

Answers to Sermon Notes

“Belief, Baptism, and the Holy Spirit”

Acts 19:1-7

9/12/21

1. Our passage this morning brings a number of **questions** to mind.
 - a. **Why** would Paul ask them if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed?
 - b. **What** does it mean that they had, “believed”?
 - c. Do we not receive the Holy Spirit **until** we are baptized into Jesus’ name?
 - d. Are we not truly (or fully) **saved** then until we are baptized in this way?
 - e. Are there **two tiers** of Christian faith, one without the Spirit and one with the Spirit?
 - f. If this is what it means to have received the Spirit, **have we**?
2. Beyond their number, these questions are so **inter-connected**, that it’s hard to know where to **begin**.
 - a. Yet, to put our hearts at **rest** and avoid falling into **error**, we need to untie this knot.
3. In these situations, we need to begin by recalling what we **know** for certain about each of these things.
 - a. Then, we can seek to **join** these things together in a way that they **fit**.
 - b. This is the interpretive principle of the Analogy of **Faith**, or the Analogy of **Scripture**, which states that scripture must interpret **itself**.
 - i. The **clearer** passages helping to inform the **less** clear. (WMC, 1.9)
4. What do we know for certain about true **belief**?
 - a. It is a **work** of the Holy Spirit. (John 6:60-65, Acts 18:27)
 - b. It is the single requirement for **salvation**. (John 6:35-40, Ephesians 2:8-9)
 - i. We are then saved by **grace**, through **faith**.
5. What do we know for certain about the **presence** of the Holy Spirit?
 - a. It is of different **types**.
 - i. The Holy Spirit is present **everywhere**. (Psalm 139:7-12)
 - ii. He is present in a **saving** way in those who **believe**. (Ephesians 1:11-14)
 - iii. He is present in a **visible** way for special demonstrations of God. (Acts 2:1-4, 10:44-48)
6. What do we know for certain about **baptism**?
 - a. It is a **visible** sign of an invisible reality. (Acts 10:44-48)
 - i. It does not **accomplish** what it represents, but **represents** what is accomplished through faith.
 - b. For John, it represented a heart that was **prepared** for God through repentance. (Matt. 3:1-6)
 - c. For Jesus, it represented a heart that had been **cleansed** through faith in him. (Matt. 28:18-20)
 - i. This is the connection between baptism and the **Spirit**. (Matt. 3:11-12)
 - d. While the “baptism of John,” (or what it represents) is necessary for our **preparation**, only the baptism of Jesus (or what it represents) is sufficient for our **salvation** and new life.
7. Putting the **pieces** of our passage together.
 - a. If these disciples had truly **believed** (and there is no indication that they did not), then Paul could not have been asking them if they had received the Holy Spirit in a **saving** way.
 - i. The Spirit **drew** them to faith.
 - ii. And made his **dwelling** in them when they **believed**.

- iii. The example of **Apollos** confirms that though he only knew the baptism of John, he was a true believer and was being used **powerfully** by the Holy Spirit.
- b. It would seem as though Paul's question had more to do with whether they had received a **special outpouring** of the Spirit when they believed as had happened elsewhere.
 - i. For **God** seems to have been using special outpourings of the Holy Spirit wherever the gospel invaded to **confirm** the message and the **reality** of the new life those who embraced it had received.
- c. But, the Holy Spirit was not going to come with power when the **name** of **Jesus** was not clearly identified as the one through whom this **gift** was coming.
 - i. As always, the Holy Spirit was **jealous** for the name of Jesus and its **exaltation**.

Central Takeaways

1. When we face a passage that brings up many **questions**, we need to begin by establishing the things that we know for certain about the topics at hand from the **rest** of scripture.
2. In this case, based on what we know for certain about **belief**, the **presence** of the Holy Spirit, and **baptism** we can untangle these events in a way that brings both understanding and rest.
 - a. When Paul asked if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed, he was not referring to the **saving** presence of the Spirit, which was necessary for them to believe to begin with, but rather a **special** outpouring of the Spirit that God had frequently been using in those days to **confirm** visibly what was happening among them.
 - b. Baptism is not a magical ceremony where we first **receive** the Spirit, but a visible sign of an **invisible** work of the Spirit. In this case, the Spirit was not poured out among them in this special way until the visible part of their coming to faith (their baptism) was done in the **name** of **Jesus**.

Application

1. While the Lord's use of these special outpourings of the Holy Spirit are not nearly as **common** today as they were in the early days of the church, it is not as though his presence in us is entirely **invisible**.
 - a. How do I know for certain that **I have** the Holy Spirit?
 - i. **Faith**. (I John 4:2-3)
 1. **Repentance** of sin and **trust** in Jesus.
 - ii. **Fear**. (Galatians 5:16-21)
 1. Of **sin** and the **flesh**
 - iii. **Fruit**. (Galatians 5:22-26)
 1. Evidences of the **new life**.