



John's Schedule

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The Results of Resisting the Devil



Part 16 (070429PM)

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I invite you to examine one of the most amazing chapters in the Bible, Acts 19. In this chapter we find the key to enduring, powerful churches that God can use, and where Christ's glory is supreme. Today many churches all over the world are involved in what is actually often just veiled competition; it becomes a struggle for "our church" getting more people to come than "your church". What methodology did Paul use to grow a church?

In v. 17 of this chapter we find **the two real keys to church growth**.

God's Word explains to us what makes Christ's church grow. It is when **Jesus is magnified** and when **God's Word is unleashed**.

Jesus was magnified and God's Word grew mighty in one group of people in the New Testament ...what a combination to have for the Lord in any generation. That powerful ministry was the result of the purged lives of a local church.

This evening think of every pressure facing us as believers from: our pleasure seeking culture, our mind-assaulting media, and our materialism-dominated way of life. God's Word has an answer for how to walk in the Spirit, abide in Christ, and see Christ's church prevail in an ever darkening world. Resisting the Devil is what we are charged with as an imperative from God's Word.

Spiritual warfare is a theme that we find in the author's of 22 of the 27 books of our New Testaments. We can easily say that the New Testament is filled with pointed warnings to actively resist and defend against the Evil One. If we look at the main passages we can see...

The Five Key Truths of Spiritual Warfare

There are five key passages on spiritual warfare, and each of them has a very specific message for us to apply. As we turn to each one and read the verses, note the lesson and apply it, by the power of God's Spirit, in your life.

JESUS said to resist Satan we must—**USE GOD'S WORD**. In [Matthew 4:1-11](#) we saw that God's Word works, Jesus even used the Old Testament to defeat the Devil!

Matthew 4:4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

PAUL said to resist Satan we must—**USE GOD'S WEAPONS**. In Ephesians 6.10-17 we see that our spiritual weapons are not human inventions or works, as Paul wrote:

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 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,

JAMES said that to resist Satan we must—**LIVE SUBMISSIVELY in God's sight**. In [James 4:7-10](#) we see submission to God precedes any resistance of the Devil.

James 4:7-10 Therefore submit to God. [is first and then, and only then can we] Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

PETER said to resist Satan we must—**LIVE HUMBLY in God's sight**. In I Peter 5.5-9

we see that God calls us to clothe ourselves with humility before we resist the prowling Devil.

*1 Peter 5:5-9 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." 6 **Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God**, that He may exalt you in due time, 7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. 8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9 **Resist him, steadfast in the faith**, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.*

JOHN said to resist Satan we must—**LIVE HOLY in God's sight**. In 1 John 3.7-9 and [Revelation 12:10-11](#) we see how powerful a pure life can be, and how disabling impurity can be.

*1 John 3:3, 8 And everyone who has this hope in Him **purifies himself**, just as He is pure. 8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might **destroy the works of the devil**.*

*Revelation 12:10-11 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. 11 "And they overcame him by the **blood of the Lamb** [faith in Christ's sacrifice alone] and by the **word of their testimony** [hope in God alone], and they did **not love their lives to the death** [love God supremely].*

As we've already seen, our spiritual immune system is laid out in Scripture as having three factors: **spiritual health** (eating and drinking in God's Word, plus exercising each day by walking in the Spirit); **spiritual armor** (understanding and uses the armor Paul commands us to use in [Ephesians 6:10-18](#)); and **spiritual warfare** (resisting the devil and his demons). If you neglect any part of your spiritual immune system—Satan and his army have a point to step up their campaign.

When God's Word Prevailed in Dark Ephesus

I'd like to go back to Ephesus tonight and look again at one of the greatest revivals in Biblical history. Paul went to the godless heart of the Eastern Roman Empire called Ephesus. There he confronted the evils of daily life that godlessness begets: **materialism, pride, occultism, and sensuality**.

The sequence that the Spirit of God led Luke to capture this stop on Paul's Missionary Journeys is profound. The manner of Paul's attack is by extensive and in-depth teaching of God's Word. The results are worthy of our attention.

