

## **Introduction**

We've got a spectacular passage before us this morning. It's going to show us what happens when God gets serious with people and people get serious with God. There are three things I want us to see this morning? 1. How not to get your clothes beat off by a demon. 2. Why that's the least of your worries. 3. What it looks like when the name of Jesus is magnified in a group of people.

### **1. How not to get your clothes beat off by a demon**

Our passage tells us that God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul. Not just miracles, extraordinary miracles. So much so that diseases were being healed and demons were being cast out of people when handkerchiefs and aprons that Paul had touched were brought to them. Why do you suppose that God chose to do these miracles in such an amazing fashion? Was he drawing attention to Paul? Was God drawing attention to himself (as if to say, look at the cool tricks I can do)? No! God was drawing attention to the message he had given to Paul. You see the bookends of this passage are sandwiched between strong statements about the gospel being proclaimed. Verse 10 says "all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord." And verse 20 says "So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily."

Commentator David Peterson says "God's sovereign role in the process is highlighted... God healed people in this way to encourage them to discover what his messenger was proclaiming to them.

In the book of Acts, the miracles always serve point to the message of the gospel.

Now, there were some Jewish exorcists, 7 brothers who made a living as exorcists. They were charlatans. They were exorcists for hire in the same way people today might go to a medium or a psychic. They witnessed the great power of what Paul was doing and they said, "cha-ching!" If they could harness this power, they, no doubt could become very wealthy. But what ends up happening to these guys? One demon mastered all 7 of these brothers, literally beat the clothes off of them and left them bloodied and naked.

So I said this point was about how to not get our clothes beat off by a demon... In some Christian circles there is an unhealthy preoccupation with demonic activity. Demons are very real and they are very powerful. A demon is actually a fallen angel. Satan and a number of other angels rebelled against God and were cast out of Heaven. To get an idea of how powerful angels are, we're told in 2 Kings 19 that one angel killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers.

Now, I have some good news and I have some bad news. The good news is God is absolutely sovereign over Satan and all his demons. Can you imagine how bad this world would be if God removed all restraints and allowed the demons to have unhindered control of our world? They could probably have all humanity wiped out within an hour. In this passage one demon possessed man easily overpowers 7 grown men. On one occasion Jesus encountered a man who had been possessed by demons. For a long time this man lived naked in a grave yard and repeatedly people tried to restrain him but over and over again he broke the chains. When he saw Jesus, this wild demon possessed man came and calmly bowed down at Jesus feet. You remember when Jesus asked the demon what his name was? And the demon said, "Legion, for we are many." Which is really frightening when you find out that a Legion of Roman soldiers consisted of 5,000 men. Luke 8 tells us that the demons begged Jesus not to make them depart in "the abyss" but rather to allow them to enter into a herd of pigs. So Jesus cast them out into the pigs and they violently all ran off a cliff. The good news is Jesus is sovereign over all demons. Not one of them moves one inch past what God allows.

Here's the bad news, Jesus may be sovereign over the demons, but friend, you and I are not! I believe it's wrong for us to assume that because God was casting out demons through Paul and a select few other men in the book of Acts, you and I have this power over demonic forces. I often hear well-meaning Christians talk about binding or rebuking Satan. But friend, nowhere in Scripture are we taught that God has given us this power. In fact other angels are not even so bold when it comes to demons. Listen to

Jude 1:9 But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you."

*Allow me to give you some suggestions for handling demonic activity*

1. Avoid it and don't seek encounters with demonic forces. I think sometimes an unhealthy preoccupation with demonic things can open the door to demonic encounters. It's wise for believers to avoid the demonic.
2. Avoid exposing yourself and your family to art or entertainment that has direct or indirect demonic themes. Now listen, we're never going to be the kind of Church that says it's a sin to watch rated R movies or listen to rock-n-roll. But there are some movies that are unwise for believers to watch. I don't think it's good to watch horror movies with demonic activity in them. If you do you're opening the door of your life for demonic activity. Listen to Paul's advice in

Romans 16:19 I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil.

3. Not only should you avoid demonic forces, we need to constantly, proactively be filling our minds and lives with the things of God.

Philippians 4:8 says Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Here's my advice if you ever encounter a demon

1. Don't address it directly. Instead, call out to Jesus! (Signal 63). Jesus! Help me! Jesus, protect me! Plead with him in prayer to deliver you from the demonic presence.
2. If the demon is associated with a person, avoid the person if you can and pray for them.
3. If the demon is associated with a place, avoid the place. Now if that place is your home, you need to invite some believers over, have a prayer meeting, read some Scripture, and sing some songs of praise. I would put Scriptures up all over my house and play K-Love non stop. You need to make it clear that the only spirit welcome in your home and in your life is the Holy Spirit.

Ok. That's how not to get your clothes beat of by a demon. Now, let's look at # 2

## **2. Why getting beat up by a demon is the least of your worries.**

When you look at this passage, there's a far greater problem than a run in with a mean demon. I used to think this passage was about some foolish believers who got in trouble for messing with a demon when God hadn't given them that authority. But in reality this is something far worse than that. These 7 brothers were not believers. They were taking the name of Jesus, which they had no claim to, and they were using it like a magic trinket for their own gain. Look at what the text says in verse 13:

Acts 19:13 Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims."

