

Paul arrives at Ephesus and spend two years teaching and evangelizing the city. As a result of his ministry in Ephesus, the gospel was able to spread throughout Asia Minor. Luke describes some noteworthy results of Paul's ministry in Ephesus, including healings and evil spirits being cast out, and people confessing their sins and repenting from their dependence on superstitious practices.

**Verses 1-9:** Paul is well into his third missionary journey (Acts 18:23) when he arrives in Ephesus, a city on the west end of Asia Minor. While there he encounters a small group of disciples. He is understandably concerned about their state as believers so he asks them if they have received the Holy Spirit since they "believed." When he discovers that they had never heard of the Holy Spirit and the fact that their baptism was that of John the Baptist and not Jesus Christ, Paul realizes that these men were not yet believers in Jesus Christ. **Romans 8:9b** tells us "*Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his,*" showing that these men were not yet born again. Paul informs the men that "the One coming" that John the Baptist spoke of was in fact Jesus of Nazareth, Who is the Christ. Once they heard that, these men believed and were able to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Paul then spent three months in the synagogue trying to reach the Jews, but they resisted and began speaking evil of "the way" (the gospel of Christ). Paul then leaves the synagogue (perhaps in similar fashion as he did before when he declared that he would go to the Gentiles – Acts 13:46, 18:6), bringing those that believed with him, and begins teaching in a local lecture hall owned by the school of Tyrannus.

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10 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.

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**"And this continued by the space of two years"** – Paul is able to teach and preach the gospel at the school of Tyrannus for two years, no doubt reaching a multitude of people.

**"so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks"** – Those that came to believe in Jesus Christ under Paul's teaching during these two years travel throughout Asia (Asia Minor) and take the gospel with them. The result was it was hard, if not impossible, to find a place in Asia where people had not heard something about Jesus Christ. Such is the result of fearlessly sharing of the gospel.

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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.

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**"And God wrought special [unusual; not ordinary] miracles by the hands of Paul"** – The nature of these miracles made it obvious they could only have come from God. Even Luke acknowledges that these were not "ordinary" miracles, perhaps to distinguish them from the fake miracles performed by charlatans who performed them for money. Peter and Paul had already encountered such people (Acts 8:9-11; 13:6-8) and proved the superiority of God's power over these magicians.

**"So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs [sweat cloths] or aprons"** – Like in Corinth, Paul was likely working to support himself and so had "sweat cloths" to wipe perspiration and aprons that he wore while he worked. The belief that mystical power could be transmitted through such items was widespread in the ancient world, so apparently people would take these items that had been on Paul's body and bring them to those who were sick and afflicted.

**"and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them"** – Despite the superstitious beliefs, God performed the miraculous acts of healing diseases and casting evil spirits out in order to give credibility to the message that Paul preached.

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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.

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**"Then certain of the vagabond [to wander about; i.e. itinerate] Jews, exorcists"** – These were Jewish exorcists who traveled around making a living by offering their "service" of casting evil spirits out of those afflicted with them and other "supernatural" feats.

**"took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus"** – Apparently some of these Jewish exorcists had noticed the success that Paul had at casting out evil spirits in the name of Jesus Christ and decided to try Paul's method for themselves. Their exorcisms may have been filled with elaborate tricks in order to bilk people out of their money. Since Paul was legitimately casting out evil spirits, they apparently believed it was because Paul used the name of Jesus as an incantation.

**"saying, We adjure [to force under an oath; to command] you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth"** – These Jewish exorcists attempted control an evil spirit by using the name of Jesus as a magic word. They expose their unfamiliarity with Jesus by adding "whom Paul preacheth." Their lack of understanding of the supernatural led them to conceive faulty ideas.

**"And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so"** – Since there is no record of a chief priest by the name of "Sceva," many commentators believe that this Sceva merely pretended to be a chief priest in order to deceive people and make money. If Sceva was a such a dishonest man, it should come as no surprise that his sons would also be charlatans trying to make a "quick buck" through deceit. In fact, they may have been a father/sons team that traveled around making a name for themselves and cheating people out of their money.

