

30. The All Sufficient Name

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[0 : 0 0] 18, a passage all about the all-sufficient name, the name of our Lord Jesus.

Sometimes, as you know, in a film or a drama, the scene shifts in time and in pace quite radically. Maybe it's a thriller about crime-fighting all over the world and you've just been watching a story unfolding, say in the MI6 headquarters in London, and then all of a sudden there is a switch to a totally new scene and a caption comes up on the screen saying, some months later in the Swat Valley in the middle of Afghanistan, and you're plunged into the next twist of the story, thousands of miles away, sometime later.

And that's exactly what happens right here in Luke's unfolding drama. In verse 18, we're told that he spent a long time further in Corinth, and then he set sail for Syria, for Antioch, where, of course, his missionary journey had begun many years before.

But from verse 18 of chapter 18 to chapter 19, verse 1, are condensed many months and some 1,800 miles or more of travelling.

In just a few short verses, Luke gives us just enough information so that we know in a coherent way how he gets to the key place for this next focus of his story, which is, of course, Ephesus, the capital of Asia Minor.

[1 : 3 1] A key city for spreading the gospel of Christ throughout the whole of that area of ancient Asia, the land that we now call Turkey. And it's obviously immediate in Luke's mind that Ephesus is the focus.

Ephesus, verses 19 to 21, describe, I suppose, a preliminary visit of Paul. But then, while Paul goes back to Caesarea and continues to travel via Jerusalem and so on, all the action remains in Ephesus.

Verses 24 to 28, the story about Apollos. And then in chapter 19, verse 1, Paul himself arrives back there and the story continues.

By the way, another thing to notice is that this whole section, which clearly hangs together in Luke's writing, straddles the end of what we sometimes call Paul's second missionary journey.

Verse 22 sees him right back in Antioch where it began. It straddles that and the beginning of what's often called his third missionary journey, beginning at verse 23 with a repeat journey through Galatia once again, back to some of those churches he's visited before and then on to Ephesus.

[2 : 4 3] There's absolutely no break in Luke's narrative there. And that's just another indication that Luke is not just recording for us here a history of Paul's journeys.

He's not even just writing a story of the geographical unfolding of the early church. He's doing more than that. He's writing gospel for the church.

That is, he's testifying clearly to the unfolding plan of Jesus right back at the very beginning of Acts, in Acts 1-8. The plan of a sovereign God with his gospel spreading out from Jerusalem through Judea and Samaria and to the very ends of the earth in fulfillment of every promise that Christ has given.

And as he tells that story, he's telling us how that kingdom spreads, not just where. Despite all the obstacles, despite human obstacles and spiritual obstacles, he's telling us how it all happens so that we can be certain of the things that we've been taught and we've believed.

Remember that's his clear purpose in writing. The beginning of his first volume, Luke's gospel, he tells us. He writes so that we might be certain of what we've been taught and heard. And one of the things Luke wants us to be certain about is that the gospel has divine power to overcome the whole world with all its hostility, with all its problems, and that it has power to bring the name of Jesus to be honoured among all the peoples in every nation of this earth.

[4 : 18] And that there's such sufficiency in the name of Jesus, the all-sufficient power and authority of Jesus, that his purpose will never, ever be thwarted.

Despite all kinds of defects and deficiencies in his church, and even among his servants, even among his ministers, in the process of that mission here on earth.

The church of Jesus Christ, once and all, will prevail. And it will prevail in its mission because the Holy Spirit of Jesus is at work always to meet every error and every distortion with the all-sufficient name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's what we see so clearly in this story of how ancient Asia was won for Christ from Ephesus, from that great city which was the hub of so many trade routes, east to west, from Rome right to the Orient.

And whose crossroads among all these major Roman highways made it a gateway to the whole of the province of Asia. It was a city boasting the great temple of Artemis, Diana of the Ephesians.

[5 : 33] Four times the size of the Parthenon in Athens. It was one of the seven wonders of the world. It was a great, great city. But every spiritual deficiency in Christ's church, and even among his ministers, in this story is met by the power of the all-sufficient name of Jesus.

