

THE BIG IDEA: Fakers can't be shakers.

The Take-Off

It's hard to believe it, but today marks the 26th week of our journey through the book of Acts.

Folks, that's half a year, and for me, I've been more challenged in this book than ever before to believe God for the impossible to become possible.

We've seen each of our CORE FOUR values in the book: the UNDENIABLE message of Jesus in the preaching of Peter, Paul and so many others, the UNBREAKABLE body of Jesus in the way the early church lived together in beautiful unity, the UNCONTAINABLE kingdom of Jesus and how the early church grew so rapidly that buildings could not hold it, and the UNEXPLAINABLE worship of Jesus as his followers continually offer themselves as sacrifices of worship in the absolute worst conditions and persecutions imaginable.

And the other thing we've seen in the book is that there is a lot of WEIRD!

In fact, last week when we started on Acts 19, I told you that it was the one chapter that would be labeled "Most likely to freak people out" if we were handing out chapter superlatives.

Last week we looked at the first part of the chapter and saw 12 men receive the Holy Spirit complete with speaking in tongues and prophesying. For some, that's already maxing out the freaky meter.

But one of the observations we made was that the Holy Spirit is a gift given to the church for future needs even more than present needs, and today we'll start looking at what happened next in this "Freakiest of all" chapter.

Verse 11-20 give us a picture of what the Holy Spirit was necessary for, and each of the 3 stories we'll encounter are pretty amazing.

But before we get to them, I need to address 2 types of people that represent a large majority of believers.

Each of them are categories that reveal how we respond to spiritual activity, and the 10 verses we'll be looking at today reveal a world that we tend to PLAY with but never really BELIEVE in.

So, when it comes to the spirit realm - angels and demons - most people fall into one of 3 categories.

The most crowded category is people who accept the reality of a spiritual realm but don't understand it and so they never really deal with it. But that's not one of the 2 extremes that I want to address.

The first extremist group is full of people who NEVER SEE DEMONS. Some of you could be in this group. You don't believe that there's really much evil out there and if we all just try hard enough, we can get in a boat together and row toward the light.

The other extremist group is full of people who ALWAYS SEE DEMONS. For them everything is an attack and there is a demon behind every corner. This group tends to either be MOUSY or MILITANT. They are either given to fear or they're looking to fight. In fact, DEMON HUNTERS come from this group.

It's important that we at least recognize those 2 extreme responses. As we'll see in the text, the natural response for followers of Jesus is to get as close to Jesus as possible because he's a really good demon butt-kicker.

With that groundwork laid, let's take a peek at 3 incredible events that took place after the filling of the believers with the Holy Spirit that we looked at last week.

1. Event #1: Handkerchiefs and healings (vv. 11-12)

- a. Since we last saw Paul, he's spent 2 years and 3 months preaching the gospel.
- b. After the powerful in filling of the believers with the Holy Spirit, it only took 3 months for the religious to tap out!
 - Verse 9 says that after 3 months of hearing about the kingdom of God, the people in the synagogue became obstinate, refused to believe and talked smack publicly about the believers
 - Paul's response? He found a new venue, the lecture hall of Tyrannus, where he spent 2 years preaching Paul asks the disciples if they received the Holy Spirit when they believed
- c. It is interesting to note that Paul had much greater success preaching in a less than traditional environment
- d. That's great encouragement for a church that meets in a storefront in the downtown Albemarle district!
- e. It's in this environment that we see the first supernatural event take place
 - I'm not sure how it started, but someone found a rag that Paul had used (possibly in his tentmaking) and when they touched it, they were healed
 - This likely started a run on handkerchiefs!

- This wasn't the first time something like this had happened
 - Matthew 9:20 - woman is healed when she touches the hem of Jesus' robe
 - Acts 5:15 - people were healed when Peter's shadow crossed them
- When people try to sell you a prayer cloth, it's not the same thing
- Paul wasn't setting up a stand to sell anointed prayer cloths with miraculous healing power
- At any rate, not only were people healed, but they were delivered from evil spirits, and that's what set the stage for God to call out the fakers