15 And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? 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.

**“And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?”** – The evil spirit recognized that Jesus and Paul both had the authority to command him, but rejected the attempt of these exorcists to command him because they lacked the authority. Jesus has absolute authority over demonic spirits and He has delegated that authority to his apostles. However, the name of Jesus is not a magic word that can be chanted in order to derive supernatural power.

**“And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them”** – Despite being outnumbered 7 to 1, the man with the evil spirit was able to attack and overpower the seven sons of Sceva with supernatural strength. The Gadarene demoniac that Jesus encountered had such supernatural strength: **Mark 5:1-4** *“And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.”* No man could tame this man but Jesus effortlessly cast the demons out of him because they recognized His authority over them and had to obey (Mark 5:6-13).

**“so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded”** – The seven sons of Sceva found out the hard way that you should not play with things that you don’t understand in the spiritual realm. Attempting to control demonic spirits is dangerous enough, and to attempt to do it by invoking the name of Jesus Christ without knowing Him is even worse. These men were fortunate to have only suffered embarrassment and physical injuries.

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.

**“And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus”** – Witnesses to the incident apparently spread the news of what had happened to others in the city until all of Ephesus had heard of the failed exorcism.

**“and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified”** – People were already afraid of evil spirits and the incident with the sons of Sceva proved that Jesus Christ was more powerful than these evil spirits. Thus they feared God and the name of Jesus Christ was magnified in their eyes. They realized that this Jesus that Paul had been preaching was real and powerful.

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.

**“And many that believed came”** – This description may refer to the other Jewish exorcists who practiced sorcery and other magical arts to attempt to cast out demons or it may refer to the general population that had believed as a result of the incident with the sons of Sceva. That incident must have caused them to realize that Jesus is indeed the Christ and that it was wiser to put their trust in Him instead of their superstitious beliefs in magic.

**“and confessed, and shewed their deeds”** – They repented and confessed their sin of engaging in sorcery and magical arts.

**“Many of them also which used curious [magic or superstition] arts brought their books together, and burned them before all *men*”** – Ephesus was full of people who practiced superstitious and occultic beliefs. Books about sorcery and other forbidden arts were plentiful in this city, but those that had turned to Christ were renouncing their belief in these forbidden arts. Many were expressing their repentance by bringing their books that taught magic to be burned. Burning these books demonstrated that they were leaving these things behind and would not return to them.

**“and they counted the price of them, and found *it* fifty thousand *pieces* of silver”** – Many commentators believe that these pieces of silver were drachmas (a day’s wage for a common worker), and if so, the value of these books equaled 50,000 days wages. Luke wants us to see the magnitude of the effect of the gospel on these people. The sum of money reflects either the number of people repenting and/or the genuineness of their repentance in that they were willing to part with books of such value.

20 So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

Luke is showing us how much the gospel was spreading and the impact that it was having as it spread. The power of the word of God is why Paul was not ashamed of it: **Rom. 1:16** *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”*

**Verses 21-41:** While still at Ephesus, Paul begins making plans to travel through Macedonia and Achaia, then back to Jerusalem and afterward to Rome. However, Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines for the goddess Diana, rallied his fellow silversmiths together in complaint against Paul. He was hurting their business through his preaching because not as many people were buying their Diana shrines because many had turned to Christ. Demetrius and the other silversmiths got the city in such an uproar that a mob captured two of Paul’s traveling companions, Gaius and Aristarchus, and rushed them to the local theater in a protest. Paul wanted to enter the theater and address the people but the brethren feared for his safety and would not allow him. Finally, the town clerk was able to appease the people and get them to disperse by reminding the people that Demetrius and the other silversmiths had legal means of addressing their complaint and that Ephesus might draw unwanted attention from Caesar because of the uproar they were causing.