And the result is that his name is exalted and honoured. And as verse 20 tells us, his word increased and prevailed mightily, all throughout the pagan strongholds of ancient Asia.

So let's look then at the three stories that Luke records for us in this passage that we read. There are three stories, just like the three stories in the first part of this section in Acts chapter 16 at Philippi.

It rather does look as though Luke has put three stories about Philippi at the beginning, and three stories at Ephesus at the end of this little section. But whether that's deliberate or not, that's the way it is.

And each of the three stories here has exactly the same pattern. I wonder if you noticed. Each one begins with a distortion of the gospel, ranging from really the very mild to the very serious.

[6 : 45] Each is corrected, and in each case the result is a great advance for the gospel. First is a deficient explanation of the way of Jesus. Then there's a defective experience of the life of Jesus.

And lastly, of course, there's a dangerous error concerning the power of Jesus. And in each case the distortion is overcome by the all-sufficient power of the name of our Saviour.

Look first then at verses 24 to 28 of chapter 18 in the story of Apollos, Apollos, a dynamic man, but with a somewhat deficient explanation, we're told, of the way of Jesus.

And Luke tells us how this was overcome as he received the wise private counsel by the ministry of the Lord's true people. And the reality is that it leads on to great blessing.

That's the result. Public confidence in Jesus' unique name was strengthened among the believers of the church, not only in Ephesus, but we're told overseas also, in Achaia and Corinth and Athens and other places too.

[8 : 00] Well, verses 24 to 26, if you look at them, are full of praise, aren't they, for this man Apollos. He comes from Alexandria, where evidently he'd heard the gospel somehow, and he had combined his own eloquence of speech with great competence in handling the Bible.

Alexandria was a renowned centre for study of the Hebrew Scriptures. And no doubt he'd made use of that background as he began to follow the way of the Lord, that is, the Christian way.

He was, says verse 25, fervent in spirit, or as the footnote says, in the spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit. I think that is the implication. Professor F.F. Bruce says that this expression means, quote, not so much enthusiastic temperament as possession by the Spirit of God.

That's what it means in Romans 12, 11, when it's used there. And we're told he's an accurate teacher of the gospel. That's all the more remarkable, isn't it?

Evidently he had no direct apostolic input in the past. We're told he knew only the baptism of John. Not, it seems, the more fulsome apostolic explanation of the full depths of Christian theology.

[9 : 16] Nevertheless, he taught the gospel accurately. He was undoubtedly a true Christian and a true teacher of the Christian faith, fulfilled and energised, as he was, by the Holy Spirit.

And so verse 26 says, he began to speak boldly, to evangelise in the synagogue. And when Priscilla and Aquila, who were there, heard him, they clearly recognised in Apollos a genuine gospel preacher.

They could see that his way was a bit deficient, perhaps, but he was not in error. He taught accurately. But they could see, because, of course, they had personally had the great benefit of the teaching of the Apostle Paul themselves.

They could see that there were things that this man had never yet had the chance to hear and to understand that would enhance and greatly develop his message. And so we're told, they welcomed him into their home.

And so they shared with him, no doubt, all the things that they themselves had learned from the Apostle Paul. Not to challenge him, not to change his ministry, but to build on his accurate teaching to make it, as verse 26 says, more accurate still.

[10 : 32] He went from being an accurate teacher to being a more accurate teacher. I guess that's what we always want to be doing all the time, isn't it? What exactly they added to his knowledge were not told, perhaps deliberately.

Maybe it was some of what Paul speaks about in Ephesians chapter 3, where he speaks there, doesn't he, about the great mystery that has been made known to him and revealed to him, which has not been made known in previous generations.

Namely, that the Gentiles, as fellow heirs, are members of the same body, partakers of the same promise of Jesus Christ through the Gospel. Remember, the Old Testament prophets clearly taught about many from the nations coming to know the one true God, but to be united as one body, as one new people of God, to know that God's ultimate purpose should come about through the preaching of the death of the Messiah of Israel.

That was an extraordinary thing. That was new and took a great deal of stomaching by Jews. And that through this church of Jew and Gentile together, the manifold wisdom of God, as Paul says, should be made known to all the powers in the heavenly places.

