



**Acts of the Apostles: Acts 19 Pt 2
Lesson 33 by Faber McMullen, Union
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THE REAL THING

⁸ Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. ⁹ But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord. (Acts 19:8-10, NIV).

Paul was so persistent and so persuasive because he was presenting the real thing. He had come to understand that only God, the one true real God, could meet his desperate needs to feel loved and accepted, to have value and worth, and to have an identity. He couldn't stop talking about it. However, we must realize that even when we speak boldly about Christ and even when we argue persuasively that Jesus is THE Way, there will be some who just plainly reject it. When we point out that Jesus is the real thing, it can be a threat to others who can interpret it as a criticism of their "fake thing." We are always supposed to speak the truth in love, but it is remembering that "love" part that is the hardest. I think of it as lifting up the name of Jesus rather than putting down someone else's belief system. I don't remember Jesus ever putting down others except the Pharisees. He just simply said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the father except through Me" (John 14:6). In spite of the great evidence of scripture and the evidence of goodness in the lives of believers, some will just refuse to believe the "real thing." We often forget that it is their choice. The Greek word here is stubbornness and disobedience. At some point when a person has been presented with all of the evidence, they either believe or in an act of disobedience they reject the truth that God has placed before them. Simply do your part and leave the rest up to the Holy Spirit.

¹¹ God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, ¹² so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them. (Acts 19:11-12, NIV).

These handkerchiefs were "sweat bands" and the "apron" was a covering Paul used while working. God's power was working to such a level that people were running off with his clothes. Demons came out of possessed people, and the sick got well. God was doing EXTRAORDINARY miracles through Paul. This was something that was amazing. It wasn't these objects that were healing people, rather it was the power of God choosing to honor the faith of those who believed. By choosing to use these particular objects, God used things that were relevant to their time and culture. There are some in the body of Christ that teach us to expect

these sorts of miracles every day, but the text tells us that these were “extraordinary,” even in Apostolic times during the ministry of Paul.

TV evangelists, shucksters, and frauds tell people if they have enough faith, they can receive anointed cloths et cetera that have been prayed over. Neither Paul nor his disciples were making any money or receiving any gain from what was going on. The things that happened in this time were extraordinary. I am by no means saying that miraculous things don't happen today. They do. I believe God is still in the business of doing the miraculous, but the extraordinary is not to be common place. We can easily have our spirits dampened and we can become discouraged if we look for extraordinary things all of the time. Most of the time, the Christian life is putting one foot in front of the next and considering all trials that we face as joy. We must learn to walk by faith and not by sight (meaning we walk knowing and trusting that God is working in our lives even though we might not readily see it in the events and circumstances that surround us) (see 2 Cor. 5:7).

We don't like to think that much of the Christian walk is to be down on our knees praying. It's great to see the miracles, but they are birthed out of spiritual work where people cry out for the hand of God to move. The mighty works of God come from the fasting, weeping, and agonizing that goes on *before* the mighty works of God appear. How is your prayer life? Do you lay your concerns before God with earnestness? In the next passage (verses 13-16) we are looking at something a bit humorous, but it is a clear example of the contrast between the “real thing” and the “fake thing.”

¹³ Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. (Acts 19:13, NIV).

There was a great amount of demon possession at this time. There were Jews that would go around and try to cast out demons. The Jewish exorcists began to try to use the name of the Lord Jesus of Paul. This is a case where they knew about Him, but they did not know Him. You may know all about Jesus, but unless you have a relationship with Him you have no standing to use the name of Jesus. You have no spiritual authority to use His name. These that were doing this knew better. They were the sons of a Jewish high priest.

They would say, “In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.”¹⁴ Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this.¹⁵ One day the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?”¹⁶ Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding. (Acts 19:13b-16, NIV).

It sounds funny, but we can learn from this crazy incident. These sons of Sceva were trying to use the name of Jesus like a magic spell. The name of Jesus is not a magic wand nor is it a secret incantation. The Name of Jesus is Holy. It is the name above all names. It is the name of the Savior of the world. Yeshua Ha Massiach is the anointed one who existed before even time began. It is the ultimate humanistic idea that would think that God can be manipulated by the mere use of the name of Jesus without knowing Him. It's the idea that God will give us certain things if we just use His name. It's easy for people to fall into this. We might just want God to

perform for us. Many look to God as a genie in a bottle. Do you love Him because He first loved you, or do you just give God a nod for what you think you can get out of Him? Many don't really want to know God; rather they just want to get stuff from Him. We must always be careful that we're seeking a relationship with God and not a performance. I think it's interesting that the demons they were addressing gave them a beating and left them naked. Remember last Sunday when we studied the demon possessed guy in the tombs. After his encounter with Jesus, the text tells us ¹⁵ *Then they came to Jesus, and saw the one who had been demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid.* (Mark 5:15, NKJV). Nakedness, shame, violence, and an unstable mind are often present in demonic activity.

¹⁷ *When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor.* (Acts 19:17, NIV).

This crazy incident had great spiritual fruit. What was the result? The fear of the Lord fell upon them. The name of Jesus became something that was revered instead of being considered and used like a magic spell.

¹⁸ *Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed what they had done.* ¹⁹ *A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas.* ²⁰ *In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.* (Acts 19:18-20, NIV).

Because of this manifestation of the power of God these born again Christians came clean. They took their valuable books that they had obviously bought before they knew the Lord, and they got rid of them. This reminds us that many of us come to the Lord, but we don't leave our past behind. This was expensive stuff. This was in today's currency about \$2.5 million dollars.

