

God's Power Displayed - The GOSPEL!

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Date: 10 January 2016

Preacher: Jim Masters

[0:00] You take your Bibles, please, and go to the book of Acts, chapter 19. Acts, chapter 19.

If you're visiting with us, you can pull out that Bible in the chair in front of you. That black Bible. Go towards the back and find page 109.

Page 109. You'll find Acts 19. We're going to study verses 8 through 20 this morning. Acts 19, 8 through 20.

Acts 19, 8 through 20. I'll read our passage and then we'll begin our study. And Paul entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading about the kingdom of God.

And when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the way before the multitude, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.

[1:25] And this took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. And God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, 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.

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.

And seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. And the evil spirit answered and said to them, I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?

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 the house naked and wounded. And 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. Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices, and many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all.

[2:43] And they counted up the price of them and found it 50,000 pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing. It was titled, Why North Korea Can't Be Dismissed as a Wannabe Nuclear Power.

It's not yet clear exactly what kind of nuclear device exploded on Wednesday, this past Wednesday, but even if it wasn't what North Korea claims it to be, hydrogen bomb, it could be a wake-up call.

The article continues, says, North Korea's Wednesday nuclear test, whatever the power or nature of the device involved, is but the latest reminder that the secretive regime continues to defy international attempts to curtail its atomic ambitions.

And should not be dismissed as a wannabe nuke state that can't quite get the hang of difficult nuclear and missile technology. The article continues on.

Power. Power. Power. Countries like power. People like power.

[4:10] People love power. Once in that position, a country or a person or a group of persons can wield their power to possibly put the weak under their thumb.

Many people, if you ask anybody just off the street, if they talk to them about having power, they're going to link that automatically to evil.

If you have great power, you're going to have great evil. But that can't always be the case. You can't always link great power with great evil.

You can't always link great power with great evil. What if power and an absolutely perfect being is shown to benefit other people?

Well, I think we believe that as Christians, don't we? We believe in an all-powerful God. in His absolute power, He wields His power to benefit people.

[5 : 23] And today, what we will see in the book of Acts, just do it, let's just be who we are, let God use us to fulfill His mission. We see the connection here with the fact that God's transforming prevailing power in the proclaimed gospel.

When the gospel is proclaimed, God is proclaiming His power. There is great power in the gospel. Transforming, prevailing power.

Life-altering, triumphant power. That's the kind of power that we have when the gospel is proclaimed. God's transforming, prevailing power in the proclaimed gospel.

I'll put it in a statement for you. When God's gospel is faithfully proclaimed, it will, according to His sovereign power, transform lives and always prevail.

Always. When God's power is faithfully proclaimed by His people, it will, according to His sovereign power, transform lives and always prevail.

[6 : 40] Today, the gospel of Jesus Christ, His life, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His lordship, the call to repent and put your trust in Jesus alone.

That gospel, it shows itself to transform lives and always triumph according to God's sovereign power when it's proclaimed.

When God's people proclaim that power. God is a powerful God. So now, in the world today, we see, like, the beauty, Harry and I were just talking about a few moments ago, the beauty of the snow, right, that we had just a couple days ago.

Wasn't that beautiful? I mean, you see God's power displayed. You see God's power displayed in the weather. You see God's power displayed in the stars. God's power displayed in the sun. God's power displayed in nature.

But let me ask you a question. How do we see God's power primarily displayed in the world today? In the gospel. In the gospel. That's how He displays His power, the gospel.

[7 : 49] And when it's proclaimed. And that's what we're going to see here in our text. And I begin with this first point, number one. The gospel is proclaimed.

Verses 8 through 10. Our call is to proclaim God's gospel. Our call is to proclaim God's gospel. Paul ends up in Ephesus.

He comes to Ephesus. We saw that last week. Comes in. He deals with these disciples from John. And as his custom, he entered the synagogue. Notice he says, Luke writes that he continues speaking out boldly for three months.

Reasoning and persuading about the kingdom of God. For three months he's doing this. And when it talks about God's kingdom, it's another way to describe Paul proving that Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus is the rightful king. God's powerful rule is linked to Jesus' person and work on the cross for sinners. That's what it means when it's talking about the kingdom of God.

[9 : 03] Another way to describe the gospel. And Jesus' resurrection sealed that truth that he would be the judge of the living and the dead. He is the Lord. It was God's intention to bring his kingdom upon the earth through Adam, but then the fall happened.

So God promised that one would come to bring this great powerful kingdom and who is that? The Lord Jesus Christ. So he's preaching about the kingdom. He's preaching about the promise has come to pass.

