

By Paul's Hands

By Paris Reidhead*

Will you turn, please, to Acts, Chapter 19. The 19th Chapter of Acts and I shall begin reading with the 9th verse; we have referred in the past evenings to the earlier verses, and I shall return again to the 6th verse, probably two or three weeks hence. You'll notice in the 6th verse that the matter of speaking with tongues has come up, and I felt pressed in my spirit to bring a message some two or three weeks hence on the subject, Tongues, A Sign or a Gift? a critique of the present movement that we are seeing about us on every hand, and I shall have that message mimeographed in advance of its being presented so that it will be available following the Service. I have been preparing, anticipating this, and so will ask you to pray with me that it might be all the Lord would have it be. This will be probably the 31st of March, and you'll have adequate notice of it. Several have asked me to speak on the subject, but I felt that when I did I should have such Scriptural documentation and quotation as would cause the message to be the most profitable, and will prepare to do that, probably, as I say, the 31st of March, or as soon thereafter as we can have the message prepared in advance. So we will be returning to this early part of Acts a little later.

I shall begin reading now with the 9th verse, and shall conclude with the 12th verse:

"But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, Paul departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul." (That is where we get the theme for the evening, "By Paul's Hand") "So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them" (Act. 19:9-12).

Occasionally it is helpful to use another version, for I see that some of you are looking at one at the moment; but I have through the years been greatly helped by a German commentator who wrote, greatly exalting our Lord, by the name of Lange. And I'd like to read the translation that he gives. I think it's really an excellent one and will throw a little light on some words: "But when some hardened themselves and were unbelievers and reviled the way in the presence of the multitude, he departed from them and separated the disciples, discoursing day by day in the lecture room of a certain Tyrannus." I think that phrase is quite helpful, don't you? "Discoursing day by day in the lecture room of a certain Tyrannus." Now that is actually what it was, and I think it helps us from the King James. "But this continued during two years, so that all the inhabitants of Asia heard the Word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks, and God wrought not inconsiderable works by the hands of Paul. So that they laid handkerchiefs from his skin on the sick, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them."

Now you must understand that this is a situation, a very very vital situation that has kept three months of ministry alive. Paul has been right next door, as you may recall, to the synagogue, and has been ministering there, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. The Apostle Paul did not have a schismatic spirit. His was not a sectarian spirit. He loved the people of God, and he loved Israel of God. The Jews were dear to his heart. You cannot read that 10th and 11th chapter of Romans without feeling the great longing, and burden, and yearning of his heart; and when he says of his people, "My people for which, for whom, I am willing to be accursed" (Rom. 9:3). He said, I would be willing to be destroyed, to be damned if they could be saved. I am so burdened for them. I love them so much. Like Moses who said, "Lord, if you cannot spare them, blot my name out of your book" (Exo. 32:32). Paul said, If it would help I'd be willing to have my name blotted out of the Book. And thus when he went into the community he always went first to his own people, to those with whom he had been reared, whose culture he knew, whose traditions he respected, whose zeal warmed his heart; for he could say that he too had been zealous among the most earnest. And he sought always to use the privilege that was his as a rabbi to reach the Jews; in every synagogue, as you have heard me say, was a section to which visiting rabbis who had something they wished to say were expected to come and be seated, just as we have a choir loft for those who are to sing, they had a speakers' loft for visiting rabbis that had something they wished to say. And so uniformly, when he would go into a community, using all the privileges that were his as a rabbi, he would be seated in this section and the President of the Synagogue, after due and proper course,

would say, Is there... Would you have something to say? And then he would begin to speak, wisely and patiently, and lovingly, and bring the testimony that was on his heart to bring.

Well in the case that's here, you know that there had been a friction and problem and difficult, as is earlier presented. Now he has spent three months seeking in the synagogue seeking to explain the way and communicate the truth. There had been many that have believed. This is always the case. "The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation unto everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). And there had been gathered together a company of people, a church, a body of believers drawn out by the Spirit of God. These met together, and prayed together, and sought to grow in the grace, and knowledge of Christ. But what is a savor of life to one becomes a savor of death to another, and this is exactly what had happened, and thus we have this translation which brings it so clearly into focus. "But when some hardened themselves." They did it. They set about to do it. They deliberately did it. They rejected, they spurned, just as Pharaoh had appeals from the Spirit of God, and manifestation of the power of God to break his stubborn will, and hardened himself until the ten tests became sufficient to bring him into absolute obduracy of spirit where he would not, he would not bend. So these heard for three months and they hardened themselves. Every time the truth came, they said, No. And it was easier to say, No, the next time, and No again; and finally it was not just an attitude of no, but it says, "And they reviled the way in the presence of the multitude."

