

Don't Bite Off More Than You Can Chew

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Acts 19. This is an interesting passage of Scripture. Let's begin reading in verse 8, "And he come" does anybody know who the "he" is there? It's Paul.

"And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus." [That's a name, isn't it?] "And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." [That's a strong statement, "all they that dwelt in Asia." Paul was getting it out, wasn't he?] "And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them. Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."

Let the church say amen.

Father, we come before your throne today bowing before you, understanding that you are God, besides you there is none other. There is nobody like you. Father, I want to thank you for the songs we've heard already and how you have touched our lives. We

began this service just worshipping you, lifting you up and it wasn't long before we were reminded about that name of Jesus and how there is nothing too dirty that you can't make worthy. I do pray, God, that you will take now me as your vessel, cleanse me of sin, empty me of self, fill me with your Spirit, help me to be a blessing to these thy people. I pray, God, that you would take your word, this word that you have given us for our benefit, I pray, God, that you would serve it on the table of hearts of these thy people, every one in the building would eat and be filled and strengthened into every perfect work as it pertains to life and godliness. I pray, God, that you will bind Satan. Put a hedge of protection about this place. I pray that in no way he hinder the work of the Holy Spirit of God. I pray, God, that we leave this building, we would leave differently than how we came. Lord, we are a needy people and, Lord, the only one that can change us is you. So I pray, God, today that you would do a great work and continue to use us to accomplish your work in this wicked world. In Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

You may be seated. Thank you so much for standing.

We find ourselves in Acts 19, traveling with the Apostle Paul into the city of Ephesus. There in Ephesus he met certain disciples. He asked the disciples a question that if they were truly born again, saved by the grace of God, they should have been able to answer. The question was, "Have you received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" Their answer was, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." And by the way, please understand the time in Scripture that this was happening. The Lord Jesus Christ had spent three and a half years on planet earth. He had promised that when he left he would send the Holy Spirit. That was a promise. "John indeed baptized with water but I will baptize with the Holy Spirit of God." In Acts 2, the day of Pentecost which was an historical event never to be repeated, the Lord Jesus Christ sent down the Holy Spirit, the church was baptized in the Holy Spirit. We find there that great miracle, those cloven tongues of fire, that speaking with tongues, and that time in which those disciples who had no prior knowledge of languages were supernaturally enabled by the Spirit of God to speak languages they had not previously learned and on that day that great miracle was accomplished by God. On the day of Pentecost, 3,000 people got saved, got baptized, and belonged to the church all in one day.

God through the Lord Jesus Christ had sent the promise of the Holy Spirit of God. By the way, today the moment you get saved, you receive the Holy Spirit of God so I don't want us to think in Acts 19 that Paul is advocating for you and I to be praying to receive the Holy Spirit of God. If you're here today and you're trying to study Scripture and find out how you can receive the Holy Spirit of God, I'd like to tell you, you're saved. This is no teaching of Acts 19 of asking for the Holy Spirit or asking for more of the Holy Spirit or seeking some second blessing or looking for the Holy Spirit to come down. Please understand, we're looking at a day and time when God by prophecy in the Old Testament, by the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament, was going to send the Holy Spirit who was going to be the empowering, enabling agent for the local church to go out and reach the world. And by the way, the only way we can reach this wicked world is through the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

Well, they responded to not even knowing that the Holy Spirit was given. Paul didn't spend much time talking about the Holy Spirit. He turned the direction of his conversation when people said they didn't understand the Holy Spirit, to Jesus Christ. Don't miss that. He could have spent all that time talking about the gift of the Holy Spirit but instead he spent his time talking about the Lord Jesus Christ because he knew that their issue with the Holy Spirit was an issue with the Lord Jesus Christ and once they had put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ, they would receive the Holy Spirit of God. And by the way, their movement is going on all across our globe today that highlight and make the Holy Spirit the focal point of our worship. I'm not trying to belittle the Holy Spirit. By the way, he's not an it, he is a person. He is the third person of the Trinity. God the Spirit, God the Son, God the Father, they are the three in one but the Lord Jesus Christ made it very clear that he would send the Holy Spirit not to uplift himself but the Holy Spirit would direct our attention to the Lord Jesus Christ so you and I should not be engaged in trying to get more of the Spirit, we should be engaged in trying to focus more on the Lord Jesus Christ because when we focus on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit gets more of us.

