God's Work Through Paul

(Acts 19:1-41)
4-17-2015

Introduction: God uses the instrumentality of people to get His mission accomplished!
How did God work through Paul? How did the Lord use his life as His tool to accomplish His work?
Notice the diverse ways in which God worked through Paul at Ephesus:

I. God used Paul to <u>complete the work</u> He started though John the Baptist (Acts 19:2-7)

II. God used Paul to <u>spread His Word</u> throughout all Asia Minor (v.8-10)

III. God used Paul to <u>perform the supernatural</u> (and thus vindicate His apostolic messenger and message) (v. 11-16)

IV. God used Paul's message to <u>bring about genuine repentance</u> in new converts to Christ (v.17-20)

V. God used Paul to <u>travel broadly and organize co-laborers</u> to serve in various parts of the known world (v.21-22)

VI. God used Paul's ministry so mightily that it <u>stirred up opposition</u> when idol-makers began losing their fortunes! (v.23-41)

Conclusion: God used Paul's life in a great way!
However, Does God have work to accomplish through our lives today?

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Introduction:

God uses the instrumentality of people to get His mission accomplished!
He uses our testimony, our voice, our hands, even our feet! (Romans 10:15).

When the Lord saved Saul of Tarsus, He did so for a reason (yes to save him from the penalty, power, and ultimately the presence of sin). But more than this. He saved him to serve!

Acts 9:15-16
But the Lord said to him (Ananias), "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."

Paul, for the rest of his life, would be a bond slave (a doulos) for Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:1, Titus 1:1). He would even call himself a Prisoner of Jesus Christ (Philemon 1:1).

In 2 Corinthian 5, Paul speaks of his desire to depart (one day and be "absent from the body") and to be with Christ. However, as long as God had him on the earth, he would live in light of the judgement seat of Christ (v.10), Persuade men toward Christ (v.11), live for the advancement of other people's faith (v.12-13), die to selfish ambition and live for Christ (v.15), view people in a new light (v.16), and would be used as an ambassador for Christ (v.18-20).

2 Corinthians 5:18-20
Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

In Acts 19:1 – God states the work of Apollos and Paul. He would use the eloquent Apollos at Corinth, and He would now use the diligent, earnest work of Paul to get His divine purposes accomplished at Ephesus.

This is Paul's third missionary journey. Acts 19 describes God's work through Paul at Ephesus. The city of Ephesus was a major city in Paul's day. The archaeological remains being uncovered at Ephesus (in modern day Turkey) are very impressive.

The Ephesian church was started by Paul (on his 2nd missionary journey) (Acts 18:19-20)
Strengthened by Apollos and Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:24-28)
Paul now returned to Ephesus and ministered for 3 years (Acts 20:31) on his 3rd missionary journey (Acts 19:1-20)

He then went back to give a final admonition to the Ephesian pastors (Acts 20:16-38).

A great work was accomplished by God through Paul at Ephesus.

How did God work through Paul? How did the Lord use his life as His tool to accomplish His work?

Notice the diverse ways in which God worked through Paul at Ephesus:

I. God used Paul to <u>complete the work</u> He started though John the Baptist (Acts 19:2-7)

Specific Problem: Paul found certain Ephesian disciples who had not received or ever heard of the Holy Spirit until he laid his hands on them. Their indwelling was manifested by tongues and prophesying.

Question: Were these twelve Ephesians truly saved or not when Paul met them?

Context:

1. This account of the Ephesian "disciples" is preceded by an account of a zealous man named Apollos.

2. Both Apollos and these twelve Ephesians claimed to have been obedient to the baptism of John, who was the forerunner of Jesus Christ.

3. John's baptism signified repentance. It was introductory and incomplete as it pointed to the finisher of salvation, Jesus Christ (Mt. 3:2, 3:11). It was purely preparatory.

4. Hence, Apollos and these twelve were living in transition, remnants of the Old Testament saints, still hanging on, still "looking for their Messiah twenty years after John the Baptist had died" (MacArthur).

5. They, as Apollos, needed to have "expounded unto [them] the way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:26).

