

## Paul in Ephesus 2: Acts 19:11-20

John 8:31-32: “If you continue in My word... You will know the truth and the truth will make you free.”

Go to The Great Barrington Declaration: <https://gbdeclaration.org>

Go to [www.waynegrudem.com](http://www.waynegrudem.com). My professor of Systematic Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Read “Permission for Pastors to Preach about Politics” and “Letters to an Anti-Trump Christian Friend.”

1. Acts is God’s discipleship training manual for modern Christians. This is basic training – Christianity 101.

- What have you learned (and practiced) from ACTS that has enabled you to grow in your Christian faith and service?
- What have you learned from ACTS that gives you a new perspective on the growth and mission of the Church?

19:11-20: Extraordinary Miracles in Ephesus

Ephesus had a reputation as a “fetish factory.” Fetishes, amulets, charms, talisman are all the same. The “Ephesian writings” were famous throughout the Roman Empire. An Ephesian writing was a piece of paper with spells written on it and placed in a small cylinder or locket worn around the neck or somewhere else on the body. Today these are known as fetishes or talisman or amulets. They are used in Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and worn by religious Americans. The fetishes are vehicles through which powers of the spirit world are given varying degrees of freedom to operate in the natural world. Belief in the fetish allows demonic powers to control a person.

(US\$1.25 billion worth of Buddhist charms are sold every year in Thailand – not surprising when seven in 10 Thais wear amulets. Some have thousands. The most prized ones were made by venerated monks, but many are mass-produced, and unscrupulous temples pass off fakes as valuable charms to Chinese tourists.)

STORY: [A missionary couple in Japan struggled with headaches and nausea until they broke the power of an occult fetish in their rented house. A standard procedure in the construction of Japanese buildings and houses is

to deposit an occult fetish in the wall during construction. They prayed and proclaimed Jesus' name in every room of the house and the demonic spirits attracted to the fetish departed. No more health problems.]

Dr. Luke recorded “extraordinary miracles” in Ephesus: *And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, 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.*

I'll take any ordinary miracle. It doesn't need to be unusual or extraordinary.

So, what's the difference between an “ordinary” miracle and an “extraordinary” miracle?

Dr. Luke recorded the miracles of Peter. He healed a lame beggar and raised Dorcas to life. Dr. Luke traveled with Paul and witnessed and recorded miracles. Paul healed a man crippled from birth in Lystra. Paul & Silas were miraculously delivered from a prison in Philippi. Paul cast demons out of a Jewish magician and a fortune-telling slave girl. Paul mentioned miracles in Thessalonica when he preached the Gospel: 1 Thess. 1:5: “Our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.” If all these are ordinary miracles, then what are considered extraordinary miracles!

The cloths were “sweat rags” wrapped around the head and used to wipe away sweat, and aprons were worn by working men (or maybe women working in a kitchen). Paul touched these cloths and the cloths healed people and exorcised demons.

Why did God do unusual miracles by the hands of Paul in Ephesus?

Here's my theory on why Jesus allowed these extraordinary miracles.

**First**, to counteract Asclepios and Artemis and the power of fetishes, the HS performed “unusual miracles” with sweat rags and aprons. The fetish functioned as a link between the spirit and natural worlds, as an intermediary between the evil spirit and the person. The HS did something similar to get a person's attention and show his greater power over the fetish. The HS did this to glorify Christ among superstitious Ephesians. It's like God saying, “Do I have your attention now!” The cloths functioned as an intermediary between the HS's power and the sick person. The cloth blessed by the HS overcame the demonic fetish.

**Second**, the HS honored the simple faith of the people who touched Paul with pieces of cloth. The closest story to this in the Gospels is **Mark 5:21-34**. The woman's faith

pulled the healing power from Jesus through his robe. Jesus felt healing power drained from him. Jesus said to the woman: “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.” Jesus accepts faith that even seems superstitious.

It indicates that those who had sweat rags, handkerchiefs, bandanas, and aprons touched Paul’s skin in FAITH and the Holy Spirit honored their faith, even though it may seem like superstition.

Imagine you have a mask and I lay my hands on it and bless it and then you take the mask to a person sick with COVID-19 in the hospital and he/she is healed. That would be an unusual miracle!

