

The Word of the Lord Prevails

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[0:00] And take again God's Word and open to Acts chapter 19.!

And he entered the synagogue, and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus.

This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jew and Greeks. 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?

[1:36] 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 50,000 pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.

There is clearly a lot happening in the passage that Pastor Colin just read for us. And if I were to ask you to tell me what stands out the most to you, it would probably be the miracles.

Paul has arrived in the city of Ephesus, and he begins teaching every day for two years straight. Extraordinary miracles are taking place. Sick people are being healed just by touching a handkerchief or an apron that the Apostle Paul had touched.

[2:55] Evil spirits are coming out. And then traveling exorcists are attempting to use the name of Jesus as though it were some kind of magic formula for casting out demons.

One of these encounters ends with seven men running from a house, naked and wounded, and then fear falls on the entire city. Believers begin confessing their sins openly, and books worth a small fortune are thrown into a fire.

But when Luke, the author of the book of Acts, attempts to summarize all of this, he does not point us to the miracles.

He could have said the power of Paul increased mightily. He could have said that demons were defeated or that dark magic was exposed.

But notice how he summarizes the whole scene in verse 20. So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.

[4:01] And that's the thread running through this entire passage. So keep that in mind as we continue. In verse 8, Paul comes to Ephesus.

He enters the synagogue, and for three months he spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. So he did as he typically did when he came into a city.

He went straight to the local synagogue, and he began teaching. Each week, perhaps every day, he opens the scriptures, and he expounds upon them.

Luke says he was reasoning with them. Now, we don't know the exact format of every meeting, but we certainly know from Paul's epistles throughout the New Testament that he was a very systematic teacher.

He is slowly but surely explaining whatever text he grabs, prophecy after prophecy. Throughout the Old Testament, he had plenty of time to make his way through large parts of it, and he's attempting to persuade, namely the Jews, to believe it.

[5:09] And we're told that he was teaching specifically about the kingdom of God. And to this Jewish audience, they would have immediately understood that concept in terms of their nation.

After all, what is a kingdom but a people governed by a king? They knew that the Old Testament promised a king from David's line.

So they expected a David-like ruler to eventually come and restore Israel's sovereignty and to defeat their Gentile oppressors, namely the Romans at this point.

This is who they anticipated the promised Messiah to be. And they were by no means wrong to expect God to keep his promises. But the problem was that they misunderstood how those promises would be fulfilled.

Paul, on the other hand, he understood things quite clearly. He knew the promised king was none other than Jesus Christ. The angel had told Mary that the Lord God would give Jesus the throne of his father David and that his kingdom would have no end.

[6:24] Paul himself preached elsewhere that the promises made to the fathers had been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. But to the average Jew, that sounded absurd.

Jesus of Nazareth? The poor carpenter's son? Do you really expect us to believe that he's the Messiah that was promised by God throughout the Old Testament?

You mean that blasphemer who was crucified on a Roman cross? Paul, you are out of your mind.

Oh, but Paul was not out of his mind, was he?

He correctly understood the kingdom, not merely to be the restoration of Israel's political independence, he knew that the Messiah had come to conquer our real enemies, our greater enemies.

Sin. Satan. Death. And that's not to say that his kingdom was somehow imaginary or that God was completely unconcerned with the physical or the material.

[7:29] The risen Jesus really reigns, and his reign will culminate in the defeat of death itself. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 that he has put all enemies under his feet, or he will reign until he has put all enemies under his feet, and the last enemy to be destroyed is death.

And that helps us to understand why the spiritual conflict taking place here in Ephesus really matters so much. Paul is not merely offering these people a new philosophy.

He is proclaiming a real king, the king of kings, who has come to rescue his people, a people who cannot rescue themselves from the domain of darkness and the greatest spiritual oppressors of all, namely Satan and his army.

writing to some of these same people, in Ephesians chapter 2, Paul reminds them of who they were before Christ.

