

There is Nothing Impossible with God

Աստուծոյ Քով Անհնար Բան Չկայ

Acts 19:1-22

Last Sunday we met the tentmakers, a couple, **Aquila and Priscilla**. What a couple that accompanied Paul from **Corinth to Ephesus**. God had a plan for them. On the other hand, we met **Apollos**, a great teacher, full of fervor and fire, who knows about Jesus. Aquilla and Priscilla heard Apollos teaching. They realized he needed to hear more about the identity of Jesus. What a couple! God bless them for not embarrassing and condemning Apollos in public. Apollos needed to know that Jesus was more than a rabbi. Jesus is **the Savior**, someone **who forgives sins**, who **restores the soul**, who **transforms lives**. Apollos needed the **Holy Spirit** to have a full relationship with the triune God. The good teacher became a better teacher, equipped with the Holy Spirit. Martin Luther suggest that Apollos could be the author of the Hebrews, because of the style of the Greek that has been used. We don't know the author of Hebrews, but as I mentioned to you last week, Apollos became one of the leading teachers, like Peter and Paul.

Here is the important point:

- God prepared a tentmaker couple Aquilla and Priscilla; or Priscilla and Aquila (Paul changes sometimes the order of the names. I think Paul is intending to say that Priscilla took the leadership role in teaching as well).
- God prepared a good teacher like Apollos;
- God can use all of you: women and men, men and women, children and elders... all of us are called to be the disciples of Jesus.

We are called to be the disciples of Jesus. There is no other alternative.

The Holy Spirit led Paul where to go, and where not to go, and how long to stay.

“He stayed few days in **Philippi**, few weeks into **Thessalonica**, a day or two in **Beroea**, and few days in **Athens**. Then he had spent 18 months in **Corinth**; and now Paul arrives to one of the major centers of Mediterranean world, **Ephesus** itself, a great city at the hub of the trade routes of the world, full of culture and money and temples and politics and soldiers and merchants and slaves.”¹

Some historical facts: Paul visits Ephesus twice. The first time with Aquila and Priscilla. He leaves them there and sails to Jerusalem. That becomes the end of second journey.

In Acts 18:22 Paul starts his third missionary journey. He starts from his home church in the Syrian-Antioch.

After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples. (Acts 18:23 NIV11)

Where to?

To Asia Minor. (See the map)

“Again sponsored by Antioch in Syria, Paul began his third missionary journey in the spring of A.D. 52, traveling by foot through the region of his first mission on into Galatia and Phrygia. On the second missionary journey the Spirit had prevented him from continuing west into Asia (Acts 16:6), but that did not happen this time, for Paul was headed directly toward the west, in order to reach Ephesus according to his promise in 18:21.”²

Let us open Acts 19

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. (Acts 19:1-7 NIV11)

Paul had wanted to come to **Ephesus** for major ministry for quite some time, but he had to wait for God’s time (16:6; 18:21), which had now come... There were believers in Ephesus when he arrived (18:27). They had probably become Christians during Paul’s earlier short ministry here, through **Priscilla and Aquila**, or through someone else (2:9).³

Paul arrived and he faced 12 disciples. (Interesting number vs.8a). Luke does not give details about how Paul figured it out that they were not believers, Paul asks if they received the Holy Spirit. (e.g. like Apollos); they said:

“No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

How come they don't know. They knew something about the Spirit, because they were baptized by John the Baptist, who told them about Jesus who baptize them with the Spirit.

-I think they were not aware that Jesus has come, and the New Age started already with Jesus.

-They were ignorant of the Pentecost: God would “pour out” his Spirit **without measure upon all peoples.**

-In Acts 2, in the day of Pentecost Peter said: **“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38 NIV11)**

“They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them. As a sign that they received the HS, they spoke with tongues and prophesied.” (5,6)

This is a **mini-Pentecost**, with **12 disciples**...

This reminds me what happened in Samaria, when Peter and John went and laid hands over them and they received the Holy Spirit.

Observation:

As I mentioned last Sunday, you can know something about Jesus, but that does not mean you have repented, and committed to become disciple of Jesus. You need to surrender to Jesus and receive the Holy Spirit.

John Stott summarizes four things here:

“The norm of Christian experience, then, is a cluster of four things: repentance, faith in Jesus, water baptism and the gift of the Spirit. Though the perceived order may vary a little, the four belong together and are universal in Christian initiation.”⁴

I think most of Christians agree with the three norms that John Stott said, when it comes to the gifts of the Spirit, some emphasis on speaking in tongues and gift of prophesying as the most important gifts. (If you don't have it, you don't have Spirit of God).

We need to be careful about the gifts of the Spirit. In Samaria and here in Ephesus, speaking in tongues and the prophesying gifts appeared to show to the gentile world that the Spirit is there, it was proof that they received it.

