



A Five-Day Devotional Journey

August 31 - September 6, 2008

Acts 19:1-22

Surge (suhrij)

Latin *surgere* to rush

1. A strong, forward forceful motion, like that of a wave
2. An increase, swelling or rush of something
3. A sudden rush or burst of current or voltage

1 Then what baptism did you experience?

Read. Acts 19:1-7 NLT

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior regions until he reached Ephesus, on the coast, where he found several believers. "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" he asked them.

"No," they replied, "we haven't even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

"Then what baptism did you experience?" he asked.

And they replied, "The baptism of John."

Paul said, "John's baptism called for repentance from sin. But John himself told the people to believe in the one who would come later, meaning Jesus."

As soon as they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all.

Think.

- Whom did Paul meet when he finally arrived in Ephesus? How did Paul determine where these people were in their spiritual journey?
- What further instruction did he give to them? How did they respond? What did they experience?
- Considering the fact that it would have been over two decades since John the Baptist ministered and that these twelve men are over 800 miles away from where he preached, what does this say about John's influence?
- Through listening and asking questions, Paul was able to find out where these twelve men really were in their journey. In what relationships, old or new, might you need to stop, ask questions and listen? How do we combat the tendency to speak into situations before really listening?

Pray.

Father, lead me forward in this grace of careful and prayerful listening to others — to really see their heart — and then, if there is anything to say or add, saying it.

Live.

Identify one relationship — old or new — where you need to make a new investment of *listening*.

Ephesus was...a centre of power:

magic power, political power, religious power.

And Paul's ministry demonstrated that the power of the name of the Lord Jesus was stronger than all of them.

NT Wright, Acts for Everyone

Δυνάμεις οὐ τὰς τυχοῦσας

Miracles (literally, "powers"), not the usual.

That's how the Greek text of Acts 19:11 reads.

A miracle is a demonstration of power, that, by definition is out of the ordinary — that's why it's a miracle.

So when Luke says that God was doing miracles that were out of the ordinary — extraordinary or "super" demonstrations of power, it gets your attention. I mean, there are miracles, but these were *miracles*.

Picture the surge of a high tide, or the spike of an electric current, or the sudden rush forward of a halfback, breaking through a tenacious defensive line.

That's what was happening with Paul in Ephesus.

In many ways, it represents the high tide of his ministry. Peter had experienced his own surge back in Jerusalem in Acts 5. People were lining the streets with the sick so that even his shadow might pass over them. Jerusalem was filled with the message of Jesus, it's world was rocked, and then Stephen was killed, persecution kicked in, and everyone scattered, with the rest going more or less underground.

And now after two missionary journeys, years of travel and teaching and preaching and ministry, Paul arrives at Ephesus — the place in Asia he was aiming for his time out years before. He doesn't reason in the synagogue three weeks, but three months. And then he stays in Ephesus for two years, planted in a lecture hall, a "schole" (our word *school*) which in Greek culture was a place for relaxed discussion and debate. This time Paul doesn't travel the countryside, the countryside comes to him, and from Ephesus the Word spreads everywhere. But as with most surges, it doesn't last forever. The tide goes out as the city is engulfed in a riot, and Paul begins heading for Jerusalem and a major transition in his life as he enters a time of personal exile that will ultimately bring him to the shores of Rome itself.

2) Daily discussions

Read. Acts 19:8-10 NLT

Then Paul went to the synagogue and preached boldly for the next three months, arguing persuasively about the Kingdom of God. But some became stubborn, rejecting his message and publicly speaking against the Way. So Paul left the synagogue and took the believers with him. Then he held daily discussions at the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for the next two years, so that people throughout the province of Asia—both Jews and Greeks—heard the word of the Lord.

Read. Colossians 1:27-29 Message

The mystery in a nutshell is just this: Christ is in you, so therefore you can look forward to sharing in God's glory. It's that simple. That is the substance of our Message. We preach Christ, warning people not to add to the Message. We teach in a spirit of profound common sense so that we can bring each person to maturity. To be mature is to be basic. Christ! No more, no less. That's what I'm working so hard at day after day, year after year, doing my best with the energy God so generously gives me.

Think.

