

39a ACTS

This is July the 9th, 2004. We continue our study in the book of Acts, picking up in chapter 19, verse 11. Let's take a moment as we begin to go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, what a privilege it is for us to gather and spend time in fellowship and in the study of your word. We thank you for the gifts that you have distributed amongst us and for the blessing and encouragement that we receive spending time together. We thank you for the preservation of your word and those who have sacrificially worked to give us our own copy in our own language.

We worship in freedom and without fear of reprisal or persecution. It is not true in so many parts of the world. We are grateful.

We know that you have given us this freedom and this opportunity for a reason. We pray that our study tonight will motivate us and equip us to fulfill the potential that you have set before us in our lives and in what remains of history until the return of the Lord Jesus. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. As I said, we're in Acts chapter 19. We have seen that Paul, having left Corinth, has come to Ephesus, has been holding forth in the synagogue, spoke there for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.

Some were becoming hard and disobedient there, speaking evil of the way before the multitude. So he departed from there, withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of the tyrant. And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

I might point out in passing that there is sort of a difference of opinion on how literally to take the word all when it occurs in different places, especially in the New Testament. You go over in Romans where Paul is talking about in Adam all die, in Christ shall all be made alive. And you have to figure out who is in that group all.

You see in Mark and the Gospels where when John the Baptist is preaching his baptism of change of mind down at the Jordan, it says all Jerusalem came out and was baptized. Well now, if you are a very wooden literalist, all means all. And that means every single living soul in Jerusalem went down and got baptized by John.

There was not a citizen, not a child, not a woman, not a cripple that didn't get hauled down to the Jordan or crawl down to the Jordan or blunder down to the Jordan and get baptized because it says all Jerusalem came out. Well, in normal usage, when you say all in a general non-technical sense, you are telling a story, you are not stating a theological principle, we say all, I mean everybody in Dallas was at the premiere of that movie. But we don't literally mean every single living soul in Dallas was at the premiere.

We mean that there was a huge number, perhaps the majority, went to the game or watched it or whatever. You know what I mean? This is a figure of speech. It is not intended to be technically, scientifically stating that each individual living soul.

The reason I point that out here is it says while Paul was in Ephesus preaching for two years, it says all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. Remember this is the Roman province of Asia, this is not Asia like the continent, this is the Roman province of Asia of which Ephesus is the principal city in the same way that Antioch is the capital or principal city of the Roman province of Syria which includes Israel. So you are welcome to take this as you like.

I will tell you that I don't believe God intends to tell us that every single living human being that happens to dwell within the political boundary of this Roman province heard the gospel. I think it means everybody had the opportunity. It was widespread, it was ubiquitous, it was well known.

You would have to work to not hear it or not hear of it. But I don't think that God intends for us to press this to an extreme and hold the sort of mindlessly literal view of his word. We are supposed to be sensitive to intent in what God is saying.

Now someone will come back and say, Sam you are getting away from the literal inspired word of God, verbal plenary inspiration, every word. Listen, there is nobody that is more devoted to the individual words of scripture than I am. But we have to be intelligently devoted.

We have to use our brain. If I tell you there is not a crumb of food in the house, I am exaggerating aren't I? There is probably a crumb that can be found. But I am using hyperbole, I am using emphasis.

And I am saying there is virtually, there is pretty much not any. Or we bought out the store. We bought everything they had.

Now did you buy everything they had? No. So you understand my point here. God expects us to read his word with normal human intelligence and not push it out of shape because it is inspired.

Yes it is inspired, but our understanding of it is also supposed to be inspired. That is why we have the Holy Spirit, to keep us from being dingbats. And believe me, there are a lot of dingbats.

And some of them have letters after their name in published books and put all kinds of ridiculous, strange information out purporting to be fact and it is just not. So what do you think this means? This continued for two years so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. This is kind of like saying everybody who was alive in 1963 remembers the assassination of President Kennedy.

Everybody remembers. Well, we mean this is true of generally everybody. Alright, beat that to death, didn't we? Now verse 11.

God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul. I wish everybody could read Greek and use a Greek text because it is fascinating to see the way Luke employs the language. Here he says miracles and not the common ones.

There is a negative here. It is *dunamis te utas tuxousas*. *Tuxousas* means something that you have obtained, something that is easily gotten.

And this is a participle. And so he says miracles and not your run of the mill, not your easily obtained, not the one that everybody has got in their hand. Miracles and not the common ones.