Now when Paul got up to speak, they would get up to speak and shout him down and revile. This word carries with it every derogatory thing that could be said, every vile thing that could be said, everything that could bring the Way... I like that; the Way, the way of life, the way of truth, the way of blessing. They spoke evil of that Way, and the children of God were called the people of the Way. This is a lovely expression, and it is a way as well. And they spoke evil. They reviled the Way. Well it was hopeless. The issue had been drawn. This company that had hardened themselves prevailed. They were the majority. I am sure there was great searching of heart. I am confident that there was great burden of spirit. It wasn't lightly done. It wasn't easily done. I think of another case, when Dr. Simpson¹, an esteemed Pastor, respected in the community, and in the Presbytery of New York City, Pastor of an affluent, wealthy church down at 13th Street, felt the Spirit of God drawing him for a vision, for a ministry that was not embraced by the eldership or the people who wanted the things of the world. They didn't want the evangelistic ministry that God had given him. Oh, I am sure in lonely hours of dark nights he didn't want to break; he did not want to leave. No man that has had a heritage of truth and blessing ever approaches lightly, if he is a man of integrity and a man of spiritual discernment, never approaches lightly this matter of separation. And that is what it is. Verse 9 is a verse of separation. It was done most reluctantly. But finally it became clear that there was absolutely nothing else that they could do. And so you will notice the way it is put. "He departed from the synagogue and the revilers, and those that had hardened themselves and the unbelievers, and he separated the disciples;" these that had committed themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ and had sold themselves to His sovereignty, and gladly had embraced Him, no longer had anything in common with a company of people that were reviling the Way and speaking evil of the Lord. And thus with the utmost reluctance, he had to separate himself.

But it was on necessary grounds. What were the grounds? Well you know what they said of Christ, do you not. This man was foolish, this man was an imposter, so said they. This man is a traitor. This man is a vile man. He should be destroyed. That is what the Jews, protesting to Pilate had said of Christ. Now that is what they are saying in Ephesus. That is what they are saying here. It is an attack on Christ. It is an attack on His deity. It is an attack on His glory. It is an attack on His person. There are no grounds, no grounds of meeting. But you will notice how reluctantly, how slowly. Well we know today there are 312 registered denominations in the United States. And all of them have felt some grounds for separation. And I think it is deplorable that so many times there has not been the care that there was in the case of Paul.

As I look back in the history of some movements, I discover that many times the grounds of separation were almost obscure. They cannot find out why. Very frequently it was on personality maladjustments. And there was a sectarian spirit, or ambitious men wanted to build around themselves a following more amenable to their leadership. It is an extremely, extremely costly thing to have a sectarian spirit, a spirit that seeks to divide. I think it approaches that place where in the Proverbs it says,

¹ Albert Benjamin Simpson (1843-1919) founder of The Christian and Missionary Alliance

“These six things doth the Lord hate, and the 7th is an abomination unto Him” (Pro. 6:16). And it is “he that soweth discord among brethren” (Pro. 6:19). I just cannot believe that much of the separation is ordered of God or on the grounds that were here established. I do not believe it at all. I think that this gives us really the only grounds in a sense, the only grounds that God recognizes, and that is the unwillingness to submit to the Lordship of Christ and recognize the authority and the Deity of Christ.

Well, here we have a situation where Paul finds it absolutely necessary to draw the disciples away from these that are reviling the one whom they love. For had he stayed, he would have exposed them to all the effects of his having to some degree endorsed, the slanderous our attack upon his Lord.

