



## Approaching God

Read this portion of Psalm 38 and use it as a basis for your opening prayer

*For I am ready to fall, and my pain is ever with me. I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin. O LORD, do not forsake me; be not far from me, O my God. Come quickly to help me, O LORD my Savior. (Psalm 38:17-18, 21-22)*

## Acts 19:1-20

### Passage Introduction: Paul's Mission to Ephesus

Paul had spent a day or two in each of the Galatian churches. He had stayed a few days in Philippi, a few weeks in Thessalonica, a day or two in Berea, a few days in Athens. Then he had spent 18 months in Corinth. Now, as a kind of climax to his work, he is in one of the major centers of the Mediterranean world, Ephesus, a great city at the hub of the trade routes of the world, full of culture, money, temples, politics, soldiers, merchants and slaves. And power. Everything we know about Ephesus indicates that it was a place where not only social and civic power but also religious and spiritual power were concentrated. Perhaps that is why Luke begins his account of Paul's work there with a story about a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit. There must be nothing secondhand about the Spirit's power when you are faced with the powers of the world.

## Bible Reading, Study & Meditation

Start with Engaging the Text: Take a few minutes to highlight, circle, or underline key words.

### Notes on Miracles

**vs. 19:11-12:** The apostles teaching throughout Acts was validated and verified by their miracles and wonders. Heb. 2:3-4 show us that the purpose of miracles in the early church was to show listeners the truth of the gospel message the apostles brought. A survey of the Bible reveals that miracles are not distributed randomly & evenly throughout history, but they come in clusters...

**Acts 19:1-20 - 1** 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. **8** 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. **11** God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, **12** so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their

(cont.)

... when God sends a new set of messengers into the world with a new stage of revelation. (Thus there are only three “ages” of miracles — Moses and the Exodus, Elijah and the prophets before the exile, and Jesus and the apostles.)

illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them. **13** Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, “In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.” **14** Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. **15** One day the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?” **16** Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding. **17** When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. **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.

## Questions for Reflection & Meditation

- Do you think the “disciples” whom Paul found in Ephesus (Acts 19:1) were disciples of Jesus or disciples of John the Baptist? What can we learn from this encounter?
- Vs. 2 indicates they had not heard of the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (chap 2), and therefore they probably had not heard much of Jesus’ life and ministry, and certainly not of his death and resurrection. They had evidently relocated from Palestine to Ephesus before Jesus’ own ministry began. The main thing Luke is doing in this little story is to introduce Paul’s work in Ephesus and to show that, from the very beginning, he was concerned with the Spirit’s powerful work both in the lives of individuals and out into the wider community. What difference would it make in your life if the Holy Spirit was missing?

## Key Takeaway:

As you read today’s passage, what are 1 or 2 main takeaways that you wrote down in the margins? How would you briefly summarize your observations and meditations for today?

## Close in Prayer:

Thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit’s work in your life. Ask God for greater sensitivity to the Spirit, and that you would fan into flame the gift of God.