

***The Great Stories of the Early Church***  
***68-Paul to Ephesus 03***  
***The Powerful Work of the Holy Spirit at Ephesus***  
***Acts 19:1-20***

- 1 And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,
- 2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.
- 3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.
- 4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.
- 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
- 6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.
- 7 And all the men were about twelve.
- 8 And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.
- 9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.
- 10 And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.
- 11 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:
- 12 So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.
- 13 Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.
- 14 And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so.
- 15 And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?
- 16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.
- 17 And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.
- 18 And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds.
- 19 Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.
- 20 So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed. KJV

## Introduction:

You should remember that we are now in Paul's Third Missionary Journey. After having ended his Nazarite Vow near the end of the Second Journey, he had traveled to Jerusalem to make the appropriate sacrifices, reported to his sending church in Antioch of Syria, and had traveled overland, visiting the churches established in the First and Second Journeys that were in the territory which we call Turkey. The western end of Turkey was then called Asia and it was to that area he ultimately traveled, stopping in Ephesus, on the western coast, where our story begins.

In our last message we noticed some of the issues that provoke us to think in this text.

Some of the questions that are raised:

When should a baptized person ever consider being baptized again?

What was this work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of these men and should we expect the same?

When does one decide that potential believers are 'hardened' and withdraw from them?

What about these cloths being taken from Paul to the sick?

Is demon-possession a real thing? What does it take to cast one out?

Is it ever right to lead people to burn books?

Do we realize that the mighty working of God for which we say we are praying would be as disruptive to our culture as it was to Ephesus?

We attempted to answer the question concerning re-baptism and the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those 12 who seemed to form the core of the new church which was to be built there at Ephesus. Today we want to take up the next two questions: (1) when does one decide that certain are 'hardened' and withdraw from them? And (2) What about the cloths that were taken from Paul to the sick?

**As to the question of hardening and withdrawal**, we need to remember that Paul was a special agent of God and was provided with direction and guidance even in the day to day. At the same time we are reminded that there is a proper and many improper ways to handle evangelism.

Matt 7:6

6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you. KJV

Matt 7:6

6 "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces. (from New International Version)

There is a place where the offer of God's message of Repentance and Salvation is understood well enough by the unbeliever that the rejection of it is deliberate, conscious and willful. The believer is to prayerfully move on, hoping that the Holy Spirit will take what has been shared and use it to break the stubborn will of the unbeliever. This is a move of faith in which the child of God realizes that he has done what has been commanded him and that any further work must be

done by God Himself. The gospel is not a prostitute and is not to be treated as one.

So, Paul saw that all who were manifesting the Work of God in their souls had responded in faith, or at least interest, to his message and that those who stood in opposition were determined, at least for the moment, not to receive the gospel. Further discussion within the synagogue would be unprofitable and disruptive, so he withdrew. Here, too, is good instruction. Arguments in which each side is entrenched in a position are almost always useless in the changing of hearts and minds. It is better to back away and leave the unbeliever, or rebel, to stew in his error, praying that the Holy Spirit will do a work of repentance.

**Next, we want to look at the cloths that were taken from Paul to the sick and possessed.**

- 11 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:
- 12 So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

What was this all about?

There is a spiritual principle that is literally older than scripture itself (first books of the Bible written by Moses) which deals with the transfer of what can only be thought of as 'spiritual essence' from one who has a greater degree of God's Power upon him to one who has a lesser degree, or none at all.

The first clear account of transference of this 'essence' by physical contact is found in Gen. 48.