And the moment he taught them about Jesus, they believed and were baptized again. Did you see that? I want you to notice what the Bible says, when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. They had already been baptized by John but they obviously didn't understand. They understood John's baptism, they understood John's baptism had to do with repentance, they had to show works of repentance, but they needed to understand Jesus' baptism because it was more than repentance, it was regeneration. They needed to get saved and they had been baptized before they were saved but once they truly got saved, they got baptized again. And by the way, we not only see that they got baptized, what we find there, the Apostle Paul laid his hands on them and Holy Spirit came upon them, we see the gift of tongues there demonstrated again, and I'm not going to take a long time to deal with this, most of you at Crossroads Baptist Church know my position on the gift of tongues. I personally believe it is not a gift that is demonstrated by the church for today and I've got plenty of Scripture to verify it, yet we hear in Acts 19 why God is still sending the Holy Spirit of God down upon the church, baptizing the church in the Spirit, you find here that Jews are here, Jews were people that required a sign because they did not believe and signs were given by God to show unbelievers that he was real and that his preachers were truly preaching the word. Paul didn't have a written Bible in his hand when he preached to them about Jesus. The Bible was not completed and so when he preached, God would allow a sign to be done so the Jews would know this man didn't preach in his word, he is preaching God's word and the sign would confirm to them that the word preached by Paul was truly the word of God.

Today I don't need a sign to convince you that I'm preaching the truth because you hold in your hands the completed written version of the word of God, God's word. The confirmation for my preaching is not slapping you on the head, anoint you with oil, or speaking in a tongue. The confirmation for my preaching is the word of God. God is doing something not only to confirm to the Jews that Paul was preaching his word, but also to confirm to the Jews that Paul was a true apostle and there were a lot of people that didn't want to rank Paul on equal terms with Peter and God said, "I want you to know

Paul is no shabby man. He's an apostle. He has the apostolic gifts. He is legitimate and I'm going to prove to the Jews who question his authority the most, this man is not a self-made preacher, he's a God-called apostle." And by the way, we live in a day and age of a lot of self-made preachers and we need more God-called men of God. No question.

So all of a sudden we see this great work to be done. Paul proceeds from there and goes into the synagogue and speaks there for three months about the kingdom of God. The kingdom was a big deal to the Jews. They were looking for the king to come, their promised Messiah. The King had come, resurrected and gone back to heaven and they were still looking for him. By the way, there are Jews in Israel today who are still looking for the Messiah. Some of the most difficult people to convince as to Jesus and who he was are the Jews today. Paul spent three months letting them know, "You don't need to keep looking for the King to come, he did come. His name was Jesus. He died, was buried and he rose again." And God began to do a great work and all of a sudden after those that were listening to his word were hearing the truth, there were others who did not believe. They had hard hearts and, by the way verse 9, the word "hard in heart" is the same word used of Pharaoh in the book of Exodus. God allowed their hearts to harden because they chose to harden them. God never makes anybody reject him but when you choose to reject him, God will allow you.

Their hearts were hardened and all of a sudden they ran Paul and those out of the synagogue and Paul goes from the synagogue to a school where Tyrannus was teaching and there in that school, it seemed to be some doctrinal school, we don't know much about Tyrannus. It's obvious that many think that he was perhaps someone that Paul had taught or led to the Lord and there was a school in the area where people could study and learn about God. Paul went from the synagogue after they ran him out to that school and for two years Paul was in that place with an open door preaching in such a way that everybody in Asia heard the word of God whether they were Jews or whether they were Greeks. And by the way, we ought to give the word of God to anybody regardless of where they're from, what color they are, what nationality they are. They need the book, amen. God was doing a work.