But notice the unity of the believers. Oh, you must see that. “For he departed and separated the disciples.” Now it was not that they were following Paul. The amazing thing about Paul was that up above here when he came to this community, he entered right into the ministry of John. He accepted what they had done. Their repentance wasn’t questioned. Their faith in Christ was unchallenged. They had been baptized in John’s baptism, and now without question he baptizes them, as believers do, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And then he prayed for them, and the Spirit of God had come upon them. These were taught believers. These were united believers. These were folk that had something wonderfully in common. For we have every reason to believe that as others had been added to the church, others had believed, they too had been brought into this same wonderful fellowship. And so when he came in he did not start, Well there are these John for Christians, now we are going to start... No, that was not in Paul’s heart at all. It was a movement of the believers to each other in their need for one another, and dependence on one another.

But notice that there was separation unto the will and purpose of the Lord. So the first thing we see as we see this is that Paul has a great sense of the fact that the church of Jesus Christ must stand upon the grounds of the sovereignty of the Son of God in the lives of the believers, and in the life of the church. It is important what we are to see just a little earlier. Had there been compromise, had there been weakness on his part here, I am confident that verses 11 and 12 would never have been in the Word, and so we are grateful to see this, that here was a man who viewed the integrity of the church as being a binding to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But it was not only grounds of fellowship and union in Christ that made the foundation for what we are about to observe. There is something else in verse 9. There is instruction; separation, and instruction. In no sense is it implied that because these people knew the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and because they were bound one to another that that was all there was for them, because the Word says, “He discoursed day by day in the lecture room of Tyrannus.” He discoursed day by day. He taught day by day.

But notice what these people have to whom he is finding it necessary to day by day teach. Not just Sundays, nor Wednesdays, but day by day. Fortunately these people lived in the day before they had so many labor saving devises. They had some time to go every day. If they had lived in the 20th century they would be as busy running the labor saving devises as we are, and they wouldn’t have the time. But they did everything by hand so they had the leisure. This is one of the benefits that came. The more technological becomes our civilization, the less leisure we have. And as it progresses to the final age where all you have to do is push a button, breakfast comes out of one shoot, the dishes are done by another, automatic hands sweep the floor, vacuum is done by the rug shaking from underneath, when everything becomes automatic by just pushing a button, and you won’t have time for anything. You’ll be so busy. So here were people that had to work 12 hours a day and they had ample leisure to go to the school of Tyrannus and to daily listen to Paul as he would discourse. And just as you know we saw the other day, last Sunday morning that some of his discourses... Well no one would ever accuse him of bringing sermonettes to Christianettes by a preacherette. Three, four, five hours. And one lad fell out of the window overcome with it all.

So when he discoursed daily, let us believe that this is what he meant. And this is what was said. He discoursed daily, he taught daily, and the people came daily. But notice something else. They were filled with the Spirit so they knew they needed to be taught. Some people think that when you are filled with the Spirit you do not have to be taught any more. Isn’t it interesting that these people were prayed for, and were filled with the Spirit about the day they were saved, and they were babes then, Spirit-filled babes.

You say, Well what is the use of being filled with the Spirit if you are a babe. Well it is just that you do not stay a babe as long. It is easier to become unbabied. You're able to grow faster. But it doesn't mean that you are grown. And it doesn't mean that you are interested only in the experience of being filled with the Spirit, but you're interest in Christ and seeing Him, and the consequence of this is that these people had an eagerness for the Word concerning Christ that was so avid, so intense that daily he could have them, just daily. They wanted to learn about the Lord, and they knew they needed to learn. This is one of the best evidences of the Spirit filled life is a hunger to learn about the Lord Jesus. And an avid interest in the Word of God and a great longing to be taught in Christ and to grow up into Christ, and they knew they needed to be taught.

Now what did he teach them? What did he talk about? If you will turn over to Chapter 20, and verse 27, he gives a report to another company mind you, in a sense, but nevertheless equally apt and appropriate. Let me see. It is the same company. He is replying, telling them as he takes leave of them now what he did when he was there for such a long time. And what did he say? "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Act. 20:27). What did he teach? He taught "all the counsel of God." What did the people need? "All the counsel of God." Who were they? They were believers in the Lord Jesus Christ that had submitted to His sovereignty on Christ's terms. They were Spirit-filled believers. What did they need? They needed "all the counsel of God." What did they get? They got "all the counsel of God." Why? Because there is no such thing as unimportant truth in the Bible. There is no such thing as unimportant truth. And Paul, being faithful to the Lord that called him, was prepared to give the people what they so desperately needed in his daily discourse, which was "all the counsel of God," sparing nothing, and overlooking nothing; because they needed it, and because God wanted it.