And here's what he says, As much as I would love to jump to the end of Ephesians 2, and talk about the immeasurable riches of Christ and God's grace, we can't even begin to grasp what God has done until we understand the depth of our depravity as members of Adam's fallen family.

[9:07] You see, every truly converted Christian knows that we are sinners. We know that we stand condemned before God apart from the atoning work of the Savior, but we don't always realize or want to admit how deeply we were plunged into corruption and iniquity when Adam rebelled against God in the Garden of Eden.

You know, sometimes people treat our sinfulness as though we're something akin to a disobedient child. Sure, little Timmy broke the lamp, and he did so maliciously and intentionally, but look how cute he is.

Generally speaking, he's a pretty good kid, right? But that's not what Paul says. He says we were dead in trespasses and sins.

Now, that doesn't mean everyone is as wicked as they could possibly be. It simply means that there is no part of us that sin has left untouched. Our minds, our desires, our wills, everything stands in desperate need of God's grace.

In Romans 3, Paul gathers an entire collection of Old Testament passages, and he puts them together, and he says, none is righteous. No, not one.

[10:29] No one understands. No one seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together they have become worthless. No one does good. Not even one.

So to be clear, when the Bible talks about our present condition since the fall, it is not presented as a minor obstacle that we need to overcome on our path to heaven, but rather as a complete and total collapse of the road in front of us.

God did not say to Adam, in the day that you eat of the forbidden tree, you shall surely get a bellyache. No, he said, in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die.

Or as Paul says elsewhere, the wages of sin is death. Now I've heard people respond to this by saying, you know, I'm not that bad.

Well, maybe not according to your standards. Maybe not according to cultural standards, but God does not judge us according to our standards.

[11:43] It's not a matter of how good we are when maybe, say, we compare ourselves to the worst human beings in history. It's a matter of how good we are when compared to a perfect and holy God.

I remember when years ago, Pastor Paul Washer was speaking to a group of college students, and he warned them from the start that he was going to share with them the most terrifying truth of Scripture.

And he kept telling them throughout, it's coming, it's coming, I'll get to it. And then he finally said, the most terrifying truth of Scripture is God is good.

And of course, the entire audience is thinking, well, what's so terrifying about that? Well, here it is. God is good, but we are not.

And a good judge cannot simply overlook evil because that's what the guilty person would prefer. If God merely excused our sin, he would no longer be a good God.

[12:53] So if God is good and we are not, that puts us in a terrifying position. So then you can imagine someone responding by saying, okay, fair enough.

I'll do better. I'll try harder. And to that I'll say, okay, here's your challenge. I'll give it to you in three steps.

Step number one, you must meet the perfect righteousness that God's law requires. Easy enough? You must follow it completely and perfectly throughout your entire life.

Now, most of us struggle to even read through God's law in our daily or our annual Bible reading plan. But you need to read it, you need to understand it, and you need to obey it without a single failure.

James says, whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point is guilty of all of it. So that's the first step. Second, you can turn over to Matthew chapter 5 and read the Lord's Sermon on the Mount because you really need to follow that as well.

[14:13] So maybe you've read the commandment, you shall not murder, and you think to yourself, well, good for me, I've never murdered anyone. But in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus clarifies what that commandment really means.

And he says, whoever is angry with his brother is liable to judgment. Maybe you've never committed adultery, but Jesus says, everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

So you not only have to perfect your behavior according to God's standard, but you also have to perfect your heart and your thoughts. You still with me?

Okay, let's say, even if you were able to accomplish all of that, we come to the final step. Somehow, you need to go back in time and prevent Adam from committing the first sin.

Romans 5 says, sin came into the world through one man and death through sin. David says, I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me.

[15:27] The problem of sin is not limited exclusively to the sinful acts we commit. Sin has corrupted the very nature of mankind so that we are not sinners merely because we sin.

We sin because we are sinners. At our core, by our very nature, from our conception. So clearly, this is impossible.

We cannot go back and undo Adam's fall. We can't even undo our own sins. So what do we need here? Well, we need someone who can deal with our guilt and frankly give us an altogether new

life.