V. 1 - "Finding certain disciples" - Both the followers of the ministry of John the Baptist and the believers in Christ could be called disciples.

a. The question is not if they were disciples or if they believed, but who they were disciples of and what they believed.

b. The object of faith is just as vital as faith itself. Faith can be folly if it is directed toward the wrong object (as we will see, the object of their faith was faulty).

V. 2a - The word "since" would be more accurately translated "when." I.e. - "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" Or "Did you receive the Holy Spirit, having believed?" Hence the question is not pointing to the time period after their salvation, but to their salvation itself.

a. Why did Paul ask this question?

1) They may have lacked fruits of the Spirit.

2) They may have lacked the gifts of the Spirit.

3) They may have lacked evidence of saving faith (or all three of these).

b. The question serves as a reminder that faith in the Lord Jesus and the reception of the Holy Spirit go hand in hand; the one leads to the other.

V. 2b - Their ignorance of any Holy Spirit at all is evidence that they had not comprehended even John's teaching well, since John prophesied of Christ's ministry of baptizing with the Holy Spirit (Mt. 3:11).

V. 4 - Notice how Paul handles their deficiency in understanding the Holy Spirit's ministry.

a. The remedy is not special instruction or knowledge on access to the Spirit, or a new set of conditions; not added obedience, deeper commitment, or ardent prayer (to receive the Spirit), but instead, the Gospel of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and baptism in His name.

b. Their problem was not ignorance of how to experience baptism with the Spirit, but rather failure to have put their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation and to have received water baptism in His name.

V. 5 - They were re-immersed.

a. This is the only instance in the New Testament of a second water baptism and it clearly indicates that baptism followed genuine conversion.

b. When they "heard" the Word, they obviously "received" (believed) it, as did the believers in Acts 2:41.

Summary of how the passage proves that at the time these Ephesians met Paul, they were not true believers in Christ.

a. They are in a context with Apollos, who at first did not have the clear facts of the Gospel (18:23-28).

b. The word "disciples" is vague (disciples of whom? V. 3 indicates John) (19:1).

c. Paul had doubts (19:2).

d. They had never heard of the Holy Spirit (19:2).

e. They were in the transition - awaiting their Messiah, being followers of John the Baptist (19:3).

f. They needed to hear the Gospel (19:4).

g. They needed to be re-baptized (19:5).

h. They then received the Holy Spirit for the first time (19:6).

V. 6 - This is the third instance of "glossolalia" (tongues) in Acts (2:4, 10:46; 19:6).

a. In each instance, there was a historical transition made.

b. Signs helped incite (Acts 8:6) and confirm faith.

c. Tongues were a sign to the Jews of the dispersed common salvation itself, which in this new age is offered to all.

d. If the original followers of the Lord (Acts 2) needed the outward tokens of the Spirit's coming at Pentecost to assure them of the reality of His presence and power, how much more did these men, with less preparation, need such tokens. Their sign gifts were exactly that: signs to Paul that they had been saved. (See Acts 10:45-48, where God proved to Peter and the Jews [by the use of sign gifts] that the Gentiles had been accepted [saved] by grace.)

When anyone puts their faith in Christ Jesus they are automatically baptized into Christ by the Holy Spirit and become partakers of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 3:26-27; compare also Gal. 3:2, 14; 4:6; Eph. 1:13-14).

Never does God command or exhort a believer to be baptized by the Spirit! Why not? Because he has already received Spirit baptism upon believing the Gospel (Note, however, that the believer is commanded to be "filled with the Spirit" [Eph. 5:18]).

Today, there is no period of waiting before receiving or being baptized by the Holy Spirit.

Note: However, when the Spirit began His baptizing work at Pentecost, there was a time when the Spirit's baptism was delayed beyond the point in time when people put their faith in Jesus Christ. Example - Acts 8:12-17.

--The Samaritans believed (v. 12)
--The Samaritans were water baptized (v. 12, 16)
--But the Samaritans did not yet receive the Holy Spirit (v. 15-16)

Why the delay?