What later did he say? You remember in 2nd Timothy, 3 and 16, he declared, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be mature, perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work" (II Tim. 3:16-17). How much Scripture do you need? All Scripture. How much truth do you need? All truth. How much of the counsel of God do you need? The whole counsel of God. What is important? All of it.

Well this is important. Now you have got to see that. Because what happened did not just happen anywhere. It happened some place. And when you understand the place where it happened, then you can say, This is what must be if that is to follow. Do you see what I mean? If you understand the foundation... Many times people will say, Well we would like to have the miracles that have been done by Paul, done with us, but the question is, Have we given our attention to the whole counsel of God? Have we been prepared to sit for two years and let it come line upon line and precept upon precept, and truth upon truth that we have embraced, and we have received, and integrated into our lives and obeyed? That is what they did. They were Spirit-taught people, that had an avid hunger for the Word, and wanted to be truly furnished unto every good work, and so they gave attendance to reading and to the teaching of the Word.

Paul was writing to this same church at Ephesus, this same people. And if you will turn to Ephesians 4, verses 11 to 16, you will see what he wrote concerning his ministry. Remember now he has been two years doing something, and now as he writes to the church at Ephesus he tells them what he has done. It is like the man down south that said, What is your message of preaching? "Well I tell 'em what I'm going to tell 'em; and then I tell 'em; and then I tell 'em what I've told them." And this is what Paul has done. He spends two years telling them, and now he tells them what he has told them, so that they will understand why and relate it to their own experience.

Notice, "he gave some apostles, (that is Paul), some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints into the work of the ministry unto the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12). Two years, daily in the school of Tyrannus, as a teacher, bringing the saints to maturity so that they could do the work of the ministry so that the body of Christ could be built up. Did that happen? Let us go back and see.

Let us go back to Acts 19 and see whether he was effective, whether it was fruitful or not. And verse 10 tells us, in Acts 19:10, "And this continued by the space of two years, so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the Word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks," (that whole area was evangelized by this company of people that spent every day, as often as they could, for they couldn't all be there every day. Half of them were slaves; many of them at least. And they didn't have freedom to go and come

as they would. But you see the nice part about the early church was, when one learned truth he shared it with the others that could not be there, that way he got it twice. And may I say this? That you don't have it until you have given it away. You know that. Until you've given it to someone it is not yours. You think it is, but if you want to know how much you got from tonight's message, you go and give it to someone that couldn't be here. And then you are going to see. This is how you get, when you give.