First the kingdom of darkness is left shaken to the core, confused and fighting against itself. Second, God called out a group of believers that would form one of the greatest churches of the New Testament era. By their zenith they numbered as many as 50,000 and were the home church of Paul, Mary, John, and Timothy. In fact Jesus wrote the church at Ephesus first in Revelation because of their zeal and fervency for him. Every detail in Acts 19 was written down for us to learn from, to see what God wants us to see as the right way to confront the wrong in our culture; and also for those of us who love Jesus—**how to get right with Him, and stay right with Him**.

To apply all this let's go back to where we started. When Paul taught the Ephesian believers about the strategies of Satan, they collected and burned all of the objects associated with demonic and satanic contact ([Acts 19:19-20](#)).

A Life-style of Shedding the Old Life

The heart of the message Paul taught them is in [Ephesians 4:22-24](#). That same message of Christ's Lordship must fill our lives, leading to the removal of any part of our lives that displeases God. There are three clear choices we must make! Look again with me at [Ephesians 4:22-24](#)

*that you **put off**, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and **be renewed** in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you **put on** the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.*

First, note that Paul describes the actions of v. 22-24 after the Ephesians had already put off the old self, their pre-salvation as life described in vv. 17-19. The work of the Cross was to wash them clean and they began as new creatures in Christ ([11 Corinthians 5:17](#)). Here Paul is asking them **to start a life-style of shedding the old life repeatedly**. Old habits like old clothes are so comfortable and fit us so well, that we often forget that we even have them on again—until the Spirit of God convicts us. Paul is reminding us that those who will live a life holy to the Lord must repeatedly put off the old ways. If we struggle with anger, anger must be shed daily; and if we struggle with pride, pride must daily be shed. This is also the choice we must make for lust, greed, fear and any other byproducts of our flesh. Often believers fail to grow in their spiritual lives because they don't understand the life-long need to shed or "put off" our old sins on a daily basis.

Next, in v. 23 Paul points to our minds and says those must change also. Choices to put off old ways flow from our renewed minds. Just as [Romans 12:2](#) says we are "transformed by the renewing of our minds". When we think godly, we behave godly; or when we believe right, we behave right.

"This is done by reading and studying God's Word, and by asking the Holy Spirit to continue his renewing work. The Word gives us God's very thoughts, and prayerful

meditation upon it will infuse his mind into ours in constant renewal. This is why every Christian should be regularly — daily — reading God's Word. This is also why it is valuable to read the Bible through once a year. It is imperative that we read the Word expectantly, praying for God to speak to us by his Holy Spirit.

Finally, there is the putting on: "... and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (v. 24). The fact is, we have this new self if we are Christians. We received the old man at birth, and we were given the new man in our heavenly birth. The new man is not our work — it is God's creation and gift. Our task is not to weave it, but to wear it. Paul is commanding a daily appropriation of that which we already possess.

Here we must keep in mind that we do not put on the new man merely by putting off the old. We need to put on love, to put on peace, to put on joy, to put on patience, etc. (cf. [Galatians 5:22](#)). For example, I may have lost my temper with my children, and I have repented and put it off. But I have not completed my responsibility unless I have also put on love and patience.

All of this is through God's grace. Works have no place in obtaining salvation or in gaining merit in the Christian life.

The Christian life is *sola gratia*, grace alone.

Nevertheless, the Apostle Paul said, "continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" ([Philippians 2:12b, 13](#)).

God is at work in his people. But as children of grace we must work at our Christian lives. We have our part to do in dressing ourselves with the divine wardrobe, for here clothes do make the man — and the woman! [1]

When Revival Comes

Back to Acts 19 for a look at this incredible revival that swept through the church at Ephesus.

First, we need to remind ourselves about the place Paul came and ministered. Ephesus was a coastal seaport along the commercial trade route linking east to west. For hundreds of years the worship of Diana (or Artemis) had made Ephesus a thriving, and safe commercial center. Known as the "Treasure House of Asia" the city of Ephesus also became a center for materialism and ambition.

The Temple dedicated to Diana was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. A forest of 127 bejeweled and carved sixty foot high marble pillars rose around the perimeter; and a statue of a sex goddess, worshipped by unbridled immorality was at the center of everything done in that city. The worship of Artemis was the worship of the desires of the flesh to their fullest.

