

Acts Series #17 - "Living In The Name" Acts 19:13-20

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Under Assumed Name

1. There is an old baseball story about a game in which the Cleveland Indians were playing the Chicago Cubs in Chicago
2. It was the ninth inning and Cleveland was leading 3-0 as Chicago came to bat for the last time.
3. The first three Chicago batters reached base safely.
4. With the bases loaded, the Cleveland manager called in a young relief pitcher.
 - a. the first ball thrown by the new pitcher was promptly hit over the center field fence: a home run!
 - b. the game was over; Chicago had won, 4-3
5. Later, in the clubhouse, the young relief pitcher went over to the Cleveland team's star pitcher, Bob Feller -- one of baseball's "All-Time Greats".
6. "Bob," he said, "tell me how you would have pitched that ball."
7. Bob Feller replied, "Under an assumed name!"

B. In Jesus' Name

1. Being a Christian means being intimately tied to the Name of Jesus
2. Indeed, it might be said that believers live under and assumed name
3. For the name "christian" means "of Christ"

C. Understanding What That Means

1. And while this is should be both, the simple fact is, not many Christians really understand what it means to live in Jesus' name
2. Though they end each prayer with the words, "In Jesus' name" they have little comprehension what that really means
3. That's what we're going to take a look at today in our study in Acts 19

II. TEXT

A. Set The Scene

1. Before we begin reading, let's set the scene
2. Paul has arrived in the city of Ephesus
 - a. and important and large city in Asia Minor
 - b. in fact, it was the capital of the province and the center for a vast amount of trade
3. Ephesus was known around the world for it's temple to Artemis, also called Diana
 - a. it was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world
 - b. people came from all over the Roman Empire to worship her there
4. Ephesus also had a reputation as a center of magic and sorcery

- a. it was a mecca for people seeking to increase their power and influence by diving into the occult
- b. magicians and sorcerers would come from all over to learn new incantations or buy secret books on spells and potions
- c. yes, Ephesus was the ancient world's center of occult activity
- d. so much so that books on magic were called "Ephesian writings"
5. Paul arrived, and began teaching and preaching in the synagogue,
6. But as in Corinth, when the Jews grew obstinate in their opposition, he left the synagogue and rented space to hold classes in one of the local schools
7. As the word of God spread, so did the work of God
8. And since the Ephesians were well acquainted with spiritual power, God began to confirm Paul's message and ministry by working many notable miracles by him
9. As it says in v. 12, one of the things that happened is that many of those who were demon possessed were set free
10. This sets the scene for v. 13 . . .

B. V. 13

{13} Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches."

1. We'll be covering these verses in a lot greater depth this Wednesday
2. But let me take a little time right now to explain what's going on here
3. Demon possession was a big problem in the ancient world, just as it is today, though in our country, most people don't recognize it for what it is
4. There were some who made a career out of exorcising demons from the possessed
5. They would attempt an exorcism by trying to get the demon to give up its name, and then using a superior name to take command of it and dismiss it
6. Jews were known to be especially good at exorcism, and it isn't difficult to understand why
 - a. as worshippers of the true God, they had a heritage of the scriptures and the revealed names of God
7. Here we read that various traveling Jewish exorcists, who would make regular contact with the synagogues of the towns they traveled through, came into contact with Paul and the gospel
8. When they saw the ease with which demons were dispensed with, they saw it as a powerful new tool in their exorcism bag of tricks
9. Luke gives us an example of one such group of traveling exorcist . . .

C. Vs. 14-16

{14} Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so.

{15} And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?"

{16} Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

1. From Luke's description of Sceva, we know he was one of the leaders of the Jewish community in Ephesus - he sat on their local Sanhedrin
2. This man had 7 sons, and because their father was a priest, they thought they had a leg up on the exorcism business
3. So when they were asked to come and deal with a demon possessed man, they came, and decided to try their new trick
4. "We adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches to come out and be gone."
5. But they didn't get the response they were hoping for
 - a. because Jesus' name is not some incantation or spell one waves through the air
 - b. His name isn't some magic device one manipulates to get what one wants
 - c. it isn't a token, or a charm, or a mandala
 - d. and the only person who can rightly use the name of Jesus is one to whom Jesus gives it and who understands what it means
6. So the demon said to them,
 - a. "Jesus I know all about."
 - b. "And Paul I'm familiar with"
 - c. "But who are YOU!"
7. Then enraged and moved by the demon, the man leapt on all seven of them and beat them to a bloody pulp {They were Black Eyed Sceva's Sons - a little joke there for the teens}
8. This display of super-human strength by a demon possessed person isn't unusual
 - a. it is a regular evidence of some who is possessed
 - b. even in Mark 5 we read about a demon possessed man who could not be bound even by iron chains because he broke them off
9. Now, as I mentioned, we'll take a closer look at this on Wednesday but for now let's move on

