

(Acts) Awakening at Ephesus

by Brian Brodersen

The sermon highlights the importance of knowing the scriptures and the empowering of the Holy Spirit for effective ministry.

Duration: 56:30

Scripture: Matthew 3:11, Matthew 24:35, Acts 19:1-10

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the activities of the Apostle Paul in Ephesus. Paul initially ministers to a group of twelve men, who receive the Holy Spirit. He then goes to the synagogue in Ephesus and speaks boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading about the kingdom of God. However, some people become hardened and speak evil of the way, so Paul withdraws from them and continues to teach daily in the school of Tyrannus. The preacher also emphasizes the importance of cleaning house and disconnecting from things that can contaminate our lives and homes.

Transcript

So as we pick up in our study here in Acts chapter 18, picking up this evening in verse 24, the Apostle Paul, as you perhaps remember, he has planted the church in Corinth and he spent quite a bit of time there in Corinth. And after probably close to two years, he began to sense that God was leading him on from that place. And so Luke records for us in the previous verses how Paul left Corinth and how he briefly stopped over in Ephesus, but his goal was to get to Jerusalem in time for the feast, probably the feast of Passover.

And it appears that he made it. He went to Jerusalem and then from Jerusalem he went back to Antioch and then from Antioch he went back into the area of Asia Minor where he had been planting churches and probably over a year had transpired. And then Luke will pick up again with Paul's activity just into chapter 19.

We find Paul back at Ephesus. But as we pick up in verse 24 of chapter 18 tonight, it's sort of an in the meantime kind of a thing that Luke records for us now while Paul is traveling back to Jerusalem and then to Antioch and then visiting the churches once again, another person comes onto the scene. And so we're introduced to this interesting man by the name of Apollos.

And so we read now a certain Jew named Apollos born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. Now, Alexandria was located in Egypt. It was, of course, built by and named after Alexander the Great.

It was a great cultural center and it was the center of scholarship. And many scholars hailed from Alexandria, particularly at the time of Jesus, there was a very renowned Jewish philosopher by the name of Philo, who lived in and carried on his philosophic activity from Alexandria. He sought to sort of join the Old Testament with Greek philosophy.

He sought to find common ground between the two things. And so he was a well-known and highly respected philosopher. And one of the things that Alexandria was famous for when it came to the scriptures was that was the place where the Bible was translated from Hebrew into Greek.

You've perhaps heard of the Septuagint version of the Bible. That was the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures. And the place where it was translated was Alexandria.

It was also the place where the allegorical interpretation of scripture really originated there among Philo and others. Even after him, they they believe that the scriptures were very deep and that there was much, much more to it than met the eye. So there was the obvious statements of scripture and the and the plain interpretation sort of on the surface.

But they believe that just under the surface, you could discover all kinds of other things, almost sort of like the Bible code mentality that some people have today, that if you follow this certain code, you can find out that the Bible talked about all kinds of things that you never would have dreamed that it talked about if you just understand the code and you can decipher it. So that was kind of the thinking process of many from Alexandria. There were approximately a million Jews that lived in the city of Alexandria.

So this man, Apollos, he hailed from Alexandria and he was an eloquent man. So he was obviously well-educated and of instructed in rhetoric and able to really communicate effectively. As a matter of fact.

When he spent time in Corinth, he came after Paul was there. Later on, there was a little bit of a party spirit that developed among the Corinthians, and they were sort of pitting Apollos over against Paul. And Apollos was really impressive to them because of his eloquence, because he spoke like the philosophers that that they were impressed by.

But he was a good man. He was a godly man. And not only was he eloquent in his speech, but he was mighty in the scriptures.

So he knew the scriptures. I like that that description. They're mighty in the scriptures.

Well, if there's anything to be mighty in, that's it. You know, you can know a lot of things, but there's nothing like knowing the scriptures because, of course, heaven and earth will pass away. But as Jesus said, my words will never pass away.

So it really behooves us to know the word of God, that we would follow the example of Apollos to be mighty in the scripture. So this man came to Ephesus and he had been instructed in the way of the Lord and being fervent in spirit. He spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John.

