

~ACTS~

Lesson 62- The Word Grows Mightily in Ephesus

Acts 19:11-22

We are in Acts chapter 19 looking at Paul's stay in Ephesus during his 3rd missionary journey. Paul spent a total of three years in Ephesus, and during this time the Word of God grew mightily so that all of Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, Acts 19:10. This was mainly a result of Paul teaching a daily Bible study in the school of Tyrannus which bore so much fruit that the believers from this school began establishing churches in all of Asia. Now today we will continue looking at some of the specific events of how God was working through the Apostle Paul during his three-year stay. Today, we will be looking at verses 11-22 which will take us up to the final event in chapter 19, the riot in the Ephesian theater, which forces his departure from Ephesus.

In these 12 verses, there are four events that Luke highlights: **1)** God works unusual miracles through the hand of Paul, v. 11-12; **2)** Jewish exorcism goes bad, v.13-17; **3)** the burning of the magic books and repentance toward God, v.18-20; **4)** Paul's deep concern for the churches, v.21-22.

19:11-12) Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, ¹² so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

Up until this point on Paul's 3rd journey, we have seen Paul teaching and preaching the Word of God. He strengthened the churches in Galatia, then he came to Ephesus and taught in the synagogue for 3 months, and then he moved on to the school of Tyrannus for two years. And as a result, many people believed, churches were being established, and all of Asia is heard the Word of the Lord. But at the same time, God was validating His Word and His Apostle by working miracles through the hands of Paul. Notice Luke makes it abundantly clear that it is God doing the work through Paul. **God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul.** Paul is not performing these miracles of his own power, but it is the power of God working through him. And the grammar tells us this wasn't just a one-time occurrence. The word "worked" is in the imperfect tense... continual action in the past. These miracles were on going as Paul was preaching and teaching.

And we see God working in extraordinary ways, by "unusual miracles," works of dunamis power that which were not common, **so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body** (χρῶς- skin). These handkerchiefs and aprons were on his skin and then placed upon these oppressed people and they were being healed and demons cast out of them. These handkerchiefs and aprons weren't anything spiritual or magical. This word "handkerchief" is literally a facecloth or a sweat band, and the apron was a workman's apron. This clothing is the working attire of Paul the tent maker; sweaty, smelly head bands and greasy, dirty work aprons. But God used these at a connecting agent to His power. What this also tells me is that God was pleased by the work of Paul. Paul even tells us in several places that he worked as a tent maker to provide his necessities instead of collecting money from the churches, **Acts 20:34; 18:3; 1 Cor 9:12; 1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:8.** So God used these tangible elements to show His power. We see something similar with the Apostle Peter's shadow in **Acts 5:12-16.** And remember the woman with the issue of blood and how she connected her faith to the hem of Jesus' garment, Luke 8:43-48. Or in the Old Testament... God's power was displayed in Elijah's mantle, 2 Kings 2:8-14; and Aaron's rod, Ex 7:8-19; and Moses' staff, Ex 15:16; 17:5-6. There is nothing magical about these physical items. This is God choosing to work through these as connecting points for our faith. But today there are people, disguised as healing ministries, using this idea to try and make a profit. They want to sell you an "anointed" piece of cloth and they assure you that for \$15 you can buy an anointed handkerchief and be healed. This is nonsense and scams to be mindful of.

Speaking of scams... Luke now goes on to another example to contrast the True power of God versus those who want to use the Name for their own glory.

13-14) ¹³ Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.” ¹⁴ ~~Also there were~~ Certain ones being seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so.

These seven sons of Sceva were traveling Jewish exorcists, vagabonds who would make their living like traveling gypsies, going from city to city scamming people for money. And they were claiming to be sons of a Jewish high priest. Sceva was probably not even a legitimate high priest. There are no Jewish records of a high priest ever being named Sceva or even a chief priest for that matter. This was a deception to exalt himself, claiming himself and his sons to be someone great. When in reality they were traveling vagabonds scamming people for their own profit. This reminds me of Simon Magus from Samaria in Acts 8. He claimed to be someone great as well, claiming even to be the great power of God, Acts 8:9-10.

So while these traveling Jews were in Ephesus, just like Simon Magus, they saw the power of God working and they wanted to use this power for themselves. Notice the connection... Paul was no doubt laying his hands on people calling upon the Name of Jesus and people were being set free. Also, handkerchiefs and aprons were being laid upon people and miracles were taking place. These vagabond Jews saw the power of God and were trying to use the Name of Jesus in the same way Paul was, but without having the authority. The NKJV says they “**took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus.**” But a more literal translation makes it a little more clear saying... “Some of the vagabond Jewish exorcists placed their hands **upon**, naming the name of the Lord Jesus **upon** those who were having evil spirits.” They were trying to do what Paul was doing, but out of their own prideful ambitions to give them glory. But they didn’t have the authority to use His Name. They’re just using the Name of Jesus like an incantation or magic spell saying, “**We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.**” They don’t have a personal relationship with Jesus. Notice they’re not making Jesus personal. It’s not by “my Jesus” who lives in me, but by the Jesus whom Paul preaches. They didn’t have the authority as a child of God. As a result, it doesn’t go very well for them...