And that's the kingdom that Paul was preaching. He is proclaiming Christ the King who does for sinners what they cannot do for themselves.

And according to the text, Paul kept preaching that message for three months. And I think we can all learn from Paul here. Notice his persistence.

[16 : 29] He didn't pop into the synagogue, preach one sermon, and expect to see the entire congregation converted overnight. Paul understood that evangelism takes time, especially when you're dealing with people who already have deeply ingrained ideas about God and salvation.

It takes time. And it takes patience. And as long as someone is willing to listen, keep talking, keep teaching. And don't give up simply because your first conversation did not end with a profession of faith.

It rarely will. As for Paul, it seems he had mixed results. After three months, some of the people became stubborn and continued in unbelief.

Paul had not successfully persuaded them. He spoke boldly, but their resistance hardened. So hard, in fact, that they were eventually speaking evil of the way.

That is, they were speaking out against the gospel and against those Christians who believed the gospel. They followed the way of Christ. As Paul says elsewhere, Christ crucified was a stumbling block to the Jews and folly to the Gentiles.

[17 : 50] Ultimately, the gospel is to those who are perishing a fragrance from death to death. And those who refuse to believe will often do everything they can to prevent that gospel from spreading.

Yet one of the remarkable things about the early church is how, by God's providence, the gospel continued moving forward despite all of the hostility, all of the persecution against the church.

And that's precisely what happens here. The opposition does not stop Paul's ministry. It simply changes location. He withdraws from the synagogue.

He takes a few of his disciples with him, whether they were converted there in the synagogue or they were already traveling with him, I'm not sure. But he goes down the road and begins reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus.

You see, there often comes a point when someone has firmly and vehemently rejected the gospel after we have sufficiently and patiently reasoned with him and it becomes time to walk away.

[19 : 04] Now, that doesn't mean we stop loving him. It doesn't mean we stop praying for his conversion. But just as God is faithful to so often open doors for us, sometimes those doors seem to close and there's nothing we can do.

And in this case, Paul also has some believers with him to protect, to teach, so they move on down the road and they begin meeting daily in the hall of Tyrannus and we're told Paul continued there for two years.

Now, we don't know much about Tyrannus. He may have been a teacher. He may have been the owner of the hall, maybe both.

His name literally means tyrant and maybe that tells us a little something about the man he was.

Who knows? But it's interesting because some New Testament manuscripts include an additional phrase in verse 9 that tells us that Paul taught from the fifth hour to the tenth hour.

So approximately 11 in the morning to four in the afternoon. And if that's a true memory of what happened, then maybe Tyrannus was willing to lend out his hall simply because who really wants to teach during those hours?

[20 : 21] I know for me, that's typically my least productive time of day. It's like I eat lunch and then suddenly my brain slows to a crawl. So if I have mindless busy work to do, those are the hours when I'm most prone to do it.

So perhaps there was a very practical reason the hall was open during these hours. Maybe its regular occupants would have been resting during that time. Who knows?

But what's most impressive here is that Paul taught there day after day for two years for potentially a solid block of time every day.

Now, I don't believe this is prescriptive for the church, but evidently, these people really wanted to learn. They really wanted to hear what Paul had to say and it had a tremendous impact.

Verse 10 says, all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. Now, that's not to say every single person who heard the word personally sat in Paul's classroom.

[21:25] The text doesn't tell us that. Paul was probably not the only person spreading the message. John Calvin makes a helpful observation here when he notes that the teaching likely spread as one person passed it to the next.

Obviously, Paul's voice could not reach every single town in Asia Minor. But the message could. And evidently, it did.

And that's worth remembering whenever we have opportunities to share the gospel. Those opportunities may seem very small to us. But you have to remember that someone you teach may carry that truth to people far and wide, to people you will never even know about.

Asia Minor became the location of many churches in Colossae, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, and of course, Ephesus.

And it would certainly seem that Paul's sustained ministry in one place had a much broader impact. So again, despite the opposition, despite the unbelief of so many, the Word of God was spreading.