And so here they have come, and they have been there, and this man is in the leather business, and he has to go back into the hills to buy leather, so that he can buy the goat skin and the thorn that he can have for his trade. He makes a trip twice a year to buy leather, twice a year or once a year, and he takes his donkey, takes something out, finished goods perhaps to the villagers along the way, and the wonderful part of it, he couldn't send it by air freight or train, had to go with it, and he couldn't walk very fast. Fifteen, twenty miles is a good day's journey, and he had time to stop on the road. So as he went along he would see some folks. Well hello. They'd been seeing him for years, you know Hello. What's new back in Ephesus? What is new in Ephesus? Say, what is new in Ephesus? You know, Ephesus, it is just wonderful in there. You ought to come. If you have any reason to come you ought to come. Why when I come back, come with me. Why? What is in Ephesus? Well Paul... You know Paul? You mean that Pharisee? Yes, that Pharisee. He is in Jerusalem, and he has a lecture room there, and every day we go and he opens the Word, and he teaches about Christ. Well what has happened? What has happened? I am a new man, that is what has happened. You see. You know me. I was a drunkard. I was lecherous, and immoral, vile. I worshipped Diana of the Ephesians. O yes, I know all about that. We've been together. Well I'm not like that anymore. Jesus Christ forgave me of all my sins, and He has come into my heart, and I have been filled with the Spirit of God, the fullness of Christ, and my home is different, and my life is different, and this is what I've learned. Is it real? You are at peace? You mean right down in your heart you do not have a fire burning that you have to quench? No. No, there is peace there now. Oh, tell me about it. Can you stay over tomorrow? Well, sure. I see no deadlines. Well that is wonderful. No deadlines. No. No shipping. Certainly. Go out tonight. Bring them in. I'll tell you about it. So they send the word out to the community. Come on over to my house. So and so from Ephesus is here, the leather trader, and he has got the most wonderful story to tell. And while the leather trader is going off here, the potter is going off there, and the goldsmith is going off here, and they are circulating around, and the Word is coming. Do you see what Paul's strategy was? Oh, he didn't just go into a community and add converts. That was too slow. He went into a community and he made Pauls. That is what you call geometric increase. Not addition. You see, it is one thing to just add converts to a preacher, but oh when you can... Every time Paul met somebody he left another Paul, had the same truth, and had the same relationship to the Lord... This is what his ministry was: perfecting the saints into the work of the ministry. And so in those two years that whole province was evangelized. And I do not think Paul ever got outside, except for maybe a Sunday School picnic the second year. I do not think he left at all. I think that he stayed right at the school of Tyrannus, daily discoursing, and everyone that came received from the Lord, and became established in the Word, and they had to follow their normal business. They did not even have to set up Open Air Campaigners because every one of them was an open air campaigner. They just went out everywhere they were. And they all spoke. Now we need open air campaigners to teach us how to be open air campaigners. That is one thing. We ought to understand it.

You know what I wish? I'd like to pray every single man that makes a living business into a business of his own. I really would. I go over to this little fruit store occasionally and buy an apple. And I think. Here is this man. He owns a little fruit store. And if he does not want to open it he does not need to. And he can talk with anybody. I think every Christian at least ought to have a fruit store. Some place where they could just talk with people that come, and nobody is going to dock them. And this is a city of little shops. And I do not know of Christians that have shops in the whole island of Manhattan. I think we ought to start a Foreign Mission Society to establish shops in Manhattan. We will get some folks from out in Santa Fe to move in. They will do that. Of course, that is where it has to come from.

Well, here is the whole genius. Taught, related to the Lord, an experience of God, established in the truth, on fire for the Lord, going out and gossiping the Gospel. That is what we are after. I have been seven years. We have not gotten very far. But I'll tell you this. We are a lot further than we were seven years ago. Don't forget it. We are a lot nearer today than we were seven years ago. But some day we are going to begin to realize that the genius of the Gospel isn't a big preacher that everybody comes to hear, but it is a lot of people that are filled with the fullness of God, and established in the Word of God, and go out

to witness in homes, and living rooms, and shops, and offices. You do not need to have a fruit store. You just witness for Christ where you are, where you are. Do you see? This is the genius of the Gospel. This is the New Testament method. This is what God is after. This is what it is all about.

All right. Now let us notice something else. We have already talked about it. Got to my third point before I told you what it was. Well I'll tell it and pass on. It was evangelism and witnessing. Visitor came, and the people went. It is wonderful when you get ahead of your own outline, isn't it? Shows you are not bound to it anyhow. This was the Lord's way of dealing. This was God's way of ministering. Filling the heart with love for Christ and the power of the Spirit of God, and turning them loose. My soul, that is what he wants. That is what he wants Christians turned loose. Set them loose. Lord, let your people go. I think sometimes we are all sort of like Lazarus, you know. God life in us, but man, we are bound hand and foot. We have got to have the Lord say Loose him and let him go. You are not loose till you know the Word. You are not loosed till you know the truth. You are not loose till you know the presence of the Spirit, working in your life, and quickening the Word, and guiding you, and directing you, and leading you.