Jesus is here. He is the king. He's the Messiah. He's the Lord. He's here. That's the gospel. Notice how the audience responded.

The response, verse 9, some were becoming hardened, disobedient. Or maybe they hardened themselves or the way you can take that verb. They disobeyed the truth.

How did they show their hardness? How did they show their disobedience to the truth? They spoke evil of the way before the multitude. They spoke evil of the way.

[10 : 08] That's another way to describe the faith. Differentiating Jewish beliefs and Christianity. They completely rejected the message of the gospel. You proclaim the gospel.

You give someone the gospel. And they go, pfft. That's a bunch of hogwash. What is that? You're a freaking nutcase.

Somebody called us that on Friday. Actually, they used the word freaking though. Yeah. Look, we may spend countless time with people only to find them reject God's gospel truth.

You're giving someone the gospel and giving someone the gospel and giving someone the gospel. But they reject God's truth. I don't think we totally blow them off necessarily. but we most likely at some point minister to the fat people. You know the fat people are, right? Faithful, available, teachable.

[11:17] Those are the people you minister to. That's exactly what Paul does. He withdrew from them and took away the disciples reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. You have to minister to the fat people, to the faithful, available, teachable people.

People who are faithful, people who make themselves available, and people who are teachable, they want to listen. Those are the ones. So he moved on.

Opposition rose, he took him away. And he would use the school of Tyrannus to teach us as well as for evangelism. And actually we know Paul worked while he planted the church in Ephesus.

We will find that out in chapter 20. So he probably worked tirelessly in the morning and then preached in the afternoon for an entire notice. It says, this took place for two years so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

For two years he's doing this. And what's the result of his two-year ministry? Jews and Greeks all over Asia heard the word of the Lord.

[12:29] There's power. How pervasive was this power in the gospel? A ministry that impacted the entire Lucis Valley, the area of Ephesus and all the surrounding region, as a matter of fact, other churches were planted as a result of Paul's persistent, faithful, consistent proclamation of the gospel.

churches that received letters that are later recorded in the book of Revelation chapters 2 and 3. These churches were close with, some of them were close within the vicinity of Ephesus and they came about because of Paul's ministry in Ephesus.

Faithful, consistent, persistent proclamation of the gospel. And so with us, the persistent, faithful proclamation of the gospel, that's our purpose.

What's our purpose? To live and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's our purpose. What's your purpose as a Christian? To live and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That's your purpose. What am I supposed to do? What do you want to do with your life? No, not rock. Just do it. Be who you are. And really, when you think about it, it's not even, I have the phrase, just do it, but it's not even something that we do.

[13:55] The gospel is just something that we are. It's just a part of you. It's just a part of us as a church. It's simply who we are as Jesus' disciples. It's just who we are as Jesus' followers.

Just be who you are. Christian, just be who you are. You should just sweat the gospel. I know that's disgusting.

Praise the Lord, you don't smell when you sweat the gospel. If you sweat because of exercise, you do smell. And we'll make sure you're told that. But, as part of being Christians, as part of being followers of Christ, we should sweat the gospel.

It should just be something that comes out of our mouths all the time. Just be who you are. This gospel truth should just be a part of who we are as a church.

We should be shaped by the gospel. We should be influenced by the gospel. That's the thing that's essential. The gospel is proclaimed. So, when the gospel is proclaimed, number two, the gospel transforms.

[15:07] Or, God's gospel power action transforms lives. God's gospel power action transforms lives.

Here, verses 11 through 19, this section focuses upon God's powerful work through Paul. The word was being taught, and God authenticated or verified his message by his mighty power through Paul. So, what we'll see is Jesus trumps Satan. Donald Trump won't trump you.

Jesus trumps you. Jesus trumps the evil one, right? You all should be nodding your heads saying amen, yeah, right on, something. Thank you.

There goes my mom. So, we can stand firm against the devil. That's why we read Ephesians chapter 6, 10 through 18. Stand firm.

[16:11] Stand firm against the evil one. Jesus is the one who trumps the evil one. And that's what we see here. We see verse 11 through 19, Jesus trumps the evil one.

And amazing too, what we see here, it's so similar to the historical events when Jesus was walking and the miracles that he did in the gospels that's recorded about him in the gospels.

And also, the events that were recorded about Peter earlier on in the book of Acts. Remember when people would actually be healed by Peter's shadow, his shadow would walk by them, they would immediately be healed, immediately be healed, immediately be healed just by his shadow. That's what you see here with Paul. God authenticating his message. Notice how awesome his works. God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul.