God did through the hands of Paul, literally. That is verse 11. Miracles and not the common ones.

God did through the hands of Paul. It is important to note here that Luke is precise in what he says. Now this is precise.

Who performs the miracles? It would be easy for an observer to say, well, Paul just went around doing miracles. Paul went around healing. God did these uncommon miracles through the hands of Paul.

Diaton kairon Paulou. *Kairon*, *kairos* are the hands, and through the hands, *dia*, through. God is working his will through these human hands.

It is the same thing God does today. God provides for our needs, but it is our hands that he uses. God ministers to the needs of the saints, but he uses our hands.

God blesses. God protects. God cares for.

But he does that largely through our hands, just as he does here with the apostle Paul. So that upon the weekend, when handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body, the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of him. You will notice, and this is a point that Calvin made many centuries ago, these are not bones of an apostle.

They are not silver chalices. It is not the holy grail. It isn't a silver cross or a golden chain.

What are the articles that touch? This literally says they are from the body surface or from the skin of Paul. They are common items. You wouldn't expect somebody to build a chapel and hang a handkerchief in the middle of it, would you? And apron, this is an apron, a work apron, a cloth you might tie around your waist so that as you are eating or as you are working, you don't get stuff on your good clothes.

And so it is a very common item. Now some people will revere things like this. Remember, some of you would have to have seen film of when Elvis Presley was a big noise and his concert in Hawaii and he is a little overweight and he is sweating and he wiped himself with a towel and threw it out in the crowd and people were killing themselves to get these sweaty towels.

I thought that was pretty far-fetched. Oh look, my sweaty Elvis towel. But there are people who, you know, thought that it was a precious thing to have the sweat, the excretions of Elvis Presley.

I mean, to me, you know, sweat is sweat. There are certain things that don't impress me and sweat is one of them in terms of something you want to hang on to and cherish. But these handkerchiefs and aprons, Paul didn't say, well, take this staff or take this something that could become a relic.

These would perish very quickly. You can't really make a handkerchief last. Although, they do have what they call the sudarion.

It goes along with the Shroud of Turin. There is a sudarion, which is supposedly the napkin that covered the face of the Lord. That, by the way, is the word that is used here for handkerchief.

Very same word, sudaria. And this is a small square of cloth that could be used for a variety of purposes, including covering the face of the dead. So you have a sudaria or an apron, which is the simikinthia, S-I-M-I-K-I-N-T-H-I-A, simikinthia, a little protective article.

And it would release from them the illnesses and the spirits. The evil spirits would travel out from them. So there was a racket going on, not only in Israel, but up in Asia and the other parts of Syria.

All of the regions where the Jews had traveled, the Jews were noted for their ability to deal with evil spirits, quote-unquote. And this Josephus, the historian, talks about the fact that there were some magical incantations and a ring and some other stuff associated with Solomon. And Solomon, being the wisest man, had passed down some secret knowledge about how to deal with evil spirits.

Well, none of this is in the Bible, and none of it is actually true. The Lord Jesus made a point of this when He spoke in Matthew 12, in verse 27. He was being accused when He would cast demons out.

They said, well, you're casting out demons by the prince of demons. The reason they obey you is you're invoking the power of Satan himself. And Jesus said, if I'm casting out demons by Beelzebul, the prince, Baal means Lord, and Zebul is the demons, basically, then by whom do your sons cast them out? For this reason, they will be your judges.

And people have sort of stumbled over this because what's the answer to that question? Obviously, if it's a Jewish exorcist, he would be invoking the name of the God of Israel. And so Jesus says, well, if I'm casting them out by Satan, who are your sons casting them out by? And they say, well, by the God of Israel. How does that make an argument in Jesus' favor? How does that shut their mouths? I mean, it's a non-sequitur.

But it's sort of a sarcastic remark. It's a very pointed and effective remark by the Lord Jesus because He says, the thing you're acknowledging here is I am, in fact, casting out the demons. When I tell them to go, they go.

And the only way you can explain it is that I'm invoking the power of Satan. Well, if I'm invoking the power of Satan, whose power are your sons using when they cast out demons? And, of course, this chokes them up and stops their mouths because their sons don't really cast out demons. It's a mumbo-jumbo.

It's like the World Federation of Wrestling. It's all fake. It's like healing by these folks on the... And everybody knew it.