STORY: [Pastor Kumuyi of Deeper Life Bible Church in Lagos, Nigeria, has seen “handkerchief miracles.” 75,000 people attend his church on Sunday and he has planted 4500 churches around Nigeria. He conducts Thursday-night miracle meetings. At one meeting he asked the Holy Spirit to bless pieces of cloth. Then to place it on a sick person at home and pray for healing in Jesus’ name. A chief of a Muslim village attended the meeting. He didn’t have a sick family member, but when he returned to the village a 9-year-old girl died. He attended the wake and remembered the cloth. He placed the cloth on her corpse and prayed for healing in Jesus’ name. She came to life and the whole village believed in Jesus for salvation. That’s extraordinary!]

Review 19:13-20.

The Jewish exorcists learned they couldn’t use the name of Jesus as a magic formula. They couldn’t use the name of Jesus to grow their reputation or their deliverance business. They would’ve put an advertisement on YT & Facebook: “*If you have a problem with demons then call the Seven Sons of Sceva. We are seven times better than the competition and seven times stronger than the opposition. We will get the exorcism done right!*” But most importantly, the Jewish exorcists learned that they could not use the name of Jesus without a relationship with Jesus. The name has no power apart from the person. The demons know who Jesus is and they know who you are if you are in relationship with Jesus as Savior and Lord.

When we have a relationship with Jesus, we can use his name’s authority to obey his commands.

Jesus' command is Matthew 28:18-20. We use the authority of his name to make disciples of all nations. We use his name to gain victory in spiritual warfare. We use his name to advance his kingdom in the world.

John 14:12-14: *"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it."* After Jesus said this he promised the HS.

John 16:23-24: *"Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."*

The result of the power encounter: 19:17: *When 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.* Power encounters won in the name of Jesus glorify the name of Jesus and grow the Kingdom of God.

I read a story that reminds me of what the evil spirit said to the sons of Sceva, "I know Jesus and I know about Paul, but who are you?"

STORY: [This account is written in first-person by the Indian Christian who was involved in the incident. > Sonali lives in Kendrapada, a town over 500 kilometers by bus from my town of Bhawanipatna. She is a government teacher with M.Sc. and B.Ed. degrees, and her husband was a college lecturer. Last January (2020), her husband was killed in a tragic accident.

In February she gave birth to a baby boy. The following month on the 24th of March she took her baby to a well-known Hindu temple. After returning home a legion of demons possessed Sonali. Most of the time she was out of her mind, and could not even recognize her baby. In the beginning her parents sought the help of a local sorcerer, but he was unable to do anything. Sonali's father then summoned a more powerful sorcerer. He came, but the demons shouted and laughed at them saying, "**bring a sorcerer who has more power than me!**" In the meantime the demons began to attack the baby every midnight, making him do strange things.

After her family failed to find help in their home district, they took her one by one to ten other districts like Cuttack, Bhadrak, Mayurbhajn, Nayagarh, Baleswore, and Khorda seeking relief for Sonali. In each district they would stay from ten to twelve days, during each stay taking Sonali to the well-known Hindu temples in the district. None of the temple priests there could help her. They spent over four lakhs (US\$5,500-\$6,000) for treatment. But in each

place the demons would challenge her parents through Sonali to **“bring someone with more power than me.”**

Ten to twelve days ago the demons told Sonali’s parents to take her to Bhawanipatna where I and my wife live. Her parents thought that perhaps there the demons might leave her. Without knowing anyone here, they came and stayed in a local hotel. They took her to several temples in our town, each time offering money, chickens and fulfilling the requirements imposed on them by the priests. But Sonali was not set free. One of the priests said that they could not do anything for her. They were now deep in distress.

During their stay in the hotel they hired an auto rickshaw driver to take them to a temple. On the way they shared with the driver what they had been going through with Sonali. The driver told them that later in the evening he would take them to see me. He had witnessed his daughter delivered from demonization after I had ministered to her.

That evening he brought Sonali and her parents to our home. I rebuked the demon in the powerful name of the Lord Jesus Christ. At that moment the demons began to cry, saying that they will leave her. After that her parents shared with us that in the past, the demons would always refuse to leave and challenge us to bring someone with more power.

The next day to our surprise the demons attacked Sonali again. They were challenging me to a fight. It lasted a while, but I continued rebuking the demons in Jesus’ name with his unmatched authority until they left. One after another the demons left Sonali, and she was completely delivered by the Lord.