How awesome, how extraordinary. Verse 12, handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out.

[17 : 23] Handkerchiefs, aprons, they touched Paul's body. They would take them and they would put it on the person and they would instantly be healed of their disease, cancer, some sickness, leprosy, it would just be gone.

And then people who were being demonized, they would lay that handkerchief or they would lay that apron on them and the demon would leave them. Friends, this is unbelievable, this power. Truly amazing is God's power. Now mind you, understand, Paul was merely God's mediator to display his power and his approval of Paul. Remember, remember who we're talking about, remember where we are.

This is Ephesus. Many gods, the Greek influence, Greek mythology, it focused so much upon magical powers.

That explains why in the circular letter that we call Ephesians, why? There's so much talk about the rulers and authorities in that book. Why? Because one of the places, Ephesus, they were so focused upon magic and upon power.

[18 : 37] But God is sovereignly more powerful and rules entirely over these rulers and authorities. There's no yin-yang here, folks.

force. There's no white power, black power. There's no light and dark side of the force. There's none of that. Sorry. Paul or God was not equal to these magical powers or these demonic forces. God stands above them all. Jesus is far, far, far more powerful. And in the magic that they would use, they would manipulate the gods or the spirits.

They would use some formula, incantation, a ritual, a spell. They would use names, repetition. They would use coercion. Not so with the one and only true God.

He sovereignly acts through His agents. But yet, you know, you think about this. Wait a second. These aprons and handkerchiefs, they're touching Paul and then they're bringing it to the people.

[19 : 51] Isn't that a form of magic though? No. For two reasons. A, it was not done with some secret potion or formula. But also, a second reason, God healed people in this way, accommodating to their beliefs to draw them near to the true truth.

To show that what Paul proclaimed concerning the Lord Jesus, that's the truth. See, all God was doing through these miracles, he was pointing to the fact that Jesus is the truth.

Jesus is the way. Jesus is the life. God was merely authenticating, verifying what Paul's message was. That Jesus has come to save sinners.

sinners. You know, it's amazing how God will limit himself in extreme, even absurd ways to communicate with absurd, sinful people.

I mean, why would the eternal Son of God take on flesh for eternity on behalf of sinners? Why would he do something absolutely absurd? And it's ridiculous. Why would he do that?

[21 : 03] Why would he waste his time with you? Why would he waste his time with me? He incarnated himself, the second person of the Trinity, the eternal Son, he incarnated himself forever to save sinners.

Why? Are you here today? You don't know the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you realize that Christianity stands above all the different religions and the beliefs of this world?

no other religion and belief has this understanding that God took on flesh and lived as a human and yet died on behalf of sinners so that he could have his arms wide open for sinners to come and he would love them.

No, no other religious system in this world is like that. come to the Lord Jesus today. Repent and put your trust in him and you will be saved.

Christian, I speak to you, speak to you, let God use you to fulfill his mission in this world, to proclaim his excellencies, to give others this news of love and grace, whereby God's arms are extended wide to all people to come and find their satisfaction in the Son.

[22:31] I mean, his arms are wide to you, aren't they? They are, Christian. So now you now do the same. You have your arms wide open to anyone to come to Jesus Christ.

You proclaim and God's gospel power will transform. Notice, as we're talking about this here, verse 11 through 12, some people want to get on this bandwagon with Paul.

Verse 13, some of the Jewish exorcists, those who cast out demons, I don't call them exorcists, because they're not exorcists.

They cast out demons. Exorcists are things done by non-Christians. So Jewish exorcists who went from place to place, they attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits, the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, I journey by Jesus whom Paul preaches.

So in other words, some thought this Jesus thing was a great trick, was a magical formula. I know, let's take this Jesus thing and let's rub it, and maybe we'll get the demon to do what we want it to do.

[23:42] That's a great idea. Sorry. So, notice the example, by the way, in verse 16, oh no, excuse me, verse 14, and seven sons of Sceva, Jewish chief priests, they were doing this.

There's an example of this. They tried to adjure the spirits from the demons by the name of Jesus whom Paul preached. Notice how this shows how syncretism was the cool thing to do in Ephesus. Syncretism, what is that? You take Jesus and you add him with everything else. Well, I'm a Buddhist Hinduistic Christian that practices Islam.

Well, that's kind of weird. Okay. That's called syncretism, folks. You add Jesus to everything else that you have. That's why they would use the phrase, in the name of Jesus, like a rabbit's foot, like a lucky charm, or some incantation.

it kind of reminds me like this movement within evangelicalism called the deliverance movement. I don't know if some of you may have heard of that. They deliver people from drugs, alcohol, etc.

