

Spirit Smackdown

How would you feel if you suddenly realized you were wearing *Adidos* shoes while drinking a can of *Mountain Lightning* soda after ordering pizza from *Pizza Hat*? Off-brands, knock-offs, and generic products are all over the place, but where's the real thing? In Acts 19, we find a hilarious story of some counterfeit disciples, who wind up naked and wounded for their deception.

Big Idea: Following counterfeit and watered-down religion won't stand the test of time.

The Real Deal

"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" (Acts 19:11-12).

If these miracles seem familiar, you're probably thinking of Jesus' walk through the city streets in Mark 5:27-34. God worked through Paul to do some fantastic signs. And he didn't even need to be present for these miracles to occur!

But why was God doing these things through Paul? What's the takeaway for us? Simply put, listen to Paul! With God working through him, Paul's words are worth our consideration. And even Peter gave Paul's instructions equal weight with the Scriptures (2 Peter 3:16), so he must be the real deal.

The Foolish Fakers

"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" (Acts 19:13-14).

Riding on Paul's coattails, these men thought they'd get in on the action too. But notice how wishy-washy they were when attempting to cast out this evil spirit. *"The Jesus whom Paul proclaims,"* doesn't sound like they believe what they're saying!

Who are you listening to today? Those with authority like Paul or the knock-off religious fakers of the world? Would you rather read a commentary of the Bible — some man's opinion — or the Bible itself? Let's be careful and test everything we hear to see if it's genuine (1 Thess. 5:20-21)!

A Regrettable Rumble

"But the evil spirit answered them, 'Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?'" And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded" (Acts 19:15-16).

Some situations are so cringeworthy that it's hard to watch, but harder to look away. But this evil spirit seems to have more conviction about Christ and Paul than these men. And he had no problem spotting the faker!

Counterfeit gospels, distorted beliefs, and "false Christs" are everywhere (Gal. 1:6-9). But strangely, let's take a lesson from this evil spirit and point out the genuine article. Listen to Christ, listen to Paul, and don't be fooled by counterfeit teachers today!

Conclusion

Are you following the authentic and legitimate words of the Lord? Or have you been deceived by fakers for far too long?