

Series: You Are Sent, Vol 3

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Scripture: ACTS 19:11-20

MPS: The Gospel compels us to go and assures us God is with us!

INTRODUCTION

On August 6th, 2014, I was at the airport in Nairobi, armed with my passport and a student visa, headed to the great state of Texas. Even though this was my first time traveling to the states, I was not scared, maybe a little nervous but not scared; I was actually excited. Part of my excitement was the prospect of seeing my wife M'Lynn again because she had come to the states 6 weeks before me. I wasn't scared because my wife would be there to meet me. She grew up in the states; she is an American, so I didn't have to figure out things by myself; she would be my guide.

20 something hours later, my wife and I were standing at the door of our first apartment in Dallas, and again I wasn't afraid to go in because I knew my wife had paid the rent and signed the lease, I was comfortable walking in and confident that it was okay for me to be there. On August 17th, I started school, and again I wasn't scared walking into Criswell College because we had paid the first semester weeks before. All I needed to do was show up and start classes.

Why am I telling you all this? I'm sharing this with you because there is a fear that comes with going with the gospel. What if people think I'm weird? What if I get rejected? What if I move across the globe only to get sick and even die? As my wife and I are planning and praying through going back to Kenya, we know it's going to be hard. We haven't lived there for over 7 years, our kids have never been there, so many things have changed, we have changed, these are real issues.

But be encouraged that whether you are planning to go and proclaim the gospel overseas in India, Australia, Somalia, or the streets of London, or you are willing to stay and go with the gospel to your office, softball game, Noda, East way, or your favorite grocery store, God is with you. I wasn't afraid of being new in the states because my wife was with me. You and I have even better assurance. The almighty God who sends us to make disciples goes before us, he goes with us, and he will be with us till he comes back.

Today we will see how God goes with His people as they undertake the task of proclaiming the gospel. We will see how God demonstrates His power to confirm those who are his, how he bestows an eternal identity on his children, and finally, how the bearing of fruit confirms a movement of God in and through his people. And God does all this so that His word can continue

spreading and so that men and women can be saved from the kingdom of darkness.

Our main idea is **The Gospel compels us to go and assures us God is with us!** This is the confidence we have as we go with the Gospel; God is with us, so who can be against us.

If you have not given your life to Jesus and maybe you are fearful that if you surrender to God, you will lose your friends, your sense of freedom, or perhaps you feel like God will not really accept you, be encouraged today. The Lord promises if you forsake all else and repent and believe him, he will send his holy spirit to live in you. Not only that, but He has also prepared a family for you. The people of God gathered here right now will embrace you; you will not have to do it alone. So please do not check out.

Read Text: Acts 19:11-20

Context.

A little bit of context here, from verses 8-10, we learn that Paul had spent three months speaking boldly, reasoning and persuading those in the synagogue about the kingdom of God, but some people become stubborn, and they started speaking evil about the message of the gospel. And so, Paul stopped going to the synagogue, and for the next two years, he was teaching and preaching about the kingdom of God at the hall of

Tyrannus. Luke tells us because of Paul's teaching and preaching ministry in Ephesus, **"all the residents of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord."**

What we see here is an explosion of the early church through Paul's ministry. According to historians, the seven churches mentioned by John in Revelation (2&3) come into being during this era. So, Paul is working as a tentmaker in the morning, and he is preaching and teaching about the Kingdom of the Lord between 11am and 4pm for two years, and this is what happens next (look with me at verses 11-12)

Through the Text

¹¹ God was performing extraordinary miracles by Paul's hands, ¹² so that even facecloths or aprons that had touched his skin were brought to the sick, and the diseases left them, and the evil spirits came out of them.

The first thing we need to note here is that GOD was the one doing these miracles. It wasn't Paul; Paul was busy making tents, preaching, and teaching the word of God, and God decided to confirm the validity of the message he was teaching. Throughout the book of Acts, we see God using miracles to open the door for the hearing of the gospel and to usher in His kingdom. I just finished listening to an audiobook

titled Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus by the late Nabeel Qureshi. Nabeel grew up a Muslim, and he became a Christian because his friend David shared gospel truth with him patiently and consistently, and hear this, the Lord also gave him dreams that led him to seek Jesus. There are numerous stories like Nabeel's. As you plan to go with the gospel, you need to be prepared to recognize what God is doing to bring people into his fold. God is still doing miracles.

