

By Paul's Hands

by Paris Reidhead

The sermon explores the significance of Paul's ministry, the miracles performed through him, and the importance of teaching and spiritual growth among believers.

Duration: 56:50

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Acts 19:6-20

Topics: "Paul The Apostle"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the impact of technological advancements on our leisure time. He describes a future where everything is automated and people are constantly busy. Despite this, he emphasizes the importance of daily teaching and discourse, as exemplified by the apostle Paul. The preacher also highlights the New Testament method of evangelism and witnessing, encouraging Christians to be set loose and share their faith. He concludes by emphasizing the need for a strong foundation of separation unto the Lord, instruction in His ways, and obedience to His commands in order to expect confirmation from God.

Transcript

Will you turn, please, to Acts chapter 19, the 19th chapter of Acts, and I shall begin reading with the 9th verse. We've referred in the past evenings to the earlier verses, and I shall return again to the 6th verse, probably two or three weeks hence. I, you'll notice in the 6th verse that the matter of speaking with tongues has come up, and I felt impressed in my spirit to bring a message some two or three weeks hence on the subject tongues a sign or a gift, a critique of the present movement that we are seeing about us on every hand, and I shall have that message mimeographed in advance of its being presented so that it will be available following service.

I have been preparing and anticipate this, and so will ask you to pray with me that it might be all the Lord would have it be. And this will be probably the 31st of March, and it will, you'll have adequate notice of it. Several have asked me to speak on the subject, but I felt that when I did I should have such scriptural documentation and quotation as would cause the message to be the most profitable, and we'll prepare to do that probably, as I say, the 31st of March or as soon thereafter as we can have the message prepared in advance.

So we'll be returning to this early part of Acts a little later. I shall begin reading now with the ninth verse and conclude with the twelfth verse. But when divers were hardened and believed not, but spake evil of

that way before the multitude, Paul departed from them and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one tyrannous, and this continued by the space of two years, so that they all which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul, that's where we get the theme for the evening, by Paul's hands, 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. Occasionally it's helpful to use another version, perhaps even some of you are looking at one at the moment, but I've through the years been greatly helped by a German commentator who wrote, greatly exalting our Lord, by the name of Lange. And I'd like to read the translation that he gives, I think it's really an excellent one, it will throw a little light on some words.

But when some hardened themselves, and were unbelievers, and reviled the way in the presence of the multitude, he departed from them and separated the disciples, discoursing day by day in the lecture room of a certain tyrannist. I think that phrase is quite helpful, don't you? Discoursing day by day in the lecture room of a certain tyrannist. Now that's actually what it was, and I think it helps us from the King James.

But this continued during two years, so that all the inhabitants of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. And God wrought not inconsiderable work by the hands of Paul, so that they laid handkerchiefs and aprons from his skin on the sick, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirit went out of them. Now you must understand that this is a situation, a very, very vital situation, that has kept three months of ministry alive.

Paul has been right next door, as you may recall, to the synagogue, and has been ministering there, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. The apostle Paul did not have a schismatic spirit. His was not a sectarian spirit.

He loved the people of God, and he loved Israel of God. The Jews were dear to his heart. You can't read that 10th and 11th chapter of Romans without feeling the great longing, and burden, and yearning of his heart.

And when he says of his people, my people, for which, for whom I'm willing to be a curse, he said, I will be willing to be destroyed, to be damned, if they could be saved. I'm so burdened for them. I love them so much.

Like Moses, who said, Lord, if you can't spare them, blot my name out of your book. Paul said, if it would help, I'd be willing to have my name blotted out of the book. And thus, whenever he went into a community, he always went first to his own people, to those with whom he'd been reared, whose culture he knew, whose traditions he respected, whose zeal warmed his heart, for he could say that he too had been zealous among the most earnest.

And he sought always to use the privilege that was his as a rabbi to reach the Jews. In every synagogue, as you've heard me say, was a section to which visiting rabbis who had something they wished to say were expected to come and be seated. Just as we have a choir loft for those that are sing, they had a speaker's loft for visiting rabbis that had something they wished to say.

And so, uniformly, when he'd go into a community, using all the privileges that were his as a rabbi, he would be seated in this section. And the president of the synagogue, after a due and proper course, would

say, would you have something to say? And then he would begin to speak. Wisely, and patiently, and lovingly, and bring the testimony that was on his heart to bring.

