

DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

Verses & Notes February 28, 2007

Acts 19:8-20

- 8: And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, arguing and pleading about the kingdom of God;
- 9: but when some were stubborn and disbelieved, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them, taking the disciples with him, and argued daily in the hall of Tyran'nus.
- 10: This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.
- 11: And God did extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul,
- 12: so that handkerchiefs or aprons were carried away from his body to the sick, and diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them.
- 13: Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to pronounce the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches."
- 14: Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this.
- 15: But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?"
- 16: And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, mastered all of them, and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.
- 17: And this became known to all residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks; and fear fell upon them all; and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled.
- 18: Many also of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices.
- 19: And a number of those who practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all; and they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver.
- 20: So the word of the Lord grew and prevailed mightily.

Introduction:

- It says, in the passage in Acts that we will study today, that the result of St. Paul's preaching and miracles was that "all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks," and that "the word of the Lord grew and prevailed mightily." This, however, did not come about without great resistance. The enemy never likes it when anyone, by God's grace, responds and believes in the Gospel, and you and I can count on the spiritual battle whenever we chose to follow God more closely. This is what we'll be discussing today on **Deep In Scripture**.

- **Housekeeping: #s & emails; website;**
- **Preparing for our study of Ephesians:**
 - Looking at the background in the book of Acts to understand why Paul wrote this letter to the believers in and around Ephesus.
 - For the last few weeks, we've looked briefly at how Acts chapters 18-19 illustrate the

stages of spiritual formation that these first Ephesian Christians went through, and considered how this is also true in our own lives.

I: (Acts 19:23-29, 33-35) The Ephesians began as pagans

- *Like these pagans, many of us have spiritual beginnings that were dramatically different or even antagonistic to our Christian faith.*

II: (Acts 18:18-21) They received some seeds from Paul's first visit

- *In our own lives, occasional seeds are planted that do not initially take root.*

III: (Acts 18:24-28) They then received accurate but inadequate teaching from Apollos

- *Likewise, some of us have received incomplete or even inaccurate formation in our Christian faith;*

IV: (Acts 19:1-7) Their faith was corrected by St. Paul

- *Like them, many Christians are blind to their inadequate, incomplete understanding of the faith...*
- *By grace, the Ephesians listened, responded, & were baptized.*
- *Likewise, many today are listening, responded, & coming home.*

- **Today & next week, in Acts 19, we'll look how the friends, neighbors, & families of these new converts responded; we'll examine the Spiritual battle.**

BREAK

8: And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, arguing and pleading about the kingdom of God;

Paul accepted their previous invitation; The Way not intending to be a separate sect!

- *Luke describes Paul's preaching here not as "the Gospel" but "about the Kingdom of God."*
 - *This is equivalent: therefore, more than a mere message of truth about Jesus, but an entire new life, communion, relationship with God = sonship*
 - *Acts 1:3-6, this was Jesus' emphasis, but they needed HS to understand!*
 - *Acts 14:21-23, this was Paul's practice...*

*"When they had **preached the gospel** to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Ico'nium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to **continue in the faith**, and saying that through many tribulations we must **enter the kingdom of God**. And when they had appointed **elders** [presbyters] for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they believed."*

9: but when some were stubborn and disbelieved, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them, taking the disciples with him, and argued daily in the hall of Tyran'nus.

- *Some responded to grace & became disciples; some resisted & disbelieved;*
- *"The Way" was what this new understanding of "the way to live" their Jewish faith was called; before his conversion, Paul [Saul] had persecuted "the Way;"*
- *Paul's normal strategy, following Jesus' model: he did not back down & compromise;*
 - *Many over the centuries have imitated Paul when they shouldn't have!*
 - *Paul had revelation from Jesus, confirmed by Apostles! AUTHORITY!*

- *Too many have caused schism based on their own authority & feelings!*

**10: This continued for two years,
so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord,
both Jews and Greeks.**

- *This verse summarizes an astounding 2 years of missionary preaching! (AD 54-57)*
 - *"All residents of Asia—Jews & Greeks—heard the word of the Lord"*
 - *Important: does not say they all "believed"!*
- *Following his normal practice as witnessed elsewhere, Paul would have been planting churches and appointing presbyters...to whom he would later write letters!*

**11: And God did extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul,
12: so that handkerchiefs or aprons
were carried away from his body to the sick,
and diseases left them
and the evil spirits came out of them.**

- *This illustrates what St. Paul later admits: it wasn't his eloquent preaching, but the power of God! 1 Cor 2:1-5,*
"When I came to you, brethren, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in much fear and trembling; and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God."
- *So what do we make of these miracles from Paul's handkerchiefs & aprons?!*
 - *1st: This is a Scriptural description of what happened, therefore, rd true!*
 - *2nd: not magic or superstition, though some took it that way!*
 - *3rd: a foundation for the power of sacramentals and relics!*
 - *Emphasizes the power of God working through the intercession of the Saint; not some inherent power in the object itself!*
 - *Confirmation of the beginning of a development that is uniquely Catholic; Also, Acts 5:14-15,*
"And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women, so that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and pallets, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them."

**13: Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists
undertook to pronounce the name of the Lord Jesus
over those who had evil spirits,
saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches."**

14: Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this.

- *Exorcism & magic was a regular part of pagan & Jewish itinerant preaching, the pagan especially calling on the name of whatever gods seemed to work, and often this was for financial gain.*
- *Jesus had encountered this: Luke 11:19, "And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore, they shall be your judges."*
- *This confirms that these miracles were so convincing, they wanted a part of the action!*

**15: But the evil spirit answered them,
"Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?"**

**16: And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them,
mastered all of them, and overpowered them,
so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.**

**17: And this became known to all residents of Ephesus,
both Jews and Greeks;
and fear fell upon them all;
and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled.**

- *A comical event, which Luke meant for us to take seriously!*
- *God used this to open hearts for the Gospel!*
- *However, this emphasizes why the Church has always had strict rules & rites for exorcism!*

**18: Many also of those who were now believers came,
confessing and divulging their practices.**

**19: And a number of those who practiced magic arts
brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all;
and they counted the value of them**

and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver.

20: So the word of the Lord grew and prevailed mightily.

- *This was so convincing that some of these itinerant pagan & Jewish preachers believed and abandoned their previous livelihood, even at great cost!*
- *Even implies that some who were already believers had continued these practices!*
- *True conversion to Jesus Christ always requires this!*
- *This sacrifice is necessary for the spread of the Kingdom of God.*

BREAK

- These verses have much to say to the lives of modern Christians!
- My normal "custom" of taking my sermons / bible studies first before the world;
- Like these early Ephesian / Asian Christians, we live our faith in the midst of the spiritual battle: Paul will remind them of this in his letter to them, *Eph 6:10-13*,
"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

Like these Ephesians,

- if by God's grace, we have responded & believed & received the graces of baptism, which has been the norm for accepting Jesus Christ from the very beginning,
- then we can expect to encounter resistance from "the world, the flesh, and the devil."
 - **The world:** friends, family, coworkers, neighbors, will prove "stubborn & disbelieve," will ridicule and resist us & the truth of the kingdom of God;
 - Jesus said, "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven."
 - **The flesh:** our own inner voices, our self-centered desires, our habits, our laziness will all fight against the sacrifices Jesus calls us to make;
 - **The devil:** We have an adversary who does not want us to follow Jesus: As St. Peter writes in 1 Peter 5:8-11,
"Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, and strengthen you. To him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen."