



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Acts 18:18-19:7

Acts

"Giants in the Earth"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We are in Acts 18 and we're going to finish that. In fact, finish chapter 18 and begin chapter 19. And Paul has been on his second missionary journey. He's going to conclude that and begin his third missionary journey. He's been in the city of Corinth and had a significant ministry there. He met Priscilla and Aquila, fellow tent makers and they joined in work and in ministry together, and now that's coming to an end.

We read in Acts 18 beginning with verse 18, "Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila. In Cenchrea he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow."

Cenchrea was the eastern port of Corinth, and there Paul cut his hair evidently, because he had taken a Nazarite vow, or a vow like that and was going to fulfill it in the city of Jerusalem.

Verse 19, "They came to Ephesus, and he left them there. now he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. When they asked him to stay for a longer time, he did not consent, but taking leaving of them and saying, 'I will return to you again God wills,' he set sail from Ephesus.

"When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and went down to Antioch.

"And having spent some time there, he left and passed successively through the Galatian region and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

"Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John; and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. And when he wanted to go across to Achaia," which is the region in Greece where Corinth is located, "the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and whether he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

"It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. He said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' And they said to him, 'No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.' And he said, 'Into what then were you baptized?' And they said, 'Into John's baptism.' Paul said, 'John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.' When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying. There were in all about twelve men.'

May the Lord bless this reading of His word in our time of study together. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank You for this time together, this opportunity to gather as believers in Jesus Christ, men and women who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, chosen from the

foundation of the world, the objects of Your amazing grace. We do thank You for it, Father. We would not be Yours apart from that. We would not have sought You out. We would not have considered ourselves in need of salvation apart from Your grace, which opened our eyes and opened our hearts to receive the truth. We thank You for that. We praise You for that. We pray that as we study together You would give us a deeper understanding of that, that we might worship You better and serve You more effectively. We pray that You would build us up in the faith this morning.

So we look to You to bless. We pray that You'd bless us spiritually and teach us and instruct us, and also, Father, bless us in the material things of life. We are a needy people. We need Your grace constantly, and not only in the spiritual things, but also in the physical things. We thank You for Your abundant provision. We enjoy health. We enjoy the things of this life, because You give them to us. We tend to forget that. We tend to take things for granted, but You are the author of every good thing, and so we thank You for that and we pray, Lord, for those who are in need.

We have a long list of individuals who are in need of prayers, in need of Your grace and Your mercy, and we pray that You extend it to them. We pray that You would give health where it is lacking, give work where it is needed, and give encouragement to all. Fill us with joy for the good things that we have. We thank You for so many good things You give us, Father.

We thank You for this time together when we can study and the time that we have tonight when we can return to this place and worship You around the Lord's table. Bless that; prepare our hearts for that. Bless those who will teach and minister this evening, and bless us in our fellowship that follows. May it be helpful to all of us and enjoyable. May we glorify You in all that we do. May we glorify You now in the hymn that we sing. May it prepare our hearts well for our time of study together, and may that be blessed of You. In Christ name, amen.

[Message] One of the most intriguing chapters of the Bible is Genesis 6, which describes antediluvian times and gives that statement, "There were giants in the earth, mighty men who were of old." Those of course were the Nephilim, the fallen ones. They were bad people. But still, the statement could be used of Apostolic times, because there were then spiritual giants in the earth, mighty men and women. We meet them all through the book of Acts.

But Acts 18, Luke brings together four people who were unusual, single-minded in their devotion to Christ and sacrificial in their service. We get a glimpse of Paul's extraordinary energy and dedication in his tireless trips back and forth across Asia. We see Priscilla and Aquila, the husband/wife team who supported themselves in the ministry, moving from place to place.

And Luke introduces us to Apollos, a powerful preacher in the Scriptures. These were extraordinary people, men and women who knew the dust and sweat of life's arena. They faced hard challenges, and unusual age. It was a time of transition. It was a time of great spiritual change, when there was people whose knowledge was partial and experience incomplete. Paul met an unusual group of men in Ephesus who were like that. Apollos too was a man of incomplete knowledge, but with patience. And through the sound teaching of Scripture, they were made complete and very useful.