And then from there, I want to get to the text. God is manifesting his glory through Paul in an unusually unique way. It was so powerful and so impacting that there were those in his presence who got a kick out of it and wanted to get in on it. They liked the fact that he was healing, he was casting out devils, he was doing miraculous works, and they looked at Paul and thought, "If he can do it, so can I." Now watch this now: they didn't know God, they weren't being empowered by God, they weren't even instruments used by God but they wanted to try something on their own without God as if the Christian life was a work of man and not a work of God. The problem was they weren't cut out for it. And we're going to walk through this passage of Scripture and see that just because they liked what they saw and wanted to do what somebody else was doing doesn't mean they were cut out for it.

By the way, we're living in a society today where the Christian life has often become a performance. People get up on stages, they think that church is entertaining; they think

that the pulpit is a place to wow the crowd; they think that singing in the church is the same as singing in a nightclub; they think that holding a microphone is like auditioning on American Idol; they walk around and they walk around and see people that are legitimately living for God and the power of God is resting upon them and the demonstration of the Holy Spirit is legitimate and real and they jump in and think, "Wow, I could try that." By the way, we're living in a day and age, young men, where a lot of young men that see preaching in pulpits and think, "I'd like to do that one day." And by the way, it's a good thing for a young man to desire to be a preacher. Amen? Let me say that again: it's a good thing for a young man to desire to be a preacher. Say amen. But the desire alone to preach is not a substitute for the call of God to preach and many have jumped up trying to do something that they decided on their own that wasn't a work of Almighty God and they found out later down the road they weren't cut out for it.

Many Christian people have watched people live the Christian life in a victorious way. The choir just sang a few moments ago, "Victory is mine." It is but that doesn't mean you can do nothing. Christian people watch somebody else live for God, watch somebody else's marriage live victoriously, watch a single young man live purely and wait until God's choice, watch a young lady dress modestly and carry herself in a way of chastity and dignity and think, "I could do that," and they found out later that it's a whole lot more than man wanting to do it, it is God doing it through him.

I want to preach an interesting message this morning entitled "Don't Bite Off More Than You Can Chew." And here's why I want to preach it: because more and more I'm seeing Christianity become a fad, a craze, a trend, and a passing whim and here's what people do, they jump on it because they think it's something that looks good, that seems good, that sounds good, and appears good but I want to tell you something: Christianity is not a phase. Christianity is – listen to me, young people – Christianity is not something you do because it's convenient while you're in your parents' house. Listen to me choir, Christianity is not something you do to look good on Sundays when the biggest crowd is here. Listen to me, young man, Christianity is not something you do in a pulpit so people will clap and say amen, you'll sign their Bibles and they will really bow down and worship you. Listen to me, folks, Christian marriage is not something you do just because you think it's fun, somebody else was doing it and it sure would be nice to tell people, "This is my wife." I want to tell you something: Christianity is the work of a Savior who died, was buried and he rose again. Unless God does it, you're biting off more than you can chew.

I want us to look, first of all, at this authentic designation. This is Paul. Something authentic is going on. Look at verse 11 of chapter 19, "And God wrought." Somebody say that with me, "And God wrought." Say it again, "And God wrought." Now watch this now: Paul is the one that is the human focal point of these miracles but before he did a miracle, the Bible tells us through the writing of Luke in verse 11 who was really doing the miracle. It says, "And God wrought."