[22:43] It was prevailing. Verse 11, 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.

Now, before I say anything about what is happening here, I want you to notice that it was God doing these extraordinary miracles.

not Paul. And I also want you to notice that even here, in the inspired text of Scripture, these miracles are called extraordinary as opposed to what?

Well, as opposed to ordinary. The miracles we see happening here were unusual even for the time. why do I point this out?

We need to notice how these miracles function in the story. This is not an invitation for the church today to establish a handkerchief ministry.

[24:00] And if you think that sounds silly, evidently, you have not watched TBN or perhaps various YouTube channels in a while. People are actually doing this.

They are claiming to bless a piece of cloth or a bottle of water or something else and suggesting that if only you'll pay a small purchase price, they will send it to you and you can be healed of all kinds of infirmities.

Brothers and sisters, do not buy these lies. Literally, do not pay money for that nonsense.

first, Paul was not selling anything here. Do you notice that? Second, the cloths did not possess power in and of themselves.

It was God who had the power. It was God who was demonstrating his power through his apostle. In other words, these miracles served the message Paul was preaching, not replacing it and not in addition to it.

[25:12] Again, Luke tells us that these miracles were extraordinary, not ordinary. let's not romanticize the exorcisms and the miracles we read about in the New Testament.

We certainly should not assume that God has given every Christian the power to wave his hands and raise his voice and expect unclean spirits to flee at his command.

Casting out demons was a sign of Christ's authority and Christ certainly gave that authority to his apostles and to others in the early days of the church for a distinct purpose.

Paul says the signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience with signs and wonders and mighty works. And the writer of Hebrews says that salvation was declared at first by the Lord and it was attested to us by those who heard while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit.

So what were these miracles for? Well God was bearing witness to the message of Christ as it was being preached by his appointed messengers in the earliest days of the church.

[26:35] In other words they were preaching the message and God was coming along by way of these miracles and saying amen what he said is true. Now I'm not suggesting that God cannot heal someone today or deliver someone from unclean spirits God forbid that we would think he no longer has the power to do something of that nature.

We should certainly pray for him to do so but we should not let ourselves be deceived by people claiming to possess divine power at their disposal especially when they're charging money for it. In fact as we continue reading through the New Testament when Paul talks about the future of signs and wonders he doesn't say believe everyone who does signs and wonders no instead he warns about Satan's activity through false signs and wonders and that's precisely what happens in

our text.

Some itinerant Jewish exorcists see what is happening through the apostle Paul and apparently they decide to more or less borrow his approach at least that's what they think they're doing. They undertake to invoke the name of Jesus over those who have evil spirits saying I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims. Now I think we can be candid here.

[28 : 11] This story is amusing. It's undoubtedly disturbing but it's humorous at the same time. There's some troubling things happening here but there's a sharp irony to it.

These seven sons of a Jewish high priest they enter the house presenting themselves as masters of the situation. We got this but what happens?

They run away without even their clothes on. But to understand what went wrong here you have to pay very close attention to what they are saying.

They refer to the Jesus whom Paul proclaims. That doesn't sound like someone who's intimately familiar with this Jesus does it? they wanted the power of the gospel without submitting to it.

They are treating the name of Jesus as though it were some magic formula they could use to wield power. They had seen real power associated with Jesus name.

[29 : 22] So they assumed they could borrow that name and use it for themselves. So where did these men go wrong? Well they didn't lack confidence that's for sure. In short they invoked Christ without faith in Christ and they presumed to exercise an authority God had not given them.

And again let's not imagine that this is a temptation that belongs exclusively to a bygone era. We should be deeply suspicious of anyone who offers to sell us a blessed handkerchief guarantee to cure whatever disease we have.

Invoking Christ's name does not make a promise true. No in fact it makes the misuse of his name all the more serious. There are people suffering and dying all over this world desperately wanting help and these false teachers are exploiting that desperation for selfish gain.

Peter warns there will be false teachers among you who will secretly bring in destructive damnable heresies and in their greed they will exploit you with false words.

