
Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

“...about all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1).

R₂L – Resolved to Live: Unleashing God’s Word

Acts 19:11-20

11 God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, 12 so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out. 13 But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches." 14 Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said to them, "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" 16 And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. 17 This became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified. 18 Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. 19 And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. 20 So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.

Do you know that there was a time in England when it was illegal to preach God’s Word in any public place except within a church building? You may be thinking that places like England are getting close to that again; but the reason why it was illegal to preach anywhere but a church was a bit different back then. Both Church and civil leaders believed the law was necessary to prevent dissidents from disturbing order in society. Do you know who it was who put this law to the test, citing a higher authority than the lawmakers? None other than George Whitefield.

In 1737, Whitefield was a contemporary of John and Charles Wesley. In 1737, Whitefield, dismayed by the prevalence of the empty religion that filled the churches, started preaching that religion was not enough and that even "good" people need to be born again. The church leaders, disgruntled by Whitefield’s preaching, began to lock him out of their pulpits. Unable to preach the gospel in a church building, Whitefield looked for other places to preach and eventually preached in the open air. You need to remember that up to this point, such preaching had never been done in England, at least not by reputable preachers. Even John Wesley, when he first heard Whitefield suggest the possibility of preaching to the masses outside of church buildings responded by saying it was a "mad notion."

But Whitefield was moved by the Spirit and the Word of God to see something that others were not seeing; a mass harvest of souls waiting to be gathered in England. Let me tell you about one of these untouched masses that God led Whitefield to preach. It was to a group of Kingswood coal miners living outside of Bristol. Coal miners were looked down upon by cultured society. A mayor of Bristol at the time called them “Indians” – thinking them to be like wild savages. Most citizens of Bristol were afraid of the coal miners. To be sure, these people had adopted a hard way of life and a hard way of living. They were gruff, violent, and did horrific things like digging up the corpse of a murderer whose suicide had cheated them of a public execution so that they might publicly celebrate round it. These people were completely illiterate. They lived in shacks that were on the extreme boundaries of the parishes, so far that they were ignored and forgotten by the clergy. Large numbers of the coal miners were drunks, wife beaters,

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

“...about all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1).

and many were sodomites. The citizens of Bristol had not one good thing to say about these people.

How would you respond to such people? Would you have compassion for their lost state, or would you avoid them? How do you reach a people who cannot read, who have never been to church, who are foul-mouthed, wild-living, and sin-loving? Our first reaction might be, “we don’t!” We might leave such people to “care and concern” of government, letting them deal with the problems. But Whitefield knew there was a way, in fact the only way to reach such a people; by boldly preaching the Word of God; by bringing to them the good news of Jesus Christ who came into the world to save sinners. In short, Whitefield unleashed the Word of God.

And so, against the dictates of the religious establishment, Whitefield found a clearing in the midst of a forest, found a rock to stand upon on the path where the coal miners traveled to and from the mines; and in a loud voice thundered out the words, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they shall see the kingdom of heaven!” Startled by the words, the miners stopped and stared. Whitefield continued, “Matthew, Chapter 5, verses 1 to 3.” But these miners had no idea who Matthew was, no comprehension of what Whitefield meant by the word “chapter” and yet they came closer to hear this preacher. Before long a large crowd had gathered. It was reported that nearly all the coalminers, covered in the muck and the mire of black coal all over their bodies, gave Whitefield their attention. Whitefield shared a story that made them laugh, which surprised them because never before had they heard a parson cracked a joke in a sermon; yet truthfully, they had never heard a preacher at all! The crowd continued to swell to around two hundred people. Whitefield spoke of hell as being black as a pit and of the certainty of judgment for evil done. Then he spoke about Jesus, the friend of publicans and sinners, who came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He told them of the cross of Jesus, and the love of God to such an extent that he had to brush tears from his own eyes. Whitefield preached like his for a long time while these miners listened in dead silence save for the preacher’s booming voice and some light rustling of the wind through the bare trees behind him. As Whitefield preached the gospel, he noticed light streaks marking the grimy faces of some. On his right was a young man and on his left an old bent miner whose faces were being cleansed by their own tears. Before long, as Whitefield continued to preach, he said what he described on the faces of many of them as the “white gutters made by their tears down their black cheeks.”

