

**8/7/16**

**Acts 19:11-20**

## **Known in Hell**

*And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, <sup>12</sup> so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. <sup>13</sup> Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims."<sup>14</sup> Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this.<sup>15</sup> But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?" <sup>16</sup> And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. <sup>17</sup> And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled. <sup>18</sup> Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices.<sup>19</sup> And a number of those who had 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.<sup>20</sup> So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.*

*(Pastor Prays)*

Being a Christian in and around Ephesus was a lot like being a Christian in Charlotte – it was no easy thing. Ephesus was the Roman capital of Asia, a port city like New Orleans. Ephesus was the headquarters for the Temple of Diana (Artemis), one of the seven wonders of the world and a place where you could be spiritual without having to be moral, much like the Queen City with 700 churches and 5<sup>th</sup> in the country in the consumption of pornography.

For many people in Ephesus, even for professed believers, Jesus was little more than an experiment. (That's) sort of what it seems like in this bizarre passage that is set in Ephesus.

I love this story. In the text, we are introduced to the seven sons of Sceva. (A man who claims to be High Priest although there is no historical record of a High Priest named Sceva...Probably a charlatan, a trait he seems to have passed on to his seven ill-advised sons.)

In the story, the power of God is being displayed in Paul's life and ministry. V. 11-12 tells us *And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul,<sup>12</sup> so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them.*

The free-loading sons of Sceva wanted what Paul had without knowing who Paul knew. And in v. 16, mayhem breaks out. The man with the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered them, overpowered them, ripped their clothes off, beat them senseless and threw them out of the house.

Now I've been told, "I'm gonna snatch you bald-headed!" but this is much worse. When these fake exorcists tried to use the name of Jesus, it was like an unfamiliar weapon wrongly handled. It exploded in their hands. Now what do we do with this event? What do we as modern-day people, learn from this story about the power of the name of Jesus?

**Jesus Is Lord Even If We Don't Agree**

**If You Are Fake, Eventually It Will Show**

So v. 13-14 tells us about the seven sons of a man named Sceva who was supposed to be the High Priest. I say “supposed” because the historian Josephus listed all the High Priests in his History of the Jewish people, and Sceva wasn’t in it. He was a self-proclaimed High Priest. Not only that, his seven sons took up the family business and they traveled the countryside performing so-called exorcisms.

In the story, they tried to invoke the name of Jesus and it didn’t play out. They presented themselves as men with spiritual authority, with a pedigree – Dad was a High Priest. But when it came time to test that spiritual authority, they were shown to be fake. Pretenders.

There is a dangerous truth from this text that applies to the congregation of men and women who have been raised *in* church or *playing* church, and having a form of Christianity that breaks down when it is tested. And that’s a *fake* Christianity that will send you to a very *real* Hell.

In this passage, the supernatural is revealed. We see behind the veil a little and there are demons who can spot a fake a mile away. It’s funny. The seven sons of Sceva could fool the people but they couldn’t fool the demons. The demons knew they had no power.

There’s a chance that you’re here and you don’t even realize that your Christianity is not real. You’ve got to look past what you *feel* and into the *evidence* in your life. If your life is not marked with a desire to be more like Christ, have a real hatred for your own sin, have humility in God’s grace and a love for His word, His worship, His ways and His church, then you may not be a Christian. Look at your life – NOW. Because if what you have is not real, it will eventually show up.

The second point is close to the first.

### **Trying To Use Jesus Without Knowing Jesus is Disastrous**

Look what happens when these goofballs try to cast out the demon. Notice the wording in v. 13. *Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims.* By the Jesus whom *Paul* proclaims. They wanted to *use* Jesus without *knowing* Jesus. Look what the demon said in v. 14-15 and look what the demon did in v.

16. <sup>14</sup> *Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this.*<sup>15</sup> *But the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?”*<sup>16</sup> *And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.*

In other words – I don’t know *you*. I know the power of Jesus, Paul has it, you don’t. They were thrashed. When you walk away from a fight with your pants ripped off – you lost. The men in the text tried to use the power of Jesus without knowing Jesus. They wanted what Paul had without going through what Paul went through. They wanted the short-cut Jesus – the part-time Jesus – a Jesus who will jump at your prayers and run to your need but otherwise stays somewhere in the murky background.