Hundreds of prostitutes were always on the grounds to promote this unrestrained indulgence of the flesh. Ephesus was a magnet for not just the sexually enslaved, it was also the center of the promotion of the black arts, witchcraft, superstition, and all the powers of Satan. It was like a cesspool where everything occultic was collected. Ephesus became the watering hole where every charlatan, medium, palm-reader, spiritist, magician, and witch felt right at home. That helps us understand why Paul would tell these Ephesians that there was so much more than the physical world to contend with. Look back at [Ephesians 6:12](#).

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

The word "wrestle" refers to hand-to-hand combat with trickery and deception. That is Paul's description of how Satan and his hosts try to attack. Paul then lists four different designations of the spiritual world in opposition to God. Each of these words describe a different layer or rank of demons in the evil spiritual empire they serve. Satan's forces of darkness are highly structured for the most destructive purposes. Paul and Peter both name these same levels of demons.

Colossians 2:15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

1 Peter 3:22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.

Facing the Darkness

Starting back in [Acts 19:8-10](#) we find the plan God laid on Paul's heart for reaching a society so much like ours. Paul faced off against the powers of darkness in Ephesus by one of the longest recorded times he ever got to spend teaching in a synagogue. Paul spent three months in intense Bible teaching right there in the shadow of Diana's Temple of Darkness.

Acts 19:8-10 And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. 9 But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. 10 And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

The word "reasoning" (NKJV) is the Greek word 'dialoguing'. Paul did questions and answer times, he reasoned back and forth taking the Jews from where they were, into God's Word and back to an application for their life in Ephesus. After three

months of this, when the unbelievers became "hardened" and started to attack those who had believed, Paul makes a strategic shift in his methods.

Paul rented a lecture hall from a "Tyrannus" and using the customary lunch and siesta time observed each day in the Roman Empire. Usual work days went from 7 to 11 AM, then lunch and rest from 11AM-4 PM, and back to work from 4-9 PM. The Western Text actually says in the Greek text at this place 'from the fifth hour to the tenth'. From Paul's other writing we can assume that he worked at his tent-making business each morning, dialogued each day during the time off people had, and then returned to the shop to work from 4-9PM. If you look over at [Acts 20:34](#) note what Paul reminded the church about his work ethic:

Acts 20:34 "Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me.

Paul didn't want to just be another religious peddler, living off the hardworking people of Ephesus. He wanted nothing to stand in the way of his message so he labored night and day with his own hands, and taught any and all who would come on the afternoon break time.

Look at the next verse. Paul did this daily for two years. That means Paul invested as much as five hours a day for 24 months. With the Sabbath off for rest, that means Paul invested over three thousand hours in teaching into the church at Ephesus. That is equivalent to thirty-years of morning and evening sermons at this church all packed into two years. Paul gave them a lifetime of learning in a very short time.

Penetrating the Darkness

Listen to the results of this extensive and focused teaching time shedding Christ's light in that sin-darkened culture.

Acts 19:10-12 And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. 11 Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, 12 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.

First, Luke says that "all" who dwelt in the Roman province of Asia (which is roughly modern day Turkey) were exposed to God's Word. In the area surrounding Ephesus there are the famous seven churches that Jesus wrote to in Revelation. It is very possible that each of them are a by-product of this extensive and intensive proclamation of God's Word.

Next, Luke records that "unusual miracles" took place. That is interesting because miracles in and of themselves are unusual, but these were extraordinary attestations by God of His Kingdom overcoming the reign of darkness in that whole area. Two types are noted—the hands of personal work of Paul and the power of God displayed through objects taken from Paul to the sick. Therein lies a bit of insight into the 'unusual' power displayed.

The word "handkerchiefs" is actual the word for the sweat rags of the workshop. The word "aprons" is the word for the leather workers apron. There in the hot and humid seaside tent-makers quarters, the rags that Paul used to wipe his face as he labored to work to pay his way and the way of those who were with him—when taken from that shop by those who wanted him to help their loved ones, healed them. That is unusual. God honored Paul's message, his hard work, and most of all his assault on the realm of Satan's hold over these enslaved and sin-darkened people.

