**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 7-25-2021  
Jesus Versus Demons – No Comparison**

This has been quite a week here at Chestnut Grove. Vacation Bible School was a great success and I would like to again thank everyone for their prayers and thank all who volunteered to help in one way or another during the event.

I can’t speak for everyone, but I trust that many of us needed a bit of time to recover from all the energy and effort put into VBS.

Just speaking for myself, with VBS and other things that I needed to attend to this week, I found myself not where I prefer to be when it comes to preparation for Sunday morning.

And then I finally had some extended time to begin to work on my message for today on Saturday, I knew in my heart that I needed to spend some time in prayer first.

If you’re like me, there is that temptation to rush into “productive” things before spending necessary time in prayer with the Lord. But, I tell you one thing, God has never failed me when I have been obedient and chosen to tend to my relationship with God before my service for God.

You know, God cares far more about our relationship with Him than anything that we can do through Him. Truly, everything flows out from our relationships, particularly our relationship with God.

Paul the apostle was a man who did so much service for the kingdom of God. He was constantly sharing Jesus with others and encouraging other Christians in their walk with Christ.

But Paul never became too busy for God. Paul cared for his relationship with God and was intentional to not neglect what was most important.

Today, as we turn to our final passage message from our Book of Acts sermon series, we will find Paul ministering powerfully in the Name of Jesus. But the key to his ministry was his deep personal relationship with his savior, Jesus Christ. Let’s keep that in mind as we hear our text, found in Acts 19:11-20.

**11God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, 12so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.**

**13Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, “In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.” 14Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. 15One day the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?” 16Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.**

**17When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. 18Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed what they had done. 19A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas.[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+19%3A11-20&version=NIV#fen-NIV-27605a)**] 20In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.**

Strangely enough, this passage reminds me of a story from back in high school. Back when I was in 9th grade, my English teacher was a woman named Mrs. Thoman.

While Mrs. Thoman was a good teacher and cared about her students, she was definitely a no-nonsense teacher. She had a reputation of being strict and students knew that it wasn’t a good idea to try to get away with any shenanigans, any misbehavior.

And so students by and large were on their best behavior when they were in her class, myself included.

And this reminds me a little bit about how the demons, these fallen angelic spirits, were when they came anywhere near Jesus.

On the surface, one would think that a poor Jewish peasant would be no match for these powerful supernatural beings.

But Jesus was no ordinary Jesus peasant. Jesus was deity in the flesh. Jesus was the One who created each of these angels that had fallen long ago.

And these evil spirits recognized Jesus and were terrified of Him. If Jesus was their school teacher, they would respond immediately when He would tell them to put their pencils down.

These spirits knew who Jesus was and they wanted to be as far away from Jesus as possible.

Friends, nearly 2,000 years have passed since Jesus ascended back into heaven, but these demons continue to be terrified of Jesus. **And the remarkable thing is that while Jesus is physically in heaven, He also lives within every one of His true followers.**

To put it another way, Christ in us terrifies darkness.

This was certainly the case when it came to Paul. The demons were not afraid of Paul, but Paul was in a deep, living, beautiful relationship with Jesus. Paul cared for his relationship with Jesus and so they were terrified of Christ in Paul.

And that made all the difference in the world. It was because of Paul’s relationship with Christ and his dependence on Christ that so many amazing things happened through Paul.

Today our focus is particularly on how demons would flee in Paul’s ministry. Paul would write in 2 Corinthians chapter 2 verses 14-16:

**“But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ’s triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of Him everywhere. For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life.”**

To put it another way, true believers grounded in their relationship with Christ will carry the presence of Christ with them. For some, this will be a beautiful thing, but for those that are opposed to Christ, the fragrance of Christ is an aroma of death to them. They can’t stand it and they want to get out of dodge, so to speak.

In our passage from Acts 19 we see a clear contrast. Paul carried the aroma of Christ, but these seven sons of Sceva clearly did not.

The demon-possessed man would have been set free if Paul was on the scene, because this demon knew that Paul was in relationship with Jesus. The demon said, “Jesus I know and Paul I know about, but who are you?”

But the demon was not scared of these other men. The demon knew that these men were not truly connected to Jesus. They were not carrying the aroma of Christ, even though they said Jesus’ name.

It is a reminder that just because someone says the Name of Jesus and recognizes the power of Jesus, does not mean that they really know Jesus or if they did, they were not tending to their relationship with Jesus.

The power of God within us, flows out of a deep committed relationship with Jesus.

Now this doesn’t mean that everyone we pray for is healed. Even Paul prayed for people and did not see healing take place.

But what it does mean is that when God wants to move in power over people and in situations, He chooses to normally move through people that are living in a strong relationship with Him.

Friends, this was an especially big deal in Ephesus. Ephesus was the magic capital of that part of the world. ---- the powers of darkness are real. But these practitioners of magic and witchcraft recognized that Jesus is far more powerful than any power they had gained through their involvement with demons. There was no comparison.

And we are told that there was this massive public bonfire and people would go and burn their magic scrolls. This was a big deal.

A drachma represented a day’s labor. Luke writes that the value was 50,000 drachmas. This would have been over 100 years worth of earnings. These scrolls may have been passed down for generations. This was not like just burning a book worth $20.00.

The Lord has convicted them that they were to not have any part of those dark practices any longer and so as a sign of their submission to Jesus, they were burning all these scrolls. Wow! And Paul ends up ministering in Ephesus for 3 years.

So friends, this is a powerful story, but what are we to make of this text for our lives today?

First and foremost it is a reminder that this relationship with Jesus means everything.

Anyone can say they are a Christian, but following Jesus is about living a relationship with Him. It is not enough to know that Jesus is powerful or even that He rose from the dead. The question is, does someone know Him deeply as their Savior and Lord?

If you are watching this today and maybe know a lot about Jesus, but are not sure that you know Him personally, I encourage you to come to Him in prayer and surrender yourself to Him and ask that He would help you walk with Him in a beautiful relationship.

Second, please remember that we are living a spiritual war. Demons are a reality – whether people believe they exist or not. But we need not fear them when we are walking with Jesus, for Jesus is far more powerful than any demon.

And third and finally, may this passage remind us to not let demons have any grounds to gain access in our lives. The new believers in Ephesus were burning their scrolls.

If we have dabbled in similar things, such as using wigi boards, séances, hypnotism, fortune telling, or other similar practices --- we need to get rid of objects connected to those things and repent of our involvement. And Jesus in His mercy will forgive us and cleanse us completely.

For even as Christians, we can give demons access to influence and control us when we have these things as part of our lives, just as Christians can give a place for the enemy when we are walking with unforgiveness or bitterness or rage.

Finally, friends, be encouraged that as we follow Jesus in a living relationship, Christ in us will terrify the darkness around us. So may we walk with our savior with joy and confidence; and always remember that far more important than anything we can do for God is to simply attend to our relationship with God.

Resources:

BibleGateway.com

Lesson Eight Lections – English Bible: Acts – Fall 2020