Now, this is an interesting thing at this stage, although he was, you know, sort of an evangelist, he was a preacher and he was going about giving instruction in the scripture. He hadn't himself really come to a thorough and complete understanding of the things of the Lord. He was familiar with the ministry of John the Baptist.

He was he had been baptized with that baptism to repentance. But it appears that he did not experience at this point the baptism with the Holy Spirit. It appears that he knew obviously something about the Lord Jesus because he was proclaiming him.

But it doesn't really seem that he had the full picture, the full grasp of things. And so he began to speak boldly in the synagogue when Aquila and Priscilla, you remember them, we were introduced to them previously. They were tent makers along with Paul and they had become his traveling companions.

Paul left them in Ephesus. And so this is where they meet up with a polis when they hear him. It says that they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

So they're sitting in the synagogue and they're listening to this man and they're no doubt marveling at his brilliance and at his command of the scripture. But yet at the same time, they're realizing that there's a missing element here. He there are things that he obviously hasn't yet really heard or understood.

And so this couple, Aquila and Priscilla, this ministry team, husband and wife, they take a polis aside, they invite him into their home, probably, and they explain to him the way of God more accurately. You know, there's lots of ministry. That is to be done.

Outside of the four walls of the church, and sometimes we make the mistake of thinking that ministry is what happens here on these grounds, perhaps, but we need to realize there's a ton of ministry that goes on and needs to go on right out where we find ourselves just in our everyday experiences of life. And Aquila and Priscilla, they were a couple who they were just ministering wherever they went as they were making tents. They were ministering as they would just go about their daily activity and business.

They were always looking for those opportunities that the Lord might bring along to strengthen somebody in the faith. And here was an opportunity that came their way. You know, they could have sat in church and listened to a polis and thought, oh, that guy doesn't even know what he's talking about.

He's eloquent and he knows the scriptures, but but he doesn't you know, he doesn't know as much as we know. And then sort of puffed up and, you know, sort of had that kind of attitude toward him, like sometimes we get. But they said, no way this guy, man, he's somebody we got to get.

We got to get on the team 100 percent. We've got to help him out. And so they took him aside.

And Apollos was obviously a humble man because he learned from them. It's not easy when somebody else comes up to, you know, give you instruction if you're a teacher and it takes humility to be able to say, oh, I didn't know that. And evidently, Apollos had all of those great characteristics because that's obviously what he did.

And so they spent time with him. They developed this relationship. And verse twenty seven says, and when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him.

And when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace, for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the scriptures that Jesus is the Christ. And it happened while Apollos was at Corinth. And so Achaia, of course, was the region where Corinth was located.

So he went into that area there and noticed he greatly helped those who had believed through grace. You know, another thing that I think we need to keep at the at the forefront of our minds is that ministry is really helping other people to know the Lord, not just helping unbelievers to come to Christ. That, of course, is a glorious thing and something that we want to be able to do as often as the opportunities come, but also to help like Aquila and Priscilla did to help other believers know the Lord better and to be strengthened in him.

And for those of you that that know the Lord well, those of you that have sat year after year and soaked in the word of God and you've got a command of of the scriptures and the faith. Have you ever thought about, you know, just looking around the church and and wondering who's maybe newer in the faith that you might come alongside them and encourage them personally? You know, some people do really well in a group environment and they learn great in that context. Other people do better when somebody comes along personally and just sort of puts an arm around them and says, you know, let's spend some time together.

Let's get into the word together. And that can be such a tremendous thing. That's what Aquila and Priscilla did for Apollos.

And it appears that when he got to Corinth, that's what he was doing for others as well. Just what just what had happened with him backing up for just a moment on Aquila and Priscilla. One thing that I want to say also is that notice Priscilla was apparently equally involved in giving instruction to Apollos.

She was right there alongside of her husband, Aquila, and the implication is that she was helping in the instruction. And I say that because a lot of times there's confusion over, you know, just what a woman is allowed to do in the context of ministry. And of course, Paul writes and he says that I do not allow a woman to teach or usurp authority over the man.