2. Event #2: I can't beat 1 (vv. 13-16)

- a. What are some imitations that aren't as good as the real thing they imitate?
 - I am a HUGE lover of Swedish Fish candy, and I can say with total confidence that the generic Red Fish sold by Food Lion is not as good. In fact, they aren't good at all.
 - Here are 2 more fake things that aren't good. (Pictures of fake eyelashes and fake tan)
- b. In this next event, we meet some imitators who are trying to capitalize on the power that they've seen in Paul and his sweat rags
- c. In the first century, there was great interest in the occult and witchcraft was respected and practiced among the people - even among the Jews - in clear violation of God's law in Deuteronomy 18:10-12)
- d. There was a high priest named Sceva and he had 7 sons who were apparently successful enough at witchcraft that they made a living going around driving - or at least appearing to drive - out evil spirits
- e. So when they saw the power in Paul, they tried to imitate what they had seen
- f. Notice that they had no faith, only a formula
- g. They were all about activity for Jesus, but they had no intimacy with Jesus
- h. They were fakers, and God allowed a demon to expose them
- i. Verse 16 says that the man - possessed by the demon - beat the 7 brothers up so badly that they ran out naked and bleeding
- j. And when word about this event spread, it led to a third and final event
- k. Let's look at it and then we'll land the plane with some takeaways

3. Event #3: A multimillion dollar bonfire

- a. Look what happened right after the fakers were revealed
 - Word spread (because news like this spreads faster than news about a black bear at Rock Creek!)
 - A city was gripped in fear
 - Jesus was honored more than ever
- b. Naturally, the non-believers would be afraid because their best demon hunters just got handed their lunch by a demon. That would leave them a bit unsettled against the power of the demonic, yes?
- c. The believers were afraid for a different reason: seeing how God honors the valuing of his name (because the 7 brothers had toyed with it and suffered as a result), they naturally started looking at themselves and wondering if they were valuing his name.
- d. In verse 18 we find that many of them weren't.
 - "Many who believed" - this is about the church, not the world around the church
 - "Openly confessed" - they no longer cared who knew, they were stepping out of the shadows into the light
- e. And after they confessed, they did something
 - they brought the scrolls that they used to practice sorcery and they burned them
 - verse 19 says that it was a bonfire worth 50,000 drachmas
 - a drachma was a silver coin worth about a day's wages
 - Average salary is around 45k a year
 - Work 6 days a week that makes a daily wage around \$143 times 50,000 makes a bonfire worth a bit over 7 MILLION DOLLARS
 - And they didn't do this at home. They didn't take a private stand for Jesus. They confessed OPENLY and they burned them PUBLICLY
 - This was a group of believers who responded to a display of real power by refusing to be fakers any longer

The Landing

So here are some takeaways, beginning with today's Big Idea: **Fakers can't be shakers.**

We know from our time in Acts that God has filled his church with his Spirit so that we can bring his kingdom to this earth

In short, we've got a mission to shake up the spiritual atmosphere in our area, and if we're playing around with the very things we're supposed to be standing against, then we'll never get that mission done

We can't play around with what we're called to put down

- When we do that, we actually dilute the power of the Holy Spirit that God wants to flow through us
- Maybe you don't go around practicing spells and stuff, but this passage is a clear reminder that we must put down the things in our lives that are inconsistent with following Jesus

The more we value Jesus, the less we worry about the cost of following him

- It was the exalting of Jesus that made burning multimillions seem like a natural step
- If we're counting out our offerings, we haven't seen his worth
- Worship is really worth-ship, and what we give is a HUGE part of our worship
- Saying we value Jesus as we give him a dollar when we could have given ten is inconsistent with a redeemed heart

Activity for Jesus can never replace intimacy with Jesus.

- The demon said he knew Jesus and knew Paul but his question to the brothers was, "Who are you?"
- If we know Jesus, the unseen world will know us, and when it knows us, we'll be glad we know him
- Spiritual warfare is not a fight we want to walk into without Jesus

The key to revival is revering the Reviver

- look how Luke wraps this section up in verse 20 and you'll see the result of the believers returning to a lifestyle that actually reverences the Lord
- the word of the Lord spread widely and in great power
- seeing this city overcome by the love of Jesus begins with us - with the church - and how we value the word of Jesus
- there is never any substitute for reading and loving the Bible
- if Jesus is the cornerstone and foundation of our faith, then the Bible is the mortar holding every brick together

The call this morning is a clear one: it's time for believers to step out of the shadows

No more pretending, because there are real powers that are more powerful than us, but not more powerful than Jesus

You and I are called to shake the unseen atmosphere in this city, and for that task we **MUST BE NEAR JESUS**, because **fakers can't be shakers.**