

Got the Spirit? Acts 19:1-7 (NIV) www.bible-sermons.org September 14, 2008

We are obviously taking a week away from the Gospel of John. That means the Holy Spirit invaded my routine to keep you and me from getting in a rut. We are such creatures of habit that we can just go on doing this religious thing of meeting at church on Sunday, going through the next portion of Scripture, and learning something without having a life changing encounter with the Holy Spirit. So the Holy Spirit has to break-in in a different way than we are accustomed to experiencing Him to shout something loud and clear because He wants us to hear it.

The Holy Spirit has been bringing to my mind a portion of an earlier sermon in John. *I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.* John 5:30b (NIV) It has challenged me every day to consider the motivations of my heart. (John 16:8) It convicts at times and encourages at other times. (John 14:16)

Then we had a passage at our Wednesday night Bible study in Acts that has been stirring in me as well, the passage I read earlier. I've been asking myself, "Is there evidence that we are in a living relationship with Jesus? Where is the fruit of the Spirit? How many who attend Wayside Chapel are like these men in Ephesus?" We may have knowledge of the truth but have yet to make Jesus the Lord of our life. If I'm responsible for anything as your Pastor, it is to make it absolutely clear to you what it means to be made right with God, saved (Acts 2:21), born again (John 3:3), passed from death to life (John 5:24), or as the Apostle Paul said in Acts 19, "*Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?*"

In our passage for today, the Apostle was on his third missionary journey. He had promised the Ephesians that he would return. (Acts 18:21) He left Aquila and Priscilla there to build the church while he was away. ¹ *While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples...* As he entered the town he met some disciples. You might wonder why those people never met Aquila and Priscilla, but Ephesus was the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire. The population was around 250,000. It is no surprise then that they hadn't met.

The fact that Paul calls them disciples does not imply that they are redeemed believers. By that I mean, it does not mean that they have trusted Jesus' work on the cross to cleanse them from their sins and make them right with God. The word *Mathetes* simply means "learner" or "follower". The New Testament mentions disciples of Pharisees (Mark 2:18) and disciples of John the Baptist (John 1:35). The term does not necessarily imply the men are Christians. Paul must have come across this group while they were gathered for worship. As is usually the case in the New Testament, only the men are counted. This was probably a group of 12 families, 30 to 40 people altogether.

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."* Paul wanted to gauge where they were at spiritually. Whose disciples are they? The following verses let us know they were disciples of John. But Paul didn't ask who they followed. He asked if they had received the Holy Spirit. From the letters Paul wrote to the

Commented [notes1]: 8 When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:
John 16:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever--
John 14:16 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: 21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.[
Acts 2:21 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: 3 In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."
John 3:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: 24 "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.
John 5:24 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: 21 But as he left, he promised, "I will come back if it is God's will." Then he set sail from Ephesus.
Acts 18:21 (NIV)

Commented [notes7]: 18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?"
Mark 2:18 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: 35 The next day John was there again with two of his disciples.
John 1:35 (NIV)

churches, we can see that the Apostle recognized that if you were a believer in Jesus, if you had passed from death to life, then the Holy Spirit resides in you. A Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 6:19) All Christians are baptized into one Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:13) When we believed unto salvation, we were marked with the seal of the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 1:13)

In Paul's theology, all Christians have the Holy Spirit living in them. They can resist Him. (Ephesians 4:30) They can refuse to obey Him, but they cannot separate their life from Him. Paul wrote in Romans 8 that if anyone did not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. (Romans 8:9b)

When the crowd at Pentecost asked the disciples what they should do to be saved, Peter told them, *"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. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call."* Acts 2:38-39 (NIV) The promise He referred to is the promise of the Father to pour out His Spirit. (Acts 1:4)

Therefore, by asking if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed, Paul was asking the defining question as to whose disciples they are. If they are Jesus' disciples and have trusted Him for their salvation, they will have the Holy Spirit. But they responded, *"We didn't know there was a Holy Spirit."*

Though Jewish writings referred to the Spirit of God, they did not consider Him as a unique entity, a separate person. Jesus explained it like this. *"If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."* John 14:23 (NIV) And then He went on to explain about the coming Counselor, the Holy Spirit. (John 14:26) That is how the Father and the Son live in us through the Holy Spirit. Those disciples hadn't heard Jesus' teaching.

³ So Paul asked, *"Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism," they replied.* If they don't have the Holy Spirit, Paul wondered what baptism they received. Who are they following? Apparently they had only heard the message of John. Maybe they were on their way to one of the Feasts of the Jews when they heard about John and went to listen to him and were baptized. (Mark 1:5) They must not have returned to Jerusalem since then, or they surely would have heard of Jesus. (Mark 1:28)

The sovereignty of God orchestrated Paul coming into town from that particular direction on that particular day in which this group had gathered so that they would meet. I believe that is true for every genuine seeker of truth. (John 1:9) God does not love one more than another. He orchestrates our lives in such a way that we can find Him in spirit and in truth. (Acts 17:26)

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."* Paul explained John the Baptist's message was to point people to Jesus. (John 1:15) He surely went on to explain the work of the cross and the resurrection. We just have a brief summary of the encounter.