Well, that was an extraordinary thing. So perhaps that and many things like it were what they shared with this man, Apollos, in their home. But whatever precisely the things were that they added to his message, the result was, certainly, that he was better equipped than before for a wider and more influential ministry.

[12 : 15] verse 27 tells us that Apollos was keen, he wished, there's a little bit weak there, he was keen to go overseas in mission to Greece, to Achaia.

But now, he could go with the enthusiastic backing of mature Christian people like Aquila and Priscilla. They wrote in support of him and of course, everyone in Corinth would know them and that would guarantee a great welcome for this man as he went there.

It's great, isn't it, when there's a coming together of missionary desire in the individual person and great confidence in the sending church. Not always the way, is it? It's not always like that.

Some folk are desperate to go into Christian service, desperate to go overseas in ministry or in mission. And maybe they're like Apollos, they're gifted, they're zealous.

But they've still got a lot more to learn about how to handle the Bible, how to teach the Gospel more accurately. than just accurately. They're genuine. They're not heretics.

[13 : 15] They know the Gospel, they want to share it, but they still need more. That's a good pattern for us too, isn't it? That's why we don't want to send people away in service of Christ when we can't do it confidently.

Write letters of backing and say, support this person. You'll have a worthy ministry among you. Yes, we know that going across the seas doesn't suddenly make you into a missionary, does it? You need to be able to learn here, you need to be able to serve here among the believers in this place.

And then we can send you off gladly, rejoicing, confident, in the ministry that you're going to have. And that was the pattern here and certainly it bore fruit if you look at verse 28.

He greatly helped the believers in Greece. He was able to refute all their Jewish opponents and prove that the Messiah, the Christ, who they all said they were longing for, that the Christ was Jesus.

There was no other name than this all-sufficient name by which they must be saved. And that all-sufficient name of Jesus was therefore proclaimed all the more boldly as the unique name of salvation among the peoples of Greece.

[14 : 30] A deficient explanation of the gospel met by the gracious private counsel of the Lord's true people led to public confidence in the unique name of Jesus.

And that was strengthened all over the churches of Achaia. Isn't that a great encouragement, by the way? Just the very fact that there are gifted, dynamic people with great gifts perhaps for preaching and persuading and evangelizing who can be helped to a much more effective ministry by the quiet, non-public ministry in the home of just mature, well-taught Christian people.

People who might never ever open their mouth publicly to preach or to teach but nevertheless are very willing to open their homes privately to nurture the faith and the understanding of those who don't have as much understanding or maturity yet as they do.

Isn't that a great thing? That's real partnership in the gospel, isn't it? And there's a real message there to would-be apolloes. Don't despise the counsel of a Priscilla and Aquila.

John Calvin, by the way, is bold enough in his commentary to say here that one of the chief teachers of the church, chief preachers of the apostolic band was taught here by a woman and we shouldn't miss that.

[16 : 01] And he quickly reminds us, of course, that she did so privately in her own home, quote, so that she might not destroy the order prescribed by God and nature. That is the apostolic order for the public authority of preaching and teaching in the church.

But nevertheless, don't miss that. Priscilla had a very clear role in helping this man Apollos along with her husband, Aquila. Don't despise that.

If you're someone who's seeking a public ministry, if you're somebody who is greatly gifted, let me tell you this, you can be helped greatly in your ministry, in now and in the future, by the quiet instruction of more mature Christians in the privacy of their home.

And if you're humble enough, then you'll be greatly helped by that, as Apollos was. I can testify that I thank God greatly for the Aquilas and Priscillas who taught me many things in the privacy of their own home.

It's a word for would-be Apollos. It's also a word for the Aquilas and Priscillas here tonight in our church. Emulate Priscilla and Aquila. Recognize gifted people like Apollos who are here among us and nurture them.

[17 : 17] And don't write off people just because they have some deficiencies. See the accuracy in their teaching and desire to help them to become more accurate and more fruitful yet.

Just imagine the loss to the church if Aquilas and Priscilla had gone home that first Sunday and said, he's no use, he doesn't even know as much as we do. But they didn't do that.

They saw what was accurate and they desired to bring him on. Accurate instruction in the all sufficient name of Jesus can be the making of a great ministry.

