

Acts 18:24-19:20, The Church in Ephesus
18:24-19:7, Starting in the Middle
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Overview

Two examples of what can happen when we meet others who profess to be believers. First time in Acts that we see the mission outreach encounter people with previous knowledge. Two options:

1. The person is a believer; in that case need to work around superficial differences, and be willing both to receive and to give.
2. The person is not really a believer; need to discriminate and seek their salvation.

A. 18:24-28, Apollos

The true believer. Example of highly qualified teacher who still retains the precious trait of teachability.

1. 24-26, His character

a) 24, His background combined sacred heritage and secular education. First four terms form a chiasm:

- 1) Jewish; cf. Rom. 3:1, with the advantage of being raised in the knowledge of the Scriptures.
- 2) Alexandrian; the center of Hellenistic learning.
- 3) Eloquent. Rhetoric a prized art.
- 4) Mighty in the Scriptures.

b) 25-26, His personal experience: a sequence all of us would do well to emulate.

- 1) Instructed in "the way of the Lord." Allusion to Matt. 3:3; Isa. 40:3; the Baptist's ministry; the way in which the Lord walks; the prophecies of his coming and the facts of his life. Illustrated in summary of his teaching in 27-28.

NB. Cf. also *drk adonai* Ezek 18:25,29 (though many *drk yhwh* passages deal with believer's walk).

- 2) He was "aglow in the Spirit." Had experience of the HS's work in his life. Not just head knowledge, but heart devotion to the Lord.
- 3) He did not keep it to himself, but sought to share with others. Two characteristics of his preaching:
 - a> 25, "diligently," *akribws*, with exactness, carefully. The same way Luke wrote his gospel, 1:3. His obligation to the *believers*.
 - b> 26, "boldly," without fear of opposition. His attitude to the *unbelievers*.

- c) His single defect: knew only the baptism of John.
 - 1) How was it like Christian baptism?
 - a> Immersion in water.
 - b> Evidence of antecedent repentance.
 - c> Focus on Jesus (cf. 19:4)
 - 2) How was it unlike? Commissioned by John, not by Jesus! Did not know that the Savior had sent out his disciples to baptize; Apollos did it on the authority of John.

2. His growth

- a) Who taught him?

Aquila and Priscilla. Tentmakers; hospitable to Paul; host a church in Rome. No evidence that Aquila is a teacher! Cf. role of Barnabas with Saul.
- b) What did they teach him?

Two contrasts between his beginning state and what they conveyed to him.

 - 1) Content: He knew "the way of the Lord," the prophecies of Messiah and their fulfillment in Jesus; they taught him "the Way of God" (Matt. 22:16 and p's, in the Pharisee's challenge concerning the tribute money), how believers should conduct themselves. No evidence that Aquila was a gifted teacher in the formal sense; in fact, the dual role of man and wife here suggests that formal instruction is NOT in view.
 - 2) Manner: He taught "diligently," *akribws*, with exactness, carefully; They taught "more perfectly," *akriboteron*, with greater exactness and care.
- c) How did he respond? Receptively! In spite of his considerable gifts, he was always ready to learn, eager from those without his own formal credentials. Not a "know-it-all." Cf. Prov. 9:7-9 and //s.

***Your wisdom is measured NOT by how much you know, BUT by how willing you are to learn.
- d) *Application*: If Rabbi Paul can learn from Barnabas, and Alexandrian Apollos from A&P, we ought to be cautious about presuming who can and can't teach us something. Often those most gifted in expounding "the way of the Lord" need the most help in learning "the way of God." After all, it is ultimately the Spirit, not any human, who teaches us; we are only his channels, and he can use us all. You think of me as a teacher, and I believe I am; yet I have learned from
 - 1) Dave--patience and gentleness in dealing with difficult situations.
 - 2) Ron--faithfulness; steadfastness; dedication to the Lord and his saints.

