

Acts 19A

- Last week Paul had reached Ephesus and came upon men who had not believed in the true Gospel
 - He baptizes them after explaining the true Gospel to them,
 - And as a result, they receive the Holy Spirit, giving evidence of the indwelling with speaking in tongues and other supernatural displays
 - I explained last week that this was a fourth example of such displays, which stood apart from the first three in the book of Acts
 - The first three had come as a result of the Gospel reaching the three distinct groups of people God intended to reach: Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles
 - It was made necessary I explained because the men had thought themselves believers already, so the signs were necessary to confirm that Paul's Gospel was the true Gospel
 - But today I want to show you a second reason why God wanted to show Himself to the people in this city
 - In fact, God demonstrates His power in even greater ways through Paul's ministry in Ephesus

[Acts 19:8](#) And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.

[Acts 19:9](#) But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.

[Acts 19:10](#) This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

- Jumping back into the middle of Luke's narrative, Paul has begun his ministry to the city of Ephesus
 - He begins like usual, in the synagogue
 - Reasoning and persuading Jews
 - In Ephesus, Paul is able to stay in the synagogue for three months before things start to go wrong

- This is a very long time to preach the Gospel each week, and we can assume that at least some converts have been made
- But inevitably, the hardening of the Jews that Paul himself describes in Romans makes itself evident
 - Some were becoming hardened and disobedient (to the Gospel)
 - They spoke evil of the Gospel and specifically of Jesus (i.e., the “way, the truth and the light”)
- As he has done before, Paul withdraws the moment someone begins to blaspheme the Lord
 - This seems to be the dividing line for Paul
 - He would remain in the synagogue until the name of Jesus was blaspheme
 - Then he took that as his cue to leave
- We could do worse than to have a similar standard for determining our limits in evangelism
 - If our audience listens and even debates the points of the Gospel, then we should remain engaged
 - If our audience speaks evil or blasphemes the name of Jesus, we do not associate with them but move on instead
 - I wouldn’t consider this an absolute rule with no exceptions
 - But on the other hand, I would rarely depart from it
 - Jesus Himself cautioned against throwing pearls before swine only to allow them to trample them in the mud
 - That analogy is referring to just such a moment as the one Paul is facing
- Paul lands in the school of Tyrannus
 - Paul needed a place to meet
 - And the school became a convenient and available place

- Isn't it interesting that this practice continues today in many places
 - Thousands of small and even large churches are meeting each weekend in empty school buildings
 - This practice of using other facilities was the norm for the church for at least several centuries
 - Only after the church and state were combined in the fourth century did permanent buildings become commonplace
 - And this change brought many other troubles for the church
- Interesting, one early manuscript of Acts adds that the meetings took place between 11:00 am and 4:00 pm,
 - This time coincided with the customary break from work during the heat of the day
 - If this addition is accurate, then it tells us something about the dedication of those who followed Paul's teaching during his years in Ephesus
 - While their countrymen were enjoying a siesta in the heat of the day, Ephesus Christians were sacrificing their resting time to hear Paul teach in a hot building
 - This may seem like a small thing, and perhaps it is, but it teaches a general principle for discipleship that remains true today
 - We do not grow in our faith and walk without sound teaching in the Bible
 - Studying God's word is the means to growing in all aspects of our faith, whether in love, obedience, diligence, or personal holiness
 - And study takes time...in my experience, it takes significant time if we expect to really grow in our understanding of the Lord we serve
 - And that time has to come from somewhere
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- If we say we want to grow in the Lord, then we must ask ourselves what are we willing to give up to obtain that growth
 - Where do we make sacrifices in our schedule?
 - If we are unwilling to give anything up, then we shouldn't be surprised when we never seem to have enough time to pursue spiritual matters
 - And we should expect our progress to stall
- Luke says Paul taught in Ephesus for two more years
 - Later in chapter 20, Paul will say he spent three years in Ephesus
 - Suggesting that he has already been in the city one year by the point he starts using the school
 - Luke says the effect of this time was that the word of God reached all who lived in Asia, both Jew and Greek
 - What does Luke mean by that statement?
 - Is he simply speaking in exaggeration to emphasize that Paul preached boldly in Ephesus (which was located in Asia)
 - Or did he mean it literally, that somehow Paul's preaching in Ephesus impacted the entire region of Asia Minor
 - The answer is the latter
 - Paul's ministry in Ephesus essentially reached the entire region of Asia Minor
 - Most Christians lack a full appreciation for how important Paul's ministry in Ephesus was to the spread of the Gospel in Asia
 - From the work Paul did in this school, Christians were sent out to cities throughout the region
 - And many of them founded churches of their own
 - From the students of Tyrannus, the churches of Colesse, Laodicea, and Hieropolis were started