And it's the answer to every other deficiency as well. And that's what the next story reminds us. Look at verses 1 to 10 of chapter 19. They tell us about Paul's encounter here with, well, devout men, but with a defective experience of the life of Jesus.

And Luke recounts how they're led into genuine personal conversion by the ministry of Christ's true apostle Paul. And the result here, well, it's a great blessing once again as the public consciousness of Jesus' name is widened and believers from the church in Ephesus spread that name so that all the residents of Asia, verse 10, hear the word of the Lord.

[18 : 43] It happens, says verse 1, that when Apollos went off to Corinth, now Paul came to Ephesus. Well, it happened in God's perfect timing, of course.

In the great city of Ephesus Paul arrived in, he met some other people who seemed to be disciples, that is, Christians. It seems that these must have been folk that hadn't come across Priscilla and Aquila or the other believers.

And when Paul talked with them, he quickly saw that there was something majorly wrong, something deficient, something was lacking in their experience. They just didn't seem to share the genuine Christian experience of the Lord's people.

And so he asked them a penetrating question in verse 2. Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed, he says. Now he's being pastorally sensitive and diplomatic here. He doesn't say to them, look, are you guys real Christians?

That would put people immediately on the defensive, wouldn't it? I don't ask people that question, especially if I'm speaking to somebody who's devout, somebody who's a staunch churchgoer.

[19 : 53] They'd think that was an insult if I asked them that. But I might ask them something else. I might say to them, do you really love the Lord Jesus? The reaction to that question will always tell you whether somebody really does have genuine believing faith.

That's the nature of Paul's question here. Because you see, the New Testament does not know of Christian faith that isn't born through the work of the Holy Spirit in somebody's heart.

And the answer that he gets tells him everything he needs to know. We've never even heard there is a Holy Spirit, they said. In other words, what they mean is they haven't yet heard that Pentecost has taken place, that the coming of the Holy Spirit has happened in fulfillment of everything that John the Baptist promised would come out of Jesus' ministry.

Apparently these men had been influenced by John the Baptist. Perhaps they'd been to Judea to go to one of the feasts at Jerusalem and they'd come under the influence of John's ministry and they'd responded and they'd repented and they'd been baptized as a mark of their commitment to seek the way of the Lord.

Lord. And they were longing for the one to whom John appointed them. Then it seems they'd left Palestine, they'd gone back to Ephesus and you'd never yet heard that the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world has come and has taken away the sin of the world.

[21 : 23] So here's a group of men who if you like are caught in what you might call a historical time warp. They're believers in waiting as it were. the devout people, people of faith, Old Testament believers but still waiting for the fulfillment of all things in the coming of the Messiah.

But they're ignorant of the fact that it has ever happened. They're rather like some of those stories that you hear of prisoners of war who'd escaped during the Second World War and were still hiding in the jungles of Southeast Asia not knowing that the Allies had won their victory and the enemy were defeated and they were still hiding.

They hadn't yet entered into the experience of liberation. And so these men here were like the disciples before Pentecost. They were disciples but they were not yet fully New Testament Christians in the full sense of that word.

And the events of Pentecost, if you like, had to catch up on them so that they would move from being believers in waiting to being those who receive fulsome New Testament Christianity.

Christianity. And that's what explains these unusual events that follow here. It's the very uniqueness of this situation that leads to Luke pointing it up to us this way.

[22 : 40] The very reverse, the absolute reverse of what some Pentecostal theologians want to read into this passage. That somehow this passage should be a pattern for every ordinary Christian.

That first you become a Christian and believe in Jesus and then, subsequently, you need some special anointing, some special experience to receive the Holy Spirit, to make complete your Christian experience.

Absolutely not. These men are clearly not New Testament Christians at all. And far from being typical, they're absolutely atypical.

They're almost unique. And that's plain in the correction that Paul brings to this situation. Paul does not say to them, ah yes, you've received Jesus, what you now need is the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

That's not what he says at all verse 4. What he does proclaim is the full truth about Jesus. He proclaims to them that the Saviour that John said would come and baptised with the Spirit has now come.