But it was sort of a running joke that, well, you know, these guys just do a mumbo-jumbo, but nothing really happens. It's like that psychic surgery they do in Mexico. Oh, you know, I rub your tummy with one hand and I whip my other hand out and here's the rock I pulled out of your kidney.

You know, I smeared a little blood on your tummy and I magically stuck my hand in and got out your kidney stone. Well, there's no such thing. It's a magic trick.

It's an artifice. It's sleight of hand. Well, these guys were going around collecting money and pronouncing all kinds of mumbo-jumbo and possibly using an artifice like drugging the victims so that if they were epileptic, or if they did in fact have a demon, you'd give them a little sleeping potion and they'd calm down.

Ah, he's gone. Pay me now. And then he disappears over the hill.

So Jesus says, well, if I'm casting him out by Satan, by whom do your sons cast him out? And the truth of it is everybody knows they can't cast him out. Jesus is the first one to ever have power to cast out demons. So these exorcists that are now being spoken of here, 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 because they were going around working this hocus-pocus, but they looked, and here's Paul doing the same thing the Lord Jesus did.

When Paul speaks, they actually leave. Well, what's he doing? What's his trick? What's his secret? And so they would sneak into the crowd and sit back and watch. And Paul would say, Demon, I adjure you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, come forth.

That's all he had to say. Because the authority of the Lord Jesus, the demon, would have to pack up and bug out. And here's the person.

He didn't administer a potion. Probably never even touched them. Simply invoked his God-given authority to order these demons hence, and out they would come.

So they said, Well, you know, the common theme here is he uses this Jesus Christ name, and it seems like these spirits, when they hear that name, why, they have to go. So they wrote that down on a little clay tablet. They went back home, got together and said, Hey, this is what we need to do.

It's this Jesus, this Yesu Christu thing. We speak those words and these demons will pop right out. So they started trying to do this.

So you see here it says, They took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, We... Now this is the thing. See, it says, We exorcise you. This word is orchizo.

O-R-K-I-Z-O. Orchizo. You know what this made me think of? Who do you call when you have roaches and bugs? You call the orchid man, right? And I thought, Well, I wonder if orchid got their name from this Greek verb, which means to adjure or to order someone.

And this is exorchizo, which means to order out or adjure out, to invoke authority and cause somebody to leave. Well, it turns out, Orkin is the guy's last name. His name was Otto Orkin.

And in 1901, he was 14 years old. And farmers in his area, I think he was in Pennsylvania, farmers had a big problem with rats. And he figured out a rat bait that he could mix poison with and kill these rats.

And he borrowed 50 cents from his parents and launched his little in-home business selling poison rat bait to these farmers. And about five years later, he had saved \$5,000, which was his grub stake. And that's how he started the Orkin Company.

Otto Orkin started his company in 1906, having done it as a teenager. At the age of 19, he started this company. Now it's one of the largest.

It's got like 7,500... You can look on their website. But it's a real going concern. But it's onomopoeic because orkizo means to order, and exorkizo means to order out.

Well, when it says that these Jewish exorcists, the word there is the noun form from exorkizo. So they are the exorkiston. And so they start exorkizoing the demons with Jesus' name.

And of course, we have transliterated this into our language as exorcist. We exorkizo you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches because, of course, they don't know him. But his name

seems to get the attention of the demons.

Now verse 14 is quite interesting to me. Also, there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. What's interesting to me here is the Greek words here say this.

Now there were some, and then it says, Scewa or Sceva, Judaion Archiarios. Scewa is what they translate as Sceva, proper name. Judaio means they are Jewish.

And Archiarios is the word, Archi means high, and Hierus is the priest. So, Jewish high priest, Scewa, Jewish high priest. That's the three words right in order.

The interesting thing is nobody knows anything about Sceva. There's no record of Sceva ever being high priest in Israel. The word is almost exactly the same as a common noun in Greek, which is Scewa or Scewas.

If the A was an O, Scewa or Scewas means thing. It means equipment, it means stuff, it means tackle in a ship. Later on in Acts, we're going to see that they get into a storm, and it says they throw the ship's Scewas overboard.

All of the stuff in the ship that they could get rid of. It also means vessel, in the sense of like a vase or a jug. It's used for wives.

It says that men should keep possession of their own Scewas, their own vessel, meaning they're referring to their wife. So, it's kind of a general purpose word, but it basically means piece of equipment, piece of work, gear, piece of gear. That's basically what it means.

