, Paul found a growing number of people who believed. We learn more about this church from Paul's letters to the Corinthians, which he wrote during his time in Ephesus, and his later letter to the Ephesians. However, Paul also discovered a great number of lost. Among those were some who believed in God and lived with a sense of morality, but they did not know Jesus. There were some who said the things Christians said and even did some of the things Christians do, but they did not know Jesus. There were also those who were rebels, defiantly opposed to Christ and everything Paul preached. The sad fact of the matter is that no matter which category they fell into, they were all lost. Lost is lost.

The same is true today. There is no halfway mark to heaven. You're either lost, or you're saved. You also cannot "fake it until you make it." Anyone without Christ is lost.

The scripture is very clear that Jesus is the only way to God. We have many differing views out there, and if you don't see the Bible as God's Word, then you may not believe that Jesus is the only way to God. The question I have is, "Why not trust Jesus? What has he done to you that would make you not repent of your sins

and receive his crucifixion as the payment for your sins?” Really, it’s incredible when you think of it. All you have to do is repent and believe. That’s it.

You might be one like these mentioned in today’s message. You know half of what it takes. Don’t be the 50 percent. Be all in. 100 percent.

The demon said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?” Does Satan know who you are? Better yet, does Jesus? Jesus knows his own. Make sure you know him so that he knows you.

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