

Exposing Counterfeit Faith

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 January 2025

Preacher: Pastor Bart Leger

- [0 : 0 0] Welcome to this week's message from Faith Bible Church of Lake Charles. We're excited to share a practical Bible-based teaching that we hope will encourage you and strengthen your faith.
- Thanks for listening. Now, here's today's message. Have you ever been in a jewelry store and you walk past the glass cases and you come to the diamond section?
- And all those diamonds are sparkling under those bright lights. But what you don't know is not all of them are real.
- Some of them have been being formed over thousands of years into a diamond, but others are just clever imitations.
- They're made to look like the real thing, but they don't really have any real value. Now, what I want you to think about this morning is how being real applies to our lives, especially our spiritual lives.
- [1 : 0 8] Just like those diamonds, a person's faith can either be real or it can be counterfeit. And the difference between the two is really very, very important.
- Today, we're continuing in the book of Acts. We are in chapter number 19. Paul has been teaching in the apostle Paul, who was a follower of Jesus Christ.
- He was called an apostle or one sent to go where the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, hadn't gone before. And he is in the place where the Jews meet for about three months.
- But their hearts become hard and some of them reject what Paul was saying to them about Jesus, because many of these Jews didn't accept Jesus as their Messiah.
- So what Paul does is he then moves his ministry to a classroom. He takes his disciples, those who are believing in Jesus, he takes them with him, probably teaching them during the off hours in this school.
- [2 : 2 1] And he stays there for about two years teaching. This is one of the longest times that Paul has been teaching Jews, and then he stays with them during this time.
- And it's a story that we're going to look at this morning that takes place in a large city called Ephesus. And it's where God's power, working through the apostle Paul, was put on display.
- And we will see some amazing things happening through what Paul is doing. But it's also a story about what happens when people try to fake it, attempting to use the name of Jesus Christ without actually knowing Jesus, without actually having the Holy Spirit in their life.
- It's like trying to use the name of a celebrity to get into an exclusive party, and you don't know them. It really doesn't work. You've got to know the person that you are using their name.
- So as this morning we unpack these verses in Acts chapter 19, I want you to think this morning about your own faith.

[3 : 35] Is it genuine? Or is it a counterfeit? Have you just been attending church, maybe joined another, air quote, religion, and you're going through the motions?

Or have you fully placed your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, trusting what he did on the cross of Calvary as being the full payment for your sin, and have God's Holy Spirit living within you?

Is it genuine? Or is it counterfeit? Is it like the real diamond? Or is it just an imitation? Because here's the thing. Authentic faith in Jesus isn't just about looking good on the outside.

It's what's on the inside that brings real change, brings true life-transforming power, and that's what we're going to look at today. So let's take our Bibles this morning and turn to the book of Acts chapter number 19.

It'll also be on the screen behind me. Acts chapter 19, beginning in verse number 11. We're going to read all the way through to verse 20.

[4 : 45] Then we'll come back to verse number 11, and then we'll unpack it a few verses at a time. Verse number 11. Luke, who is the author of this book, says, 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.

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 name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches.

Also, there were seven sons of Siva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. You have to excuse me this morning. I'm losing my voice, so I'll try to make it all the way through.

And verse 15. This is where things kind of get interesting and somewhat amusing. And the evil spirit who was within this person, they were trying to cast the evil spirit out, said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?

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.

[6 : 06] This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus, and fear fell on them all in the name of the Lord, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds.

Also, many of those who had practiced magic or the occult brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them, and it totaled 50,000 pieces of silver.

So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. Now let's move back up to verse number 11 and see what's going on here.

So we see, now God was working, and Luke calls them unusual or special miracles, so that even the handkerchiefs or aprons that Paul touched or touched Paul were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

What we see here is we see God's power in action in verses 11 and verse 12. God's power was working through the apostle Paul, and people were getting healed.

[7 : 28] So what we're seeing is Luke here calling these special, extraordinary, in the original that it was written in or special miracles.

In the Bible, there were three periods where there were miracles that were taking place. Three periods of miracles.