Well, in the case that's here, you know that there had been a friction, and problem, and difficulty, as earlier presented. Now, he has spent three months seeking to, uh, in the synagogue, seeking to explain the way, and communicate the truth. There have been many that have believed.

This is always the case. The gospel is the power of God, and the salvation to everyone that believe it. And there had been, gathered together, a company of people, a church, a body of believers drawn out by the Spirit of God.

These met together, and prayed together, and sought to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. But, what is the savor of life to life to one, becomes the savor of death to death to another. And this is exactly what had happened.

And thus, we have this translation, which brings it so clearly into focus. But when some hardened themselves, they did it. They set about to do it.

They deliberately did it. They rejected, they spurned, just as Pharaoh had appealed from the Spirit of God, and the manifestation of the power of God, to break his will, and hardened himself, until the ten tests became sufficient to bring him into absolute obduracy of spirit, where he would not, he would not bend. So, these heard for three months, and they hardened themselves.

Every time the truth came, they said no. And it was easier to say no the next time, and no again. And finally, it wasn't just an attitude of no, but it says, and they reviled the way in the presence of the multitude.

Now, when Paul got up to speak, they would get up to speak, and shout him down, and revile. This word carries with it every derogatory thing that could be said, every vile thing that could be said, everything that could bring the way, the way, I like that, the way, the way of life, the way of truth, the way of blessing. They spoke evil of that way, and the children of God were called the people of the way.

And this is a lovely expression, and it is a way as well. And they spoke evil, they reviled the way. Well, it was hopeless.

The issue had been drawn. This company that had hardened themselves prevailed. They were the majority.

I'm sure there was great searching of heart. I'm confident that there was great burden of spirit. It wasn't lightly done.

It wasn't easily done. I think another case when Dr. Simpson, an esteemed pastor, respected in the community and in the presbytery of New York City, pastor of an affluent, wealthy church down at 13th Street, felt the Spirit of God drawing him for a vision, for a ministry that was not embraced by the eldership or the people who wanted the things of the world, that didn't want the evangelistic ministry that God had given him. Oh, I'm sure in lonely hours of dark night, he didn't want to pray.

He didn't want to leave. No man that's had a heritage of truth and blessing ever approaches lightly, if he's a man of integrity and a man of spiritual discernment, never approaches lightly this matter of separation. And that's what it is.

Verse 9 is a verse of separation. It was done most reluctantly, but finally it became clear that there was absolutely nothing else that they could do. And so you'll notice the way it's put.

He departed from the synagogue and the reviler and those that had hardened themselves and the unbelievers, and he separated the disciples. These that had committed themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ and had sold themselves to his sovereignty and gladly had embraced him, no longer had anything in common with the company of people that were reviling the way and speaking evil of the Lord. And thus, with the utmost reluctance, he had to separate himself.

But it was on necessary ground. For where is the ground? Well, you know what they said of Christ, do you not? This man was foolish. This man was an imposter, so said they.

This man is a traitor. This man is a vile man. He should be destroyed.

That's what the Jews protesting to Pilate had said of Christ. So that's what they're saying in Ephesus. That's what they're saying here.

It's an attack on Christ. It's an attack on his deity. It's an attack on his glory.

It's an attack on his person. There's no ground. No grounds of meeting.

But you will notice how reluctantly, how slowly, where we know today there are 312 registered denominations in the United States, and all of them have felt some grounds for separation. And I think it's deplorable that so many times there has not been the care that there was in the case of Paul. As I look back in the history of some movements, I discover that many times the grounds of separation was almost obscure.

They can't find out why. Very frequently it was on personality maladjustments. And there was sectarian spirit, where ambitious men wanted to build around themselves a following more amenable to their leadership.

It's an extremely, extremely costly thing to have a sectarian spirit, a spirit that seeks to divide. I think it approaches that poor place where in the Proverbs it says, These six things, six things does the Lord hate, and the seventh is an abomination unto him. And it is he that soweth discord among brethren.

I just can't believe that much of the separation is ordered of God or on the grounds that were here established. I don't believe it at all. I think that this gives us really the only ground, in a sense, the only ground that God recognizes, and that is the unwillingness to submit to the Lordship of Christ and recognize the authority and the deity of Christ.