And we see that in our passage this morning, which begins with the end of Paul's second missionary journey and ends with the beginning of his third. Paul was in the city of Corinth, where he had met Priscilla and Aquila. They were fellow tentmakers. They had joined in an enterprise together and supported themselves in that way while they ministered in the city and they had a very effective ministry there, one that eventually came to some trouble with the Jewish citizens there, and Paul, as a result, faced a crisis at the judgment seat before Gallio, the Romans governor. The crisis passed in Paul's favor. Gallio decided not to hear the case that the Jews brought against the apostle, and that meant that the gospel would

continue to be preached without hindrance from the Roman authorities.

And so Paul continued on in Corinth for many days, Luke tells us, before he and Aquila and Priscilla left the brethren and set sail for Syria. Paul went on to Jerusalem. That's the meaning of verse 22, which states that "he went up and greeted the church." That's almost a formula in the Bible, going up, as reference to going up to the city of Jerusalem. It's located in the Judean hills, and so one approaches it that by, by ascending; and then one leaves by descending or going down. And so those two expressions are often used in the Bible of going to and from Jerusalem.

And so that was his destination. Ultimately it was to Antioch, but first he and the others went to Ephesus, another of the great cities of the Roman empire. Ephesus was the major commercial center and capital of the province of Asia, which was the western province of the continent of Asia Minor. This was Paul's original destination, you may remember, when he set out on his second missionary journey. And God had closed the door then, but opened it now.

Sometimes God closes a door in order to direct us in another way, only to open the same door later. That's what He did for Paul. Priscilla and Aquila settled down in Ephesus for some years and Paul would later have a ministry in that location, in Ephesus, for three years. But this visit was short.

He had some initial success. We read that he entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. The people there were interested in what he said. We read that they asked him to stay for a longer time, but Paul refused. He was evidently anxious to get on to Jerusalem, but he did promise to return if God wills.

Paul had learned a principle of God's leading with that first attempt to enter Asia and come to Ephesus, and the principle that he learned was we are to make our plans and we are to plan our life carefully, but we are to know also that God can overrule those plans, as He had done for Paul in that earlier attempt to go to Ephesus. And

so he says if God wills. God knows the future; we don't. God, in fact, has planned the future. And so we must trust Him for it. Paul was doing that. But he expressed his desire to return. Then he set sail from Ephesus.

After landing in Caesarea, we read in verse 22 that "he went up and greeted the church," greeted the church of Jerusalem. He didn't stay long. And then we read he "went down to Antioch" to his home church. There he made a report of his second missionary journey. Now, the church must have been amazed and thrilled as he recounted all of the experiences that he had had, how he had traveled the length of Asia and come to Troas, and there waited for the Lord's direction and had that vision in the night of a man from Macedonia. They crossed, he and Silas, Timothy, and Luke, the Aegean, and went to Philippi and told them about that small group of women that gathered on the riverbank, and the experience in the prison and how God had shaken it and brought to faith that Philippian jailor; told them about his trip south to Thessalonica and the great church that had been established there, and then on south to Berea and the amazing students of the Bible there in that church of Berea; how he had traveled on to Athens and his experience on Mars Hill, and then on to Corinth, that great pagan city and the great work that God had done there. Must have thrilled the people of Antioch as they heard all about the Lord's work in the west, in Europe.

And so he explained these things to them and he stayed there for some time. How long, we don't know, but not very long. And he was, again, off on his third missionary journey. This time he left alone, without Barnabas, without Silas. And Luke writes in verse 23 that he "passed successively through the Galatian region and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples." It was a long journey that he took.