[25:01] Because they thought a demon was doing that and they would pray over them and you have to say in the name of Jesus, using his name as some ritualistic spell or incantation or some magic formula.

The irony though, is that these guys, they didn't even believe in the gospel that Paul was speaking. They didn't believe in the message of the gospel. Yet they wanted to tap into its power.

They saw that the gospel truly was powerful, but they wanted to use it for their own selfish gain. Interesting. Friends, realize the gospel truly is powerful to change lives.

But one must embrace the gospel. or Jesus Christ. Not simply Adam. Christianity is one of a kind. There are no beliefs similar to Christianity. There is nothing like it. You can't just add Jesus. You turn away from everything else. Everyone else is wrong.

[26:08] I'm trusting in Jesus Christ. It's not everyone's right. It's everyone's wrong, but Jesus is right. That's a tough thing to do in our culture, isn't it?

That's not the cool thing to do. Jesus' name is only effective when used by those who truly call upon him as Savior and Lord. It's not about his name being a rabbit's foot.

It's not about knowing his name, but if one knows him, or more importantly, if one is known by him. it's not so much the question is, do you know Jesus more of a, does he know you?

Does he know you? Well, God pitted his power against this magical nonsense. Today, we don't hear so much about maybe magic, but if you know anything about Wicca, that's a religion.

Wiccans, they're witches. They use spells, they use magic. And they talk about power. But interesting, within Wicca, magic is used to glorify people, to help people, and to glorify people.

[27:28] That's why they do that. The difference though, is that God's power is used to magnify his great and glorious name. And also help people.

But the focus is to deliver us from sin. The point is to point to our true need. What's our true need? Or who is our true need? Our true need is Jesus Christ.

That's the difference between Wiccan power, spells, incantations, and God's great glorious power. That's the difference.

Jesus Christ. You know the sad, scary, almost funny part about this passage though? Is that the demon responded to these guys.

Look at verse 15. the evil spirit answered and said to them. You know, there's not a lot of times we have evil spirits answering and saying this to them. Especially this thing that he says.

[28:29] I recognize Jesus. I know Jesus. And I recognize Paul. Who the heck are you? you're not Paul.

You're definitely not Jesus. God healed and casted out demons through Paul in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ approving that Paul was his servant.

Not you clowns. Even the demon understood that it wasn't about using Jesus' name like a formula. Isn't that amazing?

Even the demon got that. it pretty much laughed at them. And notice and then it attacked. 16, the man, and the evil spirit leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them so that they fled out of the house naked and wounded.

The demon gave this man great great strength so that he was able to subdue seven men. These imposters were revealed.

[29 : 33] They were publicly humiliated. humiliated and shamed. You know what's interesting about this too? Remember the man, the garrison man that Jesus went to visit? Remember how he was screaming, he would wound himself and he would be naked?

Interesting you see this happening with these seven men. How the demon wounded them and they ran out naked. That's what the demon did.

He shamed them. as you can imagine everybody got word. Everybody is on Facebook taking a video of this event.

Oh my goodness, look at this. They got posted on Facebook. Well, Facebook wasn't around in Ephesus in those days. It was in Corinth but not in Ephesus. As you can imagine, everyone got word.

Verse 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. Great fear and awesome praise because there's great power being displayed in the gospel.

[30 : 43] People had a reverent fear of the name of Jesus. They magnified him as a source of great power. Watch out! Watch out! Don't mess with Jesus Christ.

More and more people were calling upon the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. God's transforming power of the gospel was truly displayed.

But realize, friends, as one writer says, quote, God will not act as a lackey for anyone who calls on his name. He's not our lackey. He's the sovereign God.

He will do as he sees fit. And sometimes in his sovereign power, people might not respond to the gospel. I mean, we saw that, right, in verse nine.

Some were hardened to the gospel. Some disobeyed the gospel. That's why in our phrase we have, according to his sovereign power, sometimes God does not sovereignly want those people to respond.

[31 : 48] At that time, maybe they'll respond later. We don't know. God's transforming power of the gospel is truly displayed, but he will do it according to his sovereign plan, not according to ours.

Notice the impact of the gospel in verses 18 and 19. many also who believed came confessing and disclosing their practices.

Conviction came upon them. They realized syncretism just isn't possible. You can't mix Jesus and the world.

Friendship with the world is hostility towards God. We can't be the world's friend and God's friend. You can't do it. You can't mix Jesus and other religions.

You can't be friends with the world and try to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. It just doesn't work. We can't keep one foot in the church and another in the world. Eventually the world will win.

