

46—Acts 19.1-10—The Complete Truth Saves Completely

- I. Introduction
 - a. Imagine over the next month or so you prepare your taxes but you are not aware of some of the laws or standing exemptions that would greatly benefit you? We are to be good citizens and pay taxes but we do not want to pay more than we ought to.
 - b. As was the case last week in our text and this week, we encounter some who do not have the complete gospel. I was part of a ministry that wanted to share the gospel but did not want to mention repentance. They began the conversation with “Do you want to go to heaven?” which is a no brainer for most people. They would say, “If you want that say this prayer with me.” They didn’t mention sin. They didn’t mention anything upfront. The person would, I guess, have to process what the person was praying to see if in fact they believed those things.
 - c. Those attempts with a partial gospel do not save and those in our story today need to hear more.
- II. Main Point
 - a. The risen Lord Jesus continues to build his church through the proclamation of the complete gospel and those who repent and believe receive the Holy Spirit
- III. Outline
 - a. From incomplete to complete in Christ
 - b. How do I know if I have the Holy Spirit?
 - c. Hardened People make Paul withdraw
 - d. The result of bold reasoning and persuading—all of Asia heard the word
- IV. Exposition
 - a. As we break into this new scene, we can affirm that it was God’s sovereign will for Paul to return to Ephesus because last week we heard Paul say that if the Lord wills he will return. Well right out of the gate, we see that Paul is back from his 1500-mile journey. The Lord causes some incomplete believers to cross paths with the complete gospel and the Holy Spirit comes to them when they believe.
 - i. This is so encouraging to see the Lord arrange these 12 men to encounter Paul who has the complete gospel.
 - ii. Verse 1, while Apollos was now at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus.
 - iii. It’s incredible to see this happen. The only verb in this first verse is that one in the beginning that Luke uses frequently—it happened that or it came about that.
 1. Passing through is describing what happened while the other two verbs describe the purpose God had for Paul—to come to Ephesus and to find some disciples.
 - a. Was this Paul plan? It’s hard to know but to see this unfold really causes one to see the impossibility of such things happening without God’s sovereign providence.
 2. How did he discover that they were disciples?
 - a. And by the way, disciple can be used to describe disciples of whoever.
 - b. From Paul’s perspective, he discovers that by having a conversation with them. That’s how it works.
 - i. Let’s think about how to do this.
 1. Let’s say we have some opening questions like this:
 - a. Are you a disciple?
 - b. Are you a believer?
 - c. Do you go to church?
 - d. Are you a Christian?
 - e. Are you religious?

2. Hear me when I say this: no matter how someone answers any of those general questions (which are a good place to start) you cannot assume you have enough information yet.
 - a. For example, I was able to speak with a man Tuesday afternoon over at the pavilion. After introducing myself, he immediately told me that he and his wife go to church at Crosse Point.
 - b. Since I don't know anything about that church, I ask him what it is? He doesn't really have an answer other than non-denominational.
 - c. I probe a little deeper to see what it means to be a Christian. He said and I quote, "I just want to do good to people around me."
 - d. I affirmed the good desire to love your neighbors but that's not what it means to be a Christian. I told him loving people could certainly be a result of being a Christian but at the very minimum a Christian is someone who has repented of their sins and is trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation.
 - i. Now some people get nervous in conversations like this and normally when they do they say oh yeah, I just assumed that or I thought you meant something else.
 - ii. And certainly, our questions are not as clear as they need to be. But as you talk things become more clear.
 - iii. The less you talk, then things remain muddy.
 - iv. And sometimes the more you talk it becomes even more clear they don't know Christ.
 - ii. The point I'm trying to make is there needs to be more questions than the general ones above. Many people here in the south will answer yes to all of those but do not have a conscious faith in Christ.
 - iii. Paul knows that and he plows deeper.
- iv. The conversation turns to more specific questions. Let's look at these questions and may they help us. Let Paul ask you these questions too.
 1. The first one: "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"
 - a. This verse has caused some difficult issues over the last few hundred years. The KJV says: (Acts 19:2) ...since¹ you believed?
 - i. I looked at 12 other translations and none of them use the word "since" but all of them use "when."
 1. The problem arises when you think that someone can have true faith in Jesus but did not receive the Holy Spirit.
 2. When you say since you believed, it opens the door to believe that you can receive the Spirit some time later.