Well, here we have a situation where Paul finds it absolutely necessary to draw the disciples away from these that are reviling the one whom they love. For had he stayed, he would have exposed them to all the effects of his having to some degree endorsed this slanderous attack upon his Lord. But notice the unity of the believer.

Oh, you must see that. For he departed and separated the disciples. Now, there wasn't that they were following Paul.

The amazing thing about Paul was that up above here, when he came to this community, he entered right into the ministry of John. He accepted what they had done. Their repentance wasn't questioned.

Their faith in Christ was unchallenged. They had been baptized in John's baptism, and now without question he baptizes them as believers do in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And then he prayed for them, and the Spirit of God had come upon them.

These were taught believers. These were united believers. These were folk that had something wonderfully in common.

For we have every reason to believe that as others had been added to the church, others had believed they too had been brought into this same wonderful fellowship. And so when he came in, he didn't start, well there are these John Paul Christians, now we're going to start. No, that wasn't in his heart at all.

There was a movement of the believers to each other in their need for one another, their dependence upon one another. But notice that there was this separation unto the will and purpose of the Lord. So the first thing we see as we see this is that Paul has a great sense of the fact that the church of Jesus Christ must stand upon the grounds of the sovereignty of the Son of God in the lives of the believers and in the life of the church.

It's important what we were to see just a little earlier. Had there been compromise? Had there been weakness on this, on his part here? I am confident that verses 11 and 12 would never have been in the words. And so we're grateful to see this, that here was a man who viewed the integrity of the church as being a binding to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But it wasn't only grounds of fellowship and union in Christ that made the foundation for what we're about to observe. There's something else in verse 9. There's instruction. Separation and instruction.

In no sense is it implied that because these people knew the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and because they were bound one to another, that that was all there was for them. Because the word says he discoursed day by day in the lecture room of Tyrannus. He discoursed day by day.

He taught day by day. But notice what these people have to whom he is finding it necessary to day by day teach. Not just Sundays, no Wednesdays, but day by day.

Fortunately, these people lived in the day before they had so many labor-saving devices, they had some time to go every day. If they'd lived in the 20th century, they'd be as busy running the labor-saving devices as we are, and they wouldn't have the time. But they did everything by hand so they had the leisure.

This is one of the benefits that came. The more technological comes our civilization, the less leisure we have. And as it progresses to the final stage where all you have to do is push a button, breakfast comes out one chute, the dishes are done by another, the automatic hands sweep the floor, vacuum is done by the rug shaking from underneath.

When everything becomes automatic by just pushing a button, you won't have time for anything. You'll be so busy. So here were people that had to work 12 hours a day, and they had ample leisure to go to the school of Tyrannus and daily listen to Paul as he discoursed.

And just, you know, we saw the other day, last Sunday morning, that some of his discourses, well, no one would ever accuse him of bringing sermonettes to Christianettes by a preacherette. Three, four, five hours, and one lad fell out of the window overcome with it all. So when it's discourse daily, let's believe that this is what he meant.

And this is what was said. He discoursed daily. He taught daily.

And the people came daily. But notice something else? They were filled with the Spirit so they knew they needed to be taught. Some people think that when you've been filled with the Spirit, you don't have to be taught anymore.

Isn't it interesting that these people were prayed for and were filled with the Spirit about the day they were saved, and they were babes then? Spirit-filled babes. Well, you say, well, what's the use of being filled with the Spirit if you're a babe? Well, it's just that you don't stay a babe as long. It's easier to become un-baby.

You're able to grow faster. But it doesn't mean that you're grown. And it doesn't mean that you are interested only in the experience of being filled with the Spirit, but you're interested in Christ and seeing him.

And the consequence of this is that these people had an eagerness for the Word concerning Christ that was so avid, so intense, that daily he could have them. Just daily. They were there.

They wanted to learn about the Lord, and they knew they needed to learn. This is the, one of the best evidences of the Spirit-filled life is a hunger to learn about the Lord Jesus. And an avid interest in the Word of God, and a great longing to be taught in Christ, and to grow up into Christ.

And they knew they needed to be taught. Now what did he teach them? What did he talk about? If you'll turn over to chapter 20 and verse 27, he gives a report to another company, mind you, in a sense, but nevertheless equally apt and appropriate. Let me see, it's the same company.

