*DEVOTIONAL*

March 12 - 17

The Spirit’s Witness

**Monday, March 12 Acts 19:1-7**

*“The Holy Spirit came on them”*

 On this his third missionary journey, Paul arrived in Ephesus where he found some disciples who were followers of John the Baptist’s teaching. John had preached Jesus as the coming Messiah and called people to repent and be baptized. What these followers of John had missed was John’s teaching about what the Messiah would do: “I baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Luke 3:16).

 The baptism of repentance was very important to these men. But, when asked about receiving the Holy Spirit, they confessed that they had not heard of the Holy Spirit. This crucial part of John’s teaching had not reached them. They had joined a religion of preparation for the Messiah but knew nothing of the Spirit’s empowering of those who believed in him. As soon as they learned about the living Christ and his presence through the Holy Spirit, they were baptized anew and the Holy Spirit came upon them.

*Thank you, Lord, for giving us your Spirit. Amen.*

**Tuesday, March 13 Acts 19:8-10**

*“All who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus”*

 We can be sure that Paul was disappointed once again when he was put out of the synagogue because of the hardness of the hearts of the Jews. But the closed door again led to an open door of opportunity. The hall of Tyrannus was a perfectly suited, natural place to reach the inquiring Greeks who would be interested in a new philosophy. But Paul gave them more than a new set of ideas. He preached Christ and the kingdom of God, calling them to place their faith in Jesus and to live according to the will of God.

 The joy of the new converts must have been contagious. Wherever they went they told about what had happened to them. Paul could not have reached the whole province in two years even if he had walked the length and breadth of the area talking to everyone he met. Instead he preached daily, and those who were won to Christ multiplied his ministry. The people who became Christians did the rest. They could not stop talking about the new life they had found. All of Asia Minor heard about Christ through them.

*All will hear your word, Lord, when your followers take it into the world. Amen.*

**Wednesday, March 14 Acts 19:11-20**

*“God worked special miracles”*

 Paul’s ministry in Ephesus was marked by many miracles done in the name of Jesus. The power at work through the Apostle was so great that the Ephesians actually believed that the handkerchiefs and aprons he wore working at a trade would have his power. Superstition? Perhaps. But the Lord condescended to meet people’s need because of Paul’s clear preaching of the power of the name of Jesus. Paul’s sweatbands and artisan apron were not powerful in themselves. It was because people had heard the Apostle’s message and witnessed the Lord’s miracles through him that they believed an article from him would be efficacious.

 This shows us how the Lord takes people where they are. At this time there was a belief in the spiritual power of articles fashioned in the image of a god or blessed in its shrine. The Lord blessed the prayers of people who held articles of Paul’s clothing because he knew of the Apostle’s faithfulness to point away from himself to the source of his power which is found only in the name of Jesus Christ.

*We minister in your name, Lord, for your name carries with it your power. Amen.*

*DEVOTIONAL*

March 12 - 17

The Spirit’s Witness

**Thursday, March 15 Acts 19:21-27**

*“I must go on to Rome”*

 Luke’s description of the ministry in Ephesus is interrupted briefly to set the stage for the final chapters of Paul’s life. At the height of the success of the work in Ephesus, Paul’s mind is guided by the Spirit: “I must go on to Rome.” The Apostle was being led to communicate the Gospel in the center of military might and political power. Paul knew that Rome was his destination. Since the Spirit had made that clear, he felt urgency but he was not rushed. He remained in Ephesus for a time. During that period he wrote his epistles to the Corinthians and was on hand to help the church face the attack of the silversmiths.

 Our ultimate destination is heaven. And on the way there are special assignments each of us is singled out to do. For us it may be in our present Ephesus or in some clearly assigned Rome. When we accept the calling to be communicators of the Lord’s grace and power, he will deploy us in that particular place which no one else can fill. When we ask him he will make the where and the when perfectly clear.

*Guide us by your Spirit, Lord, to carry out our purpose as your witnesses. Amen.*

**Friday, March 16 Acts 19:28-34**

*“The whole city was filled with confusion”*

 The riot in Ephesus is another example of opposition to the Gospel found throughout Acts. Luke consistently stresses the real reasons behind such opposition, especially because opposition was usually for reasons other than the content of the Gospel. Here in Ephesus (as in Philippi – Acts 16:19), it had primarily an economic reason, though it was couched in religious and patriotic terms when presented in public. The temple of Artemis was a key to the economic stability of Ephesus, for foreigners traveled there to worship and deposited money in the temple.

 Demetrius and his fellow silversmiths succeeded in getting the whole city into an uproar and seized two of Paul’s colleagues. Paul wanted to go to the assistance of his friends but was dissuaded by two groups. The first group concerned for his safety was the members of the Ephesian church. The second group was called “officials of Asia.” These officials were leading citizens of Ephesus who were appointed annually by Rome to oversee her interests. That they would care about his safety gives us insight into the influence of Paul’s preaching.

*The world shouts the names of other gods, Lord, but we follow only you. Amen.*

**Saturday, March 17 Acts 19:35-41**

 *“There is no cause for all this commotion”*

 The town clerk was the Lord’s agent to quiet the crowd. He ruled that the mob had no power to try the Christians. He reasoned with the crowd with the cool discernment of an uninvolved Roman official. Note the progression of his thought. There was no reason to chant about Artemis; everyone in Ephesus knew about the goddess and her origins (they believed that the many-breasted image of the goddess had fallen down from heaven and was thus of divine workmanship).

 He went on to point out that those being accused had not committed any crime. They had neither robbed nor blasphemed the temple – the only charges that could legally have been leveled. Further, there were courts for such trials. If Demetrius and the silversmiths had a legitimate charge, they should follow the due process established by Rome. With that the official dismissed the crowd. Once again, as had happened in Corinth (Acts 18:12), an official of Rome had declared that the Christians were not to be harassed simply for holding contrary views.

*May people of faith, Lord, be treated fairly in society. Amen.*