Witnessing such an extraordinary deliverance from the Lord, the family accepted Jesus Christ. I asked Sonali if she knew of any servants of God or churches in her area. She had never seen a church and didn’t know servants of God in Kendrapada. Many people there are suffering desperately just like Sonali.]

There were so many demons in the Gospels and Acts. You may wonder why we don’t see that many in America. There are just as many demons in America as there are in India. There are hideous idols visible in Hindu temples all over India. The demons in America prefer to hide. (They become more visible at Halloween!) They are more effective hiding in false Marxist ideologies (CRT & BLM-ANTIFA) and political parties (Democrat party).

Apparently one result of the sons of Sceva incident was a mass repentance of magic and occult practices in Ephesus. Acts 19:18-20: <sup>18</sup> *Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed what they had done.* <sup>19</sup> *A 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.* <sup>20</sup> *In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.*

They burned their “Ephesian writings,” books of incantations and magic formulas, fetishes and amulets. Each piece of silver represented a day’s wage. A value equivalent to 50,000 days’ wages went up in flames. \$10/hr for (or \$15 if you work for Amazon) an 8-hour day is \$80 a day, which would total \$4 million!

Dr. Michael Green wrote a classic work *Evangelism in the Early Church*. He refers to Paul’s testimony that in Thessalonica “our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” (1 Thess. 1:5). The GR word for “full conviction” is *πληροφορία*, which includes two dimensions:

1. Powerful preaching.
2. Healings and exorcisms to verify the powerful preaching.

The “full conviction” was produced by powerful preaching backed up by healings and exorcisms. Green writes that the healings and exorcisms continued throughout not only the apostolic church but into the second and third centuries. Christians went out into the world as exorcists and healers as well as preachers. Power ministries, including healing the sick and dealing directly with the demonic in spiritual warfare, were necessary for evangelists and missionaries.

We’ve all heard of Billy Graham. Billy Graham just preached the word. I admire BG and the HS used him in my salvation. There were no recording healings or exorcisms in his crusades.

I know you’ve never heard of Carlos Annacondia. Carlos Annacondia’s crusades in Argentina and Latin America include dramatic healings and exorcisms. (He’s a Pentecostal!) He prays with the authority of Jesus Christ. Millions have been saved and set free sickness and demonic oppression. His ministry is called International Message of Salvation and it looks like Acts.

There are “ordinary” and “extraordinary” miracles in a Carlos Annacondia crusade. Argentine church leaders have created categories for various grades of miracles. For example, healings of migraine headaches, ulcers, hernias, and breast cancers are ordinary. Extraordinary miracles would include a lung that grew back after being surgically removed, obese people losing weight (one woman 32 lbs), heads of hair growing out on bald men, and teeth filled. Filling teeth is now ordinary in

Annacondia's crusades. One or two teeth is an ordinary miracle. A person can only give testimony if he/she has had more than three teeth filled. Dentists have examined the white substance and don't know what it is. In Brazil it is extraordinary when the teeth are crowned or filled with gold. There's a book *Dentes de Ouro: Os Sinais de Deus (Gold Teeth: Signs of God)*.

If you have scepticism about these miracles, then how can you believe in the resurrection of Christ? This is the greatest miracle of all. Compared to Christ being raised from the dead after being brutally scourged and crucified, even these extraordinary miracles are nothing. They're easy for God to do.

OPTIONAL: [Here's a statement about the HS leading Paul. 19:21-22: 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." And having sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while. The GR phrase "purposed in the Spirit" indicates that the HS communicated to Paul that he must go to Rome. The HS will speak directly into your spirit and give you directions and words of knowledge.]

Application: An active Christian life is a life of spiritual warfare. If you are in a relationship with Jesus Christ, then you can use his name to protect yourself from Satan's attacks against your body and mind.

Application: The name of Jesus is powerful because it is backed up by the person of Jesus who has been given all power and authority. Matthew 28:18-20: *Jesus spoke to the disciples, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* We use the authority of Jesus' name to obey his command. We see in the Gospels and Acts that Jesus' name has authority over disease and demons in the context of Christ's Great Commission.

Application: Therefore, if you happen to share the Gospel with someone and they have cancer or some other sickness, then pray for him/her in the name and with the authority of Jesus Christ. Exercise "mountain-moving" faith. I have a friend who put up this sign outside a store in Houston's Chinatown and prayed for people. He saw

miracles happen and shared the Gospel. (The International Farmer's Market on Germantown would be a good place to practice this.)