

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

ACTS 19:1-20:17

A tourist traveling through southern Europe visited a cathedral that had a human skull on display. The guide told his group that it was the skull of the Apostle Paul.

The next day in a neighboring city the group entered another cathedral that also displayed a skull - *again, of the Apostle Paul*. One of the tourists complained, *“Now wait a minute! This is fishy. In two days we’ve seen two skulls that supposedly belonged to the Apostle Paul!”*

The tour guide replied, *“That’s right! The skull you saw yesterday was Paul as a young man, and the skull you saw today was Paul when he was an old man.”*

There were dozens of cities throughout Galatia and Asia, Macedonia and Greece that could've laid claim to having a special relationship with the Apostle Paul.

He was not a man who let the grass grow under his feet. He was always on the move - *sharing* the Gospel, and *starting* new churches. At the end of Acts 18 Paul returns to Antioch, but after a brief stop he’s off again.

Acts 19 begins Paul’s **third** missionary journey...

Verse 1, *“And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus.”* This was Paul's second visit to Ephesus. It was an important city in the Roman world. At the time its population was 300,000 people.

Ephesus was the commercial center of the wealthy region of Asia Minor. People called it, "The Treasure Chest of Asia." Ironically, Paul discovers these people who *had-it-all financially, were lacking spiritually...*

"And finding some disciples (Paul) said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." Remembered who'd just ministered in Ephesus? "Apollos." And recall Apollos' deficiency? Acts 18:25 told us, "he knew only the baptism of John." He knew to *turn from sin, and turn to Jesus*, but he didn't know how to **turn on** the power of the Holy Spirit. He was ignorant of the Spirit's baptism.

Earlier, we're told Aquila and Priscilla had to take him aside, and explain "the way of God more accurately."

Apollos had been guilty of trying to fulfill the *Great Commission, while committing the Great Omission.*

He didn't realize the Holy Spirit not only wants to *indwell us*, but also *empower us*. As believers, we can plug into the power of Jesus through His Holy Spirit.

And the missing ingredient in Apollos' teaching was being replicated in his listeners. They were *believers in Jesus*, but not *receivers of the Holy Spirit's power.*

"And (Paul) said to (the Ephesians), "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." When Jesus told His disciples to go into all the world and baptize, He provided them a formula...

Jesus said we should baptize believers “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

If the Ephesians had been baptized as Christians with this formula they would’ve at least heard of the Spirit. But rather than Christian baptism, they’d been baptized into John’s baptism - a show of repentance.

“Then Paul said, “John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.” When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” Which is another way to say *they were baptized as Christians*.

Sometimes, you’ll run across folks who point to verse 5, and suggest if you haven’t been baptized with this exact verbiage, “*in the name of the Lord Jesus*,” you haven’t been biblically baptized. That’s not true.

Again, the phrase “*baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*” is just a way to indicate “Christian baptism.”

In fact, in the context of this passage - *if the Ephesian believers had been baptized as Christians they would’ve at least heard of the Holy Spirit* - for the formula used in Christian baptism - the proper wording, would’ve included the mention of “the Holy Spirit.”

Whenever I baptize folks I use the language Jesus gave us in Matthew 28:19. I baptize you “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

Once, I was baptizing in the Jordan River, when a busload of Europeans got in line behind our group and wanted to be

baptized. Of course, asking a pastor to baptize is like saying sic'em to a bulldog. I baptized at least forty people that day, but I'll never forget the last.

When I raised him from the water, he wanted to be dunked again. When he came up the second time, he asked for one more immersion. Later someone told me he wanted to be baptized three times - *for the Father, for the Son, and for the Holy Spirit*. I'm not sure it was necessary, but at least he understood the Scriptures.

Verse 6, “**And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Now the men were about twelve in all.**” Before Paul arrived, *when the Ephesians had first believed*, the Spirit had come quietly to indwell their hearts, but now He fills and overflows them.

And it got noisy! They spoke in ecstatic utterances. They praised God with the spiritual gift of tongues - *in unlearned languages foreign to them*. And they prophesied in their own language *messages from God*.

Tongues are *praise*. Prophecy is *proclamation*.