By the way, anytime you see somebody doing something great for God, let me tell you what it involves: it always involves a supernatural work and a surrendered will. I want

you to notice this statement and don't you miss this, "And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul." Now wait a minute now, they saw Paul's hands but the Bible tells us very clear God was doing the works through the hands of Paul. And listen to me now: if anything great happens in Crossroads Baptist Church, this is what needs to happen, God has to do the work by the hands of the people. Let the choir sing but may God do the work with the choir's voice. Let the preaching happen or let God do the work through the preacher's voice. Let the teaching happen but let God do the work through the teacher's voice. Let the multiplying of missions happen but let God do the work through the people's giving and through the people's going.

Listen to me, there is too much man in churches today and I'm sick of it and I'm not trying to compete with these miracle workers. Amen. So if you came here to get your head slapped, you'd better look to the person beside you. It won't happen up here. I don't have any anointing oil. We're not living in that day and even when we were, they were in Acts 19, it was still God doing the work by the hands of Paul. Come on now. I'm simply saying if you're singing, God's got to be singing. If you're preaching, God's got to be. I don't care if you're playing an instrument or if you're holding an offering plate, it's got to be God doing the work. Somebody say amen. We need to get back to churches where God is doing the work. Now, thank God that he chooses to do the work by using people and there is nothing in the world like being used by Almighty God but in order for a supernatural work to happen, there must be a surrendered will. And God couldn't use anybody, he used Paul because Paul had died to self. He had gotten out of the way and he understood if there is something great that's going to happen in Ephesus, it's got to be God through me.

A supernatural work, a surrendered will, sensational wonders. Look at what God was doing through Paul from his body. The phrase almost literally renders, "from his skin were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs." I mean, they took napkins from Paul's skin, from his body, "unto the sick, aprons," and watch this now, "diseases and evil spirits went out." By the way, when God does a work, guess what? He can work on diseases and demons. And by the way, if you don't believe in demons, it might be a demon that's getting you not to believe in him. There are demons running around here all through this world. You can't see them but they are there and I'm telling you, if you're saved, by the way if you're saved, that demon cannot live inside of you because the Holy Spirit will not be a roommate with the devil but the demons can influence you. And I'll tell you what, there is a lot of demonic work that is going on in our world today by way of religion, by the way demons have found themselves in Hollywood, in politics, in the government, into the music industry, and sad to say, into religious circles and even into some churches. But I'm glad today that that shed blood of Jesus Christ and that resurrected Savior still has the power to get rid of demons. And by the way, there are diseases that are wrecking our people today. I'm pastoring people right now that are battling cancer, battling diseases, battling heart attacks, battling trouble breathing, battling diabetes. Listen to me, thank God for doctors, thank God for medicine, thank God for all kinds of holistic remedies but I'm glad today that the power of the human body still rests in the hands of Almighty God. He can heal diseases. I cannot. I've never even tried. I can pray. And there are people in here who have witnessed God's healing power.

Wonders. This was authentic. There was a designation here. God did it through Paul. Boy, we're missing that in churches today where God is doing it through people. Here's the problem: it was so sensational that this authentic designation attracted an attempted duplication. "Oh, we like that." Watch this now: I imagine in Ephesus there were people running around going, "Paul is a bad man. Man, that Paul. Boy, I like the way Paul got a handkerchief and he just passed out a handkerchief and somebody with cancer gone. Boy, he'd just take one of his aprons and put an apron on one of them demon possessed people and the demons leave when they wrapped the apron." Watch this now, watch this now: somebody watching said, "Hm, I think I could do that. Paul has got some magic going on, I think I could do some magic."

Attempted duplication. Hear it now, "Then certain of the vagabond Jews," these were Jews that couldn't sit still, they were run around Jews, vagabonds, restless, "exorcists," they called themselves people that cast out demons. So their stated position was they were vagabonds, they were restless. Their self-promotion, look at what the Bible says, "took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits." I said self-promotion. Nobody told them to cast out nothing, they took it on themselves. Doesn't that scare you when people have the audacity to take on positions of themselves? I've never seen so many reverends, apostles, prophets today. Who named you an apostle? "Well, I named myself." That explains it. Do you realize that people didn't pick to be apostles? They didn't pick to be prophets. God picked them. Amen. Somebody better help me preach. I'm trying to get up out of here today.