In fact, if we chart his course from Caesarea on the coast of Palestine, up to Jerusalem, up to Antioch, and then west across the southern portion of Asia Minor with the southern Galatian churches, the trip was about 1,500 miles. That is a long journey, and he didn't

travel on the comfortable convenient roads or with the nice modern conveniences that we enjoy. Paul traveled on foot over rocky, dusty roads, through mountain passes. He faced all of the dangers that were there. We wonder what kind of food he ate. It couldn't have been very pleasant; must have been very basic. What kind of places did he stay in? The inns of the ancient world were notorious for being uncomfortable and unclean, but he would have stayed in those kinds of places. And as you consider these few verse, Luke just passes over all of this very briefly, in verse 22 and 23. But as you read them, you can't help but be impressed with Paul's energy and dedication.

But that was life for the apostle Paul. It was one of single-minded purpose, a life of sacrifice and hard service. His faith was no sentimental faith. It was one of decision. His life of faith was a life of courage. He didn't despise the things of this world. Paul understood their place. He understood that every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father above and he knew that they were to be enjoyed in the proper way.

But Paul sacrificed them for the higher blessing of serving Christ, and that is what lay behind Paul's service. He knew Jesus Christ personally. Jesus is alive. He is the resurrected Savior and He was with Paul. He had appeared to him in the night in Corinth and He had reminded him of that. "Do not be afraid, for I am with you." Paul believed that. And so he set off on his third missionary journey. He left the comforts of Antioch. He left the possibility of a home and a settled life there as a teacher among many friends, to cross Asia again, alone, but with Christ.

I read a book last week by one of Dr. Johnson's former professors, James Stewart, who was a professor of New Testament and theological at the University of Edinburgh. And toward the end of his book he writes of the life of faith in the Christian life, and all that it means - the life of sacrifice and the courage that it requires and the hardship that follows in such a life. But he notes that it is worth all of

it. It's worth the sacrifice. It's worth the hardship. And then he illustrates his point.

He recounted a conversation between two old friends. One was a man from Devon, who lived near the coast of England, who stayed ashore and had grown sleek and prosperous and wealthy. His friend had gone to sea and served in the fleet of Sir Francis Drake. He didn't have wealth. He was in fact poor in terms of the world.

And the rich friend pointed that out. He said, "You have not made much of all these years." "No," the man answered. "I have not made much. I've been cold, hungry, shipwrecked, desperately frightened often. But I've been with the greatest captain who ever sailed the seas." That was Paul. He had made a decision not to stay ashore and not to grow sleek and prosperous and wealthy. It was a costly decision. The life of faith often costs us much in the world. As Professor Stewart wrote, when Paul met his destiny at Damascus, it ruined his earthly prospects, led him to stoning, shipwreck, imprisonment, death. "I've lost everything on this voyage but I have been with the greatest captain who ever sailed the seas." And that was all that mattered to the apostle Paul. He told the Philippians, "I count all things to be lost in the view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." Paul was a giant.

So he set off again, not with the feeling of lost, not with the feeling of sacrifice, not thinking I'm losing so much and giving up so much in going west again on these rocky rough roads to do the Lord's work. No, he didn't feel that at all. He left with a sense of great joy and privilege of being with Christ, of sailing with the captain of our salvation.

That was the spirit of the apostle Paul and that was the spirit of the others who are mentioned in this chapter. Priscilla and Aquila were like that too. They left Corinth. They settled in Ephesus, not because it was a good career move, not because there was a demand for tents in Asia. Tentmaking was a means to an end, and the end was serving Christ. So they were willing to relocate for the sake of the

young church and to do the Lord's work in a different city, in the city of Ephesus, and help the believers there and the church there grow. They settled there in Ephesus.

And there they met a man. Luke introduces us to him in verse 24. "Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures." F.F. Bruce suggests that Apollos was a traveling merchant. Well, that may be. His home of Alexandria was very important as a city of business there on the Mediterranean coast. But it was also an important center of learning. The greatest library of the ancient world was located there. It had over half a million volumes in it.

Alexandria had a large Jewish population. Two-hundred years earlier, the Hebrew Bible was translated there into Greek, into the Septuagint, which became a major Bible for the Jewish people in this era. It was the equivalent to the King James version among English speaking people. So a significant work was done there and significant men lived there.