Both tongues and prophecy are communicative outbursts. Like popping a cork... the Holy Spirit that's inside us surges out of us with power. Tongues is **us speaking to God**. Prophecy is **God speaking to us**.

Tongues allows our spirit to vent its praise without our minds having to keep pace. The praise bypasses our limited vocabulary with spontaneous language...

Whereas, prophecy is God's direct messaging. We become the mouthpiece through which He speaks.

And when Paul laid hands on the Ephesians the Spirit came upon them in a sudden rush of spiritual power by *speaking in tongues and words of prophecy*.

One New Year's Day, the Tournament of Roses parade was delayed by a float that ran out of gas. It was beautifully decorated with an assortment of roses. But the float sputtered, and eventually came to a halt.

It was quickly discovered that the organizers had forgotten to fill it with gas... Yet here was the irony: the float was sponsored by the Standard Oil Company.

A company with vast reservoirs of petrol had ran out of gas. And this can happen to a Christian. We have a pipeline to God's power. His name is the Holy Spirit.

We should never run out of gas. We can ask God to continually fill us and empower us with His Holy Spirit.

Verse 8, "And (Paul) went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus." When opposed, Paul left the synagogue. He rented a meeting hall to continue his discipleship of the new believers.

Realize, the Greek work day was from 7:00 to 11:00 am, then from 4:00 to 9:00 pm. From 11:00 am to 4:00 pm people beat the heat and broke for a siesta.

Each afternoon folks went home and took a nice, long nap. *Sounds like a great idea?* They had a saying, "You'll find more people sound asleep in Ephesus at 1:00 in the afternoon than at 1:00 in the morning!"

This passage gives us a glimpse at how hard Paul worked. For two years he made tents - mornings and evenings - then forfeited his siesta to teach the Bible. Ministry was Paul's *passion*, not just his *profession*.

"And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them"

Notice Luke refers to these miracles as "*unusual*" even for Paul. The "*handkerchiefs*" were Paul's work cloths he used to wipe the sweat from his brow. They were his bandanas. His Survivor buffs. His "*aprons*" were overalls he wore to protect his clothes while he worked. Both articles would soak up Paul's sweat.

I read where Jimi Hendrick's sweat bands once sold at an auction for \$7000. Some poor fellow thought there was magic in the famous guitar player's sweat.

He figured if Jimi's sweat-stained DNA somehow trickled onto his hands he'd be able to play the guitar like Jimi. Of course, it proved a \$7000 disappointment.

But this was the idea pushing the preoccupation with Paul's sweatbands, **and God used it to do miracles.**

Which brings up some questions: *Was there really something miraculous in apostolic perspiration? Does God ever use this kind of thing today? Is there anything to healing hankies and bandanas of blessing promised by questionable preachers on late night infomercials? Does God resort to these kinds of gimmicks today? You would think for God, healing would be no sweat?*

Realize, the Apostle Paul was human just like us. He calls himself "the chief of sinners." Certainly, his glands didn't secrete supernatural sweat. What occurred here had nothing to do with *perspiration*, but *expectation*.

The Ephesians so associated Paul with God's power that a closeness to the Apostle activated their faith.

Here's a question, *if you believe, but don't expect, do you really believe?* Expectation is the trigger to faith. To the Ephesians God and Paul were so linked together that *Paul's buff* stimulated *their belief* in God's healing.

And this is how it works with us today with *the laying on of hands, or the anointing of oil, or the celebration of communion, or the raising of holy hands, etc.* - the props serve the same purpose. God uses them to stir up expectation, and give the believer a point of contact where he or she can release their faith in the miracle.

Verse 13, "Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches."

Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so.” Now immediately, after his report of legitimate healings, Luke shares an episode showing how everything done in Jesus’ name was not of Jesus.

Spiritual power is never the result of *props, formulas, mechanics, or celebrities* - **but of God Himself**. Here, God was gloriously at work, but there were whackos who thought they could take command of God’s power.

Jewish exorcists, sons of a priest, Sceva, thought they could manipulate God. Notice what Luke writes, “*(they) took it upon themselves.*” They thought through technique or ritual they could pry the power out of God.