He's replying, telling them as he takes leave of them now, what he did when he was there for such a long time. And what did he say? He said, I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. What did he teach? He taught all the counsel of God.

What did the people need? All the counsel of God. Who were they? They were believers in the Lord Jesus Christ that had submitted to his sovereignty on Christ's terms. They were spirit-filled believers.

What did they need? They needed all the counsel of God. What did they get? They got all the counsel of God. Why? Because there's no such thing as unimportant truth in the Bible.

There's no such thing as unimportant truth. And Paul, being faithful to the Lord that called him, was prepared to give the people what they so desperately needed in his daily discourse, which was all the counsel of God, sparing nothing and overlooking nothing, because they needed it and because God wanted it. What later did he say? You remember in 2 Timothy 3 and 16, he declared, all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be mature, perfect, truly furnished unto every good work.

How much scripture do you need? All scripture. How much truth do you need? All truth. How much of the counsel of God do you need? The whole counsel of God.

What's important? All of it. Well, this is important. Now, you've got to see that, because what happened didn't just happen anywhere.

It happened someplace. And when you understand the place where it happened, then you can say, this is what must be if that is to follow. Do you see what I mean? If you understand the foundation, many times people would say, well, we'd like to have the miracles that have been done by Paul, done with us.

But the question is, have we given our attention to the whole counsel of God? Have we been prepared to sit for two years and let come line upon line, and precept upon precept, and truth upon truth, that we've embraced, and we've received, and integrated into our lives, and obeyed? That's what they did. They were spirit-taught people that had an avid hunger for the Word, and wanted to be truly furnished unto every good work. And so they gave attendance to reading and to the teaching of the Word.

Paul was writing to this same church at Ephesus, this same people. And if you'll turn to Ephesians 4, verses 11 to 16, you'll see what he wrote concerning his ministry. Remember now, he spent two years doing something, and now as he writes to the church at Ephesus, he tells them what he has done.

It's like the man down south said, what's your message of preaching? Well, I tell them what I'm going to tell them, and then I tell them, and then I tell them what I've told them. And this is what Paul has done. He spends two years telling them, and now he tells them what he's told them, so that they'll understand why, and relate it to their own experience.

Notice, he gave some apostles, that's Paul, some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors, and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints into the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the body of Christ. Two years, daily in the school of Tyrannus, as a teacher, bringing the saints to maturity so that they could do the work of the ministry, so the body of Christ could be built up. Did that happen? Let's go back and see.

Let's go back to Acts 19 and see whether he was effective, whether it was fruitful or not. And verse 10 tells us, in Acts 19, 10, and this continued by the space of two years, so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. That whole area was evangelized by this company of people that spent every day, as often as they could, for they couldn't all be there every day.

Half of them were slaves, many of them at least, and they didn't have freedom to go and come as they would. But you see, the nice part about the early church was, when one learned, he shared it with the others who couldn't be there, and that way he got it twice. And may I say this, that you don't have it till you've given it away.

You know that. Until you've given it to someone, it isn't yours. You think it is, but if you want to know how much you got from the ninth message, you go give it to someone who couldn't be here.

And then you're going to see. This is how you get, when you give. And so here they've come, and they've been there, and this man's in the leather business, and he has to go back into the hills to buy leather, so that he can buy the goatskin, and so on, that he can have for his trade.

And he makes a trip twice a year to buy leather, once a year, and he takes his donkeys, carries something out, finished good, perhaps to the villages along the way. And the wonderful part of it, he couldn't send it by air freight or train, he had to go with it. And he couldn't walk very fast, 15, 20 miles is a good day's journey, and he had time to stop on the road, so as he went along, he'd see some folks, oh well, hello, they've been seeing him for years, you know.

Well, what's new back in Ephesus? Oh, what's new in Ephesus, say, what's new in Ephesus? You know, Ephesus, this is wonderful, and you ought to come, you got any reason to come, you ought to come. Why, when I come back, come with me. Why, what's in Ephesus? Well, Paul, you know Paul, oh, you know that Pharisee, yes, that's, he's in Judea, and he's got a lecture room there, and every day we go, and he opens the word, and he teaches about Christ.