D. Vs. 17- 20

{17} This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

1. When news of what happened to Sceva's sons got out, it spread like wild fire
2. The result was a deepening reverence and respect for the Name of Jesus
3. These people, who were so immersed in and aware of the power and reality of the spiritual realm, became aware that a new reality, a new spiritual power had come to town and it far surpassed anything they had known
4. But the unbelievers weren't the only ones to come to a new respect for the Name of Jesus

{18} And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds.

5. This also shook up the church
6. When they heard about Sceva's sons and the report of the demon's words,

- they took it to heart
7. And it shook them to their core
 8. You know how it is
 - a. when you first came to Christ, you were excited and everything was new
 - b. you saw the power of God doing things in your life and the lives of those around you
 - c. but after a while, the excitement diminished, as did your own fervor
 - d. prayer became less a privilege and more a duty
 - e. bible reading turned from a delight into a drudgery
 - f. and the name of Jesus, which at first was so sweet to your ear, became just a thoughtless tag you stuck on the end of your prayers
 - g. and then, without warning, one day you're at church or bible study, or home group
 - g. and God performs something miraculous right before your eyes
 - 1) maybe its a dramatic healing
 - 2) or a word of prophecy or knowledge
 - 3) or maybe it's even someone afflicted with a demon whom God sets free
 - h. and all of a sudden, you are shaken to the very core of your spirit
 - i. and it seems almost as though you're waking up after being asleep
 - j. the power and reality of Jesus is made fresh and new
 - k. and with this refreshing there also comes the conviction that there are things that have crept back into your life that are wrong, that are incompatible with a life of fervent devotion to God
 9. Hey, this is what happened in Ephesus
 - a. when news of the events with Sceva's sons spread, the Christians got a wake up call
 - b. they had grown a bit complacent in their pursuit of Christ
 - c. and when the fire of devotion dims, the coals get an ashy crust on them
 - d. now that the Holy Spirit is breathing on them once again and the fire has been rekindle, they seek to push off those ashes
 - e. and so they came together and confessed their deeds to one another
 10. True revival is always accompanied by confession and repentance from sin
 - a. that's why I'm encouraged by recent reports of revival breaking out on college campuses across the country
 - b. the movement is marked by an open and honest, public confession of sin
 - c. and the small groups that are forming from these revivals for mutual accountability is a solid sign of genuine revival

{19} Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver.

{20} So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

11. This is a remarkable verse for what it tells us about the church in Ephesus
12. These people had come to faith in Christ

13. But it took a while for them to come to grips with the reality of what it meant to be a Christian
14. Though disciples, they had things in their homes that were incompatible with life in Christ
 - a. more than likely they had a conviction about these books of magic sitting on the shelves in their homes
 - b. but they had spent so much money on them
 - c. and they were so important to certain desires they still had,
 - d. they were loath to get rid of them
15. But when they became more clear on the power and authority of the name of Jesus, they quickly realized what a dangerous place they were in
16. Both God and Satan play for keeps
17. And they could not keep a foot in both realms without getting hurt
18. So they gathered their volumes on incantations and spells, and had a public bonfire
19. The value of the books Luke puts at 50,000 pieces of silver
20. Roughly equivalent to a ½ million dollars!
21. Now, when the believers took this step of whole-hearted re-commitment to God, the Holy Spirit was released to continue the work of revival

III. CONCLUSION

A. *Applying It*

1. The critical lesson we learn from this passage is what it means to live in the Name Of Jesus
2. The traveling Jewish exorcists saw His Name as just one more tool to add to their collection
 - a. it would be a means of exerting their power and influence over evil spirits
 - b. it would be an effective technology for making money
3. But they soon saw their ideas about Jesus' name were faulty
4. For Jesus only gives His name to those who have been born again
5. And he gives them His name for the purpose of advancing His kingdom, not theirs
6. In Mark 16 Jesus said to the disciples . . .