The Biblical answer:

a) The Samaritans should have received the Spirit at the moment of faith, like all believers do. The parenthetical statement in verse 16 indicates that this delay was out of the ordinary. Something should have happened that did not happen yet.

b) The Samaritans, who were enemies of the Jews (John 4:9) and had their own mode and place of worship (John 4:20-23), were not to continue to be isolated from God's people now that the Church had begun. God would not allow this terrible division and antagonism to continue in the Christian church.

c) Therefore, in this instance, "it was imperative that the Samaritans be identified with the Apostles (Peter and John - v. 14) and the Jerusalem church so that there would be no rival Samaritan church. (Ryrie) The Samaritans may have thought that their "brand of Christianity" was distinct from that of Judea if they had received the Holy Spirit without Peter and John being there from Jerusalem.

d) Another reason for the "gap" or delay was to allow the Samaritans to see that they were under Apostolic authority. (MacArthur)

e) Also, the Apostles (especially Peter) needed to learn that the Samaritans were accepted by God just as the Jews were. This event prepared Peter for his ministry to the Gentiles. SEE: Acts 10:47; 15:8 (the "half breed" Samaritans [Acts 8] bridged the gap between the Gospel going to the Jews [Acts 2-7] and later to the Gentiles [Acts 10ff]).

v. 6 “they began speaking with tongues”

(1) Biblical tongues were real languages (dialects that were known somewhere in the world, but unknown to the speaker) (Acts 2:2-11)

(2) Biblical tongues were to cease (I Cor. 13:8 - the word translated "cease" is in the middle voice, indicating that tongues ceased on their own [when God's purpose was fulfilled]).

(3) Biblical tongues ceased when the purpose for this sign gift was completed.

What was the specific purpose for tongues?

The purpose of tongues was to be a sign of judgment to unbelieving Israel (I Cor. 14:21-22; compare with Isaiah 28:11-12).

(a) I Cor. 14:21 - "Other tongues" = other languages (other than Hebrew or Aramaic)

"Will I speak" - Tongues was God speaking

"Unto this people" - this people is specifically a reference to Israel (Is. 28:11-12).

(b) I Cor. 14:22 - "Tongues are for a sign" - a sign of God's judgment (compare Deut. 28:49; Jer. 5:15)

"Not to them that believe" - Tongues were not for the benefit of believers

"But to them that believe not" - Tongues were to provoke unbelieving Israel to jealousy. Because of national Israel's rejection of Christ, the Gospel would now go to people of other languages (and be veiled, hidden from the sight of those who did not want to hear)

II. God used Paul to <u>spread His Word</u> throughout all Asia Minor (v.8-10)

v. 8 - **"He entered the synagogue"** – Though Paul had previously determined to "go to the gentiles" (Acts 18:6) [and Gentile ministry would be his predominate ministry (Ac 22:21; Gal.2:;7-9)], he would still go "to the Jew first" (Rom.1:16).

Paul's synagogue ministry involved preaching & teaching which was:

1) **Persistent** (continued…for three months)
2) **Bold** (to speak freely; Paul held nothing back; He did not "beat around the bush")
3) **Reciprocal** ("reasoning" – dialegomenos (dialog) – to discuss, dispute, argue back & forth)
4) **Persuasive** (peithon – to persuade; He would appeal to the will)

"about the Kingdom of God" – No doubt regarding the nature of that kingdom. From Heaven not a political reformation by man to usher in the kingdom.
Paul's emphasis was particularly about how to enter that kingdom (by grace through faith; not of works or self-righteousness but through Christ) Paul preached God's Gospel about how to be a constituent of that kingdom.

When the Jewish people began becoming obstinate and refused to believe which manifested itself by their slander and evil speech regarding Paul's message, he "withdrew from them and took away the disciples" so that he could teach them elsewhere.

Lesson: When we minister and our ministry is not accepted, this could be God's way of moving us on. Don't fight them; Don't waste your time and energy; but move elsewhere. When people are willing to dialog, then keep conversing. When they start fighting, move on!

"The school of Tyrannus" – a Lecture hall where the students of Tyrannos gathered.
The name of "Tyrannus" was found in Ephesus (Linguistic Key to Greek NT, p. 280.

God closes one venue for Bible teaching, to open up another!

From morning to evening and every day, Paul would dialog with people of the school of Tyrannus.

