

An Example of God's Providence at Work  
(Acts 19:1-7)

Introduction:

1. The Bible is filled with examples of God's providence at work, especially in the book of Acts.
2. Luke showed numerous times how God provided opportunities for people in different areas to learn His will.
3. In our lesson we are studying an occasion when the Lord provided two opportunities for some people in Ephesus to learn His will.

Discussion:

- I. FIRST, THE LORD PROVIDED AN OPPORTUNITY FOR APOLLOS TO LEARN HIS WILL (Acts 18)
  - A. This is significant because Apollos thought he knew the Lord's will.
  - B. This example of God's providence began in vs.1-3 with the apostle Paul developing a close relationship with Aquila and Priscilla.
    1. (vs.1) Paul had been in Athens, but he left and traveled to Corinth.
    2. (vs.2) In Corinth, Paul became associated with Aquila and Priscilla.
      - a. They had recently moved from Italy to Corinth.
      - b. The emperor Claudius had expelled all Jewish people from Rome.
    3. (vs.3) Paul lived and worked with Aquila and Priscilla -- they made tents.
    4. According to vs.4-17, Paul continued teaching in Corinth for some time.
  - C. (vs.18-23) Paul traveled to Ephesus with Aquila and Priscilla.
    1. After staying in Ephesus for a short time, Paul left because he wanted to go to Jerusalem.
    2. He left Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus.
    3. He planned to return to Ephesus, if it was the Lord's will.
    4. While Paul was away, . . .
  - D. (vs.24-28) A man named Apollos traveled to Ephesus.
    1. Apollos was a powerful preacher -- he was eloquent, mighty in the Scriptures, fervent in spirit, and diligent.
    2. However, Apollos only knew *"the baptism of John."*
      - a. John was the forerunner of Christ, but he had been executed years earlier.
      - b. We learn from Mark 1:4-5 that John's baptism was:
        - 1) based on repentance
        - 2) an immersion in water
        - 3) *"for the remission of sins."*
      - c. The problem with John's baptism was that it had become invalid when Jesus gave His Great Commission.
    3. (vs.26) Aquila and Priscilla taught Apollos *"the way of God more perfectly."*
    4. (vs.27-28) He used his talent and ability to preach that *"Jesus was Christ."*
  - E. Summarizing:
    1. Apollos was a man preaching a message he thought was right, and he was very sincere, but something was lacking in his knowledge.
    2. Through His providence, God had worked things out so Aquila and Priscilla could be in Ephesus while Apollos was there.
    3. Do you suppose Apollos was grateful they were there?
- II. SECOND, THE LORD PROVIDED AN OPPORTUNITY FOR 12 MEN TO LEARN HIS WILL (Acts 19:1-7)
  - A. This is significant because these men thought they had done the Lord's will.
  - B. This example of God's providence began in vs.1a when Paul returned to Ephesus.
    1. Paul had been there earlier.
    2. When he left, he wanted to return if it was God's will.
  - C. (vs.1b) After returning to Ephesus, Paul found *"certain disciples."*

- D. (vs.2a) Paul asked these people if they had received the Holy Spirit.
  - 1. The apostles could lay hands on Christians and impart a miraculous measure of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17).
  - 2. The answer to this question would supply some helpful information.
- E. (vs.2b) Their answer indicated that they knew nothing about the Holy Spirit.
- F. (vs.3a) This led Paul to ask about their baptism.
- G. (vs.3b) They had been baptized with John's baptism.
- H. (vs.4) Paul pointed out how John's baptism was inadequate.
- I. (vs.5) These people received the baptism commanded by Jesus.
- J. (vs.6) After they were baptized, Paul laid his hands on them, and they received a miraculous measure of the Holy Spirit.
- K. Summarizing:
  - 1. These 12 men in Ephesus had done what they were taught, but what they were taught was not accurate.
  - 2. Through His providence, God worked things out so Paul could return to Ephesus and find these men.
  - 3. Do you suppose these men were grateful that Paul returned to Ephesus?

Conclusion:

- 1. The passages we have studied show God's providence at work.
- 2. In addition to showing God's providence at work, these passages:
  - a. show how people can be honest and sincere in their service to the Lord, but be wrong
  - b. teach us what to do if we have received a baptism other than the one commanded by Christ (infant, sprinkling, baptism after salvation, etc.).