And so based on that statement, there have been a lot of different ideas that have developed. Some people take it to what I believe is clearly an extreme by saying that women aren't to give any instruction to men whatsoever. And therefore, the boys can't even go into a Sunday school classroom if it's a woman teacher, because that would violate Paul's, you know, order that a woman is not to teach or usurp authority over the man.

I don't think that that has application. And my personal belief is that when Paul said that to Timothy and second first Timothy, chapter two, the end of chapter two, he's talking there in the context of church leadership. And if you follow along with his instruction there, you come right to the issue of the bishop.

And he talks about the qualifications for the bishop, the bishop being the husband of one wife and so forth. And I think what Paul is really stating is simply that a woman is not to hold the primary position of leadership within the church. The woman is not to be the bishop of the church.

I think that's what Paul is saying. He's not saying that women can't give any instruction to men, because after all, Priscilla was clearly instructing Apollos and Priscilla was part of that ministry team that Paul was intimately associated with. So, ladies.

You can. Do a ton of things within the ministry. And this, you know, presentation that some people give of Paul being this chauvinist and how he was against women and he furthered that male arrogant sort of approach to life and all there's nothing further from the truth.

Ladies can do tons of things in the church and thank God for them. And even to the point of ministering to men, they can share with men. And I believe that women can stand in a pulpit and share with men as well, not just on a personal level.

But what I also do believe is that a woman is not to be the pastor of the church. She's not to hold the position of the bishop. And I think that's what Paul is talking about.

So Aquila and Priscilla, great ministry team, husband and wife, both equally encouraging Apollos. Apollos gets encouraged. He goes to Corinth and he greatly helps those just in the same way that he had been helped.

But one other thing before we move on from him, notice that he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly. Now, see, here's a guy that man, they can't they can't contend with this guy. He is the you know, he's the star on the dream team when it comes to Jewish evangelism.

They can't refute him. He is. He is.

You know, he's got all these credentials. He's from Alexandria. Oh, man, right away.

That would give him that would give him some clout right there. And then when they listen to him speak in the eloquence. Oh, my.

But then his power in the scriptures and how he's just refuting them from the scriptures, showing from the scriptures that Jesus is the Christ. So he must have had a great apologetic presentation going back from Genesis all the way through to show them that they had made a mistake. They had missed the Messiah.

And so anyway, that was all going on in Corinth. And as Apollos was there ministering, we pick up now in chapter 19, verse one. Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus.

And so Paul would have, as we pointed out, he was in Jerusalem. He would have gone to Antioch and then from Antioch to Cilicia and then all the way through the upper regions of Galatia and then down to Ephesus, located in the province of Asia. He comes back into Ephesus.

Now, Ephesus was the market of Asia Minor. It was located at the mouth of the Keister River, and it was known as the treasure house of Asia. Ephesus was a center of pagan superstition, famous for charms and spells called Ephesian letters.

Now, these letters guaranteed to bring safety on a journey to bring children to the childless, to bring success in love or business enterprise. And so from all over the world, people would come to buy these magic parchments and then they would wear them as amulets. The greatest glory of Ephesus, though, was the Temple of Artemis or the Temple of Diana.

Artemis is the Greek. Diana is the Latin. Now, this temple was actually one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

It was 425 feet long, 220 feet wide and 60 feet high. There were 127 pillars, each the gift of a king. The altar had been carved by Praxiteles, who was the greatest of all of the Greek sculptors.

So again, Ephesus was a very significant city. And as Paul's habit was, he tried to get into these these centers of population, these centers of culture and influence and to establish a foothold, a stronghold in these places for Jesus Christ. And so he had passed through Ephesus, remember, on his way to Jerusalem.

It seemed like a favorable place. There were people that were actually asking him to stick around a bit longer. But he said, no, I've got to go.

But if God wills, I'll come back to you. So now more than a year has passed and Paul returns to Ephesus. And as he returns, he finds some disciples and he said to them, did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? And so they said to him, we have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.

And he said to them, into what then were you baptized? So they said into John's baptism. Then Paul said, John, indeed, baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on him who would come after him. That is on Christ Jesus.