Alexandria was the home of **Thylo**, one of the most influential Jewish thinkers of that day. So Apollos came from a scholarly environment and he himself was a very learned man, well educated. Luke writes that he was an eloquent man, mighty in the Scriptures. He had some knowledge of the Gospel. But evidently he hadn't heard this in its full. He had heard it from the disciples of John the Baptist, because his knowledge was limited to John's baptism. Luke writes in verse 25 that he "had instructed in the way of the Lord," meaning probably the message that John had preached, crying in the wilderness, "Make ready the way of the Lord." He knew the message of repentance, the message of the coming of the Lord. John had identified Jesus as the Messiah and Apollos had some knowledge of Him. It was a limited knowledge, but he lived up to the knowledge that he had. Luke writes that he was "teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus."

So he had a knowledge of the Lord. He had a conviction of the Lord, because he was also preaching these things with fervency, with earnest conviction. Priscilla and Aquila heard him teaching in the synagogue and they were impressed with him. They were impressed with his boldness. They were impressed with his knowledge of the Old Testament. But they recognized some deficiencies - wasn't fully familiar with Christ's ministry. He may have been ignorant of the gift of the Holy Spirit and the end of the Law. There were things that he didn't understand. His knowledge was right as far as it went, but it was incomplete.

And so Priscilla and Aquila took an interest in him. They took him aside, Luke writes, and they explain to him the way of God more accurately. I imagine that they invited him to their home, visited with him, fed him dinner. They were hospitable. They were kind, they were interested in him, and they gave him instruction. And Apollos received it. He was no doubt better educated than they were, more intelligent, and more eloquent than they were. But Apollos, this great man, this man who is mighty in the Scriptures, submitted to their correction and instruction. And the result was he became even mightier in the Scriptures and his ministry expanded.

He wanted to go across the Aegean and minister in Greek. He was like Paul. He was like Priscilla and Aquila, ready to go wherever the Lord led him. If he was a merchant or if was a scholar, he gladly gave up worldly rewards for the surpassing value of knowing Christ and serving Him.

He went to Greece. In fact, he went to Corinth. And Luke writes in verse 27, "He greatly helped those who had believed through grace, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ." Apollos was God's man for that time and that place, and he did a significant work.

Paul indicates the influence that Apollos had in 1 Corinthians 3:6, where he writes that Apollos watered the seed that Paul had sown. God blessed it, because, Paul says, that while they did their work

there, while Paul sowed, while Apollos watered, God was causing the growth. He gifts his people. He gives them abilities. He sends His people where they go and He blesses their efforts.

Apollos was a significant man. Luther was the first to propose that he was the author of the book of Hebrew. He may have been. He was a significant individual, but it's interesting, this is all we know about Apollos. What Luke has written here and what Paul mentions of him in his letters, not very much.

But what we do have is very important and very instructive. Luke tells us "he greatly helped those who believed." And what that tells us is believers need help. And the lesson for us is that we're to give help. Now, we may not be able to give help like Apollos, or Paul. We may not have their gifts. We most likely do not. But there are many ways to give help - through instruction . Young believes need instruction in the way of God and we're to be able to give that.

They need encouragement - all Christians need encouragement, because Christians get discouraged in life. Life is hard. And in life we're faced with decisions and many of us don't know the decision to make. We need good counsel. We need good help. And we're to give that. We're to take an interest in people, just as Priscilla and Aquila did with Apollos. We're to show hospitality, invite people in, be warm and friendly and helpful. every believer has been given a gift by God. You have a gift, if you're a believer in Jesus Christ. And we are to use that gift. We all have a service to perform. We come here in order to be equipped for the service of the Lord, and that is necessary. It is very important that we gather around the world, that we not forsake the gathering of the saints on the Lord's day, that we be here, that we be instructed.

The four individuals that we study in this passage were all useful and effective because they knew the word of God and they could use it accurately and effectively. It is very important that we learn the scriptures and we study, that we be here for that purpose, that we be built up in the faith and equipped for the service. But that

is not the only reason that we are in a church. That's only part of it. We're not only here to be served, but to serve the saints and be useful and helpful to them in a variety of ways. We're to be helpful in building them up in the faith.

Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field." We're to be doing that. We are to be praying that the Lord would raise up and send out workers, praying that God would raise up men and women who are mighty in the scriptures, like these that we study in our passage. And we are to be willing to do the work ourselves.

And we can do it by the grace of God. We can do it with confidence because of the grace of God. We can know that the work we do will be pleasing to Him and successful because of His grace. That's the assurance that the grace of God gives us, and we have that very directly from this text.

Did you notice that Apollos greatly helped those who had believed through grace? Not those who believed in grace. They did that, of course. They believed firmly in the grace of God in the early church. But that's not what Luke says. He says, "Those who had believed through grace." they believed by the grace of God. The faith that comes to God first comes from God. Faith is a gift.

Luke was a physician, but Luke was also a theologian and he has developed this theme all through the book of Acts and we can go back and look at all those texts. We can see that. We can see it in chapter 11 and chapter 16 and others. He speaks of God granting or giving the Gentiles repentance that leads to life, of God opening the heart of Lydia to believe the things that Paul spoke, and other occasions in which he speaks of the work of God in the lives of men, giving faith, giving repentance.

Luke's concern is that we understand that salvation is all of God. It's all of grace. It was grace that chose the people whom God would save and gave them to Jesus Christ. It was by grace that Christ stood

in their place and bore the penalty that was due to them. Salvation is all of God. And that should be an encouragement to us. The grace of God is a great encouragement. Sovereign grace is a great encouragement, because if God gives faith, it can never be taken away. If it's God's gift, the gift of the Almighty, what man, what finite being, can take that gift away? No one is great enough to do that.

So it's a great encouragement, because the faith that He gives can never be taken. And a great encouragement that salvation is ultimately God's work, because if it's God's work it will never ultimately be frustrated. His work will be accomplished, and as we enter into that work, he will bless us in doing that. In fact, He will bless us beyond our abilities. That's the assurance that we have from the grace of God.

And so we are to serve, and we're to serve with confidence and we're to serve with boldness. We're to serve with joy. The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. The field is this church. The field of service is the world. And God's laborers are working throughout it. We see that here. These men were throughout the world. We read in verse 1 of chapter 19 that "while Apollos was at Corinth," Paul was on his way back to Ephesus.

When he reached the city, he found some disciples. There were 12 of them and evidently they were disciples of John the Baptist, because in verse 3 they state that they had been baptized into John's baptism. But they were less informed about Christian truth than Apollos had been. From his conversation with them, Paul sensed something was missing, and so he asked them some questions.

He first asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" King James version has "Have ye received the Holy Spirit since you believed?" rather than "when you believed." That is a possible translation. But the word "sense" might suggest - and I say might, because it does not suggest this - but it might suggest that receiving the Spirit happens sometime later, some time after believing.

And based on that version, some have used this verse to argue for that, to argue for the doctrine of a second blessing, which is the idea that the Christian experience is in two stages. A first, faith in conversion; and second, receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. So a person, it is suggested by that, it is believed by these who advocate that, that person can be saved without having the Spirit. And so to have spiritual power, a person must seek this second blessing, pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit, which manifests itself in the phenomenon of speaking in tongues.

The Bible doesn't teach that idea, and this verse gives no support for it either. It is also grammatically possible and preferable to understand the words "receive" and "believe" as being simultaneous, as describing events that happen at the same time. That is Paul's meaning here.

In fact, the New King James version has corrected the original. It has the translation, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So it doesn't suggest a second, separate event. And the context eliminates any notion of a second blessing, because these 12 men were not yet believers in Jesus Christ. They had not yet received what would be called the first blessing. So the context would not support such an idea. The Christian experience is not in two stages or three stages. The New Testament is clear. The Holy Spirit is received when a person believes.

In Galatians 3:2, Paul asked, "Did you receive the Spirit by works of the Law or by hearing with faith?" Well, obviously the meaning, the sense, the answer that question requires is they received the Spirit when they believe for salvation, when they believe the gospel. And not through some secondary or following works of the Law or prayer or seeking the Spirit. He came upon them when they believed. In Romans 8:9, Paul makes that very clear that every believer has the Holy Spirit. "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ," he says, "he does not belong to Him."