- There is also reason to believe based on Luke's statement that the churches in Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis and Philadelphia also started as a result of Paul's time in Ephesus
- Additionally, the city hosted not only Paul but later saw Timothy and the Apostle John serve the city in ministry
 - The church in this city received not less than seven New Testament letters, including the one that bears its name
- Ephesus was also a source of important New Testament writing
 - Paul wrote all three of his letters to Corinth while in this city
 - He traveled on at least two occasions to visit Corinth while living in Ephesus
 - The church in Ephesus was the largest in the world in its day
 - And it eventually died when Jesus removed its lampstand in penalty for them losing their first love
- It's hard to overstate how important the city was to the spread of the Gospel in the first century
 - But consider the city itself again
 - It was the center of pagan worship in the world
 - It was a center for black magic and sorcery
 - And it was overrun with debauchery and materialism
 - And God chose this location to be the center of his biggest explosion of the Gospel after Pentecost itself
 - In fact, there parallels to the time of Pentecost are remarkable
 - First, notice that Paul's experience in this city begin with a gathering of twelve men who have received the baptism of John but are awaiting the baptism of the Holy Spirit
 - In the time before Pentecost, we had the twelve apostles waiting in Jerusalem for the arrival of the Holy Spirit

- Then the Apostle appointed to the Jews preaches on the truth of the Gospel, and the Holy Spirit arrives for all who believe, followed by outward demonstrations of the Spirit
 - When the Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul, arrives in Ephesus and preaches the Gospel, the Holy Spirit arrives as does the speaking in tongues
- And as Jerusalem became the center of the Jewish church, sending out men like Philip to bring the Gospel to the surrounding regions
 - And Ephesus became the center for the Gentile church, sending out many Christians to found churches in Asia Minor
- The parallels don't stop there...look at what follows

[Acts 19:11](#) ¶ God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, [Acts 19:12](#) so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out.

- Luke records that Paul was performing miracles as he preached in the city
 - And the miracles take an extraordinary form
 - Paul's garments are capable of delivering God's power indirectly
 - They produce healing and remove evil spirits
 - Luke makes clear from the outset that the source of all these things was God Himself
 - He was choosing to work through these methods
 - We haven't seen this before in Paul's ministry, so it suggests that God is working in a special way here
 - This offers another parallel to the early time in Jerusalem after Pentecost
 - Remember Luke's earlier report on Peter's ministry in that city?

[Acts 5:14](#) And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number,
[Acts 5:15](#) to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any one of them.
[Acts 5:16](#) Also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all being healed.

- God seems to have marked Ephesus for an experience similar to the one He presented in Jerusalem
 - In a sense, Jew is to Gentile as Peter is to Paul as Jerusalem is to Ephesus
 - And if so, then it reinforces why the demonstrations of the Spirit were made so commonplace in this city
 - God is communicating through these signs that something new and true has arrived for the world in Ephesus
- The power God was demonstrating had a side effect within the this culture obsessed with the occult

[Acts 19:13](#) But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches."

[Acts 19:14](#) Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this.

[Acts 19:15](#) And the evil spirit answered and said to them, "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?"

[Acts 19:16](#) And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

- Luke introduces a group of Jews who traveled from place to place
 - The reference to traveling Jews indicates they were gypsies, traveling fortunetellers
 - They practice sorcery in disobedience to the Mosaic Law
 - The term exorcist comes from a Greek word that literally means to cast a spell

- This seems to be another parallel to the early experiences within the Jewish church centered in Jerusalem
 - You remember in Acts 8 about the Samaritan Simon who tried to purchase the power of the Holy Spirit for his magic show
 - Now again we have a group of Jewish magicians who conclude that Paul's power was a kind of magic they could imitate if they cast a spell using similar words
 - They tried to repeat Paul's work by using his name and the name of Jesus in their spells
- Just as Simon revealed his unbelieving heart in his attempt to buy something that only comes by faith
 - These men likewise throw the name of Jesus around hoping for an effect
 - Today the same thing happens
 - Men use the name of Jesus or the Holy Spirit to claim power and fool many people
- In v.14 Luke mentions another group doing much the same thing
 - A man who has taken for himself the title of high priest, but now lived in Ephesus
 - Perhaps he is here instead of in Jerusalem because he and his son practice sorcery
 - He would have been prevented from practicing such things in Jerusalem
 - We know he was never a true high priest because those names are recorded in Jewish writings, and this man was not among them
 - Now that they have seen Paul at work, they come to the same conclusion as the gypsies
 - They try their hand at casting out demons with Paul's words
 - Unsurprisingly, it doesn't work but it ends in a surprising way
 - The demon answers them, speaking through the man's voice they inhabit