And when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Now. The big question, as you look at this is.

Where were these people at spiritually, what what does this mean? They it says they were disciples, but then Paul, he spends some time with them and he says, you know, have you heard about the Holy Spirit? Have you have you received the Holy Spirit since you believe? And they respond and say, we we've never even heard about. I don't think they said we've never heard of the Holy Spirit, because, of course, the Holy Spirit was mentioned in the Old Testament. But what they're probably saying is we haven't heard about this opportunity to receive the Holy Spirit that you're presenting to us now.

So the question is, were they even believers at the time? And I don't know that we can answer either way on it. They were disciples. But maybe like a polis, but with even less understanding than him, they were just, you know, going with what they knew they had been they had received the baptism of John and perhaps had embraced the ministry of John to the extent that they knew that the Messiah had come.

But they perhaps at this point hadn't heard any of the rest of the story, they might have known that John was the herald of the Messiah and that the Messiah had arrived and they might have heard about the ministry of Jesus, but they they perhaps did not know about his death on the cross, his resurrection and those things. Evidently, they weren't baptized in the Christian sense, and that's why it says in verse five, when they heard this, they were then baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. So it's hard to say exactly where they were, but they they weren't in that place of having that real experience with the Lord that that, of course, he had come to provide for them.

And so they were baptized in the name of the Lord. And when Paul laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit then came upon them and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Now, the men were about 12 in all.

So. These men. I think.

We're probably not believers in the fullest sense, not by any fault of their own, they just had not heard the rest of the message, but now they receive it, they receive Jesus, they're baptized in his name. But I want

you to notice that after that takes place, Paul laid hands on them and the Holy Spirit came upon them. Now, we've pointed this out before in earlier studies, but perhaps some of you weren't with us.

So I want to touch on it again because it's so vitally important in the Christian life. And that is the subject of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. You see, when I become a believer, when I recognize that I'm a sinner and that Jesus died for my sins and rose again and I ask him to forgive my sins and to come into my life, that instant I am born again, I'm born of the spirit.

And as I'm born of the spirit, what happens is the spirit comes and takes up residence in my life. The spirit indwells me. But.

There's also an additional experience, and I think we see it clearly marked here once again, that occurs, and that is that Paul, after they're baptized in the name of Jesus, which would indicate, of course, that they believed and therefore would indicate that they were born again and indwelt by the spirit. After that, Paul lays hands on them and the spirit notice the spirit comes upon them. Now, you see, the purpose of the coming upon of the spirit is empowering for service to God.

You see, I can't serve God without him empowering me to do so. Jesus himself. Think about this.

Jesus is God in human flesh, born of the spirit in a literal sense. But he does not minister in the power of the spirit. Until he's baptized in the Jordan River and the spirit comes upon him.

Then his public ministry begins now, I believe that that is setting a precedent and a model for us to understand something that I can't. Embark on a ministry. I can't effectively and powerfully serve the Lord apart from his empowering upon my life, I might be a child of God, just like Jesus was God, the son.

But yet Jesus did not embark on a public ministry, he didn't perform a miracle, he didn't do any of those things until the spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove. And from that point on, Jesus began his ministry. And so likewise, if we're going to minister, if we're going to serve God and we're going to do it effectively and powerfully, we have got to receive this.

Empowering of the spirit described here as the spirit came upon them. You see, it's the spirit coming upon not only dwelling within as wonderful as that is. The dwelling within gives me that, you know, witness that the scriptures talk about that I am a child of God, the spirit bears witness with my spirit that I am a son of God.

But this upon experience then empowers me to serve the Lord. And I believe that if a person hasn't entered into service for God or doesn't even have a clue as to where to begin. And.

Or maybe even a real sort of an urgency or a sense to do that, it is probably related to the fact that although they are a child of God, a Christian, they have not experienced this spirit coming upon them. Now, sometimes, as we've seen, as we've gone through acts here, sometimes this thing happens really simultaneously. And in one sense here, it's pretty close to simultaneous.