The effects of this teaching (which occurred for two years) resulted in "all who lived in Asia" hearing the Word of the Lord! This no doubt happened as a result of the continual influx of new students as well as those students taking the word in regions beyond.
As Paul would say to the Thessalonians: For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. (1 Thess. 1:8)

III. God used Paul to <u>perform the supernatural</u> (and thus vindicate His apostolic messenger and message) (v. 11-16)

v.11 – **"God was performing extraordinary miracles"** – Notice two observations:
1) It was God, not Paul doing these miracles (God did them through Paul; but they did not originate with Paul).
2) The miracles were truly supernatural. Not psychosomatic or staged or pretentious "miracles".
They were "Extraordinary" – not common; out of the ordinary.
Clearly supernatural or of divine origin.

Clearly, God was vindicating Paul. He was proving Paul to be an authentic apostle. So mightily was God performing the miraculous though Paul, that even pieces of cloth taken from Paul and coming in contact with sick people or demon possessed people, brought about complete healing.

Note: The power was not in the cloth (sweat rags or belts)! Relics have no power. The power was in God and pointing to the authority He invested in Paul. No pope, pastor, or guru in history had such power!

Note: These miracles were not for the mere benefit of the ones healed. They served a higher purpose. That being to demonstrate Paul's authority as an apostle.

2 Cor. 12:12 - Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

This point is further demonstrated by the work of the unsaved "Jewish exorcists" and the utter failure of the Seven sons of Sceva (whose name may mean "left-handed") who attempted to do such miracles. It is evident that they did not even have salvation!

It is interesting to note that whenever God is doing the real, Satan will raise up his servants to perform the fake in the name of a real man of God (so as to distract and divert attention from what God is doing).

And isn't it interesting that many charlatans (imposters, fakes, frauds) have attempted to copy or mimic the work of an apostle and were eventually shown to be false teachers. Ultimately this will be evident when they stand before Christ.

As the Lord Jesus said: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.
"Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'
"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.' (Mt. 7:21-22)

v.15 – **"who are you?"** – The Demons know Christ and they know about His authentic apostles (like Paul). But when imposters (like the sons of Sceva) attempt such in the name of Paul, they are powerless!

v.16 – **"naked and wounded"** – Satan always strips his victims of clothing and physical well-being. Ex. The demon possess man running though the tombs naked and cutting himself. (Mark 5)

v.17a – **"This became known to all"** – The population of the city of Ephesus "at that time is generally estimated at between 200,000 – 250,000, making Ephesus the third largest city in the empire after Rome and Alexandria" (Linguistic Key).

v.17 – God allowed the powerless attempt by the sons of Sceva to magnify Christ (who was preached by Paul).

IV. God used Paul's message to <u>bring about genuine repentance</u> in new converts to Christ (v.17-20)

When people were coming to faith in Christ under the ministry of Paul, the conversions were real. How do we know? The marks of repentance are clearly evident.

What is the evidence of true repentance?
1) **Honesty** – they were "confessing" (admitting their former wrongs; Saying the same thing about their sin as God says; They did not justify it or re-define it)
2) **Openness** – They were "disclosing" publically making known their former wicked practices.
3) A **Disposing** of sin & sinful baggage
4) **Public Repudiation** – "Books were burned in public in order to repudiate the contents of the books, so the new believers were openly repudiating their own previous involvement in magic" (Linguistic Key, p. 281)

Basically, a repentant person will be open and honest about their sin and will get rid of vices and materials that are dishonoring to their Savior; and they would be unashamed to discard this stuff publically!

These recent converts kept coming (by the multitudes) and trashing their sinful paraphernalia. This is true revival. One after another, they ditched their former idols and demonic objects, relics, and particularly their evil reading material.

They had a "bonfire" as they torched their magic books.
Note: They did not sell the books (though they might have made a lot of money which they could have "given to the lord" No, they did not want the lies and sin they formerly held to being around any longer for human consumption.

They value of their magic books alone was "fifty thousand pieces of silver" – one piece of silver (if it was the typical Drachma) was a day's wage. So we are talking about fifty thousand day's wages! By today's standard of pay (as of April 2015 in USA – the Average Hourly Earnings is at a current level of 24.86): For 8 hours of work (198.88); Multiply 198.88 x 50,000 and this would be a whopping <u>10 million dollars</u>!