The second thing worth noting is these were not "normal" miracles. Luke, the writer of Acts, tells us they were **EXTRAORDINARY miracles, how extraordinary you ask**, they were so remarkable that even facecloths or aprons that had touched Paul's skin were brought to the sick, and the diseases left them, and even evil spirits came out of them. (Clearly, there was no covid in Ephesus because there is no one touching your sweaty facecloth or aprons today.) There are only two other instances in scripture where miracles are done without words being communicated. When the woman with an issue of blood touched Jesus's clothes in Luke 8 and in Acts 5, people are being laid on cots and mats that as Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on some of them.

It is important to be clear here that Paul was not the power behind these miracles. He was not powerful, but he was empowered. The holy spirit

of God was using Paul as an instrument to showcase His power. The Ephesians were doubling in works of magic, but God was showing them clearly that He was way powerful than magic, and they needed to believe the message of the gospel preached by Paul and submit to the Lordship of Christ. This leads us to our first observation, we like Paul,

We are not Powerful, but we are Empowered.

Jesus said in Acts 1:8 **But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."** The same power that turned Paul from a persecutor to a proclaimer of the gospel goes with us; the same power that called Lazarus out of the tomb goes with us the same power that resurrected Jesus goes with us. So, brothers and sisters, be encouraged as you go with the gospel; the power of the Lord goes with you. But make no mistake, if our faith becomes cultural, tame, convenient, it will be rendered powerless.

Paul writing later on to the Ephesian church, reminded them that before they had responded to the gospel message, they were dead in their trespasses and sins, walking according to the ways of the world. According to the spirit of

disobedience, they were carrying out the inclination of their hearts, and because of that they were at that point under the wrath of God.

This is so true of all of us. Before Jesus, I was under the wrath of God; before Jesus, I enjoyed the sins of this world and walked according to the ways of the world. You, too, you know before Jesus you carried out the inclinations of your heart. The reality for many in our city and all around the world is they are under the wrath of God; they are in darkness, and the only one who can set them free is Jesus. The Lord has empowered us with the gospel which is the power unto salvation, and He has empowered us with the Holy Spirit so we can go proclaim salvation to those who are far and those who are near. And how gracious of him to use us to take the gospel message to the lost. You are empowered to keep sharing the good news with your one, don't give up.

13 Now some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists also attempted to pronounce the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I command you by the Jesus that Paul preaches!"
14 Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish high priest, were doing this.

Exorcism was a thriving business in Ephesus, and Jewish exorcists would move from town to town offering their services. **Exorcism -The practice of commanding a demon or spirit to come**

out of a person. The most powerful exorcists were thought to have access to the most powerful spirits and the most powerful name. I know to some of us this sounds weird or like a scene from a horror movie. There are two errors we as believers can fall into, one is to disbelieve the existence of demons and forces of evil, and the other is to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them C S Lewis said the devil is equally pleased by both errors and he will take a materialist or a magician with the same delight.

Paul in Ephesians says, "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens¹" As we go with the gospel, we need to be have our eyes wide open because the enemy is causing chaos all around us, people are trapped in all kinds of spiritual oppression, and instead of seeking Jesus they are seeking temporary solutions or worse they are falling prey to false teachers who have a pseudo gospel and who use Jesus's name as a means to an end.

Luke, the author of ACTS, introduces us to the seven sons of Sceva – these guys sound like a Rock band- Everyone in town must have been talking about this man Paul who was using the name of Jesus to drive out demons, and these

¹ [Christian Standard Bible](#). (2020). (Eph 6:12). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

brothers decided they too needed some of that power. And so, the next time they were called in for an exorcism, they knew it was time to try the new method, their strategy- copy Paul's method by saying to demons, "I command you by the Jesus that Paul preaches!" come of out. (Can you feel the tension, is it going to work, have they cracked the code, they must have been thinking, we are going to be so famous right now, we are going to trend)

¹⁵ The evil spirit answered them, "I know Jesus, and I recognize Paul—but who are you?" ¹⁶ Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them, overpowered them all, and prevailed against them, so that they ran out of that house naked and wounded. ¹⁷ When this became known to everyone who lived in Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks, they became afraid, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high esteem.

Talk about a beat down. When preaching on this text, matt chandler said, if you go into a fight fully clothed and you come out of the fight naked, we don't need to argue who won the fight; we all know. The demons knew Jesus. In Mark 5, we see this powerful interaction between a demon-possessed man and Jesus; the bible tells us ⁶ When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and knelt down before him. ⁷ And he cried out with a loud voice, "What do you have to do with me,

Jesus, Son of the Most High God?" ² The demons recognized Paul because Paul has the seal of the Holy Spirit. He was united with Christ, but the demons did not know the sons of Sceva; the demons recognized they were imposters.