There's a danger in self-promotion. I'm telling you, if you've got something you put yourself to be doing, you're biting off more than you can chew. Amen. "Well, I like that singing." You'd better make sure that there is more than just a good voice. "I like that preaching." You'd better make sure that there is more than just a good sermon. "I like that leadership." You'd better make sure there is a lifestyle that warrants leadership. Got these guys out here today, they're going to go out and start their own church. "I'm going to go get me at church." Okay. Before long the church is going to get you. There's a whole lot more to getting a church than just putting a sermon together, putting a suit together and a tie and a pocket square and some shined shoes, some socks that look good when you sit on stage and your pants go up a little bit. I'm talking about there is a whole lot more than being a pastor than just showing up on Sunday morning and mounting a stage and hooting and hollering and boom chakalaka. And listen to me, I'm not saying that preaching ought not to be passionate and preaching ought not be a proclamation. Bless God, I wouldn't want to go to a church that was like a funeral home. I wouldn't want to go to a church where the pastor didn't have any passion. Well, I'll tell you something, he's got to be able to do more than just put together a sermon. I want to see the power of God upon his life, the anointing of the Holy Spirit. I want to see a demonstration of purity and appropriateness and holiness and when he gets up there, I want to be able to tell he's been with God, and I'd like to see a choir that can do more than just sing. Go ahead and jump up there.

There is senseless perpetration. What do you mean? Listen to their language. They are going to do what Paul did. Listen to their words, "We adjure you," they are talking to demons, "We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth." Why wasn't it Jesus who you preach? Watch this now: they had the performance without the power. They didn't know Jesus, they just knew Paul and they wanted to pull off what Paul pulled off by borrowing his Jesus. "Woo, pastor." Listen, you can get all the runs in your song you want to, that's exactly right, you can come up with the best sermons. And by the way, you can find them online and I know preachers who look them up every week and think the people are too dumb to know it. I know preachers who get their sermons from the commentary in the Bible and the people reading the commentary while the preacher is preaching the sermon, making them think he came up with it. By the way, all of us, all of us get something from somebody because all of Scripture comes from Almighty God. I'm just simply saying you'd better quit focusing on looking good on the platform and start focusing on knowing him in the background.

"I'm going to get me a church. I'm going to sing me a song. I'm going to start me a ministry." Okay, just make sure that you're not telling them about a Jesus that somebody else preaches. You'd better know him for yourself because when you meet them demons, you'd better be coming to them in a name you've experienced for yourself. Well, I'll tell you what, I have encountered some of those demons. I'm telling the truth. I've seen them firsthand. I've seen them on somebody. Amen. Listen, I didn't want to be telling them, "Get away from me in the name of Jesus who my daddy preached 30 years. Sickness, get away from me in the name of whom the Jesus who my mama trusted to get healed from cancer three times." And by the way, I'm glad she got healed and I'm glad daddy preached but let me tell you something, when I face adversity and trial and when the devil comes in my face, I don't tell him about a Jesus I heard about, I don't tell him about a Jesus somebody has talked about. By the way, we're raising kids all they know is momma's God, daddy's God, preacher's God. They go off to college and they can't find God because they never knew God. I'm not just getting you to wear a long skirt and a high blouse although you should, I'm not just trying to get your hair looking right or your standards to be right although they should, I want you to come to this church and know that there is a Savior who died, was buried and rose again and you can know him for yourself. And we don't take for granted just because you're a good performer that you know him.

We tried to come up with some regulations along the way that will demonstrate that you do know him and don't mind stepping up your game to serve him. So here we go. Duplication, "Oh, we can pull that off. Patty cake, patty cake, baker's man." I'm going somewhere. I'm going to close this message. My wife is back.