- First, they say they know or recognize Jesus
 - In Greek, the word for know is ginosko, which means to know through experience
 - The demon had personal knowledge of Jesus, as all demons do
 - The demonic realm knew Jesus before we did, and yet they still rebelled against Him
 - And then in speaking about Paul, the demon says he knows again
 - This time the Greek word changes to epistamai, which means to understand through knowledge
- The demon was acquainted with Jesus and the demon had heard about Paul
 - These are sobering realities, especially for any Christian who steps out in ministry
 - The demon realm may eventually be able to say the same thing about us...they have heard about us
 - And this realization shouldn't cause us to hesitate in serving the Lord, but we should remain on the look out for the enemy's schemes, as Peter warns
- Finally, the demon concludes that he doesn't know them and precedes to whup 'em, as we say in Texas
 - These men had no power of their own, and their attempts to invoke the names of Jesus and Paul were empty and useless
 - So they find themselves at the mercy of the demon, who has much greater power than they
- In the way the demon responds, we are left with the impression that the demon would have reacted differently had he known these men
 - For example, had it been Paul speaking, the demon would have known who he was dealing with
 - In fact, we know Paul was casting out demons regularly, so it's reasonable to assume the demon would have had reason to avoid Paul entirely

- But because these men were unknown to the demon, the demon has no fear and no hesitation to attack them
 - This is the other side of the coin for us as Christians
 - When we step out in ministry, we may become a target because the demons know about us
 - But if we DON'T step out in service to Christ, then the demon realm will have no reason to fear us
 - Of course, we are never without some measure of power, having the Holy Spirit in us,
 - But we cannot expect to conjure the Spirit up like a genie when we need Him in a time of trial
 - He doesn't respond to our orders or desires
 - We must be practiced in reliance upon the Spirit if we expect to see the Lord working through us to defeat the enemy
- So our choice is to step out in faith and attract the attention of the demon realm
 - Or stay on the sidelines in our Christian walk and remain unknown the demons
- But as we attract attention, the Lord delights to show His power through us to defeat these attacks or give us the strength to go through them
 - But when we face trials as an undercover soldier for Christ, we are taking even greater risks and the danger is even greater
 - Because of the obscurity of our Christian witness, we give the demons nothing to fear

[Acts 19:17](#) This became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified.

[Acts 19:18](#) Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices.

[Acts 19:19](#) And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.

[Acts 19:20](#) So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.

- God uses this event to profit the church in Ephesus
 - Fear of the Lord is the first result followed by the name of Jesus being magnified
 - Furthermore, many accept Christ and confess their sins
 - Many repudiate the occult and burn their magic books
 - The fact that so many had these books shows how many people were actively practicing sorcery in this church
 - We can see God's wisdom in the way He turns this situation to the church's benefit
 - Many in the church as well as the unbelievers have witnessed or heard about this event and it caused them to realize that faith in Christ was the true source of power
 - By the way, the value of these books as Luke describes it would be hard to appreciate
 - Fifty thousand drachmas represents about 137 years of average wages in that day
 - Take your annual salary today and multiply by 137 to get an equivalent value
 - Millions of dollars
 - Even at minimum wage, we're talking about over \$2M
 - Have you seen believers willing to give up so much of what the world offers to please the Lord in obedience?
 - Finally, Luke adds his key marker phrase
 - The word of the Lord multiplied and prevailed
 - This is the natural result from obedience to the Gospel
- Now the narrative moves away from Ephesus and into the last major section of Luke's book
 - In this last and longest part, Paul sets his sites on making his way to Rome

[Acts 19:21](#) ¶ Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."

[Acts 19:22](#) And having sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

- Paul perceives new direction from the Spirit
 - Specifically, Paul intends to travel through Macedonia and through Achaia confirming the churches he planted in those places in his previous trip
 - Eventually, he intends to make his way to Jerusalem
 - Paul carried donations from the Gentile churches for the poor Jerusalem church, and he wanted to deliver the money personally
 - Ultimately, Paul's intent was to make his way to visit Rome, the most notable church to never have seen from Paul
 - Remember, we said at the beginning of this study that Luke's narrative moves outward from Jerusalem and eventually reaches Rome
 - Luke is now beginning that final push in describing how Paul reaches that great city
 - Ironically, when Paul set this trip in motion, he tried to make adjustments to these original plans
 - According to things Paul says in 1 & 2 Cor, he intended to go across the Aegean Sea and see Corinth first
 - Then Paul expected to wind his way northeast through Macedonia
 - Eventually, turning East and going back to Asia Minor and on to Jerusalem
 - Instead, through a series of events Paul follows the exact plan he outlines here: Macedonia first, followed by Corinth
 - Eventually Paul reverses course and goes back the way he came then onto Jerusalem and finally Rome

- Before setting out, though, Paul sends Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia and then stays in Ephesus a little longer