In Acts chapter 8, we saw Simon the sorcerer, who wanted to buy the power of the holy spirit after he saw the holy spirit was given through the laying on of hands. Now we have these brothers who think they can command demons by simply using Jesus's name like a magic spell. It's beautiful how the sovereignty of God is on display here. God allows this beat down to differentiate between Paul, who was a true messenger of Christ, from these seven brothers who were importers. The sons of sceva might have been well known around the streets of Ephesus, but Paul was fully known by the king of Kings. This leads us to our second observation

We are not well known, but we are fully Known.

In the conversation between the demon-possessed man and the seven brothers, something really stood out to me; you see, growing up in Kenya, we did not have time out for

² [Christian Standard Bible](#). (2020). (Mk 5:6–7). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

kids; that was a foreign concept. Every time my mom would discipline me, she would ask me two questions, who are you and who's child are you. She did not want to be associated with a rebellious child, and let me tell you, anytime I go whipping, I deserved it.

The demon-possessed man asked the brother, who are you? The answer to this question is extremely important. How we answer this question makes an essential difference in our efforts to proclaim the gospel and in our personal and corporate walk with the Lord. **Who are you? How would you answer this question?** Would you present your accomplishments, would say you are what you do? The likes on your gram, the outfit you have on? Would you say you are a Christian because you gather with the church, or are you identified with Christ because you've been washed by the blood of the Lamb?

Brothers and sisters in Christ, **we are who we are because of who's we are.** Our identity as Christians is derived from our Lord. And He says we are **his children**. John tells us, "To all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God³. We are in union with Christ, and because of that, we gain all the benefits of Christ. God choose us in Christ before the foundations of the

earth. Christ is our deepest identity, and because of this truth, we can be hopeful, we can be assured, and we can have a holy expectation that lives will be changed as we go with the gospel because God is with us and we are His.

The enemy loves to counterfeit; instead of eternal joy, he fools us with momentary happiness; instead of love, he fools us with lust; instead of eternal relationship, he keeps us busy with religious activity. Who or what is defining you? All of us draw our identity from something. Will you draw your identity from the almighty God who created, or will you let the world define you? The sons of Sceva got a beat down because they were not identified with Christ. They knew the name of Jesus who Paul preached, but they did not know Jesus intimately. They had witnessed or heard of the works of the Holy Spirit, but they did not have the power of the holy spirit within them; all they could do is repeat what someone else was saying.

As we go with the gospel, we cannot afford to not be sure of our eternal identity in Christ. If you have repented and believed in Jesus alone for your salvation, you are chosen by God, you are known, loved, declared righteous in Christ, freed from debt, and bondage to sin, you are adopted by the almighty God. Let that truth sink in. You are a child of God; you've been given the privilege

³ [Christian Standard Bible](#). (2020). (Jn 1:12). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

of knowing that God is your father. This means you can rejoice, you can suffer well, you are free from legalism and Guilt, you can be generous and content. And as we are about to see next, you can be transparent and live righteously without fear of condemnation, for there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

18 And many who had become believers came confessing and disclosing their practices, **19** while many of those who had practiced magic collected their books and burned them in front of everyone. So, they calculated their value and found it to be fifty thousand pieces of silver. **20** In this way, the word of the Lord spread and prevailed.⁴

Notice here the text says believers came confessing and disclosing their practices. Those who were confessing their sins and burning their collections of magic books were believers (This leads us to our Last observation)

Because we are empowered and fully known, we will bear fruit

As we go with the gospel, empowered by the power of the Holy Spirit, as we cling to our identity in Christ, I have no doubt that we will see fruit both in us and around us. The believers in

Ephesus confessed their sins, they disclosed their practices, they got rid of their idols; in fact, they burned their idols. They did not care that doing this would cost them; they had found a better treasure, and losing everything to gain this treasure was worth it

I know confessing sin can be challenging, mainly because we don't want people to look at us differently, but it is so good for the church and the watching world to see true confession and true gracious forgiveness of sins. It's a picture of the gospel. If we are honest, we sometimes find it hard to confess sins because we end up thinking we are the only ones struggling with a specific sin. We tend to think no one out there is doing what I'm doing, but look at our text, it says. **Many who had become believers came confessing and disclosing their practices.** It wasn't the one dude who loves Harry Potter and innocently found himself owning a few magic books nope, it was many believers. What if today you decided to talk to a brother or sister in Christ about that sin in your life, and y'all prayed and sort the face of the Lord and embraced the forgiveness that comes from the Lord. Maybe your confession is what will lead another to confess, and through this, both you and the other believer will be freed from shame and grow to trust Jesus more.

