

Acts 19:8-20

8 There is a lot of archeological and historical evidence of the Jewish community in Ephesus. They seemed to be more accepted there than in other Gentile cities, gaining citizenship, and being exempted from certain duties because of Sabbath keeping. Paul was free to argue persuasively with them for 3 months. That is longer than most synagogues would put up with him.

9 The Way – an early name for Christianity as Jesus is “the way” to God. Eventually the ones that remained with the synagogue became hardened after hearing the truth over and over. Continual rejection leads to a hardness that refuses to hear anymore.

One ancient text tells us that Paul lectured daily from 11A.M. to 4P.M. It was the siesta time for regular students. Tyrannus probably rented out his hall during those off hours. That would have given Paul time to sell his leatherwork in the morning and work or make home visits in the evening. Acts 20:31; 2Corinthians 2:16 Paul labored tirelessly for the Gospel.

10 Ephesus was the trade capital and people from all over the province and even from foreign nations came to Ephesus on business, to sell or buy. This two year public forum was a great opportunity to send the gospel out with the businessmen converts. Again, we have just a brief record of what must have been an exciting 2 years as people were won to Christ and went to start churches in their home towns. Never underestimate how God can multiply your witness. Our little church in Sedona affects places around the world with the Word of God.

11-12 The local occultism believed that objects could be charged with spiritual power. This explains why they would take handkerchiefs (small cloth to wipe perspiration from the face) and aprons (any article of clothing that was worn next to the skin) that had touched Paul and take them to the sick. Though this was a belief in magic, God allowed it to be effective so that the people would listen to the Gospel. Acts 5:15; Mark 1:32-34; 2Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:3-4 It is not encouraging us to adapt this method for healing, but rather showing us that God will work in mysterious ways to break into a culture. The following passage shows that “magical” applications of the Gospel can be dangerous.

13 Jewish exorcists plied their trade in Ephesus. They would use any name they thought contained power that spirits would fear. Since Jesus had a reputation as a great exorcist, and Paul was using His name with great results, they used His name too. Some incantations from the first century that included the name of Jesus, among others, have survived to this day.

14-16 Historically we have no record of the man named Sceva. He was possibly known in the local synagogue. Apparently they were successful at times until they came across this particular demon who recognized they were using the name without the authority. "Who are you?" is a challenge to their authority. Formulas work only to a point. Paul has no power in himself. The power comes from God who works through his servants and gives them His authority.

17 The demons purpose backfired. Instead of diminishing faith in Paul's message and the name of Jesus, it increased the public's conviction that Paul was teaching the truth. Romans 8:28

18 The story put the fear of God in believers who were compromising with their occult past. They came and confessed their evil deeds. A little display of the justice of God can wake people up if they are willing to apply the lesson. Is there something you should give up before you become the example of God's justice?

19 Convicted that the scrolls of incantations were evil and should not be sold to pollute other people's lives, they burned them. Someone added up the total value of those scrolls on the open market and found it to total 50,000 days wages! If you have a question about what you should do with valuable possessions that would pollute others souls, you now know. Anything that pollutes our walk with Christ, or would deceive others, must go!

20 God's word had stood against demonic forces, convicted believers to repudiate their occult practices, and put people in awe of the name of Jesus. The Word would go out from Ephesus and affect all of Asia. Acts 6:7; 12:24