I was up at Kings College you know for their evangelistic meetings last Fall. I was so delighted when one of the men from Faith at Work gave his testimony at Dr. Cooke's home. And he was telling about being in Germany. He had rented a car. Got on the Autobahn, I guess it was. I've never been there. I don't know what it was, but Frank would tell me. And he didn't know where to get off. And so he said, "Lord, it doesn't make much difference where I get off. I'll get there sooner or later, but maybe there is somebody You want me to talk to along the way." So he missed his exit. But he met a man, and he said, "You know, I'm awful glad I missed the road, because I met you." "Well why are you glad you met me?" said this man who spoke English. Because he did not speak any German. "Well" he said, "You see, something wonderful happened to me. Eight years ago I was a drunkard in New York. I had lost my family, I had lost my home, had lost my business, had lost everything." "You had?" "Yes." And then he said, "Jesus Christ came into my heart and reached down into my throat, and He wiped away the taste for alcohol; and He reached down in my life, and He wiped away the stain of sin, and He has given me a new life in Christ, and the fullness of the Spirit of God, and my wife is back, and my children are back, and now I am president of the corporation that sent me here, and eight years ago I didn't have anything." He said, "Oh my, but Jesus has been..." The man said, "You mean Jesus, the One we hear about in church?" He said, "Yes." He said, "I didn't know He did things like that. I knew He used to, but do you mean He still does things like that?" He said, "Yes." He said, "Well have you got something I can read about it?" He said, "Do I have something you can read about Him?" And he went to his car and opened his brief case and got some literature, and gave it to him, and gave his card, and said, "Now write to me when you find Christ. And he had only been back from Germany about ten days when I saw him. Isn't it wonderful to have something to say for the most wonderful Person in all the world? Well he did.

This is what Paul is talking about. People that were filled with the Word, filled with the truth, filled with the Spirit of God, filled with love for souls, and in the course of their business they just used every opportunity to witness for Christ. But you notice, you have got separation that made them blessable; and instruction, that made them usable; and witnessing, that made them fruitful; and now they have got confirmation that makes it successful. Notice this. And so it says, "God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul." God did it by the hands of Paul.

Now the Lord needed Paul, and Paul needed the Lord, and the Lord didn't give to Paul a corner on Himself so that Paul could use God, but Paul gave to the Lord his hands so the Lord could use his hands. There is a great deal of difference. A lot of people are looking for an experience, so that God will give His power to them so that they can use God's power in their work. And He does not do that. But what He asks you to do is for you to give your body, yourself to Him so that He can use you to do His work. And this is completely different. And this is what happened. Paul has given himself to the Lord, so that the Lord can use him to do His work.

Now I do not think that these miracles necessarily came at the very beginning of the ministry. Sometimes they did. Other times they didn't. But the nature of its occurrence here makes me feel that this particular aspect of ministry may not have been concomitant with the beginning of the preaching or the teaching. I don't know. I wouldn't want to dogmatize on it. But I would say this: that there was a foundation, so secure, so strong, so wholesome, and so balanced that God could afford to bless it.

You've heard me say in the past, Do not pray, Lord bless me; pray, Lord make me blessable. Now these people are blessable: They have given themselves to "the whole counsel of God;" they have ordered themselves in the way and the will of God, and their hearts' concern is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. And so God confirms the Word by Paul's hands. "Special miracles are done." No inconsiderable works, said Lange, in his translation.

Now this is wonderful. This is wonderful. But you see, it has a foundation. And my feeling is this, that any company of people that are prepared to meet God on the basis of the foundation that we have seen, separation unto the Lord, instruction in the way of the Lord, faithful witnessing in obedience to the Lord can expect confirmation.

But where the problem comes is when we are unwilling to submit to that separation unto Him, or are unwilling to submit to His instruction, where we are unwilling to submit in obedience to His commands; and then we expect the Lord to come and seal what we haven't done. No. No, I believe that when we have the foundation that is here, God is going to meet us. He does now. We do not say much about it, but the Lord is touching lives, meeting lives, in various ways.

Someone came to me just the other day. She said, You know, my cousin that you prayed for? Some months ago? Yes. Remember the one that the doctor said had that enormous tumor? Yes. The one who was sure it was malignant? Yes. Well you know, when they took her to the operating room, preparing to operate, the doctors were amazed; they couldn't find any evidence of the tumor. Completely gone. And they said, Well here is the x-rays, and here is the report, but it just isn't there. There is nothing there. No reason to operate. So she said, She wasn't operated on. Well, why not? Why not? That's not hard for our Lord. That's not hard. You know the hard part of God isn't with flesh, tissue. I see no problem in that. The hard part is in the human spirit. That is where the difficulty is. That is the part that is hard to mold, the part hard to shape. I never find any problem in believing the God to touch. I do not believe it is always God's will to heal. Do not misunderstand me. Because even Paul left friend sick, Trophimus and he told Timothy to take a little wine, and there are problems. The Scripture doesn't give us an open and blank check. Nobody says it does.