Whitefield had taken the Word of God to these people and unleashed it. And because of this, two things happened. First, the religious leaders of the Anglican Church rebuked and renounced him. The second, the gruff and grimy miners asked him to come back to teach them more. The next time Whitefield preached, some two thousand people gathered, all standing downwind so they could hear him as he preached. He bellowed the words

of John 3, “Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God!” His sermon lasted an hour in the open air. Yet they still wanted more. He came back again on a Sunday in March, after a late snow cleared. The miners brought a table for him to stand on to make him easier to see and hear. This time a crowd of over 23,000 people had gathered. By the way, Whitefield did not count the crowd, but a report from the *Gentleman’s Magazine*, who wrote about the event, gave that figure. As Whitefield preached, there were not only tears that flowed, but also evidence of changed lives that always comes with true salvation. This was the beginning of a great spiritual awakening that would transform not only England, but before long, the American colonies as well.

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

"...about all that Jesus began to do and teach" (Acts 1:1).

Why did this happen? Because Whitefield had simply unleashed the Word of God and when God's Word is unleashed, when God's Word is given an opportunity to work, amazing things happen. What proved to be true some 275 years ago in Whitefield's day is as true today and has always been true. When God's people unleash God's Word, people's lives are changed. How do we know this? It is not only what Whitefield did, but it is also what Paul did some 1,800 years before.

In Acts 19 we find Paul in Ephesus, a city of more than 300,000 people. As we noted in our previous studies, Paul had a simple strategy of taking people to the Word of God (19:1-7) and then of taking the Word of God to people (19:8-10). He spent over two years unleashing the Word of God in Ephesus and of teaching and unleashing others to take the Word throughout the surrounding region. What was the result of God's Word being unleashed? Acts 19:11-22 reveals four results that we can expect when the Word of God is unleashed.

I. There is confirmation (11-12).

11 God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, 12 so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out.

Here is a principle I want you to make note of; *God will validate the ministry of His Word.* For Paul, the ministry of his preaching was validated by extraordinary miracles. The question is this, how are we to measure preaching today? Should all preaching today be accompanied by extraordinary miracles (interesting that miracles have to be qualified with the word extraordinary)? Beloved, preaching today, the preaching of Whitefield in his day, indeed all preaching since the days of the early church is to be compared with Scripture to see if it is true, right? But how would you test a preacher's message if you did not have a Bible (which was the exact situation we had going here in Ephesus)? Let me remind you that there were no leather bound Bibles and the New Testament had not been completed or compiled. And so, at this point in time, God gave the apostles the ability to perform confirming signs and wonders to authenticate the preaching of His Word. Such "extraordinary miracles" – the likes of which had not been seen before, were meant to cause skeptical audiences to listen to what the preacher was saying, confirming that his words were true.

As we fast-forward, what are we to do with the skeptics of our day? Ought there to be "extraordinary miracles" to confirm the validity of the preacher's message? Well, how about a "no" and a "yes". No, there is not to be extraordinary miracles accompanying my message because the confirming signs as to the truth of my words today have already been given in the New Testament. Therefore, I point you back to the Book; to the Scriptures and I can say to you, "If you do not believe my message to be true, then go to the Scriptures and examine it for yourself. What I am declaring to you about sin, the Savior and salvation is what Paul declared to be true and his message was confirmed by God."

And would you note that carefully there in verse 11. Who performed the miracles? Not Paul. It was God who was doing these things. God did this work through Paul and so we see that the emphasis is on God. So then, what does this teach us about God? Two things:

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

“...about all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1).

A. It teaches us that God is powerful.

What kind of power does God have? Consider some of the extraordinary things that God did to confirm His message and His messengers. In Mark 5:27 begins the account where people were healed by simply touching the fringe of Jesus’ cloak. In Acts 5:15 there were some who were healed by simply falling under Peter’s passing shadow. And here in our text, God healed sick people who touched Paul’s handkerchiefs and aprons. That is some kind of power!

Now, let me address some of the abuses of this verse. Some of you may have seen or heard of preachers or healers who offer some kind of specially blessed handkerchief that he has prayed over or that he had dipped in the Jordan River, a cloth that he claims, if prayerfully applied, will bring healing, and that this handkerchief can be purchased for just 15 dollars. These and other charlatans use this passage to support their opportunist folly.