Well, what's happened? What's happened? I'm a new man, that's what's happened. You see, I, you know me, I was a drunkard, I was lecherous and immoral, vile, I worshiped Diana of the Ephesians, oh yes, I know all about that, we've been together. Well, I'm not like that anymore.

Jesus Christ forgave me of all my sins, and he's come into my heart, and I've been filled with the Spirit of God, the fullness of Christ, and my home is different, and my life is different, and this is what I've learned. Is it, you, you, you, you have peace, you've been laid down in your heart, you don't have a fire burning that you have to quench, no, no, there's peace there now. Oh, tell me about it, will you, can you stay over tomorrow? Well, sure, see, no deadline, that's wonderful, no deadline, no, no shipping, or certainly, gather your friends and go out tonight, bring them in, I'll tell you about it.

So they send the word out to the community, come on over to our house, so-and-so from Ephesus is here, the leather trader, and, and, and he's got the most wonderful story to tell, and while the leather trader's going off here, the potter's going off there, and the old smith's going off here, and they're circulating around, and the word's coming, you see what Paul's strategy was? Oh, he didn't just go into a community and add converts, that was too slow. He went into a community and he made calls. That's what you call geometric increase, not addition.

You see, it's one thing to just add converts to a preacher, but oh, when you can, every time Paul met somebody, he left another Paul, had the same truth, had the same relationship to the Lord, and this is what his ministry was, perfecting the saint into the work of the ministry, and so in those two years, that whole province was evangelized, and I don't think Paul ever got outside except for maybe a Sunday school picnic the second year. I don't think he left at all. I think that he stayed right at the school of Tyrannus, daily discoursing, and everyone that came was received from the Lord and became established in the word, and they had to follow their normal business.

They didn't even have to set up open-air campaigners because every one of them was an open-air campaigner. They just went out everywhere they were, and they all spoke. Now, we need open-air campaigners to teach us how to be open-air campaigners is one thing.

We ought to understand it. You know what I wish? I'd like to pray every single man that makes a living in business into a business of his own. I really would.

I go to this little fruit store occasionally and buy an apple, and I think here's this man. He owns his little fruit store, and if he wants to open it, he doesn't need to, and he can talk with anybody. I think every Christian ought to at least have a fruit store, some place where they could just talk with people that come, and nobody's going to dock them, and all this is a city of little shops, and I don't know of three Christians that have shops in the whole island of Manhattan.

I think we ought to start a foreign mission society to establish shops in Manhattan. We'll get some folks from out in Santa Fe to move in, and they'll do that, but of course, that's where it has to come from. Well, here's the whole genius.

Taught, related to the Lord, an experience of God, established in the truth, on fire for the Lord, going out and gossiping the gospel. Now, there's what we're after. It's been seven years.

We haven't gotten very far, but I'll tell you this, we're a lot further than we were seven years ago. Don't forget it. We're a lot nearer today than we were seven years ago, but someday we're going to begin to realize that the genius of the gospel isn't a big preacher that everybody comes to hear, but it's a lot of people that are filled with the fullness of God and established in the word of God that go out to witness in homes, in living rooms, in shops, in offices, and you don't need to have a fruit store.

You just witness for Christ where you are, where you are. Do you see? This is the genius of the gospel. This is the New Testament method.

This is what God's after. This is what it's all about. Here it is.

All right, now let's notice something else we've already talked about. I got to my third point before I told you what it was. Well, I'll tell it and then pass on.

It was evangelism and witnessing. Visitors came and the people went. It's wonderful when you get ahead of your own outline, isn't it? It shows you aren't bound to it anyhow.

This was the Lord's way of dealing. This was God's way of ministering, filling the heart with the love for Christ and the power of the Spirit of God and turning them loose. My soul, that's what he wants.

That's what he wants. Just Christians turn loose. Set them loose.

The Lord would let your people go. I think sometimes we're all sort of like Lazarus, you know, got life in us, but man, we're bound hand and foot. We've got to have the Lord say, loose him and let him go.

You're not loose till you know the Word. You're not loose till you know the truth. You're not loose until you know the presence of the Spirit.

Working in your life and quickening the Word and guiding you and directing you and leading you. I was up at King's College, you know, for their evangelistic meeting last fall. I was so delighted when one of the men from Faith at Work gave his testimony at Dr. Cook's home and he was telling about being in Germany.