Those handkerchiefs and aprons were as one godly old commentator puts it, were:

"symbols which God chose to employ in order to underscore the characteristic of the apostle which made him a channel of the power of God. In the same way, Moses' rod was a symbol. Cast on the ground, the rod became a serpent; lifted over the waters, it rolled them back. There was nothing magic about the rod itself; it was the symbol of something about Moses which God honored. So these sweatbands and trade aprons were symbols of the honest, dignified humility of heart, the servant-character which manifested and released the power of God[2]."

God looks for men and women to greatly use who are willing to work unhindered by the sacrifice, laboring with an undivided heart, proclaiming an undiluted message, investing even in a humble occupation—all to make the Gospel of Christ known. This level of commitment was not new to Paul. In his first epistle to the Thessalonians he said:

1 Thessalonians 2:9 For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.

So Paul sewed tents in the morning, taught the Bible all afternoon, disciplined fellow tent makers into the evening, went on visitation, prayed through sleepless nights and wrestled with the Devil. All that to get the Gospel out, and see a church born in the center of Satan's lands of darkness. What a wonderful, inspiring servant of the Lord Paul must have been.

In the midst of these "unusual" miracles a clever group opportunists wanted to get in on the action and started 'selling' the power of God.

Acts 19:13-14 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." 14 Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" 16 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.

"Exorcism was a common trade, and the best exorcists were thought to know the names of the more powerful spirits. It was also commonly believed that the Jewish priests had access to the secret name of the God of Israel and its pronunciation and thus had special power over the spirit world. So it was very natural for renegade Jewish exorcists to add Jesus' name to their incantations. But the situation was intolerable, and the Lord decided to purge the bandwagon by providing an unforgettable example. The seven sons of Sceva thought they would have another quick exorcism and an easy buck—until they intoned the name Jesus. Then the demoniac rolled his frenzied eyes and said, "I know who Jesus is, and I know who Paul is, but who do you think you are?" After that, all they remembered were some rights and lefts, the door opening, and streaking madly for cover! Oh, how the church probably loved to tell that story!" [3]

Renouncing the Darkness

This was the turning point. The power of darkness was broken. Satan's house was divided. Christ the triumphant was opening the door to great ministry through this church.

Acts 19: 17-18 *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. 18 And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. 19 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. 20 So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.*

This final point is perhaps the most important one of all for each of us. When the church cleans house, when believers renounce hidden sins, when there is a banishment of all hypocrisy and pretense, and genuine holiness begins to permeate Christ's church—unbelievers become attracted to this real life.

The power of the early church was simple, genuine holiness. The Spirit of God moved unhindered, flowed unquenched and God got all the glory. No one competed for the credit, no one sought to be in control. God reigned, the Spirit moved, and Christ was magnified. They had caught the message of [Ephesians 4:22-24](#). They put off, renewed, and put on the way God told them to do. The choice is still ours.

- We must daily strip off any return of the rotting garments of the old life.
- We must personally reject any hint of sensuality, selfishness, pride, materialism, and bitterness in our lives.
- We must eat God's Word and ask for renewed minds by His Spirit.
- We must work out our own salvation by choosing to do the disciplines that will develop a Biblical mind.
- We must put on and wear our new, shining garments of light each day, and live the new us we became in Christ.

One dear pastor wrote these words:

"What would be burned today if the Spirit's conviction swept the church?"

I think some magazines would be quietly removed from out-of-the-way desk drawers or certain novels from the family bookshelves.

Perhaps some television shows, movies, web sites, radio stations, and video games would be boycotted.

Some people would ask others to pray that they would be set free from whatever is dragging them down.

And many would come to Christ for forgiveness of sin and deliverance from the eternal wrath of God[4]".

[1] Hughes, R. Kent, *Preaching the Word: Ephesians—The Mystery of the Body of Christ*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books) 1997.

[2] Hughes, R. Kent, *Preaching the Word: Ephesians—The Mystery of the Body of Christ*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books) 1997.

[3] Hughes, R. Kent, *Preaching the Word: Ephesians—The Mystery of the Body of Christ*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books) 1997.

[4] Hughes, R. Kent, *Preaching the Word: Ephesians—The Mystery of the Body of Christ*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books) 1997.