The first was during Moses' time. The second one was during Elijah and Elisha's time. And the third period was during the time of Jesus and his disciples.

Interesting thing is, the longest that any of these periods lasted was about 100 years. And of all the miracles, depending upon how you categorize them, that were recorded in the Bible, excuse me, there was less than 100 miracles in the Bible.

Of course, we know from the Gospel of John, chapter 20, that there were probably more that took place, but all the books in the library couldn't hold all the things that Jesus said and that Jesus did.

[8 : 39] So, lasting only about 100 years per period, obviously less during the time of Jesus and the apostles, and less than 100 miracles that are recorded in Scripture.

So, when Jesus, think about this, when Jesus performed miracles, he usually had three purposes in mind for performing a miracle.

The first was to show his compassion on human needs. He was compassionate, and he loved people, and he didn't like seeing them suffer. So, the first reason why he performed miracles was to meet their felt needs and to show compassion.

The second was to teach a spiritual truth he would perform a miracle, and the third was to present his credentials as a Messiah. He said, here, I'm performing these miracles.

I come from God, and while Satan tried to counterfeit them, they couldn't do what Jesus did. So, the three main reasons why Jesus performed these miracles, and the apostles continued this and followed the same pattern when they performed miracles.

[9 : 51] As a matter of fact, the ability to do miracles was one of the proofs of their apostolic ministry. God was showing to the world that they had the power of God upon them.

Excuse me. But what we need to understand is miracles don't save people. Miracles don't bring people to Jesus. miracles don't save people who are lost in their sin and apart from Jesus Christ.

Miracles have to be tied to the message of God. There's always a reason for the miracle. And I think this is where God enabled the apostle Paul to perform extraordinary miracles.

Now, every miracle is extraordinary, but there were some that were done that were a little bit out of the norm, probably because Ephesus was known as a center of the occult.

Their statues to their gods that they had named, many of them had some occult inscriptions on them. There were many who would go around practicing spells and incantations.

[11 : 02] So it was a very occult-ridden city. Very possibly, one of the reasons why this happened the way that it did to show that God, working through the apostle Paul, was the real thing and that this is what he was doing.

And we go back to verse 11, excuse me, verse number 12. He says, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick.

The word translated handkerchiefs was probably what would have been more like a sweat cloth or a sweatband someone would wear or a towel that a worker would use to wipe their face while they were working.

What we see here in most of our translations were Latin loan words and this is what they referred to. And the next one, aprons, referred to a work apron that a worker would use.

Someone who worked with leather, you know, they would have a work apron. Someone who would work maybe in a different type of guild would wear some type of apron while they're working.

[12 : 14] Even woodworkers would sometimes wear aprons. So these were the things that either Paul had used and Paul gave or that people had taken that Paul had worn or Paul had used that, excuse me, what was going on.

So the, it also helps us to think about it, was this very unusual. There were some in Jesus' day who were healed just by touching his clothes.

Remember the woman with the issue of blood? She just touched his clothes and she was healed. And a little later on, Peter walking along the road, it says, the Bible says that some people were healed even when Peter's shadow passed over them.

So even Peter's shadow healed some people. So this is not extremely unusual but, excuse me, think about it this way.

Luke doesn't spend a whole lot of time here. He kind of glosses over what happens here. It's kind of like Peter saying, yep, it happened and then let's move right along and then he goes on to whatever else is going on.

[13 : 29] miracles never form the basis of evangelism. God never said, go out and perform miracles so people can know me. Miracles attested to the message that they had but it was simply a means to an end of proclaiming Jesus Christ to those around.

This held true in the ministry of Jesus. It's also held true in all throughout the book of Acts. and we don't see a lot of miracles taking place much beyond this.

So this passage should never form a basis for people seeking healing through sending cloths through the mail or touching their TVs during a special time during a message.

I think what it does is it just shows us like Ephesus how dark and superstitious our culture has become. People seeking miracles. Having said that God still works miracles.

God is still in the miracle working business. But God is not using miracles the way that he was during the apostolic period in the book of Acts.