But you know what it does teach us? It teaches that God just loves to do exceeding abundantly when He is released to do it, by the obedience and the faith of His people. I can't answer all the problems, just a lot of them I don't know the answer for; but you know what I do know? That He still loves to do the exceeding abundantly above. He still loves to touch. He still loves to answer prayer. He still is the same Lord Jesus that He was. I don't find any problem with God. You know where I find the problem? With people. That's where I find the problem: with people. I find the problem with churches, that aren't willing to accept their responsibility of separation unto the Lord. I find responsibility with Christians in churches that are not willing to accept instruction from the Word, and a balanced truth. And churches and people that are not willing to accept the responsibility of witness, and testimony, and evangelism. This is where the problem lies. The other is no problem. And it follows right in this sequence, of separation, instruction, and witness.

Then there is confirmation. That is the plan, that is the order, that is the way the Lord wants to do it. That is the way God's desire is, I am sure.

Now notice. We come to this matter of the handkerchiefs. Really what it says is, Sweatclothes. The little apron what was worn around the body and the handkerchief that was used to wipe the face. Now Paul didn't send them. That is the first thing we've got to say. And Paul didn't advertise in the magazine saying, Send a dollar and I will send you an... This wasn't what Paul did. Paul didn't do that. This was not what he did. Paul didn't do that. And Paul didn't send them. That's the first thing you have got to see in this. The believers came and took them. They came and took them from... I do not believe that they did it by duress or force, but I think they just came in and said, Paul, I want to take that. And they took it, that's all. They sent them. And people put them on their bodies. And it says, And they were healed of diseases, and evil spirits went out of them.

Now I want to come back to, "By his hands," for just a moment. I want to come back to that. People often need encouragement, and they need faith. They need to be released. And when folk are sick, you know how often it is when you have been a little child and ill, and feverish, and your mother would take you in her arms, and she would just cool your brow with her tender hand.

And I remember when I was going down on the operating table, going in for surgery, and I looked at the nurse (I do not know who she was). She came in the next day, and she said, Do you remember me? And I said, I don't. And I looked at her and I said, Let me hold your hand. And she was ready for the operation, and it upset everything, and she said to the doctor, Can I? And he said, Yes, hold his hand. That meant she had to leave, she wasn't... I don't know. I don't know why she couldn't have been there. I don't know why she couldn't have been there. But they made her leave. Something. And I held her hand, and I can remember going under the ether. And I can remember as a little boy when I held my mother's hand. And I remember years ago when I was first came to know something of the fullness of the Spirit, a dear brother came and said, You know, I am so concerned about your eyes. They do give you trouble, don't they? I said, Yes. The correction is getting increasingly heavy, and there is great strain, and no little pain. He said, Let me pray for you. And he stood there beside me and just put his hands on my head, and he said, O Lord, you know our brother needs his eyes for reading, for driving, for all Your work. And somehow with his concern and his burden, my faith was released. I believed that this was ordered. That is why dear Ethan Allen of whom Dr. Simpson wrote said it was the laying on of hands. Now there is a connection there. When love, and yearning, and longing have found their expression, someone is willing to identify. There is often a release, a release, a release of God's power, a release of His love. Just as "the woman reached out and touched the hem of His garment," so many times when we have been praying for the sick, we have said as elders, let our hands be just as the hem of His garment, just that contact, that release, that means of reaching out to take from the Lord (Mat. 9:20). I believe that's what it says, "Wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul." It was an identification with the needs of the people.

