

67. The Lord Deals with False Teachers

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children become godly reproducing Christians. We see that Paul did three things to help those who became Christians in Ephesus to become reproducing Christians. He taught them the Word of God and discussed their questions during the hottest part of the day in the school of Tyrannus. Then, Paul took those that he had taught with him and showed them how to minister to people in their homes throughout the city of Ephesus. Paul showed them by his own example how to develop godly character. At the same time, he showed them how to develop ministry skills as he took them from house to house

God chose to do unusual miracles by Paul while he was in Ephesus. Acts 19:11-12 says, “Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, 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.” Here, we see that people were cured of diseases when Paul laid his hands on people. However, God also chose to heal people of these diseases in a very unusual way. God chose to use handkerchiefs and aprons that Paul had touched and had been taken by others to people with diseases to heal those diseases and to cause the evil spirits (demons) to leave those who were demon possessed.

Acts 5:12 says, “And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch.” God verified the message of the apostles about the resurrection of Christ through signs and wonders. Hebrews 2:3-4 says, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?” The apostles had been able to do many signs and wonders in the city of Jerusalem.

Peter was the leader of the apostles to the Jews and Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. Acts 5:14-15 says, “And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid *them* on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them.” In Acts 5, God chose to do unusual miracles among the Jews through Peter. Here, in Acts 19, we see God chose to do unusual miracles among the Gentiles through Paul. God chose to do these unusual miracles among both the Jews and the Gentiles by apostles to prove that the Gospel was for all people.

However, at the same time, God also chose to expose those who were false teachers. Acts 19:13-16 says, “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.’ Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. 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 that house naked and wounded.” Here, we see that certain Jews traveled from place to place and claimed that they could cast out evil spirits or demons.

There were seven sons of a Jewish priest named Sceva who said that they had this power to cast out demons. As a result, we see what happened when they went to cast a demon out of a man that was actually demon possessed. Since these men were false teachers, Jesus was not going to give them the opportunity to use His name for their own purposes. When the seven men commanded the demon to come out of the man in the name of Jesus that Paul preaches, the evil spirit answered them through the mouth of the man that was possessed by the evil spirit. The evil spirit told them, “Jesus I know and Paul I know, but who are you.” As a result, the evil spirit made it clear that these men were not followers of Christ.

In fact, the evil spirit gave the man in whom the demon was living great power. Then, the demon-possessed man leaped on these seven brothers. As a result, one man overpowered the seven brothers. Here, we see that demons do have great power. That is why it is important for true Christians to remember that 1 John 4:4 promises, “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” Because we have the Holy Spirit in our lives, we do not need to fear those who are demon possessed. Since these seven men were false teachers, the demon-possessed man had power over them. In fact, he was able to fight against all seven and defeat all of them. He tore their clothes from them and injured them. They quickly ran from the house naked and wounded, because of what the demon-possessed man was able to do to them. God chose to make it very clear to all that these men were false teachers.

This event had a great impact on many people in the city of Ephesus. Acts 19:17-20 says, “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. 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.” The news of the thing that had happened to these seven brothers quickly spread among the people of Ephesus. Both the Jews and the Greeks quickly began talking about this event that had happened to the seven men.

However, the people did more than just talk about what happened to the seven men. God caused fear to fall on all of the people. The word translated “fear” means *fear, dread or terror*. This word is used in Hebrews 2:14-15 where we read, “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Hebrews points out that people are held in slavery by their fear of death. Here, in Acts, the people were filled with fear as they saw what the demon-possessed man did to the seven sons of Sceva. In 1 John 4:18-19, we see that the love of Christ is what defeats such fear. Those verses say, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us.” This fear caused the name of the Lord to be magnified in the city of Ephesus.

We see that this event also had a great impact on many of the new Christians in that city. This caused many who believed to come and confess their deeds. James 5:16 says, “Confess your

trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” Suddenly, the new believers realized the need to get rid of secret sins that were present in their lives. They came and confessed those sins and prayed for one another. As a result, this one event caused many Christians to really examine their own lives and led to a real desire to live godly lives that would not be hindered by secret sins.

In the city of Ephesus, there were many who had practiced magic. As people had become Christians, they had kept the books that told how to perform secret magical spells. The seven sons of Sceva were trying to practice such magic when the man overcame them and they fled wounded and naked. Suddenly, the Christians realized that the spells in such books were actually a part of demonic activity. This caused the Christians who had such books to realize that they needed to get rid of these books. As a result, many people who had such books brought them to a public place and burned them. They wanted to make sure that they were not tempted to use the books again.

Before burning these books, the people totaled up the value of the books that were going to be burned. They found that the total value of the books was fifty thousand pieces of silver. A piece of silver was a day’s wage for a worker. As a result, we can see that the practice of witchcraft through the practice of casting magic spells was a very common practice in the city of Ephesus. People had spent large amounts of money to buy these books. Now, they realized that such activity depended on demons and they did not want the magical books any longer.

Here, we see that the people wanted to separate themselves from the sinful practices that accompanied demonic activity. We see the results of this choice. We see that the Word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” The power of the Word of God caused the people to examine their hearts. The people wanted the Lord to transform their lives so that they could enjoy the liberty that we have in Christ. Galatians 5:1 says, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” The new Christians realized that they did not want to be burdened with a yoke of slavery.

We also want to encourage our physical and spiritual children to ask the Lord to guide them and show them the things in their lives that they need to ask the Lord to give them the strength to change. When it is the Lord that is changing them, their lives will be truly transformed from within. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to be guided by the Lord.