When do we become possessions of Jesus Christ? When do we first belong to Him? In reality, in actuality, when it takes place is when we believe. That's when we belong to Christ. And at that moment we have the Holy Spirit. No one can belong to Him who does not have the Spirit of God.

Now, from his conversation with these 12 men, Paul recognized that they did not have the Spirit. And so he asked them about that and they answered, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." Their answer didn't mean that they had never heard of the Holy Spirit or they didn't know that such a person existed. The Holy Spirit is mentioned throughout the Old Testament. In fact, you can't pick up the Bible and begin reading it without meeting the Holy Spirit immediately. He's in the second verse of the Bible. "And the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters." And they would have been familiar with the Holy Spirit from John the Baptist's ministry, because he promised that when the Lord came he would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire.

So they knew about the Holy Spirit. They knew the teaching of the Bible and the ministry of John. What they didn't know was the coming of the Spirit. That is, they didn't know of His working in power among them in that present age. They thought this was still a future hope, a future blessing, a future promise. And so Paul asked them about their baptism and they told him that they only knew of John's baptism.

Well, Paul now understood their situation. They had not received the fullness of revelation. We don't know how this happened or how they came to be in this circumstance, but we can imagine that at some time they had gone up to Jerusalem for one of the feasts in the days of John the Baptist's ministry. They had believed his message. They had begun following him, but they returned to Ephesus before the events of the gospel had been fulfilled.

And so they didn't know about Christ and His crucifixion, His resurrection, His ascension. They were ignorant of these things. And

so years later Paul finds them out in the hinterland of Asia still preaching the message of John, preaching the message of repentance in preparation for the Messiah to come.

Donald Grey Barnhouse illustrated this situation by imagining a group of settlers in Colonial times, leaving Virginia in the year 1775 and settling out west, settling in the mountains somewhere, where they were cut off from communication with the east. Not until years later when a group of travelers came upon them in 1785 did they learn that King George had been replaced by George Washington and that they were no longer British subjects, but now they were free Americans.

Well, something like that is what happened with these 12 disciples in Ephesus. They'd been cut off from all of the news in Palestine. The new covenant had begun and they were still living under the old covenant, anticipating the coming of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. And so Paul tells them all about the changes that had occurred, about Jesus, about Him as Messiah and Savior and the fulfillment of John's ministry.

And we read in verse 5 that they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them and they began speaking with tongues and prophesied. And so these men who had been outside the loop, so to speak, caught up with Pentecost. And in the province of God, this event had an important place in Paul's mission among the Gentiles. These 12 men were very likely the nucleus of the church in Ephesus. And this small Pentecost, with these men speaking known languages - and that's what the gift of tongues is. It is not gibberish. It is a known language that the speaker had never studied they didn't know. And so it's a miracle.

And so this phenomenon of speaking these languages and prophesying what had been an encouragement to the believers, this small group of believers in Ephesus at the time and also a very convincing proof of the truth and the reality of the Christian faith to

the non-believers, particularly the Jewish people there, because tongues is a sign for the Jews.

It was a significant beginning to Paul's ministry in Ephesus. I suspect that that is the main reason this event occurred. Ephesus would be a center of the work of the apostle among the Gentiles and it would have a significant place in that work for years to come, and so it begins in this miraculous way, in a way that reinforced his authority as an apostle, and showed that God was with Him, that the Holy Spirit was guiding and empowering him.

The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives is the reason for effective spiritual lives. Spiritual life is not our own doing. It's the work of God within us. He is the reason that people becomes giants in the faith, mighty in the scriptures, and in the Lord's service. It is not them. It is Him and the work that He does in them.

And He dwells in and is at work in every believer in Jesus Christ. And as we obey Him, walking by the Spirit daily, we will serve the Lord effectively.

Well, that's what we're to be doing. The age of giants isn't over. The might were not just of old. They're for today as well. And we might ask, well, that being so, why aren't we like that? Why aren't we more victorious over compromise? Why aren't we more sacrificial in our lives? Why aren't we more like those four individuals in this passage?

