

Series: Acts

Title: The Work God Works, Gospel in the Garments, and the Folly of Fakers

Text: Acts 19: 11-20

Date: September 17, 2009

Place: Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Princeton, New Jersey

**Acts 19: 11: And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: 12: 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.**

## I. THE WORK GOD WORKS

The Acts of the Apostles are the Acts of our King.

When we started this study in Acts, one of the first points that we addressed is: the acts of the apostles are the acts of God our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, worked by the hands of the apostles.

Because it was by Christ, the Power and Wisdom of God, working in these early believers, they all had one mind and one purpose in all that they did—to magnify the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God wrought “special” miracles.

The miracles which God worked by the hands of his messengers are miracles that men consider to be great miracles. Miracles such as when—God used Peter to heal the lame man at the gate called Beautiful, when God used Peter to heal so many people until they would just lay their needy relatives by the street in hopes that Peter’s shadow would heal them, when through Philip God cast out unclean spirits.

Yet, in reality those are altogether “lesser miracles.” Those miracles are not nearly as miraculous as what God has done for and in sinners through the blood of his Son through the Holy Spirit. The special miracles which God works are—the regeneration of spiritually dead sinners recreating them in the image of God, the growing of the new man in grace and knowledge, the bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ, the boldness with which frail sinners preach the gospel in the face of all opposition—these are the “special miracles” which God works. They are infinitely above and beyond the scope of any of man’s ability to produce, whatsoever.

But here in verse 11 we read, God wrought “special miracles” by the hands of Paul. This is another case of those lesser miracles. They are called “special” miracles because these miracles were even more amazing than those other temporary miracles which God had done. Up till now at least with the other miracles, God’s messenger had to be present. Paul did not even have to be present.

**Acts 19: 12: 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.**

Here is the point of the entire passage, merely witnessing these lesser miracles never freed a sinner from the captivity of their own evil sin and hatred against God or from the captivity the prince of the power of the air had over them. The very message God is conveying in these lesser miracles is that only Christ, through the gospel of Christ, can raise the dead, cast down the evil imaginations, clothe in the garments of Christ’s righteousness and forever make sinners whole.

God is bearing witness of the glory of Christ by these miracles.

Remember when the Lord told the man to take up his bed and walk? He asked a question:

Matthew 9: 5: For whether is easier, to say, *Thy* sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? 6: But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. 7: And he arose, and departed to his house. 8: But when the multitudes saw *it*, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

Then when the Lord gave his disciples power to cast out evil spirits and to heal, he gave them charge to do two things.

Matthew 10:1: And when he had called unto *him* his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease...7: And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. 8: Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.

He gave them the power to heal as they preached the gospel because by these lesser miracles he was declaring the greater, spiritual, miracles he performs in the creation of his saints through the preaching of the gospel of Christ Jesus the King.

What is this power of Christ revealed in the gospel?

Luke 10: 17: And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. 18: And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. 19: Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. 20: Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven. 21: In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. 22: All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him. 23: And he turned him unto *his* disciples, and said privately, Blessed *are* the eyes which see the things that ye see: 24: For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen *them*; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard *them*.

When he walked this earth he said, "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins" Before he ascended, he said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations." And would sinners be healed by his power? Would his power deliver them from captivity of sin and Satan? The second thing he told them to do is the first public act of obedience which is the result of his effectual healing power. "And baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." Furthermore, as they were to disciple men he said it would be the same power which made believers obedient from the first hour to their last, "Lo, I am with you always. Amen. "

This great power of salvation first began to be spoken to us by the Lord, then those who heard came preaching and confirmed it, and here in our text: God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

## II. THE GOSPEL IN THE GARMENTS

**Acts 19: 11: And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: 12: 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.**

What a beautiful declaration that we who are robed in the garments of Christ Jesus the Lord our Righteousness are made every whit whole in him.

Paul was not present in body, but from his body these garments were brought and these garments were applied.

