

## Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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

### R<sub>2</sub>L – Resolved to Live: Unleashing God’s Word (Part 2)

Acts 19:11-20

[slide 02] 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. [slide 02] 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.

By God’s good providence, that is by His own ordering of events, we have had an interesting theme develop in the preaching over the past few weeks. Three weeks ago, our Elder, Jase, spoke to you about the power of the gospel, the Word of God, to convert and transform people. The text from which he preached, Romans 1:16-17, [slide 04]

**16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”**

This text speaks of Paul’s own unleashing of the Word of God to do what only the Word of God can do; change lives to the glory of God; making sinners in to saints, the wretched into the righteous, the faithless into the faithful.

Then, last week, we turned our attention back to the book of Acts. And in Acts 19:11-22 we find what well may have been part of the inspiration for Paul’s Romans 1:16 statement. Having arrived in Ephesus, Paul begins preaching the Word of God, of letting the Word of God speak; communicating from Scripture who Jesus Christ is, what God has done for us through His Son Jesus, who we are in our sin and the great blessing of knowing Jesus as Lord and Savior. What we began last week was seeing four results that come when God’s people are determined to communicate the gospel in any way possible. It may be in a religious setting, such as the synagogue or among the Jews as it was for Paul. For us, we are to seize opportunity to unleash God’s work in the church and among those who call themselves Christians to either strengthen true believers in their faith or to see those who are only hearers of the word become true and effectual doers of the Word. It may be in a secular setting, like in a school hall or even in the market place. But what we have before us in this text is Paul unleashing God’s word. What we see here is an example of what happens when God’s Word is unleashed; made known.

Now your rather verbose pastor only got through two of the four results that can be expected when God’s people unleash God’s word. Let me quickly remind you of the first two of the results we find in our text, followed by the remaining two for our consideration and then

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wrapping things up with an exhortation; a charge, a biblical command calling each one of you to follow the example of Paul in unleashing God's Word in your homes, in your workplace, in your neighborhoods, indeed, wherever you find yourself. That upon reflection of what God has done for us in Christ, we might echo the sentiments of 1 Chronicles 16:23-25 --- <sup>[slide 05]</sup>

**23 Sing to the Lord, all the earth; Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day. 24 Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples. 25 For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; He also is to be feared above all gods.**

Beloved, we must learn to increasingly, regularly, intentionally **"proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day."** This is what Paul did. This is what every believer is called to do; for as we read concerning who we are in <sup>[slide 06]</sup> 1 Peter 2:9, <sup>[slide 06]</sup>

**But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light**

We are to be a people who are unleashing God's Word; sharing the gospel of Christ; proclaiming the good news that through Christ, God has reconciled all who believe to Himself. And like Paul, when we unleash God's Word, we ought to expect results. <sup>[slide 07]</sup> Acts 19:11-22 reveals four results that we can expect when the Word of God is unleashed. Let me remind you of the first two results and then declare to you the final two. <sup>[slide 07]</sup>

## 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.*

For Paul, let us remember that there was no New Testament; nothing that could be used to declare the validity of God's Word. So then, to prove that what Paul was saying about Christ and salvation was true, God validated it by extraordinary miracles; miracles designed by God to reveal the divine origin of the message delivered by Paul. At this time, there was nothing to compare Paul's teaching to. Unlike today where you can see if what I says matches up to the inspired text, thus eliminating the need for extraordinary and confirming miracles, Paul's message needed such confirmation. And so, using the ordinary garments of a humble tentmaker, a sweat cloth and a work apron, God brought healings of both body and spirit.

By performing these miracles through the hands of Paul, God demonstrated Himself to be both <sup>[slide 07]</sup> powerful, and thus to be respected and feared; as well as <sup>[slide 07]</sup> purposeful, wanting to draw attention to His word, the gospel preached by Paul. All of this reminding us that miracles in the Scriptures are meant to draw attention to God's message.

So, as we make God's Word known, there will be confirmation. Our confirmation of the validity of God's Word today comes via the Scriptures themselves as we compare what is taught to what is written. But there is another expectation we can have when the Word of God is unleashed... <sup>[slide 08]</sup>

## 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*

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*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.*

Our enemy, the devil, is not idle. If he cannot stop God's Word from being unleashed, he will do what he can, often by raising up counterfeits, to confuse and distract from the true message of God's Word. In our text we were given two things to remember about counterfeit Christians, those who name the name of Christ but are not truly unleashing God's Word.

*[slide 09]* First we are told in verse 13 that such counterfeits will seek to use Jesus to their own benefit, both for fame and fortune. Exorcism – the removing of evil spirits was a profitable business in Ephesus. And as exorcists learned about the name of Jesus, they used that name for their own profit. 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 exorcist learned of Jesus, they added His name to their list, believing it gave them even more ability to cast out evil spirits. They did this for fame and profit. But there is another, more insidious reason they did this; Satan was the influence behind their work. Why?

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, *[slide 09]* but there is another truth we can must learn from all this there in verses 14-16, that counterfeit Christians will be condemned

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 and condemn their flippant attitude toward Christ by allowing just one spirit to utterly humiliate them. This brings us to the third expectation or result we can have when God's word is unleashed; a most exciting result indeed... *[slide 10]*

### **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. *[slide 10]*

#### **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.

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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... <sup>[slide 11]</sup>

## 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.

<sup>[slide 11]</sup> **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.

<sup>[slide 11]</sup> **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 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,

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[slide 12] **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.**

[slide 13] 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 we 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 make excuses for it. You confess it by calling your sin what God calls it. So there is believing, there is confession and next...

[slide 14] **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 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

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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, <sup>[slide 15]</sup>

**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. <sup>[slide 16]</sup> 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 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). 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 quickly give you seven things you need to be doing to be prepared to unleash God's Word in your life. <sup>[slide 17]</sup>

### 1. Read and mediate on the word (Psalm 119:97)

*O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.*

### 2. <sup>[slide 17]</sup> Memorize the word (Psalm 119:9-11)

*9 How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. 10 With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. 11 Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.*

### 3. <sup>[slide 18]</sup> Write the word out on a piece of paper, the 3 by 5 card, send yourself an email. Do not copy and paste, rather type it out. (Ezra 7:10; 2 Timothy 2:15)

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*Ezra 7:10*

*For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.*

*[slide 18]* **2 Timothy 2:15**

*15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.*

4. *[slide 19]* **Be determined to share a verse, at least one verse with someone on a daily basis. Be relentless with this. Discipline yourself to share at least one verse with another person on a daily basis. (Psalm 40:9-10)**

*9 I have proclaimed glad tidings of righteousness in the great congregation; Behold, I will not restrain my lips, O Lord, You know. 10 I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have spoken of Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth from the great congregation.*

5. *[slide 20]* **Get a gift Bible and underline or highlight some of your favorite verses and give it to someone. (Deuteronomy 6:7-9)**

*7 "You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. 8 "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. 9 "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

6. *[slide 21]* **Attend any, as many, Bible studies as possible. Use the studies to learn about the Word, or to impart truth about the word. Do not neglect such times of fellowship.(Hebrews 10:23-25)**

*23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; 24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.*

7. *[slide 22]* **Respond in kind to the proclaimed Word. If you are asked what you are reading in the Word; ask that person what he or she is reading. If you are given a testimony of how God's Word has changed someone, seek to proclaim how the Word of God is changing you. (Romans 12:10)**

*Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;*

*Soli Deo Gloria*

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