Authentic designation. Everybody say that: authentic designation. Say: attempted duplication. Here's number three: adverse domination. Here's what happened. Listen, here's what happened: they were going to do something with the devils but because they were unqualified, the devils did something with them. "Come out!" Boy, I bet they had the phrases and everything together. Listen, you go to churches today and I'm telling you something, these pastor's have got moves, they can sing, they can dance. Let me tell you

something, these choirs, these drummers, some of these singers, listen to me, they are the best in the market. Come on. And folks going up in churches going, "Oh, yeah, he can sing. That pastor sure can preach." He's got all the moves.

But I want you to notice what happens here, "We adjure you by the name of Jesus," right name, "whom Paul preacheth." I want you to notice this unrecognized herald that comes out. Demons, the spirits start talking. "I know Jesus. I've heard of him." By the way, it's the "seven sons of Sceva." Sceva was a high priest in town and his sons thought just because their father was a religious leader that that made them automatically qualified for religious work. Run and tell that. "Come out!" The Spirit says, "Yeah, we've heard of Jesus, we don't mess with him." Listen, it's not in the passage, I don't think I'm sacrificing the interpretation of Scripture, I imagine those fellows are going, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I remember when he came in the country of the Gadarenes and there was a bunch of us and that crazy guy, he was naked, he was out of his mind, he was running around in the cemeteries, you chained him down, you couldn't keep him down, he was cutting himself up and one day into Gadara walked in Jesus and in the matter of a few words Jesus took them demons out of that man and sent them into the swine. Oh, he's a scary man. Look at Mary Magdalene, she had demons in her. He took the demons out of her. I mean, when demons are in the presence and Jesus comes up, he knows how to run out people out of here. And Paul, yeah, we know him too." The word "know about Jesus" is the word *ginosko*, it means by experience; knowledge that is acquired. When they said we know Paul, different Greek word, it is *epistamai*, it means by proximity or prolonged attention. "We have had personal experience with Jesus and it didn't go well for us devils. We've had information in proximity about Paul and we found out he is almost as scary as Jesus is. But I'm going to tell y'all seven sons of Sceva, we done heard of Jesus and we done heard of Paul but we haven't ever heard of y'all."

Here's what they were saying: nothing gets nervous in hell when y'all come around. I wonder if we've got any singers in the church that you don't scare hell when you sing. I wonder if we have some young men that preach in this church that sound good to us but the demons can take sick leave when you preach. Now listen to me, I'm not talking about eloquence, I'm not talking about articulation and I'm not talking about my command of the Scriptures, I'm talking about my yieldedness to God so that when I stand and preach God is controlling me and – listen – I take great privilege to the glory of God to know that if God is leading me and the Holy Spirit of God is filling me and controlling me, that when I open that Bible, there can be a scene that goes on in hell where the devils tremble. Listen to me, they may come to this building before we get here every Sunday morning but my prayer is that there is a Holy Ghost filled choir that stands up there that the moment they sing three words in their soul them demons huddle up and go, "This ain't the right church for us."

I'm about to phrase something but that probably wouldn't go over well that way. Let me invert the order. Who do you scare in hell? I was going to put the "in hell" before that but that didn't go well, that wouldn't have sounded right. I'm glad I thought first. Sometimes you're just talking out and you're preaching and you don't think about context or

colloquialisms. So who do you scare in hell? I think there are churches that are packed every Sunday that scare no demons in hell.

There is an unrecognized herald and from there there is an unexpected horror. Now watch this now: they are up there trying to do something with the demons, watch what happens on the contrary. "The man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them." Now, don't miss the distinction. In verse 15, the evil spirit is talking. In verse 16, the man is jumping. "Overcame them," how many sons of Sceva? Seven and they are up there trying to do spiritual stuff and instead of them doing spiritual stuff, devilish stuff happens to them and one man jumps on seven and instead of them casting him out, he jumps on them and by the time they leave the house, they are hurt and naked. Beat them up and took their clothes.