Commented [notes9]: 19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 1 Cor 6:19 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 1 Cor 12:13 (NIV)

Commented [notes11]: 13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, Eph 1:13 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Eph 4:30 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. Romans 8:9b (NIV)

Commented [notes14]: 4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. Acts 1:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: 26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. John 14:26 (NIV)

Commented [notes16]: 5 The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. Mark 1:5 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: 28 News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee. Mark 1:28 (NIV)

Commented [notes18]: 9 The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.[John 1:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes19]: 26 From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. Acts 17:26 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: 15 John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'" John 1:15 (NIV)

⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. They had repented when they met John the Baptist, but they weren't saved. They believed John the Baptist, but they weren't born from above. They met regularly to worship, but they hadn't passed from death to life. To be baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus, is to be baptized into all that He is and all that He means to us. He is no longer just another man, but Lord of all. We could say we are immersed into His Lordship. (Romans 10:9) In other words, they surrendered their lives to Him as His servants. (Luke 14:33)

Now, consider what Paul wrote about the presence of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life and why Paul asked if they had received the Holy Spirit. ⁶ When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. The gifts of the Spirit were the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in their lives. It showed them that they were accepted by God because of the work of Jesus. The manifestation of gifts was so important then because they needed to understand that they were no longer under the Old Covenant that Moses received on Sinai. They were now living in the New Covenant made with the blood of Jesus. (Hebrews 12:24) The prophecies of this New Covenant with its outpouring of the Spirit were present in their lives. (Jeremiah 31:31) They knew it experientially and without a doubt.

The manifestation of gifts was important for the early Jewish believers. I believe they are still useful and operating today. But the application that the Lord is stirring in my heart is that of the fruits of the Spirit. You can jabber and call it tongues (1Corinthians 14:9). You can say, "Thus saith the Lord" and utter words right out of your own heart (Jeremiah 14:14), but you can't fake the fruits of the Spirit for long.

Let me ask you what the Apostle asked these worshippers. Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? Are you truly born again? Have you passed from death to life?

Jesus told us in the parable of the weeds among the wheat that the church would always have unbelievers among us. (Matthew 13:30) You can come to church, read your Bible, even believe in your mind that Jesus is God's provision for your sins, but have you placed your faith in Him? (James 2:19) Have you made that transaction of exchanging your sins for His righteousness? (Romans 5:17) How can you tell? It is the difference between death and life, hell and heaven!

The Apostle told the Corinthians that if they were in Christ they would become a new creation. The old will be gone. The new will have come. (2Corinthians 5:17) Is that how you would describe your life? Or is there little difference between the old you and the current "Christian" you? Is this a phase in your life, or does the Spirit of God live in you?

If the Spirit of God lives in you, you know you are right with God. It is impossible for God to make His home in you unless you have been sanctified by the blood of Jesus and renewed by the Holy Spirit. (Titus 3:5) And how can you know if the Spirit of God is in you? (Matthew 7:20) The Spirit of God will produce in you His own life. It is described in Galatians 5.

Commented [notes21]: 9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes22]: 33 In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:33 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]: 24 To Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. Heb 12:24 (NIV)

Commented [notes24]: 31 "The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Jer 31:31 (NIV)

Commented [notes25]: 9 So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. 1 Cor 14:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes26]: 14 Then the LORD said to me, "The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I have not sent them or appointed them or spoken to them. They are prophesying to you false visions, divinations, idolatries and the delusions of their own minds. Jer 14:14 (NIV)

Commented [notes27]: 30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn." Matt 13:30 (NIV)

Commented [notes28]: James 2:19 (NIV) 19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder.

Commented [notes29]: 17 For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. Romans 5:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes30]: 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 2 Cor 5:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes31]: 5 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, Titus 3:5 (NIV)

Commented [notes32]: 20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. Matt 7:20 (NIV)

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Galatians 5:22-24 (NIV) If the Spirit of God is at home in you, the first evidence will be the love of God flowing through you to others. The Apostle John said, ⁹ "Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness." ¹ John 2:9 (NIV) We can claim we are in the light, that we have received the Holy Spirit, but if we don't love our brother, we are deceiving ourselves.