And they were “*itinerant exorcists*” - they traveled from place to place. Always on the move, they didn’t have to take responsibility for their lack of success.

It seems these so-called exorcists were always on the lookout for a new incantation or spell, so when they saw Paul cast out demons in Jesus’ name they figured *his wording* would work for them. So they cried, “*We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.*”

But here’s what happened, “*And the evil spirit answered and said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?”* Literally, “*I’m well aware of Jesus, and Paul I recognize; but I have no idea who you are?*”

Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.” Note, the sons of Sceva and Paul used the same wording to cast out demons.

The difference was that Paul had a real relationship with the living Lord.

The Jews saw Jesus as a *spell*. Paul served Him as the *Savior*. The power of God is conveyed through *relationship* - not *rite* or *ritual* or *recitation*. It's a *personal faith*, not *formulas* that unleash God's power.

Using *the name of Jesus* without a *relationship with Jesus* is like using a gun that's not loaded. These Jews end up bruised and bloodied and naked. We need to be *in touch* with Jesus before we *invoke* the name of Jesus. *Possession should be behind our confessions.*

“This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds.”

The end result was public confession of sin in Ephesus. People openly renounced their evil deeds.

“Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned *them* in the sight of all.” Even today, in occult literature supposedly magical words known as “*Ephesian Letters*” are used in spells and incantations. Both then and now the city of Ephesus was infamous for its satanic activity.

Notice too, in Paul's day, when folks were saved they repented, and burned any *paranormal paraphernalia*.

“And they counted up the value of them, and *it* totaled 50,000 *pieces of silver.*” - this was the equivalent of the combined yearly salaries of 150 men. When the Ephesians

met Jesus they tossed into the bonfire: their horoscopes, and Ouija boards, and New Age crystals, and tarot cards, and Harry Potter books.

Notice, they didn't hold a garage sale where they could make a profit from their sinful stuff. Rather they torched the remnants of their past life! They made a clean break with the past and pledged to follow Jesus!

In the late 1970s, when I first came to Jesus, I had a pretty expensive vinyl record collection. But after giving my life to Christ I felt prompted to shatter the records, rip up the 8-track tapes, and toss it all in the dumpster.

It was a big moment for me... At the time, it was a costly commitment. **But I have no doubt I needed to make a clean break with my past life.** Afterwards, what happened in me is what happened in Ephesus, verse 20, **“the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.”**

“When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome.”

Paul ultimately had his eyes on the capitol of the empire, but his heart still pulled him toward Jerusalem.

Verse 22, **“So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time. And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way.”** Recall **“the Way”** was one of the early names for Christianity.

And here's what caused the commotion in Ephesus, "For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: "Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade.

Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands." Demetrius was the union organizer for [the United Idol Workers of Asia](#). He could see that Paul's insistence on people turning from worthless idols to Jesus was cutting into their business.

He continues, "So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship." Paul's preaching and the spiritual awakening it created was causing a crisis among the status quo.

Ephesus was popular for many reasons, but its most famous landmark was a Temple to Diana. Pagans from the world-over worshipped the Greek fertility goddess.

The great temple to Diana was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was larger than the Parthenon in Athens - imagine, 425 feet long, by 220 feet wide, by 60 feet high. It was surrounded by 127 marble columns. The whole temple was adorned with beautiful engravings and paintings. It was magnificent.

Yet in contrast to the beauty of its temple the image of the idol Diana was ugly and grotesque. It was a squat female figure, with a face, and covered front and back with mammary glands - a symbol of fertility. I suppose you could say Diana worship *was a real bust!*

Of course, when you came to Ephesus it was important you left with a little trinket to show your friends where you'd been - a miniature replica of Diana. Demetrius and the local silver-smiths made a bundle of money selling these souvenirs. Idolatry was big business and *the Gospel was a financial threat.*

And take note, this is how we put sin out of business, not by *picketing or protesting.* Don't worry so much about *the supply side.* Spread the Gospel and it cuts into *the demand.* Our job is to diminish sin's appeal.

If the demand shrinks, the supply will disappear.