Gen 48:8-20

- 8 And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who are these?
- 9 And Joseph said unto his father, They are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them.
- 10 Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see. And he brought them near unto him; and he kissed them, and embraced them.
- 11 And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed.
- 12 And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth.
- 13 And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near unto him.
- 14 And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn.
- 15 And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day,
- 16 The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

- 17 And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head.
- 18 And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head.
- 19 And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.
- 20 And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh. KJV

Now, there is a whole discussion about Jacob's (Israel) choice here of the second born over the first born but we must leave that for another lesson. What is happening here is that the blessing which ordinarily would have belonged to Reuben (firstborn) and Simeon (second born) was passed to Ephraim (younger) and Manasseh (older). Reuben had grossly violated his duties as a son and Simeon had embarrassed his father as well as endangered the entire family at Shalem (Gen 34).

But this was far more than a ceremony. Each of these two boys became heads of very large tribes and Ephraim became the lead tribe next to the tribe of Judah. That which was conveyed upon them was the actual transference of power and ability which passed to their descendants. Other tribes, like that of Simeon, almost completely disappeared in importance.

The question is whether this was the first occurrence of this rite or merely the first mention that the laying on of hands had something to do with it? We know that godly men had been blessing (the word used as 48:20) their sons, making a difference between them, since at least Noah, Gen 9:24-27. He blessed Shem with his greatest blessing, Japheth with a lesser blessing, but Ham received a curse, at least upon one of his sons. The effect of that was that some of those who came from Shem became the Jews. Japheth became a mighty people, but the descendants of Ham... not so much. Some literal and concrete was done in this 'blessing.'

The word is also used in Gen 14:18-20 where Melchizedek 'blessed' Abram. The writer of Hebrews referred to the event.

Heb 7:6-7

- 6 But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.
- 7 And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. KJV

There was, no doubt, a ceremony and the event was more than just a ritual. Something real passed from Melchizedek to Abram.

Rebekah was 'blessed' by here family in an apparent family worship ceremony before she was sent away to Isaac, Gen 24:60.

Then, of course, there is that famous story of the stolen blessing in Gen 27:6-10 in which the blessing which Isaac intended for Esau was received by Jacob through deception. This story reveals to us that the ‘blessing’ was a real a concrete thing which could not be taken back once the transfer was made.

And, this bring us to where we started here, to Jacob and his blessing upon Ephaim, the second son of Joseph. The blessing which would have gone to Reuben under natural conditions skipped a generation and was received by Joseph’s son.

In any case, the laying on of hands - actual physical contact - was seen as a literal conveyance of spiritual essence from one persons to another.

The ½ tribe of Ephraim became one of the largest tribes of Israel and, combined with Manasseh, was the largest... because Jacob had laid hands on the patriarchs of those tribes and had transferred something real to them which resulted in their prosperity.

Jesus actually gave us the best description of what happens when there is a spiritually motivated contact (‘spiritually’ in the best sense of the word) between one upon whom the power of God rests and one who has a need.

Luke 8:43-46

- 43 And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any,  
44 Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanchd.  
45 And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?  
46 And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. KJV

The word translated ‘virtue’ here is actually the Greek word for ‘power,’ the root of our word ‘dynamite.’ Realize the power needed to be in Him or on Him before it could proceed from Him. Something very real and powerful was transferred from Him to the woman, and it **healed** her.

This is the basic principle in operation when one lays hands on another in the sense described in scripture.

Paul mentioned this to Timothy.

1 Tim 4:14

- 14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. KJV

As men of the ministry (presbytery) had ordained him to the ministry and laid hands on him, something from the gifting of God upon one or more of them had moved to Timothy and now he

had a spiritual gift that he did not have before.

Then, sometimes and on rare occasion, the contact between the one having the Power of God and the one in need was virtual and not actual.

Acts 5:15

15     Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. KJV

Apparently, at times, the mere shadow of Peter was sufficient to effect a transfer of spiritual 'essence' from him to those who were sick. The way Luke presents the case we are given the impression that these were healed. There is nothing to indicate that it was always true of Peter anymore than that it was always true that cloths from Paul's body always healed the sick and possessed. But it was another case of virtual and not actual contact.

These are the only two such cases I know of unless one wants to count the very strange story concerning the prophet Elisha.