Application:
God's people have no business reading witchcraft books or any novel related to witchcraft!

If you have any remnants of your old sinful lifestyle still hanging around like Records, tapes, CDs, Books, Movies, Magazines, Pornography, Substances etc. what would God want you to do with it?

Ex. The Furnace burning the teens and I had at FBC. They brought in their wicked old cds and dvds and we threw them into the burning oil burner.

v.20 – **"So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing."**
"So" – In this way; When God is a work results like this will be manifested!
God's word was spreading (growing mightily) and was strongly pulling down strongholds (prevailing)
Large ministries do not necessarily indicate revival. Genuine repentance (Like we see in Acts 19) does indicate revival!

V. God used Paul to <u>travel broadly and organize co-laborers</u> to serve in various parts of the known world (v.21-22)

"Paul purposed in the Spirit" – Some view this as his human spirit. However, the translators of the NASB have it right, as evident from Acts 20:22-23. It was the Holy Spirit impressing Paul with the need to go to Rome to preach the Gospel there also. He would end up going to Jerusalem, then to Caesarea before making an appeal to Caesar which would bring him to Rome (He would get a free boat ride – as a prisoner).

"I must also see Rome" – not for sight-seeing, but for "soul-seeing"
His trip to Rome would not be for a pleasant vacation to Italy, but to reach those at Rome with the Good News! (Romans 1:15)

Paul was quite the traveling, itinerant missionary. Trace his journeys (by foot on land and by stormy sea) and you will see how much he travelled for Jesus.

As an Apostle, he would also give directives to Timothy and Erastus to take leave of their ministering to him so as to go back into Macedonia to further help those people.

God would delegate through Paul. More than this God would speak through Paul through the pages of sacred NT epistles.

VI. God used Paul's ministry so mightily that it <u>stirred up opposition</u> when idol-makers began losing their fortunes! (v.23-41)

v.23 – **"no small disturbance"** – an understatement. There was a huge disturbance created by the work God was doing through the ministry of Paul. The city was in an uproar.

Whenever God is doing a great work, you can expect repercussions from the heathen world.

With multitudes getting saved and turning from their idols, the people who crafted those idols were losing big money!

If you want to hear people say ouch, touch their wallets!

Demetrius said ouch as he was losing drachmas as his sales of figurines of Artemis (or Diana) were going down rapidly!

Isn't it interesting how many people profit off of religion! For pagan religions, the sale of artifacts, relics, crosses, rosary beads, objects of worship are big business.

v.27 - To add a bit of more weight to his argument, he appeals to the hurt Paul's ministry would bring to the Temple of Artemis.

"the great goddess Artemis" - Artemis was one of the most widely venerated of the Ancient Greek deities. Her Roman equivalent is Diana. In the classical period of Greek mythology, Artemis was often described as the daughter of Zeus, and the twin sister of Apollo. She was the Hellenic goddess of the hunt, wild animals, wilderness, childbirth, virginity and protector of young girls, bringing and relieving disease in women; In later Hellenistic times, she even assumed the ancient role of aiding childbirth as a fertility goddess. (see Wikipedia)

Artemis is one of many female deities worshipped throughout history.

Aphrodite
Artemis
Athena
Cybele
Diana
Ishtar
Isis
Juno
Luna
Minerva
Nemesis
Semiramis
Venus

"Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord's house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz. Then said he unto to me, 'Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these." —Ezekiel 8:14-15

"The Queen of Heaven" One of the female deities of Jeremiah's day
Jeremiah 7:18, "... the women knead the dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven

The modern day Madonna or The Virgin Mary

v.34 – Can you imagine 2 hours of "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians"?
The repetition of perhaps 35,000 people, in unison would be deafening.

Conclusion: God used Paul's life in a great way!
However, Does God have work to accomplish through our lives today?

God is not performing miraculous signs and wonders through us as He did through the apostles. However, He is performing a providential and supernatural work through us as He uses our lives to impact others in evangelism and discipleship. Every time someone comes to faith in Christ, it's a supernatural work! A work we cannot take credit for (though God used us as a tool).

Certainly the "great commission" did not end with Paul. For Jesus is with us as we take part in the great commission "even to the end of the age" Mt. 28:20.