¹ It needs to be stated that the KJV's use of the word "since" more than likely meant "because" instead of "from a particular time in the past until a later time, or until now." But our use of words has changed and this is why the KJV English needs to be explained rather than assumed.

3. The Pentecostal and Charismatic movements have used this as a proof-text to say that there are two stages to becoming a Christian. It begins with faith and repentance and then sometime later by receiving the Holy Spirit.
 - a. I have heard of several people describe their experience in two stages. Our experiences are hard to understand sometimes. But we must believe what the Bible says concerning these matters.
 4. From Acts 2 where we see the immediate pouring out of the Spirit on all who repent and believe immediately.
 5. There are no two stages. Paul will say very clearly in (Rom. 8:9) Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.
- b. Again, we are in an abnormal part of history where there is some overlap with those who were alive when John the Baptist was alive and preaching in Israel.
 - i. It's very possible these men heard John teach. Or they heard from someone who had.
 - ii. But one of the primary marks of new covenant believers is the receiving of the Holy Spirit.
 1. Friend, the Father sent Jesus into the world to make this possible. Ever since the Garden of Eden, humanity has been separated from God because of our sin. Jesus came to take that death penalty for us that we might be forgiven and counted righteous by trusting in him and therefore God's Spirit could dwell in us.
 2. Friends, this is a glorious truth we cannot lose.
- c. Their reply is even more strange if we take it literally: "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."
 - i. There are a few ways, I suppose, to get around that. But John the Baptist taught this: (Lk. 3:16) ¹⁶ John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.
 - ii. Not to mention the numerous times the Holy Spirit is mentioned throughout the OT.
 - iii. Whatever the case may be, they have not received the Holy Spirit.
- d. Paul then asks, "Into what then were you baptized?"
 - i. Let's go ahead and hear their reply before we talk about it. (Acts 19:3) They said, "Into John's baptism."
 1. John's baptism of repentance was preparation for the coming of the Messiah.
 2. There were likely many who were baptized by John but who had been longing for the coming of the Messiah.
 - ii. That's where the rubber meets the road. Did these men or will these men reject Jesus as the promised Messiah and Savior?
 1. Because immediately, Paul turns their attention to what John was pointing!

- a. (Acts 19:4) ⁴ And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus."
 - b. They respond to the complete gospel with complete faith which results in complete salvation.
 - c. Upon hearing this they believed and were baptized in the name of Jesus.
 - e. Paul laid hands on them and the Holy Spirit came upon them.
 - i. Paul knows they have the Spirit and we know they have the Spirit because they begin speaking in tongues and prophesying.
 - 1. You might be asking yourself, if I've never done this does that mean I do not have the Spirit?
 - a. This was not the pattern every time in Acts. Not every conversion experienced this. The Ethiopian eunuch is one example among many others.
 - b. The norm is repentance and faith in Jesus and the possession of the Holy Spirit. And the visible profession of faith is baptism.
- b. That leads us to ask the question, "how do I know that I have received the Holy Spirit?"
 - i. I've been helped by so many in thinking about this. I hope you are helped by them too.
 - ii. To understand this, I believe it will help if we consider the order of salvation.
 - 1. So we have election, the gospel call, regeneration, conversion, justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance, death and glorification. (Grudem 670)
 - 2. Baptism of the Holy Spirit happens at conversion, that is our response to God's call through the gospel by repentance and faith in Christ.
 - iii. As I've already stated from Romans 8, to be a Christian is to have the Holy Spirit.
 - 1. No one is a Christian who does not have the Holy Spirit. Notice the connection with receiving the word and receiving the Holy Spirit in (Eph. 1:13-14) ¹³ In him (in Christ) you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.
 - a. So, let's see very clearly the contrast of before and after conversion so that it will help us answer this question. (The following quotes are from "Ask Pastor John")
 - i. "We were spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1, 4)."
 - ii. "We were unable to receive the things of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:14)."
 - iii. "We were in what Paul calls the mind of the flesh, which is not able to submit to God or please God (Romans 8:7-8)."
 - b. "We did not have the power to change our wills or our hearts or our minds or our affections. We were bent entirely away from God. How then did we receive the Holy Spirit? It was a miracle. It was...God's grace sovereignly applied to us in our helplessness."
 - c. "The Spirit opened your eyes (Acts 16:14). God shone in your heart...to cause you to see the light of the gospel of the beauty and the glory of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6). He gave you life so that you would no longer be dead, no longer be blind, no longer be hostile to God, no longer be unable to please God, no longer be rebellious, no longer view the cross as foolishness."