2 Kings 13:20-21

20     And Elisha died, and they buried him. And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year.

21     And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet. KJV

The contact with the bones was actual though the spirit of Elisha was gone. The only explanation, though, is that something of the spiritual essence which had rested upon Elisha was still present with his bones even though he had died and his body had at least partially decomposed. Very odd indeed!

Spiritual enabling sufficient to raise the dead was still surrounding the very bones of the dead prophet.

This last case is probably the explanation for the treasuring of the bones of the apostles by the early church. There may have been the hope that the grace upon the apostles had survived their death and could continue to be accessed by those who came to their tombs. There is no concrete evidence that this was the case but there were many legends of strange events in those times.

### **So, what does all of this mean for you and me?**

There is a general principle that those whom you have spiritual contact with impact you in powerful ways that may not be always obvious.

Of course it suggests to us that if someone upon whom God's Power rests were to lay hands on you and pray for you, something of that power might be transferred to you. This is the basis of

the text in James as I understand it and the record we read from Timothy's ordination.

James 5:14-15

- 14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:  
15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. KJV

But, there is a flip side to this principle as well. Close contact with those who are evil, those who have made contact with wickedness and wicked spirits, is often detrimental and hurtful, sometimes even to Christians. Kurt Koch in his book 'Between Christ and Satan' documented many such cases in which people were spiritual injured and damaged by contact with things forbidden by God.

Another consideration given to us in scripture is that one can apparently be damaged or endangered by having spiritual contact with a believer who is know to be living in profound sin.

1 Cor 5:9-11

- 9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:  
10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.  
11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. KJV

Now, men have undertaken to give many different kinds of explanations for such a thing but Paul actually gave his own explanation.

1 Cor 5:6-8

- 6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?  
7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:  
8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. KJV

There is a level of sincerity in the search for spiritual purity that is damaged in such cases and that damage is both spiritual and very real. Just as something might be gained from contact with a truly godly person, there is something that can be lost through contact with the wicked.

There is corruption which inserts itself in a church body when known sin is tolerated and embraced.

Understand now why the Power of God does not rest upon the modern church?

This may also have been a part of the principle by which Paul led the sincere believers and

seekers out of spiritual contact with those in the synagogue at Ephesus. There comes a time, as this text shows us, that even in evangelism we must walk ourselves back from those who will not hear.

**So, what positive instruction do we receive from all of this?**

Know that close contact with the people of God who are serious in their service to God will be to your spiritual good. Or, as the scriptures say it:

Heb 10:24-25

24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. KJV

There are those who think that church is irrelevant or that church membership is unnecessary. But they hold those ideas to their own hurt. There are few if any upon whom the power of God rests in our day as in the early history of the church but the Lord has promised to be with His people in a special way when as few as two or three of them meet together. Being close to me may not do you any spiritual good but being close to Him certainly will.

Know also that your interaction with those who do not love God and who are living in iniquity is dangerous to your soul. It may bring you spiritual hurt but it will certainly do you no spiritual good.

1 Cor 15:33

33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. KJV

1 Cor 15:33

33 Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals. ASV

1 Cor 15:33

33 Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." (from New International Version)

And, know that spiritual interaction with religious frauds is one of the most dangerous things you can do.

“Take Time to Be Holy”

Take time to be Holy  
Speak oft with thy Lord  
Abide in Him always  
and feed on His Word

Make friends of God’s children  
Help those who are weak  
Forgetting in nothing  
His blessing to seek



There is another piece to this equation as well. Those who truly love God are burdened to be a spiritual help to others. The best way that you can do that is to draw as near to God as you possibly can in the hope that, if nothing else, your prayers for them might be heard, received, and answered. But, also, be willing to be with them especially if you believe them to be sincere believers who need some development.

Rom 12:16

16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. KJV

Eph 4:1-7

- 1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,
- 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;
- 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- 4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;
- 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,
- 6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.
- 7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. KJV