Joy is a wonderful evidence of the Spirit. It is almost as hard to fake as love. Joy is not happiness. Happiness is based on things being as you like them for the moment. God's joy is deep and abiding. It is there through good times and difficult times. It confuses the world, because they can't understand why you are smiling and often take offense to the joy we have. Do you have God's joy? (John 17:13)

Peace! Because the Spirit filled person is right with God, there is a peace that is unexplainable. We know we are God's child and that He can keep us secure in Him until we are home with Him. It, too, is not based on what is happening around us, but on Whose we are. We know our Father can deal with anything He allows to come our way. (John 14:27)

Patience is more than a virtue. The patience that comes from God is supernatural. It can put up with more than any natural person could and continue to love. Just think of all that God has put up with from your life and imagine a person having that the patience God has with you. That should be the fruit of the Spirit manifest in a Christian's life. And kindness! A Spirit filled Christian is consistently kind. They are kind to all, everyone, every ethnicity, every level of society. Even when they must be firm, kindness pervades the firmness.

Goodness – Many unredeemed people are described as good people. But the goodness of the Holy Spirit is good not just in the eyes of men, but more importantly, in the eyes of God. They do what is right even when it is misunderstood. They do what is good even when others don't agree. It is a goodness that is consistent with God's nature and can be very different from the world's idea of being "nice".

Faithfulness- They are faithful to their word, but again, most importantly, they are faithful to God. They are faithful to keep Him first in their life. They are faithful to obey the leading of the Spirit. They are faithful to their spouse and to the family of God. You can count on them.

Gentleness- The flaming eyes of rage are not present in a Spirit filled believer. The cutting sharp words of personal bias fade away. Gentleness pervades all that they do. They aren't pushy or demanding because the Spirit isn't like that with them. When they have to speak a painful truth, they do it with gentleness so the listener can receive it. It is an overlooked and under appreciated fruit of the Spirit. And finally, the last on the list is self-control. In every area of life, the Spirit filled believer is disciplined.

Commented [notes33]: 13 "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.
John 17:13 (NIV)

Commented [notes34]: 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.
John 14:27 (NIV)

I'm not saying that every born again believer is always expressing all these fruits of the Spirit perfectly, or they are not born again. I don't believe the Bible teaches experiential perfection in this life. (Philippians 3:12) But if in any of these areas you usually don't have victory, or habitually fail, you need to ask yourself what Paul asked that group. Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?

How important to you is your relationship with Jesus Christ? How much time do you spend in communion with Him? Do you love the Word? Would people use those descriptive words of the fruit of the Spirit to describe you? If not, you need to repent and believe. (Mark 1:15) Make that transaction of giving your sins to Jesus and receiving His righteousness and you will receive the Holy Spirit! Luke said that the Father loves to give good gifts to his children, so we should ask for the Holy Spirit. (Luke 11:13) It is a cry of desperation that knows we are worthy of judgment and desperately need the mercy of God.

Let's not think of someone else this morning. Let's bring this home to our own heart. Are you pretending? Are you living in habitual sin and yet think you are filled with the Holy Spirit? (1John 1:6) Let me tell you from experience, if the Spirit of God is in you, habitual sin will make you miserable, no matter how "fun" it is. If you are comfortable with sin, the Spirit is not at home in you. If the fruits of the Spirit don't describe your usual condition, the Spirit of God is not at home in you. You aren't a new creation in Jesus. But you can be this morning. Make that transaction. Give Him your life. Repent and be baptized and you will receive the Holy Spirit! (Acts 2:38) It is God's word. It cannot fail.

Get serious with God. Keep on pounding on heaven's door until you know your life has been changed. It isn't about a feeling. Feelings come and go. It's about being made new by the presence of the Holy Spirit in you. (John 14:20)

The Apostle Peter described another scenario. He wrote to some who had been cleansed from their sins but they did not continue to grow. They resisted the change the Holy Spirit would make in their lives. Let me read it to you. (2Peter 1:3-11) Do you see how God has given you everything you need to escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires? He has given us the Word of God and the promised Holy Spirit. But we must cooperate with Him. Those who didn't were described as ineffective and unproductive. Perhaps you are here this morning, and you know with a certainty that you were washed clean by the blood of Jesus, but you have been resisting the Holy Spirit. You haven't added those things that the Apostle described. You aren't headed for that rich welcome into the eternal kingdom. You will be saved, but it will be like running from the burning building of your life. (1Corinthians 3:15) You can start again this morning by letting Jesus be Lord of your life.

Commented [notes35]: 12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.
Phil 3:12 (NIV)

Commented [notes36]: 15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"
Mark 1:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes37]: 13 If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"
Luke 11:13 (NIV)

Commented [notes38]: 6 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.
1 John 1:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes39]: 38 Peter replied, "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 (NIV)

Commented [notes40]: 20 On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.
John 14:20 (NIV)

Commented [notes41]: 2 Peter 1:3-11 (NIV)
3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.
4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.
5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;
6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;
7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.
8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
9 But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.
10 Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall,
11 and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Commented [notes42]: 15 If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.
1 Cor 3:15 (NIV)