[32 : 58] I mean remember this? You adulterous us. Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?

Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. James chapter 4 verse 4 and 5 or yes 4 and 5 it just can't happen.

So they're realizing this these Ephesian believers we can't do a syncretism type thing here. This is not going to work. So what do they do?

They confess they disclose their magical practices they turn from their past evil ways publicly expressing their repentance their change of life direction.

That's the true response of the gospel when a person is going like this and they say you know what I have to go this way. That's the response of the gospel.

[34 : 02] You know what's interesting is when we're talking about magic a vital aspect to magic is its secrecy its mystery behind the spells when they're casting a spell you know there's mystery in

their secrecy you don't tell anybody about that spell and when the spell is made public its power is rendered useless impotent see it's just the opposite of God's great power God wants to display his power publicly it's not secretive we're not hiding he doesn't do that he puts it out in the open for all to see for people to see his great power and to see his great and glorious grace so these believers they grew in their maturity in their maturity in their walk with the

Lord Jesus by renouncing these evil practices their rejection of magic was a major statement to all about how their lives had changed directions they put their repentance into action or they put feet on their words on their expression of I repent and believe they put feet on it how great is God's transforming grace how great is God's powerful transforming grace verse 19 and many of those who practice magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all they burned these magic books their sin was made public they publicly displayed their sin they put these books in a pile and they started a fire one must publicly reveal their decision to cease their friendship with the world showing

God's transforming grace in their life these Christians came to the place where they rejected anything that held them back or brought divided allegiance with Jesus Christ do you need to do that today Christian are you here and you been doing this you have one foot in the world and one foot in the church one foot in the world and one foot in your Bible is just not going to work what are you going to do you should be who you are how vast was this transformation so extensive and so vast and it says they counted up the price of them and found it 50,000 pieces of silver now if this silver refers to a denarii then this amount of money is equivalent to a single just one person working for 137 years that's a lot of dough now it's hard to determine if they're talking about denarii or we're not sure but whatever it was this is a huge sum of money being a large sum of money it shows the city's commercial commitment to magic doesn't it it shows their commitment to this type of power this type of magic and also shows how much the transforming power of the gospel affects someone's wallet things that's important

Jesus means more than money Jesus means more than money it's like the song I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold than to be a king of a vast domain one writer puts it like this quote burning the scroll was a way of repudiating what they contained and represented a greater trust in God to deliver them from trouble and supply their needs end quote the transforming power of the gospel has life implications as well as economic ramifications God's work in the heart through the gospel brings this kind of repentance brings this kind of change and not just economic socially who are you going to socialize with economics social what you read what you watch what you think those things it will affect those things or

I should say infect those things genuine salvation or genuine discipleship means that we let go what we treasure to enjoy the greater blessings of God's kingdom realize that this might mean hostility with the world if you if you're doing this and you say you know what I'm cutting off friendship with the world you're going to get it and you don't like that because you're cutting off the friendship you're cutting off that coolness and you face opposition as Paul did he faced opposition right so we've looked at you proclaim the gospel the gospel transforms and then the last one number three the gospel prevails verse 20 God's gospel will always mightily prevail verse 20 so the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing what's the result of

[40:23] Paul's teaching there was some opposition yeah there is some rejection oh yeah you're going to face it but there's also lives being changed God's powerful working in miracles the miraculous life change of believers you see the growth of the word God powerfully works through his gospel word he powerfully works through his gospel word notice it doesn't say Paul's reputation grew but the Lord's word grew we must realize that if we want to advance in any spiritual way at all it must always be done in the Lord's gospel word God's word is powerful sharper than a two-edged sword and when the gospel is accurately told it produces powerful life-altering changes that's what it does when we proclaim the gospel it transforms and it triumphs according to

God's sovereign power you don't know how he's going to work you don't know what he's going to do we trust in his sovereign power that God's transforming prevailing power will be seen when we proclaim that gospel we proclaim that truth we proclaim the message that Jesus saves sinners let's take a few moments and let's have a moment of silence for us to think and ponder what we've seen here in Acts chapter 19 maybe this is a time for you to think about maybe I've been a friend of the world maybe I've tried to become a friend of the world maybe I haven't been proclaiming the gospel maybe I'm not being who I am I say I'm a Christian but I'm not being who I am as a follower of Jesus

maybe maybe it's a time for you to reflect upon the fact that you have not been so just radically changed by God's grace in your life maybe it's a time to reflect upon the fact that you need God's grace right now so take a few moments of silence and then we'll have our time of giving singing our last two songs and praying over listen