

"The Magic Kingdom of Ephesus"  
Pastor Wally Contreras  
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"And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims." Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?" And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled. Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily." (Acts 19:11-20)

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So, what about that pesky little conjunction at the beginning of verse 11? "**And** God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul." Conjunctions are connectors so I have to go back to verse 10 to see what it is that is being connected to verse 11. "This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks." Ooooh. So, Paul continued speaking "boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God" **and** God was doing extraordinary miracles through the hands of Paul. It was a team effort. Is this distinction important for me to grasp? If so, how so? If not, why not?

In June, 2016 Yahoo News reported that "the IBISWorld report analyzes it as such and notes those in the industry — including people involved in palmistry, cartomancy, mediumship, aura readings and astrology — have about \$2 billion in revenue a year. Roughly 85,000 people work in psychic services and make about \$1.5 billion in total wages a year." In September, 2020, AARP recounted the following incident: "A New Jersey man in his 50s was having problems at work. In February [2020], he turned to a psychic for help. During their first meeting, the psychic read tarot cards and peppered him with personal questions. That led to a second, costlier session at which she uttered an ominous warning: "You have a curse. It might be devastating for your family. It has to be removed immediately." Next, she asked him to bring her \$9,000 in a pillowcase with nine white roses, nine red roses and magnets. She said she would perform rituals and soon return the \$9,000. Yearning for the bad karma to disappear, he did as instructed, scraping together money from friends, a rainy-day fund and an account earmarked for his son's college education. He says that his repeated attempts to get the money back from the psychic have not yielded a dime, and that police refused to

pursue the matter. About five months after he gave her the \$9,000, he lost his job in information technology, part of a pandemic-related layoff, and now is strapped. "Everything is messed up right now," he tells AARP. "I got psychologically trapped, and I never expected it to go this far." Let that thought sink in... "I never expected it to go this far." In the article, AARP quoted Bob Nygaard, a private investigator who was "asked to provide a sworn, written statement to the court to detail the warning signs of fortune-telling fraud cases. Fake fortune-tellers "often engage in emotional extortion," he wrote." Uh, "fake" fortune-tellers??? As Pastor Wally pointed out there are many who believe that they can manipulate some god or evil spirit and work things to their benefit. What should my response and the church's response be, if any, to those who make their living practicing the occult in general and specifically to those individuals who turn to psychics and mediums for answers? Explain.

Webster's 1828 dictionary defines superstition to mean: "Excessive exactness or rigor in religious opinions or practice; extreme and unnecessary scruples in the observance of religious rites not commanded, or of points of minor importance; excess or extravagance in religion; the doing of things not required by God, or abstaining from things not forbidden; or the belief of what is absurd, or belief without evidence." Do I view superstitions to related in any way to "religious opinions or practice" and why?

Acts 19:11-12 "And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them." God was doing the miracles; Paul was just the instrument He chose to use. These "Jewish exorcists" were trying to cast out demons in the name of Jesus which is great logic, but terrible execution. Think about it, what they failed to realize is that in order for Jesus' power to work through them, He and the Holy Spirit's power first has to be in them. As Rick Warren once said, "Christ likeness is not produced by imitation, but by inhabitation." Here's the lie that Satan wants us to believe...I can have all of the privileges of Jesus, without actually possessing Him...that I can have His power without first wanting the person of Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. Does God work through my hands? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Are there things in my life that are hindering God from "doing extraordinary miracles" (or any miracles whatsoever) by my hands? If so, what do I intend to do about them? If not, why not?

So the seven sons of the Jewish high priest Sceva, who misappropriated and misused the name of Jesus, got their clocks cleaned by the demon (“evil spirit”) that they were attempting to exorcise. As a result of their magnificently spectacular “butt-whoopin”, Scripture tells us in Acts 19:17b, “...fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled.” To extol means “to praise; to exalt in commendation; to magnify” (Ibid). C.H. Spurgeon once said that “It cannot be that there is a high appreciation of Jesus and a totally silent tongue about him.” What Spurgeon is saying is that you don’t have to be an extrovert to be an extoller. If you truly have a high appreciation of Jesus, then there’s no way you’ll be totally silent about him. What about me? Do others who know me, see (and hear) me routinely exalting and praising the name of Jesus?

Are there things that, if I take time to stop and remember them, would help me “extol” the name of Jesus more (e.g., remember how He saved me)? If so, what are some of those things? If not, why not?

There was an immediate and significant change in the lives of those who heard about the incident. “Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all.” (Acts 19:18-19a) A.W. Tozer once said that “[m]uch of our difficulty in life...stems from our unwillingness to take God as he is and adjust our lives accordingly.” These folks took God as He is and realized that their practices didn’t line up, so they adjusted their lives and got rid of everything that wasn’t glorifying to God. Are there things in my life that need adjusting and/or trashed that isn’t glorifying to God? Is so, identify them. If not, why not?

Pastor Wally said that “a believer’s power is focused on knowing the love of God, not manipulating the spiritual world”. How much time and effort have I put in so far this week to better know the love of God? Explain.

Though I’m probably not trying to manipulate “the spiritual world”, how much of my prayers are an attempt to “manipulate” God? Explain.