They are baptized in water in the name of Jesus. And then Paul lays hands on them back in the house of Cornelius. You remember Peter's preaching to the house of Cornelius and they actually obviously received Christ by faith and received this empowering of the spirit even before they're baptized.

But if you back up a little bit further into the situation that we've already considered in Samaria, when the believers in Samaria had received Christ, believed in his name, were baptized in the name of Jesus. Yet it wasn't until the apostles came down from Jerusalem and laid hands upon them. It wasn't until then that they that the spirit came upon them.

And then, of course, if you take it back even to the very beginning to what we read in Acts two about the day of Pentecost. On the day of Pentecost, I don't believe for one moment that the apostles were born again on the day of Pentecost. I believe that happened prior to the ascension of Jesus.

It's recorded for us in John, chapter 20, when Jesus meets them in the upper room, he appears to them and he breathes on them and says to them, receive the Holy Spirit. And I believe they did the moment he breathed on them and said, receive the Holy Spirit. I believe that he did.

They did. Now, some people who disagree with this position say, well, Jesus didn't really. He breathed on them and said, receive the Holy Spirit.

But that was just a symbol of what was going to happen to him later on the day of Pentecost. I don't buy that argument. I believe when Jesus breathed on them and said, receive the Holy Spirit, they received the spirit.

They were born again. They were indwelt. But remember, Jesus said to them, now wait in Jerusalem until you receive power.

The spirit will come upon you and you will be my witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth. And so that is something that we find. Indicated, I believe, over and over again here in the book of Acts, because it's so vital to the progress of the church.

The church cannot progress without spirit filled people leading it. We've got to be filled by this with the spirit. We've got to have the spirit come upon us because that's that power to take the church in the direction that God wants it to go.

So what do we do about it? If we realize that we're lacking in this experience, what do we do? Well, we ask the Lord to do that for us. We can ask it by getting on our knees and saying, Lord, I want you to send the spirit to come upon me. We can do it by coming up to, you know, one of the pastors or elders in the church and say, would you lay hands on me and pray for me that I might receive the power of the Holy Spirit? Like Paul laid his hands on these guys and they received that power.

Then there's there's no my point is this, there's no particular exact method that one must follow in order to receive this throughout the book of Acts. We see that God does it in a variety of ways, but the main way is by the individual desiring it and asking for it. Whether you ask God directly or you ask somebody else to pray for you.

As you're just seeking the Lord and saying, God, I just want all that you have for me, you're opening yourself up there to have this wonderful experience, and I want to encourage you to do that if you haven't. And I believe personally that there are more than one baptism with the spirit. I believe that you can have this experience over and over again.

And actually, I believe that we need to have this experience over and over again. I don't think it's just a one time event. As a matter of fact, again, if we go way back to where we started in Acts two, the spirit came

upon them the day of Pentecost.

Peter stood up and preached and three thousand were converted and they were speaking in tongues. The you know, the original hundred and twenty and all of that, you read a couple of chapters later, chapter four, as they're suffering persecution and they're in difficulty, they come back to the Lord and they cry out to him. And it says and they were all filled with the spirit again.

And the building shook. And so there's a reoccurring and I think you could you can draw the same sort of conclusions by looking at Paul when he's converted on the road to Damascus and then Ananias lays hands on him, he receives the spirit, he's empowered, he goes out and he becomes this effective evangelist, contender for the faith, preacher guy, and then we find as some years pass. Remember, on the island of Cyprus, he has this encounter with this false prophet when he's seeking to minister to Sergius Paulus and he pronounces a judgment upon this false prophet bar Jesus.

But it tells us and Saul, who is also called Paul, being filled with the spirit, said to Elamus, you son of the devil and so forth. And then he pronounces a judgment upon him, but it specifically tells us that he was filled with the spirit that moment he was filled that instant. And so I believe that there are reoccurring fillings of the spirit and I believe that we ought to ask for them as often as we feel like.