⁴ [Christian Standard Bible](#). (2020). (Ac 19:11–20). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

This is part of why we encourage everyone to be part of a community group because that's where you are known, and it's a small enough setting for authentic Christian accountability to take place. Maybe your next step is to join a community group where brothers and sisters in Christ will walk with you. Please do not walk alone; the late Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "Sin demands to have a man by himself. It withdraws him from the community. The more isolated a person is the more attractive will be the power of sin over him, and the more deeply he becomes involved in it, the more disastrous is his isolation."

Here are a few principles to apply to aid you in confessing sin.

- **Confess to God.** He is the one most displeased by our sins.
- **Confess to Believers.** Find a small group of believers you can walk with and a mature Christian who will go into battle with you in prayer and accountability.
- **Confess your Temptations;** the more you bring it to the open, the less power it has on you.
- **Confess Quickly.** The longer you wait, the harder it will be to confess

- **Confess Honestly.** Be truthful enough to expose the sin but general enough not to cause your friends to be tempted.

The bible tells us ⁹ If we confess our sins, God is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.⁵ Confession before salvation is for the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation to God. After being saved, Christian confession of sin is instead, like one author puts it "more like the scraping of barnacles off the body of a boat so it can move freely again." It's not what saves you; you've already been saved.

Now, these believers in Ephesus did not just confess; they burned their magic books. The Greek text said they kept burning the books. There are some things we will have to burn and keep on burning. This means confession has to become part of our Christian walk.

When the church in Ephesus seriously cleansed itself, some on the outside found it irresistible.⁶ Our text tells **in this way the word of the Lord spread and prevailed.**⁷ I know you desire to be attractive to those outside, not that that is our goal, but if living an authentic Christian life will

⁵ [Christian Standard Bible](#). (2020). (1 Jn 1:9). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

⁶ Hughes, R. K. (1996). [Acts: the church afire](#) (p. 259). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

⁷ [Christian Standard Bible](#). (2020). (Ac 19:11–20). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

bring people to the fold, let's pray that the Lord would continue to make us worthy of the calling he has called us.

Conclusion

Our Lord is committed to his redemptive mission. He is so committed to the point of coming as a man, living a sinless life, enduring humiliation, beatings, and dying on the cross. He died the death we all deserved so that anyone who will repent and believe in Jesus alone can be saved. It is comforting to know that our God is with us as we embark on the mission, he put in front of us. To make disciples, baptize them, and teach them to observe his word. I mean God used the teaching and preaching ministry of Paul, he used handkerchiefs, aprons, a beat down, confession of sins and burning of idols so that the message of the gospel can spread, and people can be saved. How then would he not use us, he has saved us, sealed us with his spirit and sent us on this mission. He is with us!

2 Chronicles 7, after Solomon had finished dedicating the temple to the Lord, the Glory of the Lord filled the temple. His presence was so glorious that the priests were unable to enter the temple. Some of us read that passage, and we wish we were there to see it with our own eyes, and yet we have something better. The Lord has made us his temple, and He has filled us with his Holy Spirit. This is glorious! I believe that the greatest miracle, the most extraordinary miracle there is, is a heart of stone being made into a heart of flesh. A heart that was once cold to the gospel, becoming warm to the Lord. And this is possible. Here at Mercy, we expect God to change a life today. **This glorious gospel which is the power of God unto salvation is compelling us to go, and it assures us God is with us.**

If you are yet to know this Jesus we speak of, He desires to make you his temple. Unlike Solomon, you do not have to build a physical temple so you can stop working on yourself and let God make you a new creation and fill you with His Holy Spirit. Unlike the sons of Sceva, you don't have to say Jesus, the one Paul preaches. You can respond today and no longer know of the Jesus your parents' worship, the Jesus your friends worship, the Jesus your spouse worships, and you can intimately know Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. If the spirit of

God is moving in you, convicting you of your need for salvation, we would love to talk to you after service. Or just ask the person seated next to you to step outside with you. I'm sure they would love to explain to you what the gospel is. (I will walk outside with you if you ask me) But please do not harden your heart; today is the day of salvation.