

***The Great Stories of the Early Church***  
***69-Paul to Ephesus 04***  
***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:**

When we opened this text we realized that there are a number of issues here about which we might have some questions for things are said here that are somewhat, if not altogether, unique to this ministry of Paul at Ephesus.

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?

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

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

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?

You will recall that we have undertaken to answer some of these questions already. If you missed our answers the messages are up on the web site and it is working again. We have attempted to answer:

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

Today we want to open the discussion and seek to answer some questions about demon possession and we begin with:

### **Is demon possession a real thing?**

No doubt you have people in your life who would scoff at such an idea and yet all four gospel writers as well as Luke described instances of possession as well as the fact that Jesus Christ accepted it as a real thing.

He spoke on the general topic at one point.

Matt 12:43-45

43 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.

44 Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished.

45 Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation. KJV

You will notice some readily accessible truths here. First of all, it is completely possible for an “unclean spirit” to be in a person. Secondly, you notice that ordinarily, if one is in a person, the spirit may come and go as he pleases. Thirdly, you notice that there is a great difference in the person when the spirit is present and when he is absent. Fourthly, you can see that there are some spirits that are more wicked than other spirits. Fifthly, it is possible for more than one spirit to be in a person. Sixthly, the more unclean spirits there are in a person the worse his condition will be.

So, the Son of God, the One Who made all things according to John 1, was absolutely clear that people can have spirits other than their own spirit living in them and the presence of those spirits changes the condition of their lives. We even see that an unconverted man out of whom a spirit might leave of his own volition is in a somewhat better condition, his life “swept and garnished,” “Put in order” as some other versions read. In some very real way the life is better without the unclean spirit than with it. It does not mean that he has been converted but his behavior is better in the estimation of the society around him.

We wonder sometimes when we see the behavior of a person change suddenly and for the worse. Things which once were important to them no longer are and things that once disgusted them suddenly are very attractive. What has happened? We think to ourselves that they have become deceived by sin... but is there something more? The scriptures lead us to question what is really going on.

We also see varieties even among people whom we identify as being in wickedness. Some of them seem mild and kind while others are truly evil. Why is there a difference? In fact, some who are definably wicked can be so inoffensive and seemingly ‘nice’ that professing believers question whether they are evil at all. There is a movement afoot now which claims that one can be a ‘witch’ and still be a Christian. Could that possibly be true? Of course not!

But the scriptures contain stories of people who are clearly possessed by demons or ‘unclean spirits’ and some of the stories are quite disturbing.

Mark 1:21-26

- 21 And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught.
- 22 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.
- 23 And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,
- 24 Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.
- 25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.
- 26 And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. KJV

It is not clear whether those of the synagogue knew that this man was possessed or if that only became obvious because of the presence of Jesus. In any case, this man was religious and not totally demented. He was walking the streets, going to synagogue and maybe living a seemingly

normal life, but something was terribly wrong with him. And unclean spirit was living in him and at least partially controlling his behavior and his thoughts.

It is a little bit odd for us to think about a person walking around seemingly OK but under the power of an unclean spirit and yet that is exactly the situation we see here.

We are more familiar, at least in our thoughts, with what is considered the ‘classic cases’ of possession.

Mark 5:1-5

- 1 And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.
- 2 And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,
- 3 Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:
- 4 Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.
- 5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. KJV

The symptoms here are what we tend to expect or anticipate when someone says that one is “demon-possessed.” His behavior is totally anti-social and self-destructive and bizarre. Not only that but he is in possession of almost super-human strength. And... any confrontation with truth brings an immediate and violent reaction and rejection.

Mark 5:6-7

- 6 But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,
- 7 And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. KJV

The word ‘worshipped’ here has nothing to do with a proper attitude of heart, it simply means that he fell on his knees before Christ. The voice came from the man’s mouth but it was the words and attitudes of the evil spirits in him. Notice that there was an attempt to intimidate Jesus away from helping the man.

The scriptures tell us another story that is almost as bizarre.