No one is mentioned; no one is recorded, just that these garments were brought unto the sick. The Lord Jesus Christ described the Holy Spirit like the wind.

John 3: 7: Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8: The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

The earthly vessel which God used to deliver the garment is not mentioned.

2 Corinthians 4:7: But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

The garment and what it accomplished is the focus.

The garment of our Lord's righteousness was designed by God's pattern made in the eternal counsel and covenant of grace. From before the world was founded, in the eternal eye of God, each particular, chosen child of God was robed in this garment in God the Father's eternal purpose when he

Ephesians 1: 3:...blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: 4: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6: To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

His garment of righteousness is of one solid a piece, made of the undivided, united faithfulness of Jesus Christ the Son of God who was made under the law. That law whose 600 plus precepts were given by God to declare the magnitude of our one transgression in Adam in the garden. And by his righteous obedience to every jot and tittle, fulfilling even all things that were written by the prophets of him, by his obedience even to the death of the cross being made a curse for us, we behold something of the righteousness of our Representative and Substitute in whom we have been made the very righteousness of God.

This garment was died red in his precious blood when he tread the winepress of God's wrath alone. But this garment is pure white in the satisfaction which he made for us when he perfected us forever by his one offering.

Though he is not present bodily, as Paul was not here in our text, yet, now, he who has all power in heaven and in earth sends forth his messengers to preach his marvelous works. By the gospel he has sent, which declares him, he comes to each of those he has loved from everlasting and heals them of their disease and captivity of sin and Satan, by recreating them after the image of God in the inner man, decking them in his perfect robe of righteousness. He continues to grow us, to teach us and keep us. And one day, by his same power, he shall raise us to final glory. Then not only will his righteousness be imputed to us, not only shall our inner man be created in righteousness and true holiness but then this mortality will put on immortality. We shall awake in his likeness. The King's daughter shall be fully, perfectly righteous within and without in perfect righteousness, to the praise of the glory of his grace.

Revelation 7: 13: And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? 14: And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to

me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

**Acts 19: 11: And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: 12: 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.**

### III. THE FOLLY OF FAKERS

**Acts 19: 13: 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. 14: And there were seven sons of *one* Sceva, a Jew, *and* chief of the priests, which did so.**

These men appeared to the natural eye to be one with Paul.

They were Jews. These men appeared as religious men, with religious authority and some level of credibility--they were sons of a chief priest. They claimed to have the power to cast out evil spirits and they claimed to do so in the name of the Lord Jesus who Paul preached.

Yet, they were vagabond Jews—they had no permanent dwelling. Also, they were exorcists—they merely had a man-made formula for casting out evil spirits. They spoke as if *they* had the power to turn away this man from evil, “*We* adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.” But they did not dwell in Christ by faith; all in whom Christ dwells, dwell in Christ and he in them. They did not preach Christ whom Paul preached, but merely used his name. The power they depended upon was their own. They were sons of a priest but not the sons of the great High Priest, Christ Jesus the Son of God.

The majority in our day—as it has been from the beginning--are attempting to turn sinners from evil, not by preaching Jesus Christ, but by merely calling out the name of this Jesus whom Paul preached while denying his power in the methods they employ while attempting to make men holy. They do not use the only sword, the only weapon, the gospel of Christ but like these vagabond rebukers who needed rebuking, they have a form of godliness but deny the power of God. In claiming to have the power to affect what only Christ can do, they manifest the worst of all evil—lasciviousness.

Lasciviousness is such dirty word! Surely, that word means adulterers, profane people, immoral, base, the kind of sinners over which moral men like to exercise their formulas for freeing men from evil! Lasciviousness, uncleanness, greediness is found most in those who call the name Jesus and look to the power of man to affect the obedience which only Christ creates.

Titus 1: 10: For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: 11: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake. 13:...Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; 14: Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth....16: They profess that they know God; but in works they deny *him*, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

These self-promoters only serve the glory of Christ.