They thought they wanted the Jesus of Paul but they didn’t know that Jesus. That Jesus confronts your sin, convicts your sin, calls out your sin but then, unbelievably, takes your sin. He pays for your sin, forgives your sin and then fills you with hope and joy and change. The seven brothers didn’t know Jesus, because when you *know* Jesus you don’t try to *use* Jesus. He’s not a crutch or a good luck charm. He is Lord and Savior, demanding all and giving all and worth your all, but trying to use Jesus without knowing Jesus is disastrous.

### **Underestimating Satan is Fool Hardy**

In this passage we are confronted with the reality and potency of a real demonic force that really does hate people and desire their hurt. Beyond the comic potential in the text is the truth that Satan is not to be trifled with. The seven sons who were not Christian sought to subdue satanic powers and because they were not Christian, operating with Christ-honoring motives, they were easily humiliated and wounded. I don’t deal with, make fun of or make jokes about Hell or the Devil. Submit to the Lordship of Christ because He is the one they can’t overcome. And although Satan is a defeated foe, he still prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Underestimating the devil is dumb.

### **Being Known In Hell Should Be Our Goal**

Go back to the story. When the seven sons speak to the demonized man in v. 13 and say “I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims, notice the answer in v. 15. *But the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?”*

It’s striking to me that the demon not only mentioned Jesus (He is Lord so you would expect that) but he mentioned Paul – a human. Why did he mention Paul? Because Paul was being used by God for the Gospel, and when you are a Gospel carrier, then you are an enemy of Satan and he takes notice. I would go a step further. When you embrace the Gospel of Jesus and you are living the truth of the Gospel and having Gospel conversations, Satan’s forces know you and hate you and will come against you like they did Paul.

I think the modern Christian stops short. Most people have as the goal for the church to make sure you are saved and will go to Heaven when you die. It’s our goal for our children. We want them to know Jesus so that they are known in Heaven. That’s not the endpoint of our goal. That’s the start point. Yes, we want them to be known in Heaven because they have been saved, but at Hickory Grove, we want them to be known in Hell because they are sold-out for the Gospel. High schoolers, college kids, young couple with children: we want you to go beyond being known in Heaven. We want you to be known in Hell. We want you to be missional.

Let me show you something else.

### **Whatever Satan Intends For Harm, God Will Use For Good**

We’ve talked about the brawl and how the seven sons took a beating in v. 16 but take a look at the effects of all this demonic activity.

A. In v. 17, Satan sought honor but Jesus was glorified.

B. In v. 18, Satan sought dominance but a revival breaks out. Martin Luther said, “The devil is God’s devil.” Because Jesus Christ is Lord, He is in control of all events and He takes your life that was once dominated by Satan and the things of this world and through faith and repentance, He uses your past as a testimony of God’s grace.

### **When Christ Is Honored, Values Change**

v. 17 tells us that the name of the lord will be extolled, honored, praised and held up. And because of this there was tangible change in v. 19. *And a number of those who had 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.* An abandoning of old ways for the new life in Christ.

Notice a few things about this book burning.

1. It was a real and public giving up of something, a letting go of the past, a past that was loved.
2. It was absolute. To throw their books on the fire, they wouldn't get them back.
3. It was drastic. I think in our modern society we have forgotten the spiritual impact of drastic action.
4. It was costly. Jesus always calls for his hearers to count the cost. The truth is, when Christ is honored, values change.

Now let's look back a little and finish by looking at this story as a whole. And when you do that you see...

### **God Is In Control**

All of these wild things happened and notice Luke's commentary in v. 20. *So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.* A sovereign God working the events of His world for His glory and our good. And that which brings Him the most glory and you the most good, is when you give your life to Jesus Christ. You were made for this. He brought you here for this. The name of Jesus has power – power to heal, forgive, restore and save.

*(Pastor shares the Gospel message and prays)*