Yet Acts 19 does not speak of special “prayer cloths” enchanted with divine healing powers. The word **“handkerchief”** - *sudaria* simply means a “sweat rag.” Any worker with leather, say a tentmaker, would have this kind of cloth. This cloth would be tied around the head to soak up the perspiration that resulted from the labor. The second word, translated **“apron,”** is referring to what the leather-worker tied around his waist to protect his clothing while working. What did God use as the instruments of His own healing power? Old sweat rags and dirty work aprons.

All of this reminds us that God does not generally work through the noble and self-promoting, those who love to take the credit for what God does. Rather God works through the humble and lowly, those who are servants. Paul was once high and mighty, arrogant and self-serving, but he had become a humble slave of the almighty God, and God worked through such a man, a man who was obviously willing to sweat and support himself so that the gospel could advance freely. God used the very symbols of servanthood, sweaty rags and work aprons, as the means of carrying His healing power to hurting people. But we still need to answer the question as to why God showed His power this way, through such means? This brings us to the second thing we learn about God. Not only does this passage teach us of the power of God...

B. It teaches us of the purpose of God

What was the purpose of God performing such miracles? Listen carefully. God was drawing attention to the truthfulness of His Word. God was validating Paul’s message about Jesus. Ought we to expect God to bring healings and perform other miracles to validate the message of preachers like myself? Beloved, God can do whatever He wants, including healing people. He’s God. While I believe God can and does do miracles today, they are not in the same manner or through healers. Beloved, God does not always work in the same way in all periods of time. Do you realize that God did not always do things in the same way in the Bible?

The Bible was written over a period of about 1500 and over that time God transmitted His word and work in phases. A careful study of the Bible reveals that there were really just three key periods in the Scriptures where vast miracles were taking place. What are these three times? We see great miracles taking place in the time of Moses (roughly 1400 BC), in the time of Elijah and Elisha (around 850 BC), and in finally in the time of Jesus and the Apostles (between 30-100 AD).

And in connection with each of these special times of miracles, another part of the Word of God was given. Moses did miracles, and then came the Law; Elijah and Elisha did miracles, and then came a line of Prophets; finally, Jesus and the Apostles did miracles, and then came the

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

"...about all that Jesus began to do and teach" (Acts 1:1).

New Testament. The purpose of the miracles was to draw attention to and confirm the validity of God's spokesmen and their messages. And once God got the people's attention, He always put the focus on His Word.

Does God still do things to draw attention to His Word? I believe so. In Ephesus He brought healing to the sick to point people to His Word. Today He might do a number of things to get our attention. He might take away our health or a job or a relationship. He might bless a person monetarily or even deplete a person of his funds. Whatever He brings to pass, He wants us to come to His Word. As Jesus said in Matthew 4:4,

MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.

What is God doing in your life right now? Think about it. Whether it is a trial or a triumph, His purpose is to draw you to His Word. Are you paying attention? Because wherever God is at work, God will confirm it by His Word. We need to unleash God's Word so that we can see where He is working. God will confirm His Word and His work. But there is another expectation we can have when the Word of God is unleashed...

II. There will be counterfeits (13-16).

13 But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches." 14 Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said to them, "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" 16 And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

Interestingly, Paul warned the Corinthians, in 2 Corinthians 11:14-15 this about Satan and those under his influence saying,

14 No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.

Here in Acts 19:13-16, we find two things that are true about counterfeit Christians:

A. Counterfeit Christians seek to use Jesus to their own benefit (13).

13 But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches."

Exorcism – the removing of evil spirits was a profitable business in Ephesus. According to the practice, if the exorcist could learn the name of a spirit, he could use that name to control the spirit. A good exorcist was one that had become familiar with the names of the most powerful spirits. A Jewish exorcist believed he had access to the secret name of the God of Israel and that the use of this name invoked special powers. When these Jewish exorcists learned of Jesus, they added His name to their list, believing it gave them even more ability to cast out evil spirits. They

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

“...about all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1).

did this for fame and profit. But there is another, more insidious reason they did this; Satan was the influence behind their work. Why?