He'd rented a car, got on the Autobahn, I guess it was. I've never been there. I don't know what it was.

Frank could tell me, but he got on there and he didn't know where to get off. And so he said, Lord, it doesn't make much difference where I get off. I'll get there sooner or later, but there's maybe somebody you want me to talk to along the way.

So he missed his exit, but he met a man and he said, you know, I'm awful glad I missed the road because I met you. Why are you glad you met me? Said this man who spoke English because he didn't speak any German. Well, he said, you see, something wonderful happened to me.

Eight years ago, I was a drunkard in New York. I'd lost my family, I'd lost my home, I'd lost my business, I'd lost everything. You have? Yeah.

And then he said, Jesus Christ came into my heart and reached down in my throat and he wiped away the taste for alcohol and he reached down in my life and he wiped away the pain of sin and he's given me a

new life in Christ in the fullness of the Spirit of God. My wife's back, my children's back, and now I'm president of the corporation that sent me here. And eight years ago, I didn't have anything.

I said, oh my, that Jesus is dead. The man said, you mean Jesus, the one we hear about in church? I said, yes. He said, I didn't know he did things like that.

I knew he used to, but you mean he still does things like that? I said, yes. He said, well, have you got something I can read about him? He said, do I have something you can read about him? And he went to his car and opened his briefcase and got some literature and gave it to him and gave his car. He said, now write to me when you find Christ.

And he'd only been back from Germany about 10 days when I saw him. Isn't it wonderful to have something to say for the most wonderful person in all the world? Well, he did. This is what Paul was talking about.

People that were filled with the Word, filled with the truth, filled with the Spirit of God, filled with love for souls, and in the course of their business, they just used every opportunity to witness to Christ. But do you notice they've got separation that made them blessable and instruction that made them usable and witnessing that made them fruitful? And now they've got confirmation that makes it successful. Notice this.

And so it says, God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul. God did it by the hands of Paul. Now, the Lord needed Paul, and Paul needed the Lord.

And the Lord didn't give to Paul a corner on himself so that Paul could use God. But Paul gave to the Lord his hand so the Lord could use his hand. There's a great deal of difference.

A lot of people are looking for an experience so that God will give his power to them so they can use God's power in their work, and he doesn't do that. But what he asks you to do is for you to give your body, yourself, to him so that he can use you to do his work. And this is completely different.

This is his, and this is what happened. Paul has given himself to the Lord so that the Lord can use him to do his work. Now, I do not think that these miracles necessarily came at the very beginning of the ministry.

Sometimes they did, other times they didn't, but the nature of its occurrence here makes me feel that this particular aspect of ministry may not have been concomitant with the beginning of the preaching and the teaching. I don't know. I wouldn't want to dogmatize on it.

But I would say this, that there was a foundation so secure, so strong, so wholesome, so balanced, that God could afford to bless it. You've heard me say in the past, don't pray, Lord bless me. Pray, Lord make me blessable.

Now, these people are blessable. They've given themselves to the whole counsel of God. They've ordered themselves in the way and the will of God.

And their heart's concern is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, God confirms the word by Paul's hand, special miracles are done. No inconsiderable works, said Lange in his translation.

Now, this is wonderful. This is wonderful. But you see, it has a foundation.

My feeling is this, that any company of people that are prepared to meet God on the basis of the foundation that we've seen, separation unto the Lord, instructions in the way of the Lord, faithful witnessing in obedience to the Lord, can expect confirmation. But where the problem comes is when we're unwilling to submit to that separation unto him, where we're unwilling to submit to his instruction, where we're unwilling to submit in obedience to his commands. And then we expect the Lord to come and seal what we haven't done.

No. No, I believe that when we have the foundation that's here, God's going to meet us. He does now.

We don't say much about it, but the Lord is touching life, meeting life, various ways. Someone came to me just the other day. He said, you know my cousin that you prayed for some months ago? Yes.

Remember the one that the doctor said had that enormous tumor? Yes. The one that was sure it was malignant? Yes. Well, you know when they took her to the operating room, preparing to operate, the doctors were amazed.

They couldn't find any evidence of the tumor. Completely gone. And they said, well, here's the x-rays, here's the report, and it just isn't there.