[23 : 48] And his name is Jesus. He proclaims to them the all sufficient name of Jesus. And their lack of true spiritual experience was met by their belief in Jesus and by personally encountering the Lord Jesus Christ.

And they were born again and they were baptised into the Lord Jesus, says verse 5. And to have the life of Jesus is to have the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

And so, of course, they were then filled with the Holy Spirit. And for this almost unique case, that fact is visibly and publicly demonstrated to them by another kind of mini Pentecost.

Just like the other highly significant, unusual events that we have had repeating that Acts 2 day of Pentecost. Remember in Acts chapter 8 when the Gospel first went to Samaria. And to make it absolutely plain that the Samaritans were Christians in a fulsome way just like the Jews, the Holy Spirit came in a repeat of Pentecost.

And in Acts chapter 10, the very first time the Gospel comes to total Gentile people, once again, the events of Pentecost are repeated. And here again we have a vivid sign to assure them, to say yes, you Ephesian disciples who have been left behind in the Old Testament era, you have now caught up fully with the age of Pentecost.

[25 : 14] You are truly New Testament Christian believers. And so it may have been a pattern for others who were in that highly unusual situation in the ancient world, no doubt there were many others who had come under John's influence but had never yet caught up with the message of Jesus.

So yes, it might be a pattern for such as them. But there are no disciples of John the Baptist around today who have never yet heard that Jesus has risen. So of course we shouldn't expect that kind of atypical situation to be in evidence anymore today.

Well, what was the result then of this correction of their deficient experience? Well, verses 8 to 10 tell us. Now that there were others like them in Ephesus and the synagogues of that city and also in Asia, so Paul continued, verse 18, preaching the same message.

Not a new message about the Holy Spirit, but the kingdom of God. That is the all sufficient name of Jesus the Messiah, Jesus and the resurrection, who fulfills all the promises of the coming of God's kingdom.

And we're not surprised to see once again the same familiar pattern, verse 9. Some reject the way of Jesus. They refuse to obey Christ's rule. They continued in unbelief, we're told.

[26 : 34] Notice unbelief in the Bible is disobedience, refusal of the lordship of Jesus. Jesus. And so Paul withdraws and he takes the Jewish Christian disciples with him.

But he doesn't stop for a minute from his ministry. He leases this lecture hall from Tyrannus. As the footnote says, some of the texts say between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m., the time when it was, I guess, siesta time, when the pupils of Tyrannus were not there, Paul moved in.

And he went on day after day until verse 10. All the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. And so as always, the gospel is, as we've seen, a separating message.

The word of God divides. But also, it is always a spreading message through all the province of Asia. That's an amazing statement, isn't it?

Well, it was a strategic hub. Roman roads led all over Asia from it. And so from that city center place of gospel teaching, those who were taught and trained spread out and spread the church far and wide.

[27 : 46] Probably during that time, Epaphras went to find the church in Colossae. And no doubt all of those other seven churches of Asia that we read about in the book of Revelation were planted as a result of that ministry in the center of Ephesus.

John Stott crystallizes with characteristic clarity Paul's strategy for urban mission. In contrast, he says, with much contemporary mission, which he says is too ecclesiastical, too emotional, and too superficial, Paul's way was markedly different.

He found himself an accessible premises in the city center from which to reach people of all kinds of the church. He made serious, reasoned, persuasive presentations of biblical truth and did so at length, unafraid to engage the minds of his hearers.

In other words, Paul knew that genuine Christian experience comes through changed minds, not through charged emotions. And, says Stott, he was seeking to convince in order to convert.

And he stayed for extended periods. Two years in Corinth, three in Ephesus, teaching thoroughly and comprehensively. That's a fine strategy, says John Stott, for the great university and capital cities of the world.

[29 : 13] If the gospel is reasonably, systematically, and thoroughly unfolded in the city center, visitors will hear it, embrace it, and take it back to their homes.

Well, that ought to encourage us here, don't you think? That's what we're trying to do here in our city center, despite all our deficiencies and faults.

And that's what we should keep striving for. The evidence of real, genuine life and Christian experience is the spreading fruitfulness of the gospel, so that the public consciousness of the name of Jesus is widened in the city and throughout the nation and then to the world and beyond.