He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. . . . And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." {15, 17-18}

7. In John 14:13-14 Jesus gave this incredible promise

Whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.

- a. many people read these words and because Jesus is so sweeping in making the promise they conclude that Jesus' name is like a key that unlocks any and every door

- b. they think Jesus is saying whatever they pray, no matter what it is, as long as they ask in Jesus' name, they'll get it
- c. and they think asking in Jesus' name simply means to mouth those words in prayer
- d. but consider the context of the promise
 - 1) Jesus gave this to His disciples on the last night he was with them, after Judas, the traitor, and already left
 - 2) these were faithful men who had left everything to follow Him as Lord
 - 3) these were men who were sold out to the cause of Christ,
 - 4) whose sole passion was the kingdom of God
- 8. You see, being first century Jews, they well understood what Jesus meant when He gave them the authority to use His name
- 9. Names were more than just tags or labels stuck on people so you could call them to dinner
- 10. A person's name was a symbol, a representation of all that a person was
 - a. that's why we often see in Scripture that God changes a person's name after He has gave them a new relationship of Himself
 - 1) Abram, (Father) becomes Abraham (Father of many)
 - 2) Sarai (Contentious) becomes Sarah (Princess)
 - 3) Jacob (Deciever) becomes Israel (Prince With God)
 - 4) Simon (Flat-nose, because he was so impetuous he was always running into walls) becomes Peter (The Rock)
 - b. in fact, in the book of Revelation, one of the promises to those who go to heaven is that they will receive a new name
 - 1) we'll trade in the label our parents gave us and God will assign us a new name
 - 2) and this name will sum up all that we are, all that He has created us to be in the fullness of eternity
- 11. Do you see what this means as we look at Jesus' name?
- 12. When Jesus gives His name to His followers, it means He gives them the right to appropriate all of His power and authority
- 13. And all of His power and authority are given for the express purpose of glorifying The Father
- 14. That's why the Jewish exorcists couldn't use His name themselves and only got bet up for their efforts
 - a. they tried to prostitute His name for their own gain
 - b. and uttering the name of Jesus only reminded the demon of His ultimate defeat at the cross and in the lives of those who are true followers of Jesus
- 15. And when the church in Ephesus was brought into realization of this, it reminded them of the power and the authority that was theirs through His name
 - a. a power and authority they had neglected
 - b. a power and authority that could turn this upside down world right-side up
 - c. but they hadn't even let it turn their own lives over

B. Living In The Name

1. Friend, are you a Christian?
2. If you say “Yes” then I ask you - “Are you living in Jesus’ Name?”
 - a. are you living under His authority and power?
 - b. do you take seriously the reality of the spiritual?
 - c. are you trying to keep a foot in both realms, the kingdom of God and the dominion of the devil?
 - d. are there things in your life or home that God has shown you are incompatible with His name?
 - 1) magazines, books, videos
 - 2) games; Oiuja boards, Dungeons & Dragons
 - 3) occult trinkets
 - 4) records, tapes, CD’s
 - 5) clothing
 - 6) bottles, cans, boxes
 - e. get rid of them; and no, don’t have a garage sale, throw them out, burn them
3. Story is told of Alexander the Great
 - a. one night decided to pull a surprise inspection of the sentries
 - b. came to one young soldier who was asleep at his post
 - c. Alexander woke him and as soon as the sentry realized he had been awakened by none other than the General, he was sacred to death
 - d. falling asleep at your post was a crime punishable by death
 - e. Alexander was furious and asked the young man what his name was
 - f. the sentry replied that his name was Alexander as well
 - g. Alexander the Great paused, then said, “Soldier, change your behavior, or change you name.”
4. Brother or Sister in Christ, if you go by the name of “Christian” make sure you aren’t taking that name lightly
5. Understand what it means
6. On the positive side it means that Jesus has given you the greatest of all privileges - to use His name when you come before the Father in prayer
7. His name is the Key that unlocks the inner sanctuary of heaven and makes possible the presence of God in your daily life
8. You have the authority and power to carry out the kingdom of God on earth, just as it is being done in heaven
 - a. Jesus taught the disciples to pray that
 - b. then He gave them the equipment necessary to accomplish it
9. In His name we can cast out demons, heal the sick, and proclaim the everlasting power of the gospel to totally transform people’s lives
10. We are a mighty army who march under the banner of Jesus’ Name