Sometimes when we come to Christ we aren't careful about leaving behind some of the things that got us into spiritual trouble. For example, there is nothing wrong with playing secular music, and making good money doing it. But, if it takes you to places which cause you to do things that hurt your walk with Jesus, or cause you to be with people that are destructive to your spiritual walk, then it is better to throw those things on the "burn pile."

If part of your past is of value to you and you're not sure they are really negative spiritually, they can sometimes cause you spiritual trouble. There is always the danger that stepping back into that activity might side track you from where God wants you to go. Parting from your negative past will be painful, but this is what we're called to do. Those things are incompatible with what He's asked us to do and how He's asked us to live. We can't have certain things in our lives when we are faithful followers of Jesus Christ. In my own case, as I began to pastor, I felt led to get away from litigation in my law practice. It is very lucrative, and it's not inherently evil in any way at all. But, it has the tendency to create combative and hostile heart attitudes in me. The stress of such work is so great that, according to a recent New York Times article, 44% of trial lawyers have a problem with alcohol and 19% suffer from depression. I had to leave behind those things that get in my way from serving Jesus with all joy. Are there things that you need to leave behind?

That is the lawlessness that will increase in the last days. People's hearts will grow cold. The threat is going to grow. We are not interested in running around and offending people, but we are going to keep speaking the truth. We must speak the truth in love. What we're going to see in the text today is how the world responds to the gospel message. What can we expect from the world and what can we expect from ourselves?

The Riot in Ephesus

²³ About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. ²⁴ A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in a lot of business for the craftsmen there. ²⁵ He called them together, along with the workers in related trades, and said: "You know, my friends, that we receive a good income from this business. ²⁶ And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that gods made by human hands are no gods at all. ²⁷ There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited; and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty." (Acts 19:23-27, NIV).

If your God can be discredited, then you shouldn't be worshiping that God. All day, every day, people *attempt* to discredit the name of God and they diss Him. God doesn't need us to be who He is. If all of us decided to never worship Him again, He is the one and only Creator of the Universe. He doesn't need us. We need Him. We don't need to go into "attack mode." We just need to speak the truth in love.

²⁸ When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" ²⁹ Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia, and all of them rushed into the theater together. ³⁰ Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him. ³¹ Even some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, sent him a message begging him not to venture into the theater. (Acts 19:28-31, NIV).

The Bible does not tell us to defend God. It just asks us to make a defense of the gospel. Jesus died on the cross and if you put your faith and trust in Him you will be saved. We are not called to defend God. He has no need of defense. In fact the Bible says, "Vengeance is mine I will repay says the Lord" (Romans 12:19). The fight is between those unbelievers and God. Our role is to speak the truth in love.

³² The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there. ³³ The Jews in the crowd pushed Alexander to the front, and they shouted instructions to him. He motioned for silence in order to make a defense before the people. ³⁴ But when they realized he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" (Acts 19:32-34, NIV).

The majority of the people had no idea why they were there, but they formed a mob. I've noticed that often mobs come together and it's not even for the reason the press is saying it's

happening. It's just a chance to be lawless. This guy Alexander (probably a lawyer) motioned for silence but when they found out he was a Jew they shouted for two hours. They were obviously racists against Jews. Note that "There is a way that seems right to a man but it leads to death" (Proverbs 14:12, 16:25).

³⁵ The city clerk quieted the crowd and said: "Fellow Ephesians, doesn't all the world know that the city of Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven? ³⁶ Therefore, since these facts are undeniable, you ought to calm down and not do anything rash. ³⁷ You have brought these men here, though they have neither robbed temples nor blasphemed our goddess. ³⁸ If, then, Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a grievance against anybody, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. They can press charges. ³⁹ If there is anything further you want to bring up, it must be settled in a legal assembly. ⁴⁰ As it is, we are in danger of being charged with rioting because of what happened today. In that case we would not be able to account for this commotion, since there is no reason for it." ⁴¹ After he had said this, he dismissed the assembly. (Acts 19:35-41, NIV).

We live in a world of increasing lawlessness, but we are told to follow the law. We are subject to the governing authorities. Paul has been very clear about the fact that God is not something made by human hands. We are to address the errors of the thinking of the world. You can't declare God's Word without talking about what is wrong.

Whether errors are with the Latter Day Saints, the Watchtower, etc, we have to speak the truth in love. Sometimes in the sharing of God's Word we must highlight truth next to falsehood, but we must always do it in love. Paul was merely presenting the "real thing." The world has consistently and fervently presented false things as the real thing. In the end it goes to what I often teach concerning the three basic needs inside of every human being: (1) the need to be loved and accepted, (2) the need to have value and worth, and (3) the need for an identity.

These needs cannot be met by anything except the real thing. There is no lover, no relationship, no boyfriend, no girlfriend, and no spouse that, in the end, can fulfill your deepest need to be loved and accepted. They will always come up short. If you lean on another human being to totally fill that need, the result will always be conflict and frustration. Humans are just incapable of loving that perfectly and that completely. It is when I realize at the end of the day that only God can love me completely and perfectly that I can be at peace concerning that need. You see, He is the real thing that Paul was talking about. The need for value and worth cannot be totally fulfilled by job titles, money in the bank, 401k plans, degrees on the wall, or the esteem of others. I am only fulfilled when I realize that He loved me so much that He came to earth for me and died on a cross for me. He has made me in His image and in His likeness. He has filled me with his "special gift," the gift of the Holy Spirit. Pursuit of anything other than the real thing to feel that I have value and worth will lead to frustration and conflict. Finally, the only identity that will feel totally comfortable in the end is my identity in Jesus.

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