

# Paul's Third Missionary Journey: Ephesus--Acts 19:8-29

by J.R. Miller

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*The sermon highlights the supernatural power of Christianity as demonstrated through Paul's miracles and the transformation of the people of Ephesus.*

**Scripture:** Acts 19:8

**Topics:** "The Power of Christ", "Renouncing Sin"

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## Description

J.R. Miller discusses Paul's third missionary journey in Ephesus, emphasizing the city's significance as a center of influence and the initial rejection Paul faced from the Jews. Despite this, Paul preached boldly in a public hall for two years, leading to widespread dissemination of the gospel and the establishment of churches. The sermon highlights the extraordinary miracles performed through Paul, showcasing the divine power of Christianity compared to the failed attempts of magicians. The transformation of new believers, who openly confessed their sins and burned their magic books, illustrates the profound impact of Christ's power in their lives. Miller concludes by urging believers to renounce sin and choose righteousness, as true faith is evidenced by the fruits it produces.

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## Transcript

From the beginning, Christianity sought the cities as great centers of influence. Ephesus was an important city. It was a great center of heathenism, having in it the magnificent temple of Diana, one of the Seven Wonders of the World. As usual, Paul began his work in Ephesus with his own people, the Jews, to whom he spoke boldly. But they rejected his preaching.

One result of the opposition of the Jews, was the abandonment of the work in their synagogues. For two years Paul preached in a public hall. It was a glorious opportunity for Christianity. Ephesus was a great commercial center, and people from all Asia Minor resorted there. Many of these continually heard Paul's preaching, and thus the gospel was widely diffused. Ephesus became a center of evangelism in another way. Paul had a band of noble helpers who went out into the surrounding country, and a number of churches were established.

There was an unusual display of supernatural power in connection with the work in Ephesus. One remarkable example of this is given in the narrative. "God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, 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." These sick people were not cured by the handkerchiefs and aprons--God wrought the miracles. He saw fit to use the instruments of healing.

From every truly godly man there goes forth an influence of blessing. Everything he does seem to be hallowed by his touch. Even his most commonplace words have a power that the words of other men have not. A portion of his own spirit--seems to enter into whatever his hand touches.

As in the case of the magicians of Egypt, when Moses and Aaron were working great miracle there, the enemies of the gospel in Ephesus tried to outdo the work of the apostles. "Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed." If these enemies of Christianity had been able to do the works which the servants of Christ were doing, they might justly have claimed equal power. When John the Baptist sent from his prison to know if Jesus were really the Promised One, Jesus pointed the messengers to the works he was doing--the healing of the sick, the opening of the eyes of the blind, and the cleansing of the lepers, the raising of the dead. These were the proofs of his Messiahship, he said.

Christianity still points to its works--as its best evidences. Paul cast out evil spirits and healed the sick--by naming over them the sacred name of Jesus Christ. Could those exorcists do the same thing? They tried, and ignominiously failed. We should point to the works of Christianity and ask its enemies if they can do the same things. Take the history of missions. Look at the nations and people lifted out from the degradation of heathenism. Can the enemies of Christianity do the same? Have they any record to show that they can? Look at individual cases--men saved from the most depraved vices--and changed into nobleness, purity and saintliness. Can infidelity imitate these works? Look at the benevolent institutions which Christianity has established--hospitals, orphanages, asylums and homes of all kinds. Where are the benevolent and philanthropic institutions erected by skepticism and atheism? "You shall know them--by their fruits."

Even demons recognized the power of Christ and his authority, and could not be deceived by those who thought by using the same formula, the words the apostle used, to invoke the divine power. "Jesus I know, and Paul I know--but who are you?" In the same way evil yet resists the efforts of pretenders to master it and expel it.

The evils in our own hearts--wicked dispositions, lusts and unholy tempers, reply in the same way to our personal, unaided efforts to dispel them! It is the same with the vices of society, with all the world's evils and corruptions. Human power alone is not able to drive them away! They look up and say, "Jesus I know--but who are you?" Jesus is well known all over Satan's kingdom. He is recognized as the Almighty Conqueror, before whom all satanic power has to yield. "But who are you?" Here is where all pretended power fails, where all false religions are proved insufficient. Only Christ's power is strong enough to drive out Satan. If we would have our own hearts rid of the evil that is in them--we must give ourselves to Christ, for these evils will recognize no other Master!

The effect of this remarkable display of supernatural power was felt at once. The people recognized the difference between the real power exercised through the apostle and his helpers--and the pretended power of the magicians, and were awed by the manifest presence of God among them. Always the religion of Christ is characterized by the divine presence and work, thus evidencing its supernatural origin. Heathen religions pretend to do wonderful things--but they have no power to make the world better. They cannot comfort sorrow. They do not build up sweet homes. The work of Christianity is proved to be

divine--by what it does for men wherever it is accepted.

"Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. A number of them who had been practicing magic brought their books and burned them at a public bonfire. The value of the books was several million dollars!" Acts 19:18-19

One proof of the power of Christianity, was in the way these new believers at Ephesus renounced their evil ways and gave up their profitable sins. They saw the emptiness and folly of the things in which they had been trusting, and openly confessed the sinful deeds they had been doing. Many of them who had been engaged in the practice of magic arts, brought their books together and made a bonfire of them in the public square.

Always, those who follow Christ should be ready to part with whatever is sinful in their life and work, that Christ may be honored above all. Sins kept in the heart--poison the life, hide God's face, and shut out blessing. No matter what it may cost, our sins must be sacrificed, or they will destroy us!

The burning of these old Ephesian books suggests that it would be good, if in many places there might be bonfires of evil books. There are many books which ought to be burned! They carry in them Satan's poison! To read them is to debauch our own souls. To put them into the hands of others--is to ruin them.

In India, a man took down a book from the shelf--and a viper came out of the book and stung him to death! Just so, there are many books in which deadly vipers lie hidden. We should be most careful in choosing the books we read. A good book is a great blessing--but a bad book is a curse!

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