We need one, which for me is pretty often. As often as we feel that we need a fresh outpouring, but I know, too, even by experience, I can think of, you know, as time passes and God has in my life had me doing different things, I could sense a fresh outpouring of the spirit for the particular task that God was calling me to. And so remember that, understand that no, as Jesus said, I'm not going to leave you as orphans, I'm not leaving you here by yourself to figure this thing out and to and to do it, I'm going to come alongside in the person of the spirit and I'm going to come upon you and I'm going to empower you.

Some of the greatest pictures of this empowering, I think, are given to us really in the Old Testament, you know, the Old Testament saints had a different experience than we do, but the key Old Testament figures, they're the ones who experienced what I believe is the equivalent of the baptism of the spirit, like a Samson, for example. How in the world could one guy slay a thousand? You couldn't do it, humanly speaking, but what does it say about Samson? It says specifically the spirit of God came upon him and then he did these great exploits. What does it say about David who slew Goliath? It tells us prior to that, that he was anointed with oil and the spirit of God came upon him from that day forward.

And as you go through the Old Testament, you find these these men and women who did these, you know, extraordinary things, these significant things for the furtherance of the kingdom. You will find that whatever they did, they did through the spirit coming upon them. And so if you want a good picture of what to expect, go back to some of the stories in the Old Testament.

And so. As we continue on in verse eight now, Paul. Having ministered to this group, these 12 men and seeing the spirit come upon them.

He then went into the synagogue and now remember when he visited Ephesus previously, that's where he had been and they were very welcoming and they were anxious for Paul to stick around. They wanted to hear more about what he had to say. So there he is.

He's back in the synagogue and he spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and did not believe that spoke evil of the

way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. So he had a three month period there in the synagogue.

And obviously, many responded and responded positively, but there came a point when they started to grow hard and they they were becoming unfavorable toward the apostle and they spoke evil of the way. The way was. The term that was used to refer to the faith in the first century, we find this term a few times over here in the book of Acts, the way.

Implying that the Christian life is a way of believing, it's a way of thinking and it's a way of living. It really is the way. It's God's way, it's God's way to believe, it's God's way to think, it's God's way to live.

And so they called it the way this is the way they didn't call it a way. They called it the way and it is the way it's not a way, you know, today we live in the pluralistic environment and. So much pressure.

Bearing upon us to just drop the V. And say it's a way, come on, it's it's a way for you, but it's not necessarily true for everybody else. Sorry, we can't do that. Because it's the way.

It's the only way. To know God, you can be religious, there are plenty of ways to be religious, and if you're content being religious, then fine. But if you really want to know God and if you really want to have your sins forgiven and if you really want to know that when you die, you're not going to hell, there's only one way to do that.

And that is the way Jesus, he said it himself, I am the way, the truth and the life. And so Paul departed from the synagogue now after these months of ministering there, and he reasoned daily in the school of Tyrannus. Now, Tyrannus was evidently an instructor of some sort, and.

He. Allowed Paul to rent out his hall. You know, it's interesting that.

When you look at the picture of the church in Acts. And then you follow history. You find that for quite a period of time, the church went off in just a completely different direction and, you know, became this institution and this vast, complex organization.

And you find the great cathedrals and, you know, the churches and things that were built. And and actually, you know, the thought of having a church, you know, in a school hall or in a storefront or in somebody's house, for that matter, there was a long period of time where that was unthinkable. In Western culture, at least, but, you know, it's interesting in the last 50 years or so, the Lord's kind of.

Worked in such a way as to to bring a lot of that back around and what we see today is, you know, a lot of similarity to what's happening with churches, to what was going on in the New Testament. We see today people renting out school halls and, you know, I know Bob Coy started his church in a mortuary and, you know, I know people that have started their churches in synagogues and in seven day Adventist churches and people that have started in different, you know, recreational centers and things. We started the church in London in a school hall and then, you know, a lot of, you know, people in storefront things and all.

But it's good because it's it's getting back to what was happening biblically and all of, you know, the cathedrals and all of these kinds of things. They were great monuments to men. But today, they're pretty much just large, cold tombs and there's hardly a cathedral on the face of the earth where there's anything really significant going on in terms of the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Most of them have been turned into museums, but there they were reasoning in the school of Tyrannus. And so this continued for two years. Listen to this so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

Amazing. So Paul set up a preaching center in the school of Tyrannus and people from all over the province of Asia. Now, this would have included all of the churches that are mentioned in Revelation two and three.