We need to be careful not to generalize this as a sign that whoever will be baptized will receive those gifts. Please read 1 Corinthians 12, 13, 14. Everyone does not have same spiritual gifts. Paul is very carefully explaining the danger of boasting or bragging on our spiritual gifts. The spiritual gifts should build and edify the body of the church, the body of the Christ.

-I think we sometimes over emphasize the **gifts of the Spirit** and forget the **Fruit of the Spirit**.

Think about it..

-Please notice this delicious fruit: **“love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”** (Gal 5:22-23 NIV11)

The fruit of the Spirit, nine of them in a package, keeps me on my knees trusting God in my walk with Him and using my spiritual gifts for His Kingdom.

Costly Preaching

Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. ⁹ But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord. (Acts 19:8-10 NIV11)

As usual, Paul starts at the synagogue, for three months, preaching, arguing about the Kingdom of God. The **opposition** (stubborn) wanted Paul out of the synagogue.

-How sad that people **became obstinate: (stubborn) (lit. “hardened themselves”) harden hearts.** (I pray about this)

We read in Hebrews:

So, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts (Hebrews 3:7,8)

But God:

As a result of this hardening, **God did a greater work of salvation....**

-Paul decides to leave the synagogue to find a new place to preach; he finds a **lecture hall called Tyrannus**. We don't know if this hall belongs to **Mr. Tyrannus**,

but it is a hall where the philosophers argue. I don't know how Paul got to this place. I don't know what time during the day he was preaching. Remember during the day he was a tentmaker... John Stott assumes saying: **"a five-hour lecture six days a week for two years, which makes 3,120 hours of gospel argument."**⁵

Then what?

-He preached for 2 years.

-To Jews and Greeks (gentiles). **The RESULT:**

-Entire Asia heard the Word of the Lord.

How come?

Ephesus is an important city: a city of business.

"The center point of the city of Ephesus in the ancient world was its magnificent temple dedicated to the goddess **Diana**, or **Artemus**. This temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The city of Ephesus was one of the five largest cities in the Roman Empire at that time, being the capital of the province of Asia under the Roman government. It was also a very important commercial center for the Roman Empire."⁶

I will pass over some passages, please read them.

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. (Acts 19:11-12 NIV11)

Watch out with those verses. Paul is not a magician doing magical entertainment. God is using Paul to demonstrate His Power.

Then the following verses talk about **evil spirits** and **exorcism**. (13-17)

Because of time I will not go over all those verses.

Result:

As result of the preaching, teaching, miracles, exorcism, there was a turning to God in this pagan city which practiced sorcery.

¹⁸ Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed what they had done. ¹⁹ A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. ²⁰ In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power. (Acts 19:18-20 NIV11)

This is so important. Many believed and followed Jesus.

Not only Jesus' name was glorified, but also His people were purified.

Many wanted to get rid of anything that hinders them to be faithful followers of Jesus.

Practicing sorcery was good business. Books were very expensive those days. They burned them. WOW

How much was the value of things they burned?

The total came to fifty thousand drachmas (pieces of silver)

“50,000 Pieces of silver (probably refers to the Greek *drachma*), which represented a laborer’s average daily wage. At \$15 (U.S.) per hour, or \$120 per day, 50,000 *drachmas* would equal approximately \$6 million in today’s currency.”⁷

ESV

This is a tough thing to do. To get rid of something that was so profitable, but it will not allow you to be sanctified and follow Jesus.

Can you make a drastic decision like that?

What will you choose?

We can have conversation about stocks. Where do you invest?

I have a friend who realized the company that he was investing was making electronic cigarettes. Thousands of kids were getting addictive and also dying. He pulled out from it.

Holiness is more important than profit.

Result:

²⁰ In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

Application:

1 Be receptive to the Holy Spirit

Don’t be upset when God closes the door in front of you. God delayed Paul’s mission to Asia Minor. I don’t know why? But God did miracles when Paul obeyed God and arrived Asia Minor.

It is God’s work not yours. Just be receptive to His Spirit.

2 Are you using your spiritual gift to edify the body of Christ?

Just check if you lacking the fruit of the Spirit: “**love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.**”

We know more people in the church to support, disciple, mentor, build the body of Christ.

3 Is there something you need to “burn it”

It could be costly but should burn it. It is not helpful for your spiritual growth

1. N.T. Wright. *Acts for Everyone (Part two)* P 113
2. (ESV Commentary)
3. Ajith Fernando, *The NIV Application Commentary, Acts* P 506
4. John Stott, *The Message of Acts*, BST, p 305
5. John Stott, *The Message of Acts*, BST p 314.
6. R.C. Sproul, *You Will Be My Witness to the End of the Earth Acts* P292
7. (ESV Commentary)