[14 : 41] So don't let's not be superstitious and think that you know I'll pay I'll pay \$100 to this televangelist and he'll send me a cloth that he prayed over and it's going to heal me.

And I've even heard it's been years ago but I've heard say you know touch the TV at this special time and we'd be praying when you're touching your TV you're going to receive the power of the Holy Spirit through your TV set.

That's superstition. I don't think Luke ever recommended this and we don't see this recorded again in the Bible.

So we need to remember that wherever also that wherever God's people are sharing are sharing the truth Satan the devil is going to come and try to counterfeit what's going on.

He's going to counterfeit to try to oppose the truth. You know Jesus taught this in the parable of the in the story about the tares Peter experienced it when he was in Samaria Paul experienced it when he was in a place called Paphos.

[15 : 46] So Satan imitates whatever God's people are doing but it's always it's always a fake. It's never with the power of God. The thing is Satan does that because people who don't know Jesus people who don't have the Holy Spirit don't know the difference but hopefully you've got the Holy Spirit we know that the power comes from God.

So here's the key takeaway I believe from what we see here is these miracles weren't about the objects themselves. They weren't about the sweat bands they weren't about the aprons they were about pointing people to God the true source of power not the magic that was going on not the occult that was going on in Ephesus.

It's easy to get caught up in the miraculous and miss the message. It's all about Jesus. God was showing people in Ephesus and I think even to us today that God's power is real God's power is available to us even in the darkest places.

So what does this mean for you and what does this mean for me? We need to recognize that God is powerful and that God does yes in fact work miracles and maybe you're facing a situation that might be overwhelming.

Maybe you're facing a situation that maybe brings you fear or you're wondering if you are up to the task or a place maybe where it feels spiritually dark.

[17 : 14] Remember God's power is not limited by our circumstances. No matter how dark it seems no matter how difficult the spot you find yourself in God's still in control and He still has power over our lives if you allow Him.

So let's not fall into superstition and think that we can manipulate God's power especially if it's a counterfeit faith. Instead let's trust Him to meet our needs and to show His powers in ways that we may not even begin to understand or expect.

So as we move on we come across a pretty amusing story about what happens to these seven sons of Siva. So let's take a look.

Verse 13 through verse number 16. 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 Siva who was Luke says a Jewish chief priest who did so and the evil spirit verse 15 answered and said Jesus I know and Paul I know but who are you?

[18 : 34] Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped upon them overpowered them prevailed against them so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. Crazy right? Well as we said this was Ephesus after all and Jewish exorcists were fairly common during this period and they were looked up to.

They said their incantations and you know it wasn't unusual for these Jewish exorcists to try casting out demons but what was strange for them was they invoked the name of Jesus.

Jesus. They didn't believe in Jesus. Matter of fact they were against Jesus. But what did they see? They saw the apostle Paul talking about Jesus and people were getting healed and evil spirits, demons were cast out by just touching some of the things that Paul had touched.

So what did they do? They said well let's see if we can borrow this incantation and see if we can you if work for him it should work for us. Right? Remember the power is not in words so to speak.

The power is in Jesus. The power is in the person of Christ. So word of caution don't try to counterfeit the power of Christ.

[19 : 51] We see this in verses 13 through 16. The philosophy of these Jewish exorcists is still alive today because think about it.

blending what people already know with something new has been going on through millennia.

There have been times in the past few thousand years or so that when Christianity and I use air quotes when I say that would come to a new culture the church the Roma church in this respect allowed people to keep some of their pagan practices.

The fancy term for it is called syncretism. It's such where we take a little bit about what we believe we take a little bit about what you believe and we put it together and we stir it up in the pot and we come up with with something different and it doesn't look like either one.

So they say you know we'll we'll let you worship Jesus and we want you to worship Jesus but we don't want to make it too uncomfortable for you so we'll let you keep some of these pagan things that you do.

[21 : 07] Some of your pagan holidays some of your pagan practices but it's okay you know we'll kind of you know we'll kind of bless it and say it's okay and we'll call you good Christians.

So that's been happening for thousands of years and that still happens today. People will take this philosophy and that philosophy and they'll put it together but here's the thing God's word alone is our basis for faith and for practice.