Scewas is a piece of gear. And when the apostle tells the husbands, maintain your own gear, he's talking about your household and your wife in particular. The sailors throw the gear overboard.

And I'll tell you what I think, and I am totally alone, there's nobody who knows anything about Greek who would agree with me, but I think, I don't think there ever was a guy named Scewas, because why do we care about an archerius way up in Ephesus of even knowing his name? If he is the high priest, he would be down in Jerusalem, but we know the names of all the high priests down there. He would have had to have been a fake high priest, but the Bible doesn't say he's a fake. What I think is, this is sort of a term of derision for these guys.

These guys are a piece of work. These vessels, these Jewish sons of the high priest, meaning they were invoking a lot of Jewish ritual, and they passed themselves off as, oh, we're the seven sons of the Jewish high priest. This is like going to the circus and saying, this girl is a lineal descendant from Cleopatra.

You're invoking, here's the magician Farouk, straight from India, when he's really from

Indiana. And so they said, oh, we're the seven sons of the Jewish high priest. Well, they're not.

They're just a bunch of Jewish guys running a racket. And so I think the Bible is saying, these guys are a piece of work. They're running a racket.

These vessels, these pieces of gear, and I base this on some grammar here, because all of this is in the genitive, until you get to sons, seven sons, that's the subject, and all the rest of these are modifiers. Sceva is in the genitive, not the nominative. So anyway, it's the wrong word order for them to actually be sons of Sceva.

And there's three words between sons and Sceva. I just don't see it, but I could be wrong. But the way I like to read this, the way I'm going to present it to you, some, there were some guys, there were some vessels, supposedly seven sons of the high priest, doing this, invoking the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches.

Then we have one of our favorite constructions in Greek, the action of the aorist participle precedes the action of the main verb. You have apokrithon, this is from apokrinomai, which means to answer, to speak up and say. The evil spirit, having answered, the word said to them, Jesus indeed I know, and Paul I am aware of, I am acquainted with.

Two different words for know here. But who are you? The word for knowing Jesus is ginomai, ginosko, Jesus I know. Ginosko is the word for certain knowledge.

This is a solid piece of knowledge. Paul, he epistomai, this is the verb that we get epistemological from. Epistomai means to gain a firm mental grasp, to acquire information, to be aware of or acquainted with.

Later on in Acts, there are some stirrings going on, and it says the king is aware of this, the king is acquainted with these facts. He wasn't an eyewitness, he wasn't on the scene, he wasn't involved in it, but he's aware of it, he knows about it. This means to know about it in the sense of be acquainted or aware.

What this tells us is, the demon says, I know Jesus, I know all about Him, I know Him from way back. And Paul, who's a relative newcomer, he says I'm aware of Him, maybe I haven't run into Him yet, but I'm acquainted with Paul. But you guys, I don't even know who you are.

And this is an insult, this is a put down. What is it Jesus is going to say to the faithless who do works in His name and come to the door when He's sitting down at the great feast in the kingdom? Lord, Lord, in Your name did we not cast out demons? Did we not do all these great works? What is Jesus going to say? I never knew you. These men, this team of seven exorcists, does not know Jesus, has no interest in knowing Him, He's just a talisman.

They're using His name in vain. Literally in vain here. So, Jesus, I indeed know.

And Paul, I am acquainted with. But who are you? And having leaped on the man in whom the evil spirit was, the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them. These are some great verbs here.

The first one, and these are Aristotles once again, the first one is katakureo. Katakureo means to bring into subjection, to gain dominion over, subdue. Kureos is the word for lord.

And kata means to get beside somebody and lord them, to boss them around, to become their lord by getting right up next to them. That's the first word. The second word, having lorded over them, then having become strong against them.

This is iskuros, I-S-C-H-U-R-E-O, iskureo, or iskuo. This is the word for strength, iskuo, I-S-C-H-U-O. This is the physical strength.

He dominated them, he invoked strength on them, and then he wounded and made them naked. In Gymnas, where we get gymnastics, he made them naked and wounded them. Traumatizo.

He traumatized them. Well, what happens when you try to act like a Christian, try to invoke Christ and you don't really know him, you don't really have the power of God on your side? You're going to be naked, traumatized, lorded over, and stomped by somebody else's strength. We need to pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we'll pick up here in Acts chapter 19.