Ephesus, of course, is the first one. And then from Ephesus, you have Smyrna and then you have Pergamos and Thyatira and Sardis and Philadelphia and Laodicea and all of those churches and then all of the other ones in the region. It appears that from his base in Ephesus.

The gospel was going out into these different places as people would come to Ephesus and be brought to the school of Tyrannus and there they would listen to Paul and they would take the gospel back to the various places they went. What an exciting thing that is now, verse 11, God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul. So that even handkerchiefs and or aprons were brought from his body to the sick and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.

So here's an extraordinary thing. And notice how Luke. Clarifies that this was unusual, this wasn't the norm, this was something out of the normal, like Peter.

And his shadow being cast upon people and them being healed. As we read earlier in Acts, that they were taking people out to the streets on their beds and things so that perhaps the the shadow of Peter, as he passed by, would fall upon them, believing that they would be healed. And I think they were healed.

That was an unusual thing. God was really, you know, designating Peter as his man. And here in this city, remember, that's given over to sorcery, it's given over to magic, it's given over to idolatry.

And here in this environment, God does these unusual things by the hands of Paul. There are these wacky ministries today. A ministry is such a bad word to even use in reference to him, because ministry means a service.

And, you know, these people aren't serving anybody but themselves. But you know what I'm talking about, and they will send you the prayer cloth, they will send you their sweat bands and things like this. And and this is the verses that they'll use to sort of, you know, justify what they're doing.

But there's two problems. They don't produce any healings is one big problem. And secondly, none of these men are in the category that the Apostle Paul was in.

The majority of people doing that sort of thing, I don't even think they're in the camp, I think they're they're deceivers. But, you know, they and I've talked to people about this and they will argue, well, look right here in Acts, you know, we see this sort of thing happening, but they fail to notice that these were unusual miracles. This wasn't the norm.

And I just don't believe for a moment that. They're doing that today. Benny Hinn, of course, he's got a whole coat, not just a handkerchief or an apron.

And he's probably got several coats. He I don't think he wears the same one all the time, but just swinging that thing around and everybody's. You know, I have no apprehension about mocking that, because to

me, that is a mockery itself.

So, but in Paul's case, God was working extraordinarily. And so the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them. Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcist took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits.

Now, of course, the the ancient world and the pagan world today, there's a lot of demonic activity still as there was back then. And a lot of people, you know, harassed and possessed by demons. And so some of the Jews, they would you know, they sort of had a business going of.

Delivering people from the demonic and they had all sorts of methods and things by which they would, you know, try to free a person from demonic activity here, it seems that they had a family business going and. They were itinerant Jewish exorcist. So they took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits saying, we exercise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.

Also, there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest who did so. And now listen to this. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus, I know and Paul, I know.

But who are you? Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them and prevailed against them so that they fled out of the house naked and wounded. You know, you kind of wish those things would happen today. But I like the response of the demons.

This is one thing the devil said that I do like. Jesus, I know and Paul, I know. But who are you? And isn't it significant? Of course, they knew Jesus.

But to me, what an amazing thing, Paul, I know. Oh, they knew Paul, all right. He was the one that was bringing down their empire and they knew him and they had their eye on him and they were targeting him.

And so it is today for everyone who knows Jesus and loves Jesus and is trying their best to serve him and advance his kingdom. The devil knows you and he's got his sights on you, but don't be worried about that because Jesus knows you, too, and he's got his protection over you. We can thank God for that.

And so this, listen to this, this became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus. So, man, this word of this spread and fear fell on them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified and many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. 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.

So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. This is Luke's brief description of just a mighty outpouring of the spirit of God. This this would be like what you would read in the writings of somebody like Jonathan Edwards or Charles and John Wesley or George Whitfield.

But they, of course, went into much more detail about the mighty workings of God during those times of great awakening and revival. This is the same thing that was going on in Ephesus. Luke just, you know, just covers it much more briefly.