- 3) Michelle--courage in maintaining a witness among unbelieving family.
- 4) Francis--many riches of the reformed tradition.
- 5) Isabella--love and patient care for those who cannot repay.
- 6) Anita--the hardest, but most important, lessons of all--my own weaknesses and vulnerabilities.

You have all taught me far more in "the way of God" than I have conveyed to you of "the way of the Lord."

From Apollos and A&P, we should be challenged to reverse our roles:

- 1) if we think of ourselves as not teachers, recognize that we have much to exhort and encourage others about;
- 2) if we think of ourselves as teachers, be careful to assume Apollo's Attitude and be receptive toward what others have to teach us.

3. His ministry

- a) Learning from A&P of the work in Corinth, he desired to go there.
- b) The brethren encouraged [probably him, not the Achaian saints], and wrote a letter of introduction to him.
- c) A rare but important example of the minister taking the initiative to move out in ministry. Contrast Acts 13.

4. His outcome--positive.

- a) Prominent ministry in Corinth; 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:4,5; so much so that a party formed around him.
- b) 1 Cor. 16:12, away from Corinth when Paul wrote to them; Paul speaks favorably of him. A's unwillingness to go to Corinth may result from desire not to fuel party spirit.
- c) Titus 3:13, still traveling toward the end of Paul's ministry.

B. 19:1-7, The Twelve

Example of those with only superficial exposure to Christianity.

1. What do you ask someone who claims to be a believer?

- a) 19:2, not "since" but "when." "Did you, believing, receive the HS?" Combines two questions into one:
 - 1) Did you believe?
 - 2) Have you evidence that it "took"?

It's not enough just to ask if people believe. The question always includes the question of evidence. Cf. 9:27, the points in Barnabas' endorsement of Saul to Jerusalem.

From John's teaching, they would know that the HS was promised. But they had not heard that he had in fact come. In this, they are behind Apollos, who was already "aglow in the Spirit." By Paul's standard (Rom. 8:9), they are not believers.

- b) 19:3, Zeroes in on the content of their faith, the nature of their understanding. Appropriate answers: "repentance" (Matt. 3:11); "forgiveness" (Luke 3:3; cf. Acts 2:38). Their answer shows lack of deep instruction about the meaning of the rite. A rite is only as valuable as what it symbolizes; their focus was on the symbol, not its meaning.

A common problem in so-called Christendom today!

2. What do you tell them?
 19:4,5 are BOTH Paul's reply (reasons below). Both John's preaching and the motive of his original disciples for baptism was centered on the Lord Jesus, and so must these disciples be. *Reasons for making this part of the discourse:*
- a) *men-de contrast*
 - b) *Why passive? Expect "Paul baptized them."*
 - c) *No other rebaptisms from John to Jesus*
 - 1) *John's disciples among the twelve*
 - 2) *Apollos*
 - 3) *cf. Samaritans, without HS; still not rebaptized.*
- Problem: meaning of baptizesqai eis to onoma tou I. Answer: eis can have causal force with b, as in Mat. 3:3 (they have already repented); Acts 2:38; cf. metanoew eis, Luke 11:32.*
3. Their true belief brings the Spirit; Paul endorses them with laying on of hands. cf. ch. 8, Peter in Samaria.
- a) The rite symbolizes identification; it's Paul's recognition of them as true believers.
 - b) The whole episode is one of several showing Paul's parity with Peter.

Summary

1. Dominant importance of the HS; the difference between the need for instruction (Apollos) and evangelism (the twelve).
2. Paul's authority, equal to Peter.
3. The Apollonian Attitude--still teachable, in spite of his great learning and gifts.

Analysis

A. 18:24-28, Apollos

1. His Training
 - a) 18:24)Ioudai^os de/ tis)Apollw^s o)no/mati,)Alecandreu\s tw^| ge/nei, a)nh\r lo/gios, kath/nthsen ei)s)/Efeson, dunato\s w)\n e)n tai^s grafai^s.
 - b) 18:25 ou(^tos h)^n kathxhme/nos th\n o(do\n tou^ kuri/ou,
 - c) kai\ ze/wn tw^| pneu/mati e)la/lei kai\ e)di/dasken a)kribw^s ta\ peri\ tou^)Ihsou^, e)pista/menos mo/non to\ ba/ptisma)Iwa/nnou.

