

Beginning with chapter 19, Paul returned to Ephesus where we met some disciples of John the Baptist (v1). After baptizing them (v5), he laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit (v6). He then taught boldly for three months in the synagogue (v8), but after the Jews hardened their hearts, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus (v9). This, according to v10, he did for two years. The events of vv11-20 describe an additional event that took place during that two years. It can be summarized by three words: Imitation (vv11-17), Repentance (vv18-19), and Domination (v20).

- I. Imitation (vv11-17)
- II. Repentance (vv18-19)
- III. Domination (v20)

- I. Imitation (vv11-17)

1. Verses 11-12—"Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them."
2. Luke describes these miracles as "unusual" or "extraordinary" which means they were beyond the regular miracles.
3. Even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from Paul's body to the sick and possessed, and they were healed.
4. It's not that there was any virtue or power in the clothes themselves, but the power or virtue came from God.
5. V11—"Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul"—the power came from God who performed the miracles through Paul.
6. Paul was only the medium, instrument, or channel whereby or through which God performed the miracles.
7. V13—"Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, 'We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.'"
8. I take these to be Jewish people who claimed to possess the power to exorcise, expel, or cast out demons.
9. As Paul was casting out demons by the name of the Lord Jesus, so these began to use the same formula.
10. Even though they didn't know Christ, they nevertheless sought to cast out demons by the name of Jesus.
11. V14—"Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, 'Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?'"
12. As crowds of people flocked around Paul, these seven men took it upon themselves, to exorcise an evil spirit from a man.
13. As we learn from the gospels, demons are fallen and evil angels who can indwell or possess unbelievers.
14. Furthermore, we are reminded, that these evil spirits know about Jesus and they knew about His apostles.

15. Remember, evil spirits are fallen angels who are powerful and intelligent creatures (more power than men).
16. The evil spirit not only verbally rebuked these seven men, but he then physically attacked them (v16).
17. V16—"Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded."
18. The presence of the evil spirit gave the possessed man great physical strength so that he prevailed against all seven brothers.
19. V17—"This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified."
20. Knowledge of this event had passed throughout the region, which resulted in two related things: fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified."
21. (a) Fear fell on them all—this means the people were gripped with an awe, terror, and/or amazement.
22. As news spread of what happened to the sons of Sceva, a holy fear and dread fell upon all of the people.
23. This doesn't mean that every person had a true fear of God, but they at least had a general fear of God.
24. Acts 5:11—"So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things"—this was the result of what happened to Ananias and Sapphira (if you remember they were both struck dead).
25. Notice fear fell upon two distinct groups—"upon all the church" and "upon all who heard these things."
26. (b) The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified—that is, His name was being held in high honor or respect.
27. This specifically refers to the speech of the people—they began to speak about His name in reverent ways.
28. Before at best they ignored His name at worst they blasphemed His name now they magnified His name (and as we shall see from v18, this resulted in many people believing on Christ and repenting from sin).

II. Repentance (vv18-19)

1. V18—"And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds"—I understand by "many who had believed" to refer to the previous verse.
2. In light of the events of vv16-17, many had come to believe the message that Paul preached to them.
3. They didn't believe by merely watching the events of v16, but in light of them, they believed the truth.
4. Remember, the miracles were an authentication of the word, which was no doubt preached by the apostle Paul (v13).
5. The miracles merely validated the messenger as an ambassador of God and thus his message as from God.
6. Luke then describes the repentance that accompanied their faith as being expressed in confessing (v18) and burning (v19).

