

## **Breaking the Strongholds of Satan** **Acts 19:1-20**

### **Introduction:**

1. How many of you traveled over the holidays? How many enjoy traveling?
2. How many prefer to just stay home? **You** wouldn't have enjoyed being the apostle Paul.
3. In Acts 18:23, Paul left his home church in Antioch and began his third missionary journey. Over 1,000 miles later, his travels landed him in the city of Ephesus, the capital city of Asia. It was a city of several hundred thousand people.
4. Ephesus was a pagan city that, for the most part, was morally and spiritually corrupt.
  - Idolatry was rampant and focused around the temple of Diana.
  - Ephesus was a city in great spiritual need, yet it found itself in complete bondage to Satan. This bondage was evidenced everywhere you turned.
5. When the apostle Paul arrived on the scene and began sharing with people the message of Jesus Christ, the shackles of Satan began to loosen in people's lives. vs. 20
  - The word "*prevailed*" means "to exercise force."
6. The gospel of Christ permeated this city and forcefully began to break down the strongholds of Satan. Notice verses 18-19. People were loosed and set free!
7. Did you know that all people can break the strongholds of Satan in their lives? How? Let's learn from this incredible text.

### **First, you must possess the Spirit of God internally.**

1. Have you ever tried to iron wrinkles out of clothes with an iron that wasn't plugged in. How did it work for you? Without the electrical power to heat the iron, you are struggling in vain to smooth out the wrinkles.
2. We all have areas of our lives that are like those wrinkles. Maybe it is a violent temper, a prideful spirit, an addictive habit, or a bitter spirit. Maybe it is a past event that you cannot seem to get past. It could be a grieving spirit that has swallowed you up.
  - Satan can take any of these issues and use them to bring strongholds in our lives. We feel trapped in a cycle of repetitive attitudes or actions that threaten to destroy us.
3. Did you know that God has provided a power source for us to be able to overcome these wrinkles in our lives? The power source is called the Holy Spirit of God.
4. Here in our text, the apostle Paul encountered twelve Jewish men in Ephesus (vs. 1). After talking with them for a little while, Paul perceived that these men were men of faith and believed God's Word, but he sensed that something was missing. vs. 2

5. These men had never even heard of the Holy Spirit. The only biblical instruction they had received was by John on the other side of the cross (the forerunner of Christ). vs. 3
  - The reason why Paul asked them about their baptism was because, in the early part of Acts, Jewish believers would receive the Holy Spirit after they believed on Christ and were baptized in water (Acts 2:38). Water baptism was essential for Israel at this time.
6. Paul now understood why these men did not possess the Spirit of God. They had never heard of or believed on Jesus Christ. Paul gave them further enlightenment, they trusted Christ, and then desired to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. vs. 4-5
  - As a God-appointed apostle, Paul laid his hands on them, and at that moment they received the Holy Spirit, and then miraculously spoke in different languages and prophesied. vs. 6-7
7. What is the doctrinal significance of this for us today? There really is none. Four times in the book of Acts, people groups receive the Holy Spirit and it never happens the same way twice (Acts 2, 8, 10, 19).
  - The book of Acts is a transitional book that takes us from law to grace, from Israel to the body of Christ, from God's prophetic program to God's mystery program. It is a bridge. You don't park on a bridge. A bridge is meant to take you from point A to point B.
  - Many of the supernatural and miraculous signs in the book of Acts were signs to Israel of various things, and they were also meant to validate the apostles' new message of Christ.
  - These miraculous signs eventually faded away when their purpose was fulfilled.
8. But what about the Holy Spirit of God? Does God still give His Spirit to people today? I've got great news – yes, He certainly does! But how? Do you have to be baptized in water to receive His Spirit? Do you have to speak in tongues and do miraculous things before you receive it? Do you have to have another person come and lay hands on you first?
9. The apostle Paul taught the church that believers today receive God's Spirit the moment they trust Jesus Christ and simply believe on Him. Ephesians 1:12-13; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22
  - When the Gentiles heard the gospel of Christ in Acts 10, the moment their hearts believed God sent His Spirit unto them. They did not have to be baptized, have hands laid upon them or anything else. It was faith alone! Galatians 3:14, 22
  - If you have believed on Christ, you have the Spirit of God living inside of you. The same Spirit that raised up Jesus from the dead now lives in your inner spirit. Romans 8:11
10. What a power source we all possess! If the Spirit of God raised up Jesus Christ from the dead, He can give you the power to overcome those destructive habits, addictions, thought patterns, and attitudes that threaten to destroy you. Galatians 5:16

- Galatians 5:19-21 gives us a dirty laundry list of some of the works of your flesh that can destroy your life. Then it goes on to say, “*But, the fruit of the Spirit is....*” vs. 22-23
  - The Holy Spirit lives inside of you to provide you the power to overcome those destructive sins, and also to replace them with pleasant, edifying fruit that will change your life and positively impact others.
11. Remember the illustration of the iron? When you have the Holy Spirit of God and you yield to Him, you are plugged in to the power source that enables you to overcome the strongholds of Satan and iron out those wrinkles in your life.

**In Conclusion:**

1. So, while this text may not have doctrinal application for us today, it certainly has practical application. Here it is: Do you have the Spirit of God living inside of you today? Just as these men had to come to grips with this question, and they had to make a decision for Christ, so do you.
2. Today, if you desire the awesome power source of the Holy Spirit, all you must do is believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Trust Him, and Him alone, to save you from your sins.
3. If you have trusted Christ as your Savior, maybe you didn’t realize that the awesome power source of God’s Spirit is living inside of you to help you to overcome destructive strongholds of Satan.