- d) 18:26 ou(^to/s te h)/rcato parrhsia/zesqai e)n th^|
sunagwgh^|:
- e) a)kou/santes de\ au)tou^ Pri/skilla kai\)Aku/las
prosela/bonto au)to\n kai\ a)kribe/steron au)tw^| e)ce/qento
th\n o(do\n [tou^ qeou^].

2. His Mission

- a) 18:27 boulome/nou de\ au)tou^ dielqei^n ei)s th\n)Axai/+an
protreya/menoi oi(a)delfoi\ e)/grayan toi^s maqhtai^s
a)pode/casqai au)to/n:
*The encouragement of prot. probably is addressed to Apollos,
not to the brethren.*
- b) o(\s parageno/menos suneba/leto polu\ toi^s pepisteuko/sin
dia\ th^s xa/ritos:
- c) 18:28 eu)to/nws ga\r toi^s)Ioudai/ois diakathle/gxeto
dhmosi/a| e)pideiknu\s dia\ tw^n grafw^n ei)^nai to\n
Xristo\n,)Ihsou^n.

B. 19:1-7, The Twelve

*Cf. the Samaritan believers in ch. 8. Shows Paul's authority equal
to the Jerusalem apostles.*

1. Setting:

- a) 19:1)Ege/neto de\ e)n tw^| to\n)Apollw^ ei)^nai e)n
Kori/nqw| Pau^lon dielqo/nta ta\ a)nwterika\ me/rh
[kat]elqei^n ei)s)/Efeson kai\ eu(rei^n tinas maqhta/s,

2. Interchange:

What do you ask someone who claims to be a believer?

- a) 19:2 ei)^pe/n te pro\s au)tou/s, Ei) pneu^ma a(/gion
e)la/bete pisteu/santes;
*That is, did you believe, and have you evidence that it
"took"?*
- b) oi(de\ pro\s au)to/n,)All' ou)d' ei) pneu^ma a(/gion e)/stin
h)kou/samen.
*How could this be, if they had properly understood John's
teaching? estin must be in sense of "has come," as John
promised.*
- c) 19:3 ei)^pe/n te, Ei)s ti/ ou)^n e)bapti/sqhte;
*Zeros in on the content of their faith, the nature of their
understanding. Appropriate answers: "repentance" (Matt. 3:11);
"forgiveness" (Luke 3:3; cf. Acts 2:38)."*
- d) oi(de\ ei)^pan, Ei)s to\)Iwa/nnou ba/ptisma.
Shows lack of deep instruction about the meaning of the rite.
- e) 19:4 ei)^pen de\ Pau^los,
1))Iwa/nnhs me\n e)ba/ptisen ba/ptisma metanoi/as, tw^| law^|
le/gwn ei)s to\n e)rxo/menon met' au)to\n i(/na
pisteu/swsin, tou^t' e)/stin ei)s to\n)Ihsou^n.
2) 19:5 a)kou/santes de\ e)bapti/sqhsan ei)s to\ o)/noma tou^
kuri/ou)Ihsou^:

3. Action:

- a) 19:6 kai\ e)piqe/ntos au)toi^s tou^ Pau/lou [ta\s] xei^ras
h)^lqe to\ pneu^ma to\ a(/gion e)p' au)tou/s,

b) e)la/loun te glw/ssais kai\ e)profh/teuon.

4. Summary: 19:7 h)^san de\ oi(pa/ntes a)/ndres w(sei\ dw/deka.

C. 19:8-12, Teaching in Ephesus [next study]

D. 19:13-20, The Exorcists Exorcised [next study]