In the Welsh Revival of 1901 every tavern and pub in Wales went belly up, and guess how many anti-alcohol sermons were preached? **None!** Once people were touched by Jesus and filled with the Holy Spirit people lost all interest in their booze. *Social reformation* came on the heels of a *spiritual transformation.* To really alter society you start by changing people's hearts.

This is what happened in Ephesus. The Gospel *spread* and the *spreadsheet of the silversmiths shrunk.*

Because Demetrius' cronies felt threatened they try to enact legislation to squelch the Gospel. They meet to discuss the shrinking profits and stir up the crowd.

“Now when they heard *this*, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, “Great *is* Diana of the Ephesians!” So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul’s travel companions.” Today, when you visit the ruins of Ephesus one of its main attractions is the huge theater where this mob rallied. We’re told by the archeologists in the days of Paul it could seat over 25,000 people.

Here the union members erupt into a frenzy. They all started chanting, “*Great is Diana of the Ephesians!*”

And while they’re chanting, they grab the first believers they can find - *Gaius and Aristarchus*. Ben Franklin once said, “a mob is a monster with heads enough, but no brains.” This was the case in Ephesus.

“And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him. Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater.”

But you’ve got to love Paul’s courage. He thinks, “*Wow, a stadium full of people - I can preach!*” To Paul there’s no such thing as *opposition*, just *opportunities*.

Verse 32, “Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together.”

The situation was total chaos. “And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander

motioned with his hand, and wanted to make his defense to the people.”

In the Roman world of the first century when a public uprising occurred someone usually blamed it on the Jews. Here, the Jewish leader in town, a man named Alexander, wants to make it clear that the Jewish community had nothing to do with Paul and his efforts.

But Alexander’s attempt backfires. “When they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians!” The sight of a Jew only inflamed their pagan loyalties.

Verse 35, “And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: “Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and of the *image* which fell down from Zeus?” Antiquity tells us the original statue of Diana was fashioned of black stone. It was probably made of a meteor. The local lore claimed it came from Zeus, chief of the Greek gods.

The clerk continued, “Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly. For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess.” Paul hadn’t enter Ephesus to launch an anti-Diana campaign. He’d just preached the Gospel, and the light of Jesus had uncovered their darkness.

“Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. But

if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly.” This city official brings some reason to the frenzied crowd. He reminds them there are courts for legal grievances.

Then he warns them, “For we are in danger of being called in question for today’s uproar, there being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering.” The Roman empire frowned on any kind of public unrest. This clerk reminds the crowd they don’t want the Roman military to feel compelled to invade their city to restore the peace or enact marital law. Rome had designated Ephesus “a free city” - with special privileges. The last thing they needed was a crackdown. So “when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.” Evidently they all went home.

Chapter 20, “After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to *himself*, embraced *them*, and departed to go to Macedonia.” Paul sails from Ephesus on the Turkish coast to Philippi and Thessalonica.

“Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece and stayed three months.” It’s 58 AD. Paul is in Corinth, where he writes his letter to the Romans.

“And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria (or back home to Antioch), he decided to return through Macedonia.” Paul sniffed out an assassination plot. To avoid it he changed plans. Rather than set sail, he returned through Macedonia.

And here's the entourage that traveled with Paul. Call it **Paul's posse'**. It included seven men, "Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia - also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas."

One of Paul's reasons to return through Macedonia was to collect an offering for the famine-stricken church in Jerusalem. The men listed here were the people entrusted to transport the offering for their churches.

And notice the personal pronoun, "us" and now "we."

"But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days." Luke, the author of Acts, is now traveling with Paul. He's with him when he arrives in Troas, 130 miles up the coast from Ephesus. They wait there a week for a ship to Antioch.

Verse 7 "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight." **Notice a couple of points...**

First, the early Christians met on the first day of the week. This might seem trivial, but think it through - for 1500 years Jews met to worship God on the last day of the week, the Sabbath. *Why did the early Christians change their day of worship from Saturday to Sunday?*

There's only one reason. **Church meetings were a celebration of Jesus' resurrection.** Something dramatic

budged a ritualistic people out of a proud tradition. **The transforming event was Jesus' victory over death.**

Second, notice the Christians at Troas met Sunday night rather than Sunday morning. *And the reason?*

In pagan Rome Sunday was a *work day*, not a *day off*. Believers labored all day on Sunday. When their job ended, they met together to worship the Lord.