- How much time did Paul spend in the synagogue in Ephesus? Considering that in some places Paul didn't make it past week two, what does this say about that synagogue community?
- Why does Paul eventually switch locations? Who went with him? Where did they start meeting? What did Paul do there — and how far reaching was his impact?
- In the Colossians passage, what insight do you see into Paul's message and passion?

Pray.

Lord, fill me with fresh passion for you and your simple Message of grace and truth through Jesus.

Live. Write out Colossians 1:27-29. Carry it with you. Meditate on it.

4) I know Jesus...but who are you?

Read. Acts 19:13-17 NLT

A group of Jews was traveling from town to town casting out evil spirits. They tried to use the name of the Lord Jesus in their incantation, saying, "I command you in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, to come out!" Seven sons of Sceva, a leading priest, were doing this. But one time when they tried it, the evil spirit replied, "I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but who are you?" Then the man with the evil spirit leaped on them, overpowered them, and attacked them with such violence that they fled from the house, naked and battered. The story of what happened spread quickly all through Ephesus, to Jews and Greeks alike. A solemn fear descended on the city, and the name of the Lord Jesus was greatly honored.

Think.

- Summarize what we know of these seven sons of Sceva. Who were they? What were they doing? What would you surmise about their motivations in traveling from town to town? What were they after? What was their connection with Jesus?
- What do you make of this demonic encounter? What impact did it have on the city of Ephesus? How did it affect people's view of Jesus?
- Are demonic encounters like this a thing of the past, or are they possible today? Why? Have you ever had any encounters with the demonic yourself? What happened?

Pray.

Sovereign Lord, keep me from the extremes of indifference and obsession when it comes to Satan and the demonic. When the enemy shows his face, teach me to stand in faith and humility.

Live.

Write out and meditate on 1 Peter 5:8-9.

3) Power to perform unusual miracles

Read. Acts 19:11-12 NLT

God gave Paul the power to perform unusual miracles. When handkerchiefs or aprons that had merely touched his skin were placed on sick people, they were healed of their diseases, and evil spirits were expelled.

Read. Matthew 10:8-10 Message

Jesus sent his twelve harvest hands out with this charge:

"Don't begin by traveling to some far-off place to convert unbelievers. And don't try to be dramatic by tackling some public enemy. Go to the lost, confused people right here in the neighborhood. Tell them that the kingdom is here. Bring health to the sick. Raise the dead. Touch the untouchables. Kick out the demons. You have been treated generously, so live generously."

Think.

- What do you make of these "unusual miracles" God was doing through Paul?
- What is the ultimate point of the miraculous? How do Jesus' instructions in Matthew 10 clarify the purpose of miracles?
- What has your experience been with the miraculous? Do you think the door is still open to miracles — even "unusual" miracles? Why or why not? Does the thought of the miraculous make you excited or nervous or what? Why?

Pray.

Lord, help me to be ready for you to work through me in unexpected ways. Never let your grace and presence in my life become routinized and predictable. Keep me awake and moving with you.

Live.

Look for a practical and natural way of carrying out Jesus' commission in your life today.

5) Many confessed their sinful practices

Read. Acts 19:18-22 NLT

Many who became believers confessed their sinful practices. A number of them who had been practicing sorcery brought their incantation books and burned them at a public bonfire. The value of the books was several million dollars. So the message about the Lord spread widely and had a powerful effect.

Afterward Paul felt compelled by the Spirit to go over to Macedonia and Achaia before going to Jerusalem. "And after that," he said, "I must go on to Rome!" He sent his two assistants, Timothy and Erastus, ahead to Macedonia while he stayed awhile longer in the province of Asia.

Read. 2 Corinthians 7:10 Message

Distress that drives us to God does that. It turns us around. It gets us back in the way of salvation. We never regret that kind of pain. But those who let distress drive them away from God are full of regrets, end up on a deathbed of regrets.

Think.

- What seems to have "uncorked" this brokenness and confession among believers in Ephesus? How did they "put their money where their mouth was"?
- What in your life needs to be "burned" so that you can really live?
- Where does Paul now head off to? What seems to be driving him at this point?

Pray.

Lord, bless me with deep distress over what needs to be turned around in my life. Show me how to really sever the ties with what needs to be broken off my life. Give me the courage to share this with others, and then to do it!

Live. Conduct your own personal "book burning"— and invite some friends alongside to share in the celebration.