7. (1) Confessing, v18—"And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds"—that is, to Paul and the other believers.
8. This was a public confession wherein those who had believed humbly acknowledged their former sins.
9. While it's true, according to v19, that some of these sins were sorcery and witchcraft, I take the confession of v18, to be much broader.
10. V18—"And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds"—they came confessing their sins.
11. Mk.1:5—"Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins."
12. They were publicly confessing that they were sinners and had lived their lives in foolish and wicked ways.
13. (2) Burning, v19—"Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver."
14. Just as their confession was public so was their book burning (which too was an expression of their repentance).
15. In short, they repented in word and deed—they confessed their sins and they burned their books of magic.
16. This is always the result of true repentance—a person makes a clean break with their former life-style.
17. Thieves repent of their thievery, adulterers repent of their adultery, liars repent of their lies, and crack-smokers repent of their crack smoking.
18. Luke tells us the value of the books was great—"And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver."
19. This obviously was a great amount of money as books were extremely rare and thus extremely costly. (John Dick – 'It was a sacrifice to the glory of God, consumed in a fire, kindled by the hand of holy zeal').

III. Domination (v20)

1. V20—"So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed"—here Luke says to things about the word: it grew mightily and prevailed (or dominated).
2. (1) It grew mightily—the word of the Lord grew or spread mightily—that is, as it was believed and proclaimed.
3. The word of God is said to grow when it's believed, and so as many believed so the word of God grew mightily (greatly).
4. Acts 6:7—"Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem."
5. (2) It prevailed—the word of the Lord prevailed—the Greek word rendered "prevail" literally means "to become strong."
6. It implies opposition—the word of God prevailed or conquered hard hearts and sinners were converted.
7. This goes back to what we saw in v8, where Paul taught in the synagogue "concerning the things of the kingdom of God."

8. The church is a kingdom which advances as the gospel is proclaimed and sinners are brought to bow to Christ.
9. It's through the word of God that the kingdom of darkness is defeated and the kingdom of God is advanced.
10. In fact, this particular Greek word rendered prevailed was used to describe a fortress taken by military force.
11. The word of God was spreading throughout the city and was prevailing against the kingdom of darkness.
12. Thus, this entire passage is an illustration of the spiritual conflict that takes place between two kingdoms (as I have entitled the message – A Clash of Two Kingdoms).

IV. A Clash of Two Kingdoms

1. Before I come to this final point, I want to briefly remind you of the necessity of asking two questions—what does the passage mean, and why is it in our Bible?
2. It's not enough to simply give a running commentary on the grammar and historical setting of the passage.
3. We have to develop its theology (that is, its relation to the rest of Scripture) and then its application for us today.
4. I mentioned two weeks ago in considering v9, that Paul preached about the kingdom of God in Christ.
5. According to Paul, the Davidic kingdom formally began with Christ's ascension when He sat at the right hand of God the Father on David's throne.
6. Well this week, in vv11-20 we have an account wherein additional truths are revealed about Christ's kingdom.
7. And so, I want to suggest to you from it, three additional facts about the present kingdom of God on earth.
8. But before I do that, I want to digress for a few minutes and address a current debate among Christians.
9. There are some Christians who speak of two kingdoms (the kingdom of darkness and light) and there are other Christians who speak of one kingdom (the kingdom of God in Christ).
10. And the reason for this discussion is because the Scripture speaks in both ways—it sometimes describes His kingdom as limited to His people and at other times, it describes it as including all of creation.
11. So there is a sense in which Christ's kingdom is limited to His people, and there's another sense in which it includes all creation.
12. Many of our fathers used to distinguish between the kingdom of grace (over the church) and power (over the world).
13. This allows for us to make sense of all the texts of the Bible—there are two kingdoms on earth (darkness and light) and yet there's one king ultimately over them both.
14. But having made that clarification, it is the kingdom of grace that is usually meant by the kingdom of God (and is what I will now discuss).
15. (1) Its authority—the authority of this kingdom has been given to a single King in reward for His suffering.
16. This means, everything we do as soldiers of Christ is done in His name—that is, is done in His authority.