Maybe it's because we don't have the devotion to Christ that they have. The ministry of the Holy Spirit within us to testify of Christ. He turns us toward Christ. He magnifies the Lord in our thoughts. And we are to have a vital relationship with Jesus Christ. Paul's great ambition was to have that. It was to know Him and follow Him and experience His sufferings. Philippians 3:10. And that was true of Apollos as well. That was true of Priscilla and Aquila. They gladly left the wealth of this world to go wherever Christ led them, because they loved Him who died for them.

We need to rediscover and develop our relationship with Jesus Christ. We will never grow in grace or serve God effectively until our lives are intertwined with the life of Jesus Christ. But how do we do that? How do we have that kind of life, that kind of relationship that is intertwined with the life of Jesus Christ? There are lots of ideas on how to become spiritually fervent. Many books have been written on it. But really, the only way to have that, one way to become like the people that we see in this text is to spend time with Him, to live in His presence, and we do that by reading the scriptures, by reading the gospels, and considering the life of Jesus Christ, the ministry of Jesus Christ.

We do that by communicating with Him in prayer and in reflection upon Him and upon the whole godhead. We really can't understand the Lord Jesus Christ without understanding God the Father and God the Spirit as well, the whole godhead and the whole council of God, because all of it has to do with our Lord. And so we're to be students of the word. We're to be men and women who fellowship with one another in Christ, about Christ, growing in our knowledge of Jesus Christ. We are to be exposed to Him and His life.

There's a story about the French scientist of many years ago, Georges Buffon, who was a naturalist and who one day had a number of philosophers to his estate. A very wise man, all of them were members of the Academy of French. On the grounds was a glass globe. And when one of the philosophers touched it on the shady side, he found it very warm. Compared with the side exposed to the sun, which was relatively cool, and he was very surprised by this. Called the other philosophers over and they put their hands on the globe and they felt, yes, the shady side was hot and the sunny side was warm and they couldn't understand this, so they began to theorize and give different hypotheses for why this might have happened, but none of these were very convincing, not to Mr. Buffon, so he called the gardener over and asked him if he knew why the shady side of the globe was hot and the

side in the sun was cool, and he said, "Yes, I just now turned the globe around, because it was getting too hot one side."

Well, that didn't fit any of the theories that had been put forth, but it did prove the old fact that the sun gives heat. And in the spiritual life, there may be many different theories and ideas on how we grow and how we develop and what we're to do, but the old truth is always the same and always right, and that is we grow warm in our faith through the light of God's word and exposure to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. That is how we have a fervent spirit. And that is what we need. We need to grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ.

And the growth in the Christian life's unlimited. It's not to be small growth. We're not to be pygmies in the faith, but rather we are to be what we can be, like these - giants in the faith. That's the prospect for the man and woman of God who studies the word of God, who fellowships with Jesus Christ, who lives by faith. That's what we need. May God help us to do that, to be that. But if you're here this morning without Christ, if you don't know Him as Savior, may God give you, first of all, and understanding of your lost condition and your need of Christ. He is God's Son who died in the place of sinners. He paid for their sins with His death. And all who believe in Him are saved.

At the moment of faith your sins are forgiven, you are adopted into God's family, your heart is sealed with the Holy Spirit who will never be taken away. All of that through faith and faith alone. May God help you to believe and help all of us who have put our faith in Christ, to live for Him, to live first of all for Jesus Christ, to love Him and serve Him. In God's grace, we will do that. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank You for Your goodness and Your grace, and we see it in the lives of these individuals, men and women who did a great work for You, a great service for the church. And we can marvel over them, marvel over the energy and the devotion of the apostle Paul and that of Apollos and Aquila and Priscilla.

But Father, they would say that it's all the work of God within them, it's Your work through the Spirit in their lives. And so Father, we pray for that same work within us and we pray that the Spirit of God would create within us a love for the Lord Jesus Christ and a desire for His service. Produce that within us. Make this company of believers very active in the faith. We pray these things in church name. Amen.