First, because Satan knows that since he cannot stop God’s true work, he can at least copy it and try to redirect people away from it.

Second, by redirecting people away from the true work of God, Satan knows he is bringing confusion into the hearts and minds of people. One of Satan’s strategies is to bring suspicion to the Word of God. How many of us have been asked question like, “Why are there so many interpretations of the Bible?” Satan has a long list of people he has influenced to bring so many thoughts and views on the word of God that people are confused as to what to believe. Satan has raised up countless opponents who attack the truthfulness and reliability of God’s Word. Atheists who make claims like, “You can’t believe what those Christians teach. Creation has no place in the classroom. It’s not scientific!”

There are others Satan has influenced not to bring head-on attacks but rather a subtle undermining of God’s Word by imitation. Satan loves to have people use the name of Jesus, and to quote the Word of God, but whose lives and teachings are so bizarre and so confusing that it makes all of Christianity looks suspicious. Satan imitates God’s work because he knows the world cannot tell the difference. Sadly, sometimes even God’s people have trouble distinguishing the wheat from the tares. We need to be discerning and compare what is being taught and what is being sold as “Christian” with what is actually in the Bible! Some people just use the name of Jesus, but there is another truth we can must learn from all this...

B. Counterfeit Christians will be condemned (14-16).

We see this in verses 14-16, *14 Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said to them, "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" 16 And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.*

The scene is almost funny, if it were not so sad. The seven sons of Sceva thought they could use Jesus’ name for their own selfish gain. There are two things they did not account for however. First is the worth of Jesus’s name and the second is the power of Satan’s domain. The thought that men could use or control either is displeasing to God. And here we see the providence of God against those who play games with the name of Jesus. He turns them over to just one evil spirit to teach these boys a lesson. What did they learn? At least two things:

First, it is a dangerous thing to dabble with the devil. Like giving a loaded gun to a toddler, there is nothing more dangerous spiritually than playing around with the demonic. Someone will get hurt in some way as is evident in our text.

The **second** lesson is that it is a dangerous thing to only have second hand knowledge of Jesus. When a person uses the name of Jesus in a flippant way, he is violating God’s third commandment. Do you know who are potentially at highest risk of repeatedly using the name of Jesus in a flippant way? Children in Christian homes. Our children know the lingo, they know all the words, but too often, if we are not careful to teach and train them, they are only mimicking and substituting second-hand knowledge of Jesus for the real thing. In the end, such second-hand information will not save them, it will only condemn them. I have heard it well said that God has no grandchildren; only children. However, the point is this, where God’s word is unleashed, there will arise counterfeits. We must beware.

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

“...about all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1).

Our text reveals a third expectation we can have when God’s word is unleashed...

III. There will be changed lives (17-20)

When God’s Word is unleashed, when we really devote ourselves to proclaiming the truth of God’s Word, there are two ways, as seen in our text, that lives are changed.

A. Where God’s Word is Unleashed, unbelievers will pay attention (17)

This became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified.

While I am not one to believe that people were more moral at the founding of our nation, for sin has always been at the heart of man, I do believe that the constant public preaching of God’s Word kept sin from being as flagrant as it could be. Here, in this pagan city of some 300,000 people, news spread fast. As the people heard about the power of Jesus to heal the sick and then about what happened to those who toyed with Jesus’ name, they did not go on as though nothing happened. Luke says that fear fell upon them. While they did not all believe, it would seem that many changed their tunes and stopped mocking the name of Jesus.

I suppose it is an occupational hazard, but when I am involved with a group of people that does not know who I am, it is amazing the kind of language I can hear. Then I am asked that question, “So Ed, what do you do?” I respond, “I am a pastor!” All of a sudden the language changes, often apologies are made for offending me, as though it is my offense they ought to be concerned about. People, if we would be more vocal about the God we serve, we would see more people taking notice and being a bit more reverent and fearful of God. Speak of God’s word more. In addition to this...

B. Where God’s Word is unleashed, believers take action (18-20).

God’s word is powerful and it results in changed lives and specific actions. Walking through verses 18-20, note with me the four actions that occur in a person’s life when they are exposed and respond to God’s Word.