As a matter of fact there's a group of people in the Bible that were called the Bereans and whatever what were taught to that was taught to them they went to the scripture and they said okay let's see if what you're saying really is right.

And so they tested it and they made sure let's be like that. Let's not hear somebody some TV preacher or some preacher on the radio and just because they say something cool or it sounds good accept it.

What you've got to do is come back to the Bible and say does this line up with the Bible? Is this what God wrote? Is this what is true? Excuse me.

[22 : 19] So we wonder too what kind of chief priest this Siva was. the Jewish historian Josephus doesn't include him in the list of high priests that were working during this day.

It could very well be that this is what he called himself or it could be maybe Luke calls him this because he was maybe one of the prominent maybe from one of the prominent high priest families.

We're not sure. But in verses 15 and 16 something amusing happens. These itinerant Jewish exorcists were trying to cast out demons by saying in the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches we command you or I command you to come out.

But here's where it takes a surprising turn. They tried this on a man that had that was possessed by an evil spirit by a demon and their response was pretty chilling.

The demon said and based on the Greek words that Acts was written in here's what they said. There were two different words for no that the demon said.

[23 : 31] So literally the way we could read this is Jesus we know from experience. Paul we recognize him matter of fact we respect him but who are you?

And so yeah we know Jesus. Matter of fact the Bible says the demons believe in Jesus and tremble because they're afraid of him because they know from experience the power that he has. And they knew about Paul matter of fact they respected Paul but they didn't know these men these seven sons of Siva.

Why? Because they were counterfeit. They didn't know Jesus. They didn't know him personally and so they didn't have the power of Christ within them. Had it been one of the apostles had it been Jesus they couldn't have withheld or they couldn't have withstood the power of God.

But here they are. And then next apparently the exercise the exorcism business can be pretty dangerous because what happens next it says the man in whom the evil spirit resided overpowered them beat them up tore their clothes and they walk out and they run out of the house naked and humiliated.

They walk out they run out naked and so and what I find it amazing here is it wasn't Paul who undid this it was the demons themselves that proved that God had the power not these guys.

[25 : 08] So Paul didn't have to do anything the power of God worked and excuse me whoever these would be exorcists were their attempt to invoke Jesus name without knowing Jesus didn't work.

So I find it interesting that it was a demon not the apostle Paul that was responsible for their undoing. I believe this encounter highlights an important truth.

Faith in Jesus isn't a formula we can use without a relationship. You can't just pray and say in Jesus name if you don't know him. That would be like saying I can take money out of this bank account because I know name your spouse or someone that's given you authority to take money out of their account.

If you don't really know them maybe they're your neighbor. It doesn't work right? So it didn't work with these men because they didn't know Jesus Christ.

So I believe this story is a powerful reminder that authentic faith is about a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ. Not borrowing someone else's experience or someone's someone else's faith and trying to mimic it externally.

[26 : 32] So knowing about Jesus isn't enough. Going to church isn't enough. Joining a church isn't enough. Getting baptized isn't enough. Giving money to the church isn't enough.

Doing good works isn't enough. The Bible says for by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves.

What is it? It's a gift. It's not of works because if it were works we could boast about it. Hey look, look how good I am. Look at how good a person I am. The Bible says we become a part of the family of God and our sins are forgiven as a gift from God because God gives us the ability, he gives us the grace to believe.

And when we trust Christ as our Savior, trust what he did on the cross of Calvary, his being the full payment for our sin, and admit that we're sinners, and trust Christ, the Bible says all who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved or shall be delivered from the penalty of sin.

So their incantation was useless. It meant absolutely nothing. So ask ourselves this morning, is my faith real? Is my faith genuine? Or is my faith counterfeit?

[27 : 53] Am I just going through the motions? Am I living authentically in Christ? Or are we just trying to use his name, going to church, without genuinely knowing him? So this is a call, I believe, to deepen our relationship in Jesus Christ.

Now as we continue, very quickly, verses 17-19, this became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus. 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.

Also, many of those who practiced magic or the occult brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all, and they counted up the value of them, and it told 50,000, pieces of silver.