And let's just forget about miraculous handkerchiefs. A Bible that sits on your nightstand is no help to you.

[30 : 54] it does not protect you in any sense if you refuse to believe and obey what it says. Or adding in Jesus' name to the end of a prayer, that does not obligate God to grant whatever you ask.

These men here in Acts 19, they were trying to use Jesus while simultaneously refusing to bow to Jesus. And we need to examine whether we do something similar in our own lives, wanting his help while resisting his authority.

What happens to these men? Their attempt to use Jesus to magnify their own authority results in public humiliation. The evil spirit replies to them, apparently speaking through the man possessed, and here comes the most humorous part.

He says, Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you? And before these men can figure out what in the world is happening, the possessed man overpowers them, and in the end they run away naked and wounded.

So beyond the obvious, I want to give you two things to remember from this. First, demonic forces are real. Satan is real.

[32 : 28] And second, do not mess with them. And what I mean by that, do not flirt with them, do not treat them lightly. John says, test the spirits to see whether they are from God, and if they're not from God, stay away.

And that means Christians should have nothing to do with occult practices, or perhaps entertainment that invites us to treat demonic power and wickedness as desirable, or amusing, or harmless.

Now, having said that, that doesn't mean we need to walk around fearful. Not at all. John also says, he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

Paul would later tell these same Ephesian believers, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might, put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

And then he adds, we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

[33:47] The battle is real. Paul confirms that the spiritual forces of evil are real, and he confirms that they are dangerous. But he also says, we're not left without a defense.

Not as Christians, not as those in Christ. We are not left helpless. And I want to hone in specifically on the one offensive weapon that Paul says we have at our disposal.

What is it? In Ephesians 6, 17, he says we have the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Now, that may sound less climactic than what we would anticipate, maybe after reading about demons and exorcisms and seven guys getting beat up at the same time by these evil forces and the excitement of all that kind of thing.

But it's true nonetheless. Read Matthew 4. What did Jesus himself use when Satan tempted him? Not a miracle.

Not divine power. He answered every temptation with a word from Scripture. Was it enough? It was enough.

[35:08] Or read Acts 6. What did the apostles say that they must devote themselves to? Above all else, what should they devote their time and their effort to?

Prayer and the ministry of the Word. And even here in Acts 19, where God is doing extraordinary miracles through Paul, Luke's great concluding emphasis is not miracles or divine power, not in the way that we often think of that.

It's not in exorcisms. It is that the Word of the Lord increased and prevailed mightily. That's it. Now, verse 17 tells us what happened after these false miracle workers were exposed.

We're told 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 was extolled.

Whose name was extolled? Not Paul's. The name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The very name these men had tried to misuse was now being honored throughout the city.

[36:25] See how the Lord really turned that one around? Fear fell upon the people. But the story does not end with frightened people merely trying to avoid evil spirits or anything like that.

It ends with people confessing sin and turning from it. These people are learning that the Lord Jesus is not someone to manipulate.

He's not someone to merely admire from a distance. He is someone before whom we bow. Luke continues, also, many of those who are now believers came confessing and divulging their practices.

Wow. Think about this. This is a really dark place. I mean, this is the kind of place that vividly demonstrates what Paul means when he says people were following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, this spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.

this is a place full of sin and idolatry. It's a place full of paganism and dark occult practices.

[37:40] Even the so-called good guys in the city, they're manifesting their evil to Jews. They're trying to put a stop to Christianity. The itinerant exorcist doing such a good work, they're blaspheming the Lord.

And yet, the light is breaking through regardless. Something wonderful is happening here.

Suddenly, these evil people in this drastically dark place, they're confessing their sins.

More than that, 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 50,000 pieces of silver. It's been estimated that one piece of silver was approximately a day's wage. And if that's the case, we're talking about 50,000 days of labor sacrificed here in repentance before God.

Now, I want you to put yourself in their shoes for a moment. If you were them, what would you have done with these evil books that you wanted to repent from? What would you have done with them?