15-16) ¹⁵ And the evil spirit answered and said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?” ¹⁶ Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

That’s a bad day when you’re wounded and naked and driven out of the house. But notice why the demon was able to overpower them. They didn’t have a personal relationship with Jesus. They didn’t have the authority to use His Name. The demon said to them, Jesus I know intimately, γινώσκω, and Paul I am acquainted with, ἐπίσταμαι, to be familiar with as result of experience. The demons knew Jesus as God... even the demons believe and tremble James says, James 2:19. And they were acquainted with the Apostle Paul and his ministry. No doubt Paul had rebuked them in the past. But notice what they say about the sons of Sceva... “But you... who are you? ὑμεῖς δὲ τίνες ἐστέ; This prompts a question for us. Does the enemy know who you are? If you’re a child of God and you are exercising your authority as an heir of God, then the demons will know you. Better yet, they know the One who lives inside of you, 1 John 4:4; Luke 10:17-20. These sons of Sceva didn’t know Jesus and Jesus nor the power of God was in them.

Notice the results of this beating... the Name of the Lord Jesus was magnified... verse 17

17) This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

The Name of Jesus was magnified because this event with the sons of Sceva magnified the True power of God and exposed the lies and schemes of the devil. Just like Simon Magus, the sons of Sceva were exposed as frauds and the True power of God and His Word was glorified. To the point that there was a convicting fear that came upon the people of Asia.

18-19) ¹⁸ And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. ¹⁹ Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver.

God's power brought conviction and repentance to those who were believing in Asia, and they made an outward confession, ἐξομολογέω, and proclaimed, ἀναγγέλλω, and renounced their practice of magic. Ephesus was the center of worship for the goddess Diana, but it was also filled with occult practices of witchcraft and sorcery. And these believers were being delivered from all this paganism and they were gladly purging this old lifestyle. These books were probably papyrus rolls that were inscribed with magic spells and symbols. Archeologists have discovered ancient papyri fragments with magic spells and symbols much like what was being burned in Ephesus. This was probably a very lucrative business which was quickly going away in Ephesus, much like the silver shrines of Diana that we will see later in chapter 19. I think that is why Luke mentions the value of these books being burned. **And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver.** We're not sure what this piece of silver might have been, but if it was the ancient silver drachma, it would have been equivalent to a working man's daily wage. Scholars estimate this value to be worth between \$300k to over \$1m. Notice they didn't sell these and give the money to the ministry. No, they destroyed them. Much like Moses and golden calf, Ex 32:19-20. As a result, Luke gives us the response in verse 20...

20) So the Word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

So far, during the course of Paul's stay in Ephesus, which has been about 2 years and 3 months to this point, the Word of God has been spreading and bearing much fruit. In verse 10, Luke says that as a result of the daily Bible study in the school of Tyrannus for two years... "*all who dwelt in Asia heard the Word of the Lord.*" Then after the sons of Sceva were exposed and God's True power was shown, Luke says in verse 17, "*the Name of the Lord was magnified.*" Now that the believers in Asia are renouncing their pagan ways and turning upon Jesus, Luke says "*the Word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.*"

While all this was happening in Ephesus, Paul's heart wasn't just focused on the churches of Asia, but he had his deep concern for the other churches as well, namely Macedonia and Corinth. And it is around this time that Paul was nearing the end of his two-year ministry in the school of Tyrannus, and he was desiring to go back to Macedonia and Corinth again. Which is what leads Luke to write verses 21-22...

21-22) ²¹ When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." ²² So But he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time.

Paul's desire was to continue from Ephesus, and travel to Macedonia, then down to Corinth, and then on to Jerusalem to deliver the contribution for the saints at Jerusalem, then afterwards to Rome. Notice his plans to visit Corinth when he wrote 1 Corinthians, which was about a year after being in Ephesus around 56ad, **1 Cor 16:5-11**. And as we begin overlaying other comments in Acts and 1-2 Corinthians, we can see that Paul's plans begin to change as he was dealing with the Corinthian believers.

During this time at Ephesus, Paul had written three letters to the Corinthian church admonishing and exhorting them in the faith. The first letter, "the previous letter," 1 Cor 5:9, was written within a few months after first coming to Ephesus. This letter was a follow up to his first visit on his second missionary journey, 55ad. Then he wrote 1 Corinthians in response to Chloe's letter, 56ad, and we just read his plans at the end of 1 Corinthians. But then after Timothy returns with news of their response to 1 Corinthians, Paul feels the need to visit them himself. This is known as the "sorrowful visit," 2 Cor 2:1-3, 57ad. This second visit doesn't accomplish much, so he returns to Ephesus and writes the "severe letter," 2 Cor 2:3-4; 7:8. At this point, Paul decides not to go back to Corinth, but instead, he sends Timothy and Erastus

along with Titus to deliver this severe letter. This is what Luke refers to in verses 21-22 and we see the result of his plans slightly changing in verse 22 because he sends Timothy and Erastus instead of himself returning to Corinth. And then we gain even more insight into the heart of the Apostle Paul by reading and overlaying [2 Corinthians 1:15-16, 23; 2:1-4](#).

So Paul, out of his love for the Corinthian believers, sends Timothy, Erastus, and Titus to deliver the “severe letter,” and Luke says in verse 22, **but he himself stayed in Asia for a time**. This “time” was probably the remaining 9 months, making his entire stay at Ephesus a total of 3 years as he mentions in Acts 20:31. Three months in the synagogue, Acts 19:8, two years in the school of Tyrannus, Acts 19:9-10, then the remaining 9 months in Ephesus and Asia, probably going from house to house edifying the new churches established in Asia, Acts 20:20.

Then after three years in Ephesus, the Gospel message had turned the hearts of so many people in Asia that the pagans were losing money on their idol and witchcraft sales. Nobody was buying any magic papyri and the sales of the silver statues of Diana were way down. This creates such a huge stir among the pagans that Demetrius the silversmith starts a riot in the theater and Paul is driven out of the city, [Acts 19:26-27](#).

Next time we'll look at the remainder of chapter 19 which will focus on the riot in the theater at Ephesus and his departure from the city.