And it all began when a group of devout, decent people, God-fearing people, when they got a hold of the full evangelical gospel for the first time.

As some of you here have been here long enough or an old enough to remember when exactly that happened right here in this building in the 1950s. when Tom Allen brought that full gospel message to many decent and devout people who had never heard it before, although they'd been in church all their life.

[30 : 28] And our task is to keep proclaiming that message, excessively, persuasively, persistently, that it might spread and the public consciousness of the name of Jesus grows.

The third story, finally, in verse 11 and following, is very dramatic. In the seven sons of Sceva we meet deceitful men but making a dangerous error concerning the power of Jesus.

And we see how they're brought to a dramatic public correction by the absent ministry of Christ's true spirit. And once again, the aftermath is great blessing.

Public commitment to Jesus' name is deepened among the believers of the whole church. Now, Ephesus was a very religious place. It was full of occultism and magic.

And since our God is a God who stoops low in order to reach all manner of people, it seems that he will condescend even to use the language that they recognize and understand in order to break into their world and force them to reckon with him.

[31 : 47] And I think that's what explains these extraordinary miracles that Luke reports for us in verse 11. Notice that Luke makes clear in his wording that these are not even the usual kind of mighty works that are associated with the apostles, the signs of the apostles that Paul speaks about in 2 Corinthians 12.

He tells us they were extraordinary, they were highly unusual. And they certainly were. They almost looked magical. Aprons and handkerchiefs, sweat cloths, bringing healings and exorcisms.

Most extraordinary. But the message is clear to these people who are all taken up with such spiritual powers. The message comes across loud and clear.

Jesus alone is Lord and his name is sovereign over all these powers in earth and heaven. And it might be, it might very well be that still today such extraordinary things do happen in frontier mission in places where primitive peoples are very consonant with dealings with the spirits in their culture and in almost daily life.

Could well be that God will speak into situations like that in ways that are clearly understood in the language of those peoples. But there is certainly no warrant whatsoever here for the kind of charlatanism that we see among the tele-evangelists offering to send you prayer cloths to ward off your diseases if you'll send them twenty dollars.

[33 : 25] Absolutely none at all. In fact, people like that need to read this story especially verses fifteen and sixteen. Don't you think? It's a very sober warning to those who would abuse the name of Jesus.

And notice also, by the way, the emphatic word in the sentence in verse eleven. It was God doing these things all round about Paul. Paul's only contribution to those sweat cloths was his own sweat.

What Paul was doing in every place was proclaiming the gospel of Jesus. In fact, if you read into Acts chapter twenty you'll see on several occasions Paul says that in his mind was all that he did in Ephesus.

All the time I was with you I was preaching and teaching publicly and from house to house he said proclaiming the kingdom teaching the full counsel of God telling it all to all of your people.

And yet as Paul did that in that pagan occult centre of ancient Asia God himself was authenticating the message of Paul and he was showing his total power over every opposition however dramatic it might seem to be.

[34 : 39] So it's not surprising when the gospel is assaulting a place that is so taken up very much with the dark world of spirits that the opposition should show itself in a flagrant and dramatic way.

These Jewish exorcists Jews were also often mixed up in magic and in occultism. They recognised the genuine power in the name of Jesus.

But what they want to do is use it for themselves. Just like Simon the sorcerer do you remember back in Acts chapter eight? They want the power of Christianity but they don't want the reality of the person of Jesus Christ in their life as many people want it today.

Often people want that don't they? They want the gifts of God they want the answered prayers they want the health they want the success they want the wealth what they don't want is to confront the lordship of Jesus a lordship which will materially change and challenge their whole life.

They want to use Jesus' name like a charm but Jesus will not have his name used in that way and that is a dangerous dangerous error to make.

[35 : 56] And these seven sons of Sceva discovered that to their cost. Verse 16 tells us their correction was very dramatic and very public. When they tried to use Jesus' name they discovered that in fact they were abusing it.

And the evil spirits well in the Bible the evil spirits are not foolish they're very discerning. I know Jesus he says I know Paul but who are you? You're just an imposter.