There's nothing there. No reason to operate. So she said she wasn't operated on.

Well, why not? Why not? That's not hard for our Lord. That's not hard. You know the hard part of God isn't with flesh, tissue.

I see no problem in that. The hard part is in the human spirit. That's where the difficulty is.

That's the part that's hard to mold, hard to shape. I never find any problem in believing the Lord to touch. I don't believe it's always God's will to heal.

Don't misunderstand me. Because even Paul left Trofimus sick, or left his friend sick Trofimus, and he told Timothy to take a little wine. And there are problems.

The scripture doesn't give us an open, blank check. Nobody says it does. But you know what it does, teacher? It teaches that God just loves to do exceeding abundantly when he's released to do it, by the obedience and the faith of his people.

I can't answer all the problems. There's a lot of them I don't know the answer for. But you know what I do know? That he still loves to do the exceeding abundantly.

He still loves to touch. He still loves to answer prayer. He still is the same Lord Jesus that he was.

I don't find any problem with God. You know where I find the problem? The people. That's where I find the problem, the people.

I find the problem with churches that aren't willing to accept their responsibility of separation unto the Lord. I find responsibility with Christians and churches that aren't willing to accept instruction from the Word, and the balance of truth. And churches and people that aren't willing to accept the responsibility of witness and testimony and evangelism.

This is where the problem lies. The other is no problem. And it follows right in this sequence of separation, instruction, and witness.

Then there's confirmation. That's the pattern. That's the order.

That's the way the Lord wants to do it. That's the way God's desire is, I'm sure. Now notice.

We come to this matter of the handkerchiefs. Really what it says is sweat paws, and a little apron that was worn around the body, and the handkerchief that was used to wipe the face. Now Paul didn't send them.

That's the first thing you've got to say. And Paul didn't advertise in the magazine saying send a bower and I'll send you. That wasn't what Paul did.

Paul didn't do that. This was not what he did. Paul did not do that.

And Paul didn't send them. That's the first thing you've got to see in this. The believers came and took them.

They came and took them from, I don't believe that they did it by duress or force, but I think they just came in and said, Paul I want to take that. And he, and he, they took it, that's all. They sent them.

And people put them on their bodies, and it says, and they were healed of diseases, and evil spirits went out of them. Now I want to come back to the by his hands for just a moment. I want to come back to that.

People often need encouragement, and they need faith. They need to be released. And when folk are sick, you know how often it is when you've been a little child, and ill, and feverish, and your mother would take you in her arms, and she'd just cool your brow with her tender hand.

And I remember when I was going down in the operating table, going in for surgery, and I looked at the nurse. I don't know who she was. She came in the next day.

She said, do you remember me? I said, I don't. And I looked at her, and I said, let me hold your hand. And she was ready for the operation, and it upset everything.

And the doctor, she said to the doctor, can I? He said, yes, didn't he? Hold his hand. That meant she had to leave. She wasn't, I don't know, I was there.

I don't see why she couldn't have been there, but he made her leave, something. And I held her hand, and I can remember going under the ether. And I can remember as a little boy when he held my mother's hand.

And I remember years ago when I was, first came to know something of the fullness of the spirit. A dear brother came, and he said, you know, I'm so concerned about your eye. They do give you trouble, don't they? I said, yes, the correction is getting increasingly heavy, and there's great strain and no little pain.

He said, let me pray for you. And he stood there beside me and just put his hands in my hand. And he said, oh Lord, you know our brother needs his eyes, the reason for driving, for all your work.

And somehow with his concern and his burden, my faith was relieved. I believe that this was ordered. That's why dear Ethan Allen, of whom Dr. Simpson wrote, he said that it was the laying on of hands.

Now there's a connection when love and yearning and longing have found their expression. Someone's willing to identify. There's often a relief, a release, a release of God's power, release of his life.

Just as the woman reached out and touched the hem of his garment. So many times when we've been praying for the sick, we've said as elders, let our hands be just as the hem of his garment. Just that contact, that release, that move of reaching out to take from the Lord.

I believe that's what it says, brought special miracles by the hands of Paul. That it was an identification with the needs of the people. Now in Peter's case, as he walked down the street, the shadow was there.

