

"The Third Missionary Journey"

Part 4

Acts 18:23-21:26

Introduction: Last week in our study of Acts we stopped as Paul had left the synagogue in Ephesus after three months because there were certain people who started to speak evil of the Gospel. Paul then took the disciples that were willing to go with him and they went to the school of Tyrannus.

Notice Acts 19:8-9

In this we considered the possibility that Paul would work until 11:00 am then meet the disciples and study the Bible until 4:00 pm then go back to work in the evening. This is believed to be the time when the school would be available. This went on for two years. As we continue on tonight let us keep in mind the purpose of Luke writing this letter. It is to help us to understand how the Lord would place the greatest message ever told in the hands of twelve ordinary men and get it out to all ends of the world.

Acts 1:1-2

The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

² Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:

➤ **God's Hand of Blessing**

Notice Acts 19:10

At the end of this verse, we see just how effective Paul's ministry was from Ephesus. Everyone in the region of Asia heard the Gospel. This was the result of Paul preaching and teaching in Ephesus. The disciples who Paul taught carried the Gospel out to the areas where they lived and then as others were saved those believers carried the Gospel further out in Asia. This is most likely when the Gospel spread to the other six churches listed in Revelation.

Application:

This is the way in which the church is to function. We are to come here and hear the teaching of the Word of God and then carry it out to our families, friends, workplaces, schools and wherever we go, and share what we learn here, out there.

2 Timothy 2:24-26

²⁴ *And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,*

²⁵ *In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;*

²⁶ *And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.*

Notice Acts 19:11-12

Here we see that God gave Paul the ability to do special miracles in Ephesus. God used the handkerchiefs and the aprons which Paul wore to bring about the miracles. When we look closely at verse 12, we see that Luke makes a distinction between those who were sick and those who were possessed by evil spirits. This is important. Luke was a physician and he made this distinction for a purpose. It lets us know that all sickness is not the results of being inflicted by demons. I point this out because there are many people who believe that all disease and sickness come from the Devil or the demonic world. But that is not the case. Sickness and disease are the results of sin entering into this world.

Why did God choose to work these "special" miracles in the city of Ephesus? We must understand that the city of Ephesus was a very spiritually dark city. When we get to verse 19, we will see the burning of a large number of books and these would have been books on witchcraft and magic. Considering also that Satan is a counterfeiter and he had many in this city whom he could work through. Let us not forget that he will do all he can to bring into question the Truth of the Gospel and to distract from it. Here in Ephesus Satan had many tools through witchcraft and magic practices. But these "special" miracles that were done by the hand of Paul were far beyond those who practiced their dark magic. Therefore, these "special" miracles separated Paul and the Gospel he preached from those who were able to practice their dark magic. These "special" miracles were God given to affirm that the message of the Gospel was from God and to show that Paul was a True messenger of the Living God. Notice the words of Longenecker.

"Ephesus was the home of all sorts of magic and superstition, and the phrase "Ephesian writings" was common in antiquity for documents containing spells and magical formulae. So, it need not be thought unnatural that just as Paul met his audiences at a point of common ground ideologically in order to lead them on to the Good News of salvation in Christ, so at Ephesus he acted in the way here depicted. The virtue, of course, lay not in the materials themselves but in the power of God and the faith of the recipients. Luke's interest throughout this chapter is in emphasizing the supernatural power of the gospel. Therefore, he has highlighted these "extraordinary miracles."

I need to also add here that these miracles do not exist today though many believe they still do. I have received "holy handkerchiefs" in the mail over the years but they did nothing and the reason is because God did these miracles in Ephesus and to show the authenticity of the Gospel and there is no need for this today because we have the completed Scriptures to show us it is Authentic. We have discussed this before but we need to be reminded again. The apostolic gifts were for the apostles only and they served two major purposes.

1. To separate the True Apostles from false apostles.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15

¹³ *For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.*

¹⁴ *And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.*

¹⁵ *Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.*

2. To show the authenticity of the message the Apostles preached.

Acts 2:41-42

⁴¹ *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*

⁴² *And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

Today we have the Bible to show us the True message of the Gospel and how it can change lives therefore we do not need "special" miracles to prove anything. Does God perform miracles today? He certainly does but the GIFT of miracles such as the Apostles had does not exist.

Hebrews 2:1-4

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

² For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward;

³ How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

⁴ God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

When Jesus walked the earth He used the miracle of healing to prove He was who He claimed to be.

Matthew 9:2-8

² And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.

³ And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.

⁴ And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?

⁵ For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?

⁶ But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.

⁷ And he arose, and departed to his house.

⁸ But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

Getting back to Acts again we also need to understand that in the early church the spread of the Gospel was met with demonic forces on several occasions.

Acts 8:6-9

⁶ *And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.*

⁷ *For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.*

⁸ *And there was great joy in that city.*

⁹ *But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:*

Acts 13:6-8

⁷ *Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.*

⁸ *But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.*

Acts 16:16-17

¹⁶ *And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:*

¹⁷ *The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.*

Then here in Acts we see it again. This brings to light what Paul penned in Ephesians.

Ephesians 6:12

¹² *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

Notice Acts 19:13

Now Luke focuses upon a group of Jews that were exorcists. These people were not saved but did cast out evil spirits.

Matthew 12:27

27 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges.

Notice Acts 19:13 again.

This group of exorcists decided they would use the name of Jesus in their practice of casting out demons. They believed if they spoke the name of Jesus over the demon possessed, then miracles would happen.

Notice Acts 19:14-16

The evil spirit leaped upon these men and they were fortunate to escape.

Conclusion:

There are a couple of points to see here.

1. The demonic world is far more powerful than what people realize. It is dangerous for people to open themselves up to the dark spirit world.
2. These sons of Sceva exist under different names today. They are called philosophy, psychology, education, science or even religion. But not one of them can change the heart of man. Only Jesus Christ can change the heart.

Satan would have loved for these men to be successful so that he could cause confusion among the people, but God would not allow it. God was showing the power of the Gospel over the demonic world.