Question: as powerful as those evil spirits were, who had the power? Who could remove them? Who could hedge them about? Who could prevent the evil spirits from causing any further injury? The one to whom all power in heaven and earth is given—Christ Jesus the Lord. He did so with the demoniac. The people saw him clothed and seated and his right mind because Christ simply told the spirit to come out of him.

Why then did not these men simply preach the Lord Jesus Christ like the apostle Paul did, like Aquilla and Priscilla, like Apollos at Corinth, like Peter and Philipp and every ambassador Christ has ever sent? Vagabonds do not preach Christ because they do not truly believe that Christ is the Power and Wisdom of God. Religious wolves in sheep's clothing have a form of godliness but they really think their power and their own commands—we adjure thee--have the power to perfect believers! But look what the Lord allowed the evil spirit to do to those fakers who were using his name in vain to promote their own name and power.

The Lord used the evil spirit to rebuke the vagabond exorcists.

**Acts 19: 15: And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?**

As least the evil spirit knew Jesus and his ambassador. The devils which were cast out of the demoniac at least knew they had to beseech Christ.

Matthew 8:31: So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.

James 2:19: Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

What a statement! The devils knew the power of Christ and his gospel before these men did.

Christ brings them to their end.

**Acts 19: 16: 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.**

Sometimes we see this in this life. And whether it comes in this life or not, it shall be the end of all who seek to have the preeminence.

A man spend years lording over God's heritage in how they ought to be raising their own children, making parents feel guilty and helpless, as if he has the power to do what only Christ can do. Then his own children grow up and prove to the world he had no such power himself. Or a man will meddle in the affairs of men and women in the church as if he has the power to prevent others from immorality then one day he proves he didn't have the power to prevent himself from it. They often flee out of the house naked and wounded.

In such cases, the natural eye only sees what you would have seen in our text, one man overcome by another. In reality, by Christ removing the restraints, the evil spirit these men claimed to have the power to overcome, overcame them. The lawyer who cries for justice will wish he had pleaded for mercy when the judge lands him in the same jail cell with those he condemned.

Sadly, unless Christ exercises this power in sinners, someone else crawls up to take over the whip and the people go on in their religious rebellion.

Jeremiah 5: 31: The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love *to have it* so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?

God overrules all rebellion to glorify his name.

**Acts 19: 17: 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. 18: And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. 19: 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.**

### Application

Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves but know that your wisdom, your charisma, your political savvy, will never work what only Christ can work—far wiser men than you have tried and failed. If you could sway men, bridge opposing parties, coerce confessions of faith or affect an outward form of repentance and faith someone better than you can sway them another way. Carnal men use these methods, men who do not trust the power and wisdom of God, vagabonds, formula-men, men whose apparel changes to suit the fashion of the day.

The Psalmist said:

Psalm 66:3: Say unto God, How terrible *art thou* in thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee....7: He ruleth by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah.

Have you been such a one? Do you trust in your power, in your wisdom? Our strength is to sit still, to trust Christ.

Isaiah 40:29: He giveth power to the faint; and to *them that have* no might he increaseth strength.

God is merciful. I like this in verse 18, 19, "many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds" and those who were in the same way with those fakers repented and set fire to their old religion. The Lord Jesus Christ told Nicodemus:

John 3:20: For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. 21: But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

**Acts 19: 11: And God wrought special miracles....17...and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified**

God delights to show mercy!

Job 33:27: He looketh upon men, and *if any* say, I have sinned, and perverted *that which was* right, and it profited me not; 28: He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.

When men experience the power of God's grace, I mean truly experience this power in their heart; they are done with the power of men, the methods of men, the formulas of men. Instead they speak of the works of God.

Psalm 145: 10: All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee. 11: They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; 12: To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.

**Acts 19: 20: So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed. Amen!**