[38:58] I wonder whether we would be tempted to maybe, I don't know, put them on eBay? Sell them? After all, you know, if you sell them, you don't have them in your possession anymore, and you might as well make a little of your money back.

That seems like a sensible thing to do, right? But that's not what they do. Why? Well, here's the problem. If you hand those books to someone else, what you're really doing is handing the exact same temptation, the exact same sin to someone else.

What else could we do with them? I fear that we might be tempted to maybe store them away somewhere, out of sight and out of mind, but maybe we should hang on to them just in case we change our mind about this whole Jesus thing.

And decide to go back to that. But again, that's not what these people do. They immediately throw 50,000 pieces of silver's worth of books into the fire.

No one will ever read these books again, including themselves. And furthermore, you'll notice that they did this in front of everyone, in the sight of all.

[40:17] What did Jesus say? for whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation of him will the son of man be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his father with the holy angels.

Evidently, these people were not ashamed. In front of everyone, in front of family members, in front of their very communities, in front of everyone who holds their reputation in the balance, in front of everyone, they renounce their sin, they repent of their sin, and they're coming to Christ.

Now, to be clear, this is not an effort to buy their way into heaven, but when we come to Christ, Christ, we cannot insist on keeping those things from which he came to save us from.

Jesus said, no one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God. Yes, even as believers, we will still sin, but we do everything to throw our former sins into the fire once and for all.

That's what true repentance looks like. It's not merely feeling bad about something. It's not merely promising to yourself, well, I will try a little harder next time.

[41:47] Maybe next time I'll do things a little differently. It's realizing that we cannot make peace with sin. The Lord himself frees us from sin's dominion.

In Romans chapter 6, Paul writes, let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body to make you obey its passions. That's the imperative. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

How are you going to conquer your sin? Well, the Lord's already enabled you for that. He's made the way. And this really brings us back to where we started.

Luke says, so the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily. Now, think about everything the word has prevailed over in this passage.

I said it runs through the whole thing. It prevailed over opposition in the synagogue. It prevailed beyond the walls of one city as people carried the gospel throughout Asia Minor.

[42:57] It prevailed over counterfeit spiritual power. power. It prevailed over fear. It prevailed over sinful practices people had known and embraced their entire lives.

It prevailed over sins that were very costly to surrender. It prevailed in the lecture hall. And it prevailed in what people did when they went home.

Now, remember what I read in Ephesians 2. You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air.

Dead. Following the world under Satan's influence and by nature children of wrath. And if that were the end of the story, how dismal this story would be.

But Paul continues in Ephesians 2. But God, he says. But God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses and sins, made us alive together with Christ.

[44:17] By grace you have been saved. And there is our hope. Those people in Ephesus, they were not rescuing themselves from darkness, were they? They were not overcoming Satan by their own strength.

They were not making themselves alive. God was doing what they could never do for themselves through the word, namely the gospel of Jesus Christ. He was bringing dead sinners to life in one of the darkest places you can imagine.

Do not underestimate the word of God. Look what happened in Ephesus. Jesus. The synagogue opposed the gospel, but the word prevailed.

False teachers misused the name of Jesus, but the word prevailed. Demonic powers seemed to have a stranglehold over the entire city and had for years and years, but the word prevailed.

Hidden sins were exposed. Costly idols were burned, and the word of God prevailed. Never underestimate the word of God.

[45:26] Read it. Believe it. Obey it. Speak it. Far and wide, as often as you have the opportunity. And when it exposes something in your life that needs to be thrown into the fire, don't cling to that thing.

Let it go. And please remember that God is still at work through his word. He is still bringing light into dark places.

He is still breaking through the power of sin. So let the world rage. Let falsehood spread. Let darkness boast.

The word of the Lord will still prevail. And may it prevail here in this church, in our homes, in our hearts, in our community, on college campuses, in places all around the world, until every rival is cast down and Christ alone is praised.

In 2 Thessalonians chapter 3, Paul writes, finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored.

[46 : 44] May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ. Amen. Amen. Amen.