So after seeing these extraordinary miracles, after seeing what happened to the seven sons of Ziva, it brought fear on all those who were around, especially those who were believers, who probably were still practicing some of their occult.

Then they realized, no, if we're going to believe in Jesus, we need to put all of this aside. God used these Jewish exorcists to defeat Satan and to bring conviction to these followers of Christ.

[29 : 02] And so the name of Jesus began to be magnified. So what they did was, and the tense of the verbs in verse 18 would tell us that they kept on coming, they kept on confessing, and they kept on showing.

And they took all of their books of incantations, their books of spells, and they burnt them. And Luke says, it was not a small amount that they got rid of.

As a matter of fact, the amount in silver during that time would have been about what 150 men would have earned in a year's salary.

Think about, think about your salary. And 150 other people making your salary, that's how much the value of the books that they burnt. Apparently it was pretty expensive books that they had.

So the act of burning these scrolls was more than just a dramatic gesture. I think it was a public commitment to following Jesus and to getting rid of anything that was in the way.

[30 : 16] So what can we learn from this? First of all, confession is powerful. It frees from the bondage of hidden sins. It restores our relationship with God. And it's about being honest with ourselves.

It's about being honest with God and acknowledging where we've gone wrong. But it doesn't stop there. Secondly, true repentance involves sacrifice.

It means being willing to let go of anything that hinders our relationship with God, no matter how valuable or important it seems to us.

What brings us to his main point number three, confess and forsake hidden sins. Confess and forsake hidden sins in your life. So let's think about this. What are the scrolls?

What are the books in your life? Not necessarily literally, but what are the things in your life that you hold on to that keep you from fully surrendering to Jesus Christ?

[31 : 15] It might be a habit. It might be a relationship or even a mindset. Whatever it is, God invites us to admit it, confess it, and what we do, we experience the freedom and transformation that only Jesus Christ can provide in our lives.

So now they've confessed, they've repented, believers in Ephesus were ready to take the power of the gospel everywhere. Verse 20, so the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

Greek words here emphasize the strength and dominance of God's word over the forces of darkness. This transformation didn't happen just because people burned their books. It happened because they turned themselves over completely, surrendered themselves completely to God.

So what does this mean for us today? It means that a transformed life, I believe, will lead to a transformed community. The world is looking at us, and the world is looking to see if we're real.

The world is looking to see if we're counterfeit. Or if we're just a bunch of holy rollers to try to say that we're good, but yet they see what we do and we don't think anybody else is looking.

[32 : 23] Now they're looking to see if we're real. They're looking to see if it's really the power of God's Holy Spirit working through us. See, we have the opportunity to share stories of how Christ has changed us, and we can inspire others to believe as well.

So let's ask ourselves, how can we be part of this transformation in our own communities? It might be through acts of kindness. It might be through sharing our faith. It might be partnering with other believers and accomplishing God's will in our community.

Whatever it looks like, we're called to bring light to darkness, advancing the gospel wherever it's needed most. Together, let's let the power of the gospel shine through us, and as we work together, bring hope and change to a world that's pretty dark around us.

So this week, I challenge you to take a step toward living in the authentic power of Jesus Christ. Maybe you're spending more time in prayer. Maybe confessing something that you're holding on to, or reaching out to someone who needs to hear about Jesus.

Whatever it is, know that God's with you, and He'll work through you in extraordinary ways, just like He worked through the Apostle Paul. So let's go out and be the change, letting the gospel shine brightly through you.

[33 : 39] Together we make a difference. We can make a difference in our community. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for what you do in us and through us. Father, we thank you for loving us.

We thank you for what you're going to do in our lives today. Father, I pray that you be with us, encourage us, strengthen us. Father, I pray that you help us to know that either we have a relationship with Jesus Christ or not.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Thanks for joining us today. We hope this message encouraged you and gave you something to apply to your life this week.

If you'd like to learn more about Faith Bible Church or connect with us, visit our website at meetfaith.org. We'd love to hear from you. Have a great week, and we'll see you next time.

We'll see you next time.