First, *there will be believing.* At the beginning of verse 18 we read, ***Many also of those who had believed kept coming...*** A truly changed life begins when a person believes in Jesus, believing Him to be his only hope to the blessings of eternal life. Salvation is not about looking within yourself to improve yourself. Not one person has that power to change themselves in a manner that pleases God. God, through the prophet Jeremiah declared this in Jeremiah 13:23 saying, ***“Can the Ethiopian change his skin Or the leopard his spots? Then you also can do good Who are accustomed to doing evil.”*** We can do nothing and so we must be looking for a Savior; to the one God sent for us, the only one who has met God’s perfect standard and lived a perfect life; the one who died to pay the debt of sin, which is death and yet who conquered death by rising from the dead. This what a person must believe.

Second, in addition to believing, *there will be confession.* Read with me the end of verse 18, ***confessing and disclosing their practices.*** I love the account about Prussian king Frederick the Great while he once toured a Berlin prison. The guilty prisoners fell on their knees before him trying to convince the king of their innocence; all except for one man, who remained silent. Frederick called to him, “Why are you here?” “Armed robbery, Your Majesty,” was the

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

“...about all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1).

reply. "And are you guilty?" "Yes indeed, Your Majesty, I deserve my punishment." Frederick then summoned the jailer and ordered him, "Release this guilty wretch at once. I will not have him kept in this prison where he will corrupt all the fine innocent people who occupy it."

One of the key problems in our evangelism today is that we do not address *sin*. Do you realize that a person cannot be saved until he acknowledges that he is a sinner, one *lost*, hopelessly lost in the sea of sin. Consider the opening lines and thesis statements of many popular gospel presentations that go along these lines; "Are you searching for meaning and purpose in life? Would you like to experience personal fulfillment? If you are, my friend, know this. God has a wonderful plan for your life. He loved you so much He sent Jesus. And Jesus loved you so much He died for you. Let Him in your heart and He'll give you new life." The problem is no serious attention given to man's sinfulness, God's wrath, and the certain and deserved judgment to come.

So what happens? A person hears this "good news" about a "genie" Jesus that he might add to his life to make him happier, healthier, more successful, but fails to see his need of the "Savior" Jesus – the one who came to rescue him from the wrath of God and his own deserved punishment in hell. There is little if any remorse, brokenness, or confession of sin. And why should there be in light of such gospel presentations that depict people as being essential good, for why else would Jesus die for them? This is not the true gospel. The true gospel, according to Jesus in Matthew 5:3-4, demands that a person admit his spiritual bankruptcy. We read,

3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

The question is not whether you are satisfied with your life. The question is whether God is satisfied with your life. According to the Bible, there is no one with whom God is satisfied - save one, His Son Jesus Christ. And then, by extension, all those who believe in Christ and confess their own sin as being offensive to God. We must realize that our sinfulness offends God. We have gone our own way in His world. And this is why need a Savior. And what is an evidence that you have truly been saved. You make confession. You agree with God that you have sought your own way and your ways offend Him. You no longer hide your sin or makes excuses for it. You confess it by calling your sin what God calls it. So there is believing, there is confession and next...

Third, *there is repentance.* Notice in our text how these new believers and confessors next turned from specific sins. In verse 19 we read, **"And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver."** Let me remind you that Ephesus was a highly religious, incredibly superstitious city full of people who knew how to take advantage of others. Casting spells and casting out spirits was a big business in Ephesus. These "magicians" were competitive because the pay was lucrative. These conjurers believed that the potency of a spell is bound up with its secrecy. They would guard their spells with their very lives believing that if they became known, they would not be effective. But here the magicians, who had come to faith in Jesus, these men and women who once loved darkness and secrecy now made *open confession*, denouncing their magic but also ridding themselves of source of their rebellion against God, burning up all their sinful paraphernalia. They did not want

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

“...about all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1).

anyone else getting involved in their past sin. And this was no small repentance. Luke tells us the value of their resources amounted to 50,000 pieces of silver. Let me put this into today’s terms. These silver pieces were most likely drachmas. A drachma was a day’s wage. If an average day’s wage in America is \$100, making an annual income of around \$25,000; the equivalent of 50,000 drachmas would be about five million dollars today.