Mark 9:17-27

- 17 And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;
- 18 And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.
- 19 He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with

- you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.
- 20 And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.
- 21 And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.
- 22 And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.
- 23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.
- 24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.
- 25 When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.
- 26 And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead.
- 27 But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose. KJV

Here the spirit caused the boy not to be able to hear or to speak but also at times caused him to have terrible seizures of some kind. It had begun when he was a child and had continued for some time. We are led to assume that when Jesus commanded the spirit to leave the young man was restored to being every bit normal, able both to hear and to speak.

Now, of course, we do not believe that every person unable to hear or speak is demon possessed but this case does show some of the symptoms.

What does it take to cast out an evil spirit? Well, obviously it requires more than a little religious mantra as our text clearly shows us.

- 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.

What is required, as the scriptures plainly show, is a man who is in touch with God in a very real way, one upon whom the power of God rests in truth. That does not happen except with people who are given to God in an extraordinary way and who walk with God in complete obedience. People such as Paul and Peter.

That does not mean that one must be an apostle in order to deal with evil spirits but it does mean that he cannot be a joker of some kind, a religious charlatan, or one seeking after payment for his services. Those things are hideous frauds and disgraceful.

The only one who has any hope of success against the work of evil is the one who truly walks with God.

But the question that always comes is “Do Christians have anything to worry about when it comes to the work of evil spirits?”

The answer to that has more than one part. First of all, we do not believe that a child of God can be ‘possessed’ in the way that the people we just described were.

**However...** the false professor, the counterfeit Christian, the self-deceived one has no such protection nor safety. There are endless case studies of people who were very religious and who even thought themselves to be Christian who have fallen into profound possession.

The only protection against possession is to truly be a child of God.

Beyond that, we have warnings of scripture which should cause us to think seriously about what is possible even for the saint.

1 Peter 5:8-9

8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. KJV

We must realize that these words were said to genuine believers, folks whom Peter was convinced were truly children of God and he was making it clear to them that even though they are afforded some protection automatically by being converted, they were by no means safe from every interference of the evil one in their lives.

Paul was likewise clear.

Eph 6:11-12

11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. KJV

To stand against “the wiles of the devil” is not a guaranteed thing in the life of the child of God. It requires diligence, perseverance, and a conscious seeking after God for protection. Paul shows us that our battle is a spiritual battle which it is entirely possible that we lose.

Even though we cannot lose our salvation, there is still much to lose.

Consider the saints at Corinth who lost much because of their inattention to the sacredness of the

church and the Lord's Table.

1 Cor 11:29-30

29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. KJV

Consider Demas who let the love of the world carry him away from Christ.

2 Tim 4:10

10 For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. KJV

Consider the saints at Galatia who had put themselves in danger by listening to false teachers.

Gal 3:1

1 O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? KJV

Gal 5:4

4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. KJV

Consider the danger into which the pastor at Ephesus had put himself and his church by not attending to his love for Christ.

Rev 2:4-5

4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. KJV

Or the pastor at Laodicea who had become lukewarm in his devotion.

Rev 3:15-16

15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. KJV

Many believers in our day have been sold a bill of goods, the idea that they are completely and fully protected from Satan and from evil spirits because they have trusted in Christ. The scriptures say no such thing! They rather affirm a sense of danger and great warnings that we are to continually seek the Lord and renew our devotions to Him continually that we might be enabled to live effectively in our world and escape the many traps, devices, and entanglements that the Wicked One would place before us.

Some questions we should be able to answer:

What is it like, as a believer, to be 'devoured' by the Wicked One?

What 'wiles' does Satan have and what do we do about them?

What are the 'devices' of the Devil about which we should not be ignorant?

2 Cor 2:10-11

10 To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;

11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices. KJV

I am convinced that there are many Christians who are living under the domination of the devil simply because they have foolishly thought it safe to avoid obedience to the warnings of scripture.

Be Careful! Be Aware! The devil is walking around like a roaring lion. Resist him. Don't let him have his way. Drape yourself, dress yourself, in the wonderful truths of God's Word. Learn about his devices. Pay attention. Ignorance and inattention to spiritual matters is harmful even to God's people.