Now when in Peter's case, as he walked down the street, his shadow was there, the shadow passing onward released their faith, and so we find this matter of the clothes, the handkerchiefs, the one Paul used to wipe his brow. Just as he would take a cloth to wipe the perspiration from his brow, and then lay it by, and someone seeing it say, Can I have it? And they would send it, and say, Now Paul... Well this could... You see, it is only once mentioned in the Word. Paul didn't do it. And actually in the next instance you have the exorcists, the magicians which means somehow to say, Let's not get too far here. Let's hold this. The very proximity to this warning portion, lest we should become interested in fetishes. Let's stop. But you know I believe that what it was again was just a release to faith; just like I believe in anointing. When people come and ask me, the elders, to anoint them in the Name of the Lord, the oil is the symbol of the Spirit of God, the anointing, that moment of release when from which moment they believe the Lord begins to work in them.

All right. Is this important? Is there a place? Yes. There is a place. Is this for today? Yes. Where? In the church. In the church. I believe as I have told you, all the gifts and ministries of the Spirit of God are for today in the church, in the local church. That's their place of residence, that's their place of operation, that's their place of protection, that's their place for protection from exploitation. And so what do we learn from this portion? That the place of God's working is right in the center of the church, the church grounded on the Lordship of Christ, the Church committed to the Word of God, the Church dedicated to the task of evangelism, and in the midst of this church, rightly related to the Lord, rightly related to the Word, rightly related to the world, the Lord is released to work as He wills. That's what we see. That's what we see. That's what He is teaching us. There's no danger here. There's no fanaticism here. No excess here. No abandonment here. There is what God is driving for and pressing for today and that is the return to the church, the local church, of all the dynamic vitality of the presence of the risen Christ in the midst of the candlesticks.

I told you before, I tell you again, I am committed to everything in the Word of God; but I am committed to the Biblical principle that the unit with which God works is the local church, a company of believers, banded together in the Lordship of Christ, and submission to the Word, dedicated to the task of world evangelism, and local evangelism, and there in their union in prayer, and their union in the Word, and their union with each other, the Lord Jesus Christ can walk in the midst of the candlesticks, and there His glory can be seen. Let us say then that what we have learned tonight is that the place where He chooses to reveal Himself is in the midst of the church. Let us ask God to make us a church in the midst of which the Lord can reveal Himself in all of His glory. I am willing to wait, because that is His place. I hope it isn't long.

Let us pray. Now our Father we are so grateful that Thy Word is before us as an open Book. Thou art ready and willing to teach us and instruct us, and lead us in a plain and open path, and we needn't fear and we needn't withdraw, and we needn't take a club and drive the dynamic parts of the Word down into the dust of history, or into the future in prophecy. We can say that

this is the Textbook by which we are instructed and the Word by which we are taught, and these principles that we have seen tonight we hold as self-evident and clear, and precious, and we ask Thee that elders and deacons may unitedly commit themselves to that which is so patently clear that Thou canst reveal in the midst of the Church, this church and churches all over the land, we are grateful for anything Thou dost do anywhere; but oh our God, how we long to see Thy best in the midst of the church, in the midst of the believers, united, one mind, one heart, one accord, in utter submission to the Lord Jesus, utter obedience to the Word, dedication to the task. It is our paramount task in this world He loved, and for which He died, there to see the glory of Christ manifest again. So breathe upon us, lead us on into a better understanding of one another in Thy will, and by Thy grace hasten the day when Thou canst afford to confirm in every sense that pleases Thee and exalts Thy Son, that which we believe to be Thy will and purpose for us. Grant, our Father, that any heart here tonight that has need may not feel that in any sense there need be delay. Thou art passing by. If Thou wilt but stretch forth Thy hand, Thou who art in our midst art prepared to meet that need tonight. Thou art still filling the hungry soul with goodness. Thou art still meeting the weary body with health and strength. Thou art still satisfying our heart's desire with Thyself. And so might it be tonight that in addition to instruction there comes an actual appropriation of the full provisions that are ours in Christ. For the sake of our Lord Jesus.

With our heads still bowed, and eyes closed, this little invitation. If for any reason you know that there is that that is standing in the way of your being all He wants you to be, why don't you deal with it tonight. If you know special need, and your heart has been quickened in expectancy, and you'd like elders to join with you in prayer, we would be happy to do so if you make it known. We do want you to know that we believe in all the Word in its fullness and balance, and would withhold nothing that is the heritage of the children of God.

Now let us stand together for a closing prayer.

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Evening, March 10, 1963 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

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