Beloved, when God saves a person, He also gives him a new heart; a heart that longs to live for and love God. Such a heart comes a desire to get rid of old ways. These Ephesians are a great example for us making the cleanest of cuts with their old ways, even though it meant abandoning the things that were their livelihood. What does it mean to be saved? In part it means making clean cuts. You cannot love Christ and continue to love your old sins. With what do you need to make some clean cuts today? Some of you love your own ways, your old ways. It is time to believe that Christ came to give you the true life of His ways by dying for you. It is time to confess that your ways do not please God. It is time to repent of your old ways and ask God to instill in you a new heart that aims to please Him. What needs to be removed from your life today? A new heart will confess it and do everything necessary to rid itself of the sin-producing menace. Beloved, do not refuse to relinquish your sin, for such a refusal to let go of certain things always leads to certain trouble. Where there is a true change, a real conversion, there will be a willingness to get rid, not just of sin, but of *specific* sin. For the converted Ephesians, it was sorcery scrolls.

Let me ask you, what would you burn today if the Spirit’s conviction gripped our church as it did in Ephesus? We might burn certain magazines. Others would cease from visiting certain web sites or watching questionable television channels. What unwholesome music cd’s, mp3 files, movie dvd’s and blu-ray discs need to go? I am not suggesting that we have a bonfire tonight and you all bring your sin paraphilia. But I am saying that according to God’s Word, we need to take any steps necessary to put off ***specific*** sins from our lives. But know this; it is not enough to put off specific sins. They must also be replaced with righteous actions. Paul, later writing to this very church, wrote these words in Ephesians 4:22-24 saying,

22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self [put off], which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

So there is believing, confession, repentance, and now one more; fourth, *there will be a new purpose*. We read in verse 20, ***So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.***

How does the Word spread? Luke says “So” meaning, in light of all these things just mentioned. The Word of God is unleashed as God’s people are serious about living according to it and then making it known to others. The God’s life-changing power takes effect. *The problem is we tend to set our sights too low*. We have people to reach, but we are not seeing them.

Let me wrap things up by means of the parable the wild duck. “Flying northward across Europe with his friends one spring, a certain duck landed in a Danish barnyard where there were tame ducks. Enjoying some of their corn, he stayed for an hour, then a day, then a week, then a month. Finally, relishing the good fare and safety of the barnyard, he stayed all summer. One

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

“...about all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1).

autumn day when his wild-duck friends were winging their way southward again, they passed over the barnyard, and the duck heard their cries. He felt the thrill of joy and delight, and with a great flapping of wings he rose in the air to join his old comrades in their flight. But he found that his good fare had made him so soft and heavy, he could rise no higher than the eaves of the barn. So he dropped back again to the barnyard and said to himself, ‘Oh well, my life is safe here, and the food is good.’ Every spring and autumn when he heard the wild ducks honking, his eyes would gleam for a moment and he would begin to flap his wings. But finally the day came when the wild ducks flew over him and uttered their cry, but he paid not the slightest attention to them.”

Beloved, God is calling upon you right now, either for salvation or for increased service. And before you get soft, heavy and unresponsive, you need to, by any means possible, respond *now*. For Paul, he said, "I must also see Rome." (Acts 19:21). For Whitefield it was, "I must take the Word to the coal miners." What are you living for? Do you have a God-given ministry passion? We have seen today what happens when God's Word is unleashed. But it must be *unleashed!* How can you unleash it? Let me give you three applications.

First, make the Word of God your priority! Read it! Study it! Memorize it! Treasure the Word of God.

Second, make the Word of God personal. Allow the Word of God to change your thinking; to change your behavior; to change your speech. Make it personal.

Third, make the Word of God known. Only the Word of God has the power to change lives, to tell others the truths of God's Word and watch what happens!

Soli Deo Gloria

Copyright © 2013 Edward K. Godfrey. *This message is the sole property of the copyright holder and may be copied only in its entirety for circulation freely without charge. All copies of this message must contain the above copyright notice. This message may not be copied in part (except for small quotations used with citation of source), edited, revised, copied for resale or incorporated in any commercial publications, recordings, broadcasts, performances, displays or other products offered for sale, without the written permission of the copyright holder. Requests for permission should be made in writing and addressed to Edward K. Godfrey, Pastor, Hope Community Bible Church, 2300 South 13th Street, Rogers, AR 72758.*