Did you notice what it said? First of all, they undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus. They assumed for themselves authority that God had not given them. But second, look what they said to the demon, "I adjure you," not by the Jesus whom we proclaim or not by the Jesus whom we trust, but "by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims."

They took the holy, beautiful name of Jesus without authority, and without honoring it and they used it for their own glory and not Christ's. They broke the 3<sup>rd</sup> commandment, which states: You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. Now, if you grew up in a Christian home, we were taught that you took the Lord's name in vain if you attached a curse word to his name, or if you flippantly used his name outside of worshipful context. Now that's correct but there's way more to it than that.

Do you realize that any failure to fully honor the name of Jesus is a violation of the third commandment? Q & A 99 Q. What is the aim of the third commandment?

*In summary, we should use the holy name of God only with reverence and awe, so that we may properly confess God, pray to God, and glorify God in all our words and works.*

Do you see what this is saying? Anytime we don't properly glorify God in all our words and works, we are taking God's name in vain. How do we see this most often in our day? There are quite a number of people in our day who take the name of Christ but their lives bear no resemblance to him. What an offence it must be to God when a person calls their self a Christian but they do not love him and they do not obey him. They are taking the Lord's name in vain. But what about us here today if we are believers? It's a hard reality in the life of a believer that we struggle with sin. I hope it's heart breaking when you realize that when you've been born again and you have entered the kingdom of God, but you give in to sinful temptations, you who have been washed with the blood of the lamb are taking his name in vain.

In the 10 Commandments, we're told that the "Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain." So we come to the sad realization that never a day in our lives have we fully honored the name of Jesus in our thoughts, our words, or our deeds.

In Acts 19 these men took the Lord's name in vain and God removed his hand of restraint and these men got beat up by a demon. But stop for a minute and think about this... There will come a day when God will cast Satan and every demon into the lake of fire along with every person who has not repented of taking the Lord's name in vain – an eternity separated from God surrounded by Satan and his demons.

Friends, there is good news. In spite of the fact that we have taken his name in vain a million times, there is a Savior who came and perfectly obeyed God and honored God's name. And this Savior came and died for our sins of violating the third commandment. And his sacrifice has made it possible for you and I to be counted as though we have perfectly honored and glorified his name our entire lives. Do you see how much grace has been poured out on us that you and I can take the name of Jesus on our lips and for those whose sins have been forgiven we are told in

Proverbs 18:10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.

Getting beat up by a demon is the least of your worries if you have not repented of taking the Lord's name in vain.

So let's look at #3

3. What does it look like when the name of Jesus is magnified in a group of people?

Look what happens as a result of this – v17

Fear fell upon them all

And the name of Jesus was magnified

It's interesting how God often uses traumatic events to awaken us to his power and glory isn't it? In this case we see the triumph of God's working powerfully through Paul vs. the false working of the Jewish exorcists. And so we get a vivid picture of what it looks like when God gets serious with people and people get serious with God.

What happens when God magnifies his name in the midst of people? Here at Ephesus it led to three things

1. Widespread conversions
2. Public confession of sin
3. A dramatic pursuit of holiness and purity (inside out) - \$6 million

What would happen if God was determined for his name to be magnified at The Road? What kind of traumatic events would God have to use to awaken us to the glory of his name? Hurricanes? Tornadoes? Earthquakes? The threat of nuclear war? Friends why are we as a church so sleepy and lethargic? What will it take to wake us up?

When will we decide we will not be satisfied with less than the mighty moving power of God in our midst? When will we begin to come together in desperate hunger and longing for the presence of God with us? When will we lay hold of the throne of God with a vengeance in prayer and boldly tell him to his face that we will not let him go until he blesses us?

Friends, you and I need to be warned by this passage today not to be found guilty of taking God's name in vain by playing house for God, when he has called us to be his Church to display the glory of his name to our community and to the nations.

Here's what I'm asking you to do here today.

1. If you're not yet a believer, I invite you to come and lay down the burdens of your sin at Jesus' feet and take up eternal joy in a relationship with him. That happens when you see your sin, and you see that Jesus and his sacrifice is the only remedy for your soul and you come to him by faith depending on him.
2. If you are a believer but you've been riding the fence, dabbling in sin, I want you to get off the fence. Stop dishonoring the name of Jesus by trying to hold hands with him and the world. Plead with him to forgive you of your halfhearted devotion and your lukewarm love.
3. Or maybe you're here today and you hear what I've been saying. And you realize that we have been far too satisfied with far too little of God's presence and power. What I'm asking us to do here today as a Church-family is to get serious with God. Let's confess to God our lack of hunger for him and our desire to see and experience his glory. Let's get serious and be willing to get rid of anything in our lives that prevents us from having more of Christ and being used by him. I am pleading with you and I'm pleading with myself that we not live our lives satisfied with lukewarm Christianity. Here the words of C.S. Lewis are helpful:  
"It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."

I'm going to pray...