Now, we're laughing but there are men who stood in pulpits all over America and convinced people the Spirit of God was around them and it wasn't but five years they were in jail, they were gay, they were messing around with boys, and here they were preaching every Sunday trying to get demons out of people and meanwhile the demons were taking up them. Do you know why? They bit off more than they could chew. They thought the ministry was a place to make money. They thought the ministry was a place to get popular. They thought the ministry was a place to be in charge. They thought the ministry was a place they could do it better than their pastor did and they found out that the ministry is not a place just to be on the stage, it is a place where God works through a surrendered will. And they left humiliated and not only were they humiliated, the whole cause of Christ was humiliated. They were an embarrassment to Christianity because they tried to fake it until they could make it.

Now, let me finish. I'd carry on into next week but it's Easter and I'd wait two weeks but y'all would forget what I said this week. Unrecognized herald, unexpected horror, uncontrollable handling, unpleasant humiliation. Wow. You play around with God and think you could do God things without a God thing working in you, you will be wounded and naked. This is not a joke, it is not a game. You get right and be right and if you're not willing to get right and be right, then be honest enough to stop trying to do spiritual things until you're willing to be right. Preach, pastor.

Number 4 and the last point. Praise the Lord, nobody said amen. There was an authentic designation. Say it with me: authentic designation. Attempted duplication. Adverse domination. But we're going to finish with an awesome demonstration. Okay, news started traveling. There was a spreading reverberation all around. People started hearing, "Have you heard about them Sceva boys? Have you heard about them Sceva boys? Heard about them Sceva boys? Ooo, let me tell you, them seven sons tried to get up and cast a demon out. The demon jumped on them, beat them all up, took all their clothes and they were running around through town. Well, you didn't? No, my wife was down there and she was buying some apples and oranges and said they come running through the town, them Sceva boys half naked running through there, scared to death, hurting and limping, trying to hurry up." "What happened?" "Somebody said they tried to fake like they knew Jesus when they really didn't," and all of a sudden people started going, "Uh-oh, I better

not." Every time somebody falls, it should be an admonition to us to be right. "God, if I'm not singing right, if I'm not preaching right, if I'm not living right, God help me get right because whoever was running through town hurt and naked, the next her and naked person could be me."

There was a spreading reverberation which caused a subsequent reverence. All of a sudden they heard what had happened, Greeks and Jews. Fear fell on them. Guess what? When God starts waking people up, then people start realizing that God is not a joke. And by the way, we need to quit treating God like he's a butler we ring the bell for when we are thirsty, a prefix to our cuss word, or a 911 bailout. Where is the reverence for God? When we pray to God, we ought to be serious. When we come to church, we ought to be serious. When we open the Bible, we ought to be serious.

Fear came upon them. All of a sudden this subsequent reverence and this spreading reverberation created a spiritual response. The Bible says, "many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds." All of a sudden a whole lot of other fakes started coming out of the woodwork and said, "Before you take my clothes and before you hurt me, let me get right." Sometimes somebody else getting judged ought to be the motivation for you to get right. Come on now. Every time somebody stands up here in front of the church, young ladies, it ought to say to you, "Keep myself pure. Shouldn't be talking about somebody." You should be saying, "Let me get right with God. Just because they are up there doesn't mean they did something I'm not doing too. They just got caught." And sometimes it's good to get caught because you get right. Amen.

