

Acts 19:11-20 (NIV)

¹¹God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, ¹²so 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. ¹³Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." ¹⁴Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. ¹⁵[One day] the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" ¹⁶Then 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. ¹⁷When 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. ¹⁸Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. ¹⁹A 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. ²⁰In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

44-19-02-Undoing Life's Undoing

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Acts 19:11-20

By grace and truth, Christ unravels the realm of darkness.

INTRODUCTION:

–The *enfolding* of Pentecost happens as the Spirit releases the power of our indwelling Lord. When we *repented* of our old life and *trusted in Christ*, our bodies became “temples of the Holy Spirit.” Our hearts became *Christ’s home*. Jesus doesn’t want to be inactive there. He wants to *live His abundant life through us*. Pentecost begins the Spirit’s unleashing of Christ’s life within us, because **Jesus isn’t done yet!** He is still working in and through us to undo life’s undoing.

–**1 John 3:8b** tells the Incarnation’s purpose: “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.” He overcame Satan’s *deceitful* and *hateful* “work” by God’s *eternal truth* and the *loving grace of His Cross*. Jesus is still “full of grace and truth,” but is *incarnate in a new way*. *His presence in us is still destroying* “the devil’s work.” Being “filled with the Spirit” energizes the release of *Christ’s authority*, so that **HOM.idea**.

I. In Union with Christ, Believers Can Be Channels of Grace– v.11-12, ¹¹God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, ¹²so 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.

- A. We are uniquely individual, with *special personalities* (So, when God does *His works* through us, they’re always “extraordinary.”)
1. Religion gravitates toward uniformity, and it can stagnate our full humanity. (But God liberates us by producing a **united variety**.)
 2. So, unless He directs you, don’t try *duplicating unique* “miracles.”
- B. But how these “miracles” occurred **isn’t unique**: the “grace” of Jesus live in Paul, as it does in us. (The Spirit was releasing “grace” from him in a “greater” way than when *a sick lady touched Christ’s robe and was healed*. Jesus told us that would happen– John 14:12, I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.)

TRANS: Never doubt that the “grace” of *Christ* in us can heal “illnesses” and defeat “evil spirits.” [God’s grace was *uniquely present* in Moses’ rod, and in

the mud Jesus made to put on a blind man's eyes.] But His "grace" *indwelling us surpasses all other means of grace. It may flow out of us in unique ways*, as it did with the items "that had touched" Paul's body. But its goal is always the same: to *undo* "the devil's work." **By grace and truth, Christ in us can still unravel the realm of darkness. However...**

II. Disconnected from Christ, a Knowledge of Truth is Dangerous—

v.13-16, 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. They would say, "In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out."*

¹⁴*Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. [One day] the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, 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.*

A. Don't challenge Satan unless you're under the orders of Him Who said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

1. These 7 men tried using the name of Jesus as a magic formula but didn't really follow Him. [**Churches** have folded up despite sound preaching about Jesus, when pastors didn't make Him the Lord of their lives.]
2. How "*the evil spirit answered*" should encourage us: "*Jesus I know, and I know about Paul...*" (**Demons don't fear imposters** but they *know and fear Jesus' presence*— (in **Mat 8:28-29**), two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him.... "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?")

B. Satan sows skepticism, but his cohorts (Ja 2:19) "believe and shudder."

1. **Demons know** "the gates of hell will not prevail against" Christ's Body, "the church... which he bought with his own blood" and now indwells.
2. They knew the truth "about Paul" and they know the truth about us— **1 John 4:4**, You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.
3. [**Judith MacNutt**, in *Angels Are for Real*, told of a day her secretary warned her of a man with *evil vibes* sitting at her counseling desk. It proved true. She had worked a psych-ward with serial killers and rapists, but his darkness was deeper. She got a rapid pulse, nausea, and an intense headache. After a silent prayer for God's help, she asked, "*Why are you here? What's your problem?*" "*I don't have a problem. You do,*" he replied, then said, "*You've come to our attention because of your work. I'm a warlock in Satan's service, and I've been sent to stop you.*" She thought he might be *psychotic* or *delusional*. Then he told of killing people by Satan's power. She excused herself for a coffee, but really to pray. Her secretary said God showed her what he was and why he came but had already taken care of the matter and Judith should return to

the session. As she did, she recalled **1 John 4:4**. When he repeated his threats, she looked at him and said, "*I'm not afraid of you. My Master is far greater than yours, and God's holy angels protect me.*" As she told of Satan's defeat by Christ's Cross, she felt a majestic, holy presence at her side. The warlock stared in terror, screaming, then leaped up, dashing out of the office and down the stairs, never returning. It taught her to heed her secretary's warnings.]

TRANS: Never doubt the power of *Christ's grace and truth to undo life's dark undoing*. Grace may bring in big-gun angelic help or an episode of healing hankies in order to contrast true Gospel grace with *powerless religionism*. But (**v.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. But Gospel grace must stand on Gospel truth.*

III. Dedication to Christ Destroys the Inroads of Darkness— v.18-19

¹⁸*Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds.*

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. [about a million dollars in today's currency]*

- A. When people truly receive Christ, and His "**grace and truth**" unravel their *obsessions with satanic deceptions*, they must discard every avenue that led them into darkness, *whatever it may cost them*.
- B. *Selfish pride*, that seeks *power, prestige or possessions*, is usually Satan's doorway into darkness. (*Bondage from such pride breaks, when it's "openly confessed" and former bridges to it "burned."*)

CONCLUSION:

—God's *only plan for our sin-darkened world* is "his only begotten son," We see that plan's goal in the prayer: "thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." For God's will to be done, His Son had to become human "to destroy the devil's work." That plan originally resided only in Jesus, until He died on the Cross, arose from death and ascended into Heaven. Then His gift of Pentecost spread *God's plan all over the face of this earth through Christ's indwelling presence in us*.

—**By grace and truth, Christ unravels the realm of darkness**. He did it when He was on earth, and *He's not finished doing it now, through us*. That plan flowed *uniquely* from Paul's life. It says in **v.20**, In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power. Now it's our turn for the Holy Spirit to release Christ's "**grace and truth**" *uniquely* from our lives.