You don't scare me because you don't have Jesus with you. His Holy Spirit is absent and I can see that because Jesus was absent in their life as their lord.

the receiving end of a very violent encounter with the powers of darkness. Again don't think this kind of thing is just make-believe. The Bible is very very clear isn't it?

There are dark powers and they are powerful. They're very real and people who dabble in them can get very seriously damaged indeed. I remember hearing of some students one year got involved in a seance with some spiritualists and they had a terrifying experience as some of their number had an experience very similar to this and were thrown violently across the room came to see their pastor trembling in fear.

[37 : 22] And that was the effect here certainly it was a very sobering one among the whole city. Verse 17 all the residents of Asia fear fell upon them and many of the believers and God used it for his greater glory.

Evil always oversteps the mark. And what happens here? Well verse 17 the all sufficient name of the Lord Jesus is extolled by everybody and the public commitment to the name of Jesus is deepened in very telling ways among the people of the church.

Many Christians are driven to much deeper repentance they come we're told and they confess their former ways they confess their sins they confess the sin of not abandoning all of their former ways but now they do and they ceremonially burn the relics of all their old ways destroying them forever.

They realize don't they that becoming a Christian can never just simply be something that you add on as an addition to your old life. It's far more radical than that.

Repentance and trust in Jesus means a whole new life a whole new creation. The old has gone says Paul the new has come and the old life is dead it must be buried forever. The baptism of verse 5 signified that new life for those 12 men by the Spirit of God and what we have here signifies a real repentance in that literal burning of their books.

[38 : 52] That's what repentance means isn't it? Remember John the Baptist his call to repentance wasn't just use the word I repent what did he say bear fruit in keeping with repentance?

That's what we see here. It's a striking contrast by the way isn't it? In an attitude to real spiritual power. Charlatans and pagans seek dramatic spiritual pirate experiences but real believers touched by the real power of the gospel turn their backs on all of that want to burn it have nothing to do with it anymore very striking because real faith in Jesus real experience of his all sufficient name and power is seen in the power of radically changed lives that's a genuine gospel remember Jesus' own words in the parable of the sower in Luke chapter 8 when the seed of the word is taken up in the good sower what is the evidence?

it will be held fast says Jesus and bear fruit with patience my family says Jesus my mother and sister and brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it it changes them has it changed these believers in Ephesus it can take time of course when people come from a totally pagan unbelieving background like these Ephesians it often does take time that as people learn more of the truth that's in Jesus they'll honour him more and more as their law and their behaviour will change they'll realise as these Ephesians did that their former ways were not right that wrong things and wrong actions need to be repented of and left behind that wrong relationships need to be put right that wrong sexual behaviour has to be left behind that godly ways and thinking must be substituted but that will happen as genuine gospel ministry goes on as the whole counsel of

God is taught publicly and from house to house and Paul did that in Ephesus and God was at work to bring all kinds of these errors to light and to correct them sometimes no doubt it was very quiet and private other times like here it was very dramatic and public but as a result of all of that verse 20 says tells us the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily the growth of the gospel of Jesus the all sufficient name cannot be halted despite all the insufficiencies in the church there will always be friends deficiencies of course in the explanation of the faith that we can improve on there will often be defective experiences among some who have never really yet been led to genuine personal conversion into knowing Jesus personally not just knowing about him and there will also always be as Jesus says dangerous errors in and around the work of the gospel that will require radical public correction but where the holy spirit is relentlessly at work through the servants of Christ who are bearing witness to Jesus as the all sufficient name and when they're putting his gospel at the center of everything more and more then there will be effective ministry there will be fruitful and spreading mission to the world through that church warts and all because

Jesus is the all sufficient name and he can work through his people despite all that kind of mess that's going on around about the gospel mission and he does work to strengthen confidence in his unique name among them and to widen consciousness of that great name through them and to deepen commitment to his name in them and thank God he can still do that and he still does do that right in the heart of pagan cities today let's pray Lord we thank you that your all sufficient name and power is at work for us and in us and through us who believe so may we together despite all our deficiencies be led by that spirit through your word to have a greater more fruitful spreading ministries of

[43 : 42] Christ in this our city and from it to the world for the sake of Jesus great name amen amen