Spiritual response. Sincere repentance. They started bringing in books. The Bible says "curious arts." It means, "curious arts," means those who went beyond that which was legitimate. They were meddlers. They were doing the most. Curious arts means they were doing something that caused care and pain that was not worth the trouble. What was it that they were doing that wasn't worth the trouble? Reading them crazy books. Watch this now: the Bible says, I'm finishing. I promise you. They used curious arts and they brought their books together. No doubt in my mind these were superstitious books, magic books, books that Christian people shouldn't have been fooling with. And when they watched God judge seven phonies, do you know what they said? There are some husbands and wives that said, "Honey, go in the kids' room and get the books." Some teenage parents probably thought, "Oh, let me get them books." Watch this, maybe some men said, "I might need clearing some stuff off my internet, shut down my Facebook page. Once I saw God judge, once I saw a man fall, I might even change some of the things, I might even turn my cable off." They started bringing, nobody went in their house and took it out, they started getting convicted. And by the way, the context here is curious books, books that they shouldn't have had. Well, the truth of the matter is when God gets a hold of you, he won't just point out your books, he'll point out your music, he'll point out your language, he'll point out your thoughts, he'll point out your clothes. Hello?

They started bringing them forward, what I call a sacrificial relinquishing. They got rid of them. Significant representation. They said when you counted it up it was 50,000 pieces

of silver. We don't know how much that was. It could have been \$10,000 worth. Who knows? Some have estimated. Here's what I'm saying: God got a hold of them. They were so serious about God they got rid of stuff that they had spent a lot of money on. Do you know what some people say? "I'd love to get rid of that stuff but do you know how much it cost me? I'll sell it to somebody else and mess up their life. These bad books just got the devil all in my house and I gave them to my nephew. You want to walk with the Lord, here take this junk." Why in the world would you be remorseful over money that you're wasting when it was wasted on junk? Just get rid of it. Amen.

Significant representation and the scriptural results, "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." I don't want you to miss this. Why would Luke after they got rid of all those demonic books make the statement, "So mightily the word of God grew and prevailed." Here's what he's saying: when preaching went forth after they got rid of that junk, the preaching had so much more effect when people got sin out of their lives. If you find yourself coming to church and never enjoying the message and always shaking your head and always mad about the sermon, ready for it to finish, you've probably got junk in your trunk. If you'd get that mess out of your life, God's word could hit you where it counts and start doing a work. And let me tell you something, you ever try to read your Bible mad, tried to do something spiritual? It's counterproductive, but doesn't it feel good to get that mess out? To get your mind clear? Get your marriage right? You say, "God, Lord, I'm starting to realize now this Christian life ain't me, it's got to be you."

Listen, I know, I've been lengthy today but I think this is a serious matter. There are a lot of people, a lot of people that go to a lot of churches that have got a lot of drama and very little God and we can't judge God by parking lots, programs and popularity. It's got to be his work through us. Anything besides that, let me assure you, you're biting off more than you can chew.

Our Father, I pray you would erupt in us a seriousness for your work. Please, God.

Heads bowed and eyes closed, no one looking around, let me ask you a question: do you know you're saved? I'm just asking you, do you know Jesus as your Savior? I'm not asking if you've been baptized. So were they earlier in the passage. I'm just asking you if you know Jesus as your Savior? "Pastor, I know that I'm saved." If you know that, would you raise your hand? "I know that I know that I know that I know that I know that I know that I'm saved." Put your hands down. Okay. "Pastor," watch this now, "I want my Christian life to be a work that God does through me. God in some way has spoken to me today." Would you raise your hand? Come on and in a moment you ought to come to the altar. Many have already come, and just say, "God, if there's anything that needs to get out of my life, needs to be adjusted, don't let me just get up here and make the performance look good." Performance without power is pointless. One more question, "Pastor, I'm not sure if I died today I'd go to heaven but I'm sure I don't want to go to hell. I'm not sure if I died today I'd go to heaven but I'm sure I don't want to go to hell. Please pray for me." Will you raise your hand? "I'm not sure if I died right now today I'd go to heaven but I do not want to go to hell." I'm not going to call your name or embarrass you, I just want to pray for you. Anybody like that? Just leave it up long enough for me to see

it. Anybody like that, "I'm not sure I'm going to heaven but I'm sure I don't want to go to hell. Please pray for me."

Let's stand together.

Lord, would you bless this invitation time and move in our midst. Make much of Christ through our lives. In Jesus' name. Amen.