- d. "Instead, you saw the glory of Christ in the gospel. You saw it as more beautiful, more desirable, than the things of this world. You were made alive by the Spirit of God. God was real and precious and beautiful. You were no longer blind. You saw the cross and Christ and his way and his word as more attractive than the promises of sin. Instead of hostility to God, you loved him and you wanted to please him. Instead of doubt and suspicion and hardness, you saw his promises as true and you trusted in them, banked on those promises. Christ became your treasure."
- e. "That's how you know you're alive. That's how you know you're converted. That's how you know you have faith. That's how you know that the Holy Spirit is within you."
- c. Let's now press on to see what it looks like for some who reject Christ and do not have the Spirit but God uses to move Paul on to good soil.
 - i. As is Paul's custom, he enters the synagogue.
 - ii. There he is given an unusual amount of time. It says for three months he spoke boldly.
 - 1. We've talked about this before but it's worth the reminder that speaking boldly is to speak freely. It's to speak openly and with courage.
 - a. Imagine Paul being reminded of the encounters at other synagogues causing him to hold back for fear of persecution?
 - b. It would be easy to speak in such a way that remains very general that everyone in the synagogue would agree with.
 - i. I recall some encounters Jesus had that began very general and agreeable like the rich young ruler. If he would have just left off the part about selling all that he had and come follow him. Or when a disciple said, I will follow you but first let me bury my father. Jesus said, let the dead bury the dead, you come follow me.
 - 2. Luke describes Paul speaking boldly as reasoning and persuading.
 - a. He didn't just speak in general agreeable terms. He was very specific from the OT scriptures to prove that Jesus fulfilled all that was promised. He connected the dots for them.
 - iii. Well, what the Lord said would happen in Isaiah 6 continues to happen to some of these Jews.
 - 1. Some became hardened and continued in unbelief.
 - a. Hard hearts and unbelief normally stay silent. In fact here, they speak evil of the way before a listening crowd.
 - i. It's ironic that Paul even used this saying before when he persecuted the way.
 - b. Do you think if you were to ask these hardened Jews about their experience that they would describe it as rejection and hardness of heart?
 - i. They were people like Isaiah preached to: (Isa. 6:9-10) ⁹ And he said, "Go, and say to this people: "'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' ¹⁰ Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."
 - ii. With every reasonable and persuasive argument Paul gave them over those 3 months, their hearts were increasingly hardened.
 - 1. It is a heart that is dead and unfeeling, not alive and filled with the Holy Spirit.

2. God calls us to sow the seed even on rocky soil. Every farm knows what happens when you do that. But in this case, Paul nor ourselves know which soils are filled with hard rocks.
 - a. But when Paul sees the rocky, hardened soil which becomes clear when they speak evil of the way before a large crowd attempting to make them hard too, the Lord moves Paul on to more fertile soil.
- d. Isn't it amazing how God works! We've seen the word spread many times throughout this book of Acts. And as a result, Paul moves on to a school of some sort where he reasoning during the day for two years and all of Asia heard the word.
 - i. If Paul had been given two years in the synagogue with the same outcome, would all of Asia have heard the word of the Lord?
 - ii. But he is given an open door to speak daily at the school of Tyrannus...a school...an opportunity to share Christ and major results.
 1. I can't help but think that student ministries saw this text and said we need to find a way to get on the campuses of these universities.
 - a. And guess what, they did. And you can even join them in this cause by given to Annie Armstrong which support some of these campus ministries.
 - iii. So, when you read the first few chapters of Revelation to the seven churches of Asia, that will have been some of the fruit from this great work of God's amazing grace through Paul at the school of Tyrannus.

V. Response

- a. As we come to the table today the response comes as the bread and the fruit of the vine are passed.
 - i. This is for those who have turned from their sins and are trusting in the finished work of Jesus for salvation. We are a people who know that we have the Holy Spirit. We know who we were and who we are now. We are sinners who have been saved by grace. We love Christ more than anything else...especially ourselves. We take up our cross and follow gladly.
 - ii. This is not for those who do not have the Holy Spirit. But it can be. Let it pass by today but see me after the service and we will gladly share the complete gospel with you. Come out of that awful cultural Christianity that poisons our culture here in the south. Come to Jesus.

Benediction: (Phil. 4:19-20) ¹⁹ And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

²⁰ To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.