17. This is illustrated in Paul's miracles, which were done by the power of God in the name (authority) of Jesus.
18. This is further seen throughout the book of Acts in that all the apostles did they did in the name of Jesus.
19. They preached in the name of Jesus, baptized in the name of Jesus, performed miracles in the name of Jesus, and cast out demons in the name of Jesus.
20. Everything they did was in Jesus name, which again fundamentally means, it was done in/by His authority.
21. Thus, it wasn't the expression, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches" that was the problem—the problem was it was merely words in their mouths.
22. Only people who are within the kingdom of grace, have the ability to speak and to act in Jesus' Name.
23. It's similar to what Paul said in 1Cor.12:3—"No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit."
24. This doesn't mean unbelievers are unable to form the words or mimic the expression, but they are unable to say it from the heart.
25. Even demons can say the expression Jesus is the Lord, but only believers can own Christ, from the heart, as Lord.
26. Thus, all that Christians do and say, as citizens of His kingdom, are to be done and said in the name of Jesus (that is, in the authority of Jesus).
27. Now, I feel like I need to offer a brief clarification—there are certain Christians who abuse this concept.
28. They run around rebuking demons and claiming blessings all in the name and authority of Jesus (in the name of Jesus has become to them a magical formula).
29. I fear many of these professing Christians have little or no real understanding what the phrase "in Jesus name" means.
30. And yet, on the flip side, we must remember that all we do and say must be "by the name of Jesus whom Paul preached."
31. Our prayers must be in His name—our worship must be in His name—and our warfare must be in His name.
32. And so, what does this specifically mean—what does it mean to live, walk, and fight in the name of Jesus (I suggest we do so in His merit, by His power, and for His glory)?
33. (a) In His merit—this means I live, walk, and fight dressed in His righteousness and washed in His blood.
34. We fight as soldiers of the cross—do you remember, the crusaders found with a cross painted on their chest (and so must we – we must ever live, walk, and fight in light of the cross).
35. (b) By His power—by this I mean, we do so knowing, we have to strength in ourselves to live, walk, and fight.
36. Remember, this single evil spirit was powerful enough to overcome and defeat seven grown men by himself.
37. (c) For His glory—by this I mean, we live, walk, pray, preach, and fight not for our honor but for His.
38. Unlike these seven brothers, our goal is self-advancement, fame, or self-glory—we fight from and for our King.

39. (2) Its opponents—according to our passage our opposition are evil spirits who control or influence evil men.
40. Now, to say that Christ possesses authority over the kingdom of darkness in no way changes its nature.
41. It is the kingdom of darkness, wherein Satan and his demonic host holds powerful sway over its citizens.
42. Acts 26:17-18—"I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me."
43. (a) They are in darkness—this means, they are in spiritual ignorance and moral wickedness—this is their native realm.
44. (b) They are under the power of Satan—this means, they are willing slaves of Satan who desire to do his will.
45. (c) They are without forgiveness and sanctification—they are guilty and filthy sinners under the just condemnation of God.
46. (3) Its weaponry—I trust it goes without saying the weaponry of Christ's kingdom is spiritual not carnal.
47. Luke expressly tells us (v20), it was the word of God that grew mightily and prevailed over all its enemies.
48. There is but a single weapon that can prevail against Satan and his kingdom of darkness and that is the truth.
49. (a) It's by the word fiery darts are extinguished—it's by faith in the word that Satan temptations are quenched.
50. This can be illustrated by our Savior, who met the temptations of Satan with the word of God—"It is written."
51. (b) It's by the word strongholds are broken—by this I refer to the lies and deception of the father of lies.
52. 2Cor.10:4-5—"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."
53. The strongholds in this passage refer to all arguments, lies, and deception leveled against the truth of God.
54. (c) It's by the word slaves are liberated, Jn.8:32—"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
55. Nothing but the word of God, in the hand of the Spirit, can liberate such sinners from the kingdom of darkness.
56. (i) We must know it—brethren, it's absolutely necessary for a soldier to have a right understanding of his weapon.
57. How tragic it is, that so many Christians run headlong into battle with little or knowledge of the truth (while it's true not every Christian will be a preacher, every Christian is called to be a soldier).
58. (ii) We must believe it—we must know it in such a way that it's not only in our heads but deeply in our hearts.

59. (iii) We must wield it, Eph.6:17—"And take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"—take it up as a weapon (it must not only be in our heads and hearts, but also within our mouths).