The shadow passing on them, released their faith. And so we find this matter of the cloth, the handkerchief, the one Paul used to wipe his brow, just as he'd take a cloth and wipe the perspiration from his brow, and then wear it by, and someone seeing it saying, can I have that? And they'd send it and say, now Paul, well this could, you see it's only once mentioned in the word, Paul didn't do it, and actually in the next instance you have the exorcist, the magician, which means, somehow means to say, let's not get too far here. Let's hold it.

The very proximity to this warning portion, lest we should become interested in fetishism. It stopped. But you know, I believe that what it was, again, was just a release to faith.

Just like I believe that anointing, when people come and ask the elders to anoint them in the name of the Lord. The oil is a symbol of the Spirit of God. The anointing, that moment of release, when from, from which moment they believe the Lord begins to work in them.

All right, is this important? Is there a place? Yes, there is a place. Is this for today? Yes. Where? In the church.

In the church. I believe, as I've told you, all the gifts and ministries of the Spirit of God are for today in the church. In the local church.

That's their place of residence. That's their place of operation. That's their place of protection.

That's the place for exploitation, for protection from exploitation. And so what do we learn from this portion? That the place of God's working is right in the center of the church. The church grounded on the Lordship of Christ.

The church committed to the Word of God. The church dedicated to the task of evangelism. And in the midst of this church, rightly related to the Lord, rightly related to the Word, rightly related to the world, the Lord is released to work as he will.

That's what we see. That's what we see. That's what he sees.

There's no danger here. There's no, no fanaticism here. No excess here.

No abandon here. There is what God is driving for and pressing for today. And that is the return to the church.

The local church. Of all the dynamic vitality of the presence of the risen Christ in the midst of the candlestick. I told you before, I tell you again, I'm committed to everything in the Word of God, but I am committed to the biblical principle that the unit with which God works is the local church.

Company of believers banded together on the Lordship of Christ in submission to the Word, dedicated to the task of world evangelism and local evangelism. And there in their union in prayer, and their union in the Word, and their union with each other, the Lord Jesus Christ can walk in the midst of the candlesticks and there his glory can be seen. Let's say then that what we've learned tonight is that the place where he chooses to reveal himself is in the midst of the church.

Let's ask God to make us a church in the midst of which the Lord can reveal himself in all his glory, only to wait to start this place. I hope it isn't long. Now our Father, we're so grateful that thy Word is before us as an open book.

Thou art ready and willing to teach us and instruct us and lead us in a plain and open path. And we needn't fear and we needn't withdraw, and we needn't take a club and drive the dynamic parts of the Word down into the dust of history or into the future in prophecy. But we can say that this is the textbook by which we're instructed and the Word by which we're taught.

And these principles that we've seen tonight we hold as self-evident and clear and precious. And we ask thee that elders and deacons may unitedly commit themselves to that which is so patently clear, that thou canst reveal in the midst of the church, this church and churches all over the land. We're grateful for anything thou dost do anywhere.

But O our God, how we long to see thy best in the midst of the church, in the midst of the believers, united one mind, one heart, one accord. It's utter submission to the Lord Jesus, and utter obedience to the Word, and dedication to the task. It's our paramount task in this world in love and for which he died, there to see the glory of Christ manifest again.

So breathe upon us, lead us on into a better understanding of one another in thy will, and by thy grace hasten the day when thou canst afford to confirm in every sense that which pleases thee and exalts thy Son, that which we believe to be thy will and purpose for us. Grant our fathers that any heart here tonight that has need may not feel that in any sense there need be delay. Thou art passing by.

We'll but stretch forth thy hand. Thou who art in our midst are prepared to meet that need tonight. Thou art still filling the hungry soul with goodness.

Thou art still meeting the weary body with health and strength. Thou art still satisfying our heart's desire with thyself. And so might it be tonight that in addition to instruction there comes an actual appropriation of the full provisions that are ours in Christ for the sake of our Lord Jesus.

With our heads still bowed and eyes closed, this little invitation is for any reason. You know that there's that that's standing in the way of your being all you want you to be. Why don't you deal with it tonight? If you know special need and your heart's been quickened in expectancy and you'd like elders to join with you in prayer, we'll be happy to do so if you make it known.

We do want you to know that we believe in all the word in its fullness and balance and would withhold nothing that is the heritage of the children of God. Now let us stand together for a closing prayer.

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