But notice what's happening as the people are are believing this great conviction of sin and they're confessing and they're telling their deeds and they're turning away from their sin. They're bringing their magic books and all of these things, and they're just, you know, burning it right there. That's when you

know something's really happening.

We know something's really happening in our lives when we're moved to the point of turning away from our sin, of clearing out the junk, of saying, you know what? I'm not going to be involved in this kind of stuff anymore. And you can know you're getting serious about God when you start cleaning house. And I think a lot of Christians today need to really clean house.

We've allowed so many things to come into our lives. And we just sort of justify it by, well, you know, it's everybody does it, it's just part of life, it's part of the culture, it's part of, you know, and and yet we're contaminating ourselves instead of disconnecting from these things. We're, you know, we're allowing things to come back and and infiltrate our lives and infiltrate our homes and bring poison.

You know, I am tempted at times, Sheryl and I, we don't have television coming into the house. We have a TV that we just, you know, do videos and DVDs on and that sort of thing. But we just don't bring anything in from the outside.

And there are times when I'm tempted to do it. There are times when, you know, during the war, especially, man, I want to see the news. I want to know what's going on or times when, you know, sporting events are going on or something.

I get these. Oh, man, I just would like to do that. But then, you know, we sit down and we weigh the whole thing out and realize it's not worth it.

It's not worth it to know what's going on in the news. I can read the paper or I can go on the Internet, but to pipe this garbage into my home and I'm not worried about me. I'm not going to sit down and watch it, but my kids will, because that's what kids do.

I mean, you come in, you flick on the TV and you sit in front of it and you're not conscious of all of the things that are going on. And they might not even pick up on a lot of the stuff, but it's getting instilled in their brains. And nowadays, I mean, a lot of it is just so blatant.

It's so in your face, it's so perverse. I mean, have you noticed that it's just there's no shame. And the people in the industry, they're they're doing their best to impose.

You know, they're always ranting and raving about these Christian people trying to impose their values on people. Well, that's all they do. They exist to impose their values on us.

And sadly, we let them most of the time. And we need to be wiser, we need to take a stand, and these people were serious, they got serious and they came and they brought everything, they just said, forget it, this stuff, we don't want to have part of this anymore. And it was quite a significant amount of stuff that valued 50000 pieces of silver.

But the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. And so that's what we want to see the word of the Lord growing mightily and prevailing, prevailing in our culture, prevailing in our communities. And I believe that that starts with just that kind of commitment.

A genuine, just Lord, I'm giving you all and then Lord, fill me with your spirit, I want to be empowered by you, I want to be active in the body of Christ, I don't want to be a bench warmer, I don't want to be sitting there watching everybody else serve you. I want to be part of the game and just asking God for that

empowering and then receiving that from him and going. Full steam ahead with the Lord, that's where we all need to be today because time is running out, things aren't getting better, are they? They're getting worse by the day.

And I believe that we hold the key to any change that's going to take place if there is going to be any change. And God only knows it's not going to come unless it comes through the influence of the church. And so God help us to be that influence.

We'll leave off there and we'll pick up in verse 21. As we continue to follow the activity of the Apostle Paul and the great and exciting things that were happening at that time, Lord, we thank you for your word. And Lord, we thank you for this wonderful story that is full of great instruction for us.

Many lessons continue to teach us through these things. And Lord, tonight, perhaps there are some of us here who need to confess certain deeds. Perhaps there are some here that need to bring things to be thrown on the fire and consumed.

Perhaps there are some that need to be filled with the Holy Spirit in a fresh way. Lord, we thank you that by your spirit, you're here working in our hearts and so have your way. We pray tonight.

We bless you, Lord. We thank you that you're coming again. And Lord, as we look around the world we live in, as we see the incredible tension in the Middle East.

As we see the rising up of Europe, as we see the moral decline all around us. Lord, all these things tell us one thing, and that is that it won't be long. And so help us, Lord, to realize that and help us to work while we have the opportunity to serve you while it is day.

We know the night's coming when no man can work. May we work while it is day. In Jesus name, Amen.

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