

“THE SIGNS OF A TRUE BELIEVER”

Acts 19:1-7

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INTRODUCTION

If the apostle Paul were traveling the world today and stopped in San Tan Valley and met a group of you at one of our fancy restaurants—let’s say Denny’s—or maybe one of our stores—let’s say Wal-Mart—and began a conversation with you, would he be absolutely convinced that you are a genuine believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, or would he have some doubts like he did with this group of “believers” at Ephesus?

First, I think that it is important to note that two words used here are generally words used for those who are Christians: 1) “disciples” and 2) “believed.” Therefore Paul engaged in conversation with them but soon became troubled; could these men really be genuine Christians, followers of Christ, born-again believers?

My purpose today is not to raise doubts in the minds of those of you who are genuinely saved, who are resting in the finished work of atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose sins are forgiven, who have received the gift of His righteousness, whose lives have been transformed and dramatically changed, who have a new reason to live, who experience His peace, joy, and life on a daily basis. I want you to enjoy the full assurance of salvation in our Lord!

On the other hand, some go through the motions, pray a “Jesus prayer,” act religious especially on Sunday, use some Bible lingo, **but live pretty much the same as they did before their profession of faith.** They don’t really notice a transformation of their lives, they don’t experience genuine assurance of a right relationship with God, they don’t have peace, joy, contentment; they don’t have a desire to tell others how to be saved and to know Jesus; they really get excited about the world’s entertainment, movies, TV, parties, friends, games, sports, shopping, etc. etc. When it comes to church, Bible study, prayer, fellowship with Christians, *they are necessary activities but not very exciting or enjoyable.* **In some cases, your parents make you go to church; in other cases you participate because your spouse wants you to do so; in other cases you do what you do out of a sense of guilt but seem to get really not much out of church, prayer, Bible study, etc.**

What is wrong? I will ask you the same question that Paul asked of these disciples:

DID YOU RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT WHEN YOU BELIEVE?

Genuine Christianity cannot be faked before God (and a spiritually discerning servant of God like Paul). And true Christianity cannot be hidden from God or people!

Most of the time when we look at this passage our focus is on the problems:

- Who are these “disciples” who know only the baptism of John the Baptist?
- How can they be called “believers”?
- What does Paul mean, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit **after** you believed?”
- How could they not have heard “whether there is a Holy Spirit”?

- Why did they have to be “re-baptized”?
- Does baptism bring salvation, or even the filling of the Spirit?
- Do we all need a post-salvation “baptism with the Holy Spirit” in order to please God?
- Should we also seek to speak with tongues and prophesy?

[Now that we have **briefly** dealt with these issues, let us focus on the real issue at hand!]

I. THE CONCERN (1-3)

- A. Initial Appearance (v. 1)
- B. Deficiency of Truth (2-3)
 1. In Belief--Truth
 2. In Life—The Indwelling and filling of the Spirit

II. THE CORRECTION (4)

- A. Repent—turn from sin and your own ideas, your own way.
- B. Believe in Jesus Christ—who He really is.

True faith involves a genuine commitment to Him, a desire to obey Him and please Him.
It is a turning from the old life and a turning to the new life.

III. THE CONVERSION (5-7)

- A. Christian Baptism (5)
- B. The Indwelling and Filling of the Holy Spirit (6)

CONCLUSION

Most of the time when we look at this passage we simply deal with the complicated theological issues connected with it.

This time, we must consider the overwhelming practical issue—Does your life evidence real spiritual change?

DID YOU RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT WHEN YOU BELIEVE?