And **third**, Paul's ship sailed at sunrise. Which means this was his last opportunity to speak to the believers in Troas, so *he took off his watch*. He didn't worry about parents getting kids to bed, or folks going to work the next day - he preached until *"midnight."*

If he started his sermon at 7:00 pm, this means he preached five-hours - *and you think I'm long winded!*

There's another detail about the room where Paul preached... in verse 8, *"There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together."*

In the first century, Christians were a strange, new minority. *And all kinds of rumors circulated about them.*

They were accused of sexual promiscuity since they always talked about love... The practice of communion caused misconceptions. It was said that Christians ate the body of Christ - *were they cannibals?* Some said they even drank His blood - *were they vampires?*

And it was because of these rumors the early church lit their meetings with tons of candlepower. No one dimmed the lights

during worship in the early church. They wanted the room so bright there were no secrets.

Now you get a feel for the conditions in the meeting room at Troas... *A Sunday evening after a tiring day at work... a long-winded preacher... a stuffy, smoke-filled room...* **Poor ole Eutychus didn't stand a chance!**

Have you ever fallen asleep in church? Your eye-lids got heavy, your shoulders slouched, your head started to bob. It can happen. Here're a few examples (pics).

Be glad we don't have a camera panning the crowd.

Verse 9, **“And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep.”**

In fairness to Eutychus he might've gone to the window to get some fresh air. He thought the night air would wake him up. But **“He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead.”** His fall was fatal. The man fell three stories - close to 40 feet. Hit the dirt and died on impact... I've had people get drowsy and fall out of a chair, but thankfully never out of a window!

But what happened to Eutychus can happen to all Christians. *Notice, his mistake.* He leaves the middle of the room for the periphery. Any third floor windowsill is a dangerous place. Eutychus leaves the center of the room for the edges. Beware when you move from fellowship with other believers, and go it on your own.

When you leave where the action is and gravitate to the edges it sets you up for a fall. When you look for air to breathe *out there*, rather than *in here*, it's trouble.

Verse 10, “But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing *him* said, “Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is *in him*.” It reminds me of the man who fell asleep during the pastor's sermon. The pastor shouted at the usher, “*Wake that fellow up?*” The usher shouted back at the pastor, “*You put him to sleep - you wake him up!*”

Here, Paul is being a responsible preacher. Since he put Eutychus to sleep, he wakes him up. He falls on Eutychus - Elisha-style - and God works a miracle.

And this is how we resuscitate those who fall asleep spiritually... *with love... with the warmth of **the body of Christ*** - the Church. Love is what revives the sleeper.

“Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed.” *What a night it was!* Paul raised the dead, served a meal, and fellowshiped until morning light.

“And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted.” Obviously, Luke is speaking of Eutychus, but I had a pastor write me this week and quote this verse. He had no idea I was teaching here this week, but he felt God was applying this verse to my son, “*Zach will be brought in alive and we'll all be comforted.*” *Please pray, that pastor is right!*

Verse 13, “Then we went ahead to the ship and sailed to Assos, there intending to take Paul on board; for so he had given orders, intending himself to go on foot.” From Troas to Assos is 25 miles. Perhaps, the scheduling of the voyage caused Paul to want to walk it. Maybe he could walk it as fast as they could sail it.

Or he walked, so he could pray. He’d stayed up all night. If he traveled by boat he would’ve gone to sleep. Instead he takes **a prayer walk**. If you have a hard time staying awake while you pray; then pray and walk.

“And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene. We sailed from there, and the next *day* came opposite Chios. The following *day* we arrived at Samos and stayed at Trogyllium. The next *day* we came to Miletus.” The ship was working its way eastward along the Turkish coast.

“For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost. From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.” The beach at Miletus was 28 miles south of Ephesus. If Paul had docked in Ephesus, a thriving church and good friends would’ve forced him to stay. He would’ve spent weeks on shore.

So he skips Ephesus, and from Miletus sends word to the elders that he’s hosting a leadership huddle, an elders meeting. *That’s where we’ll pick it up next week.*