WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY- Acts Chapter 19- verses 11-20 (ESV 1028)

Verse 11-12- And God used Paul not only to speak his word, but to cause unusual things or miracles to happen. Unfortunately, some people did not always understand that neither Paul nor the cloths had any power outside of the power of God. For instance, cloths that he used for himself as a handkerchief or an apron, were taken by others (likely stolen) and used to heal people or to cast out evil spirits. God allowed this to work sometimes in order to show His divine power, or so more would believe in Jesus, and to give credibility to Paul as Christ's representative. (Psalm 77:14, ESV 541), (John 4:46-51, ESV 985), (Mark 16:20, ESV 947)

Verse 13-16- But as is often the case, those who do not believe at all will hear something said by Christians and pick it up to use for the wrong reasons. Some wandering Jews who practiced exorcism falsely as a profession decided that they could use what they saw Paul do, to make a profit or obtain fame. So, though they had no faith at all in God or Jesus Christ, they thought they could use His name for gain. They urged the demons to come out in the name of "the Jesus that Paul preached". This was proof that they had no idea or knowledge of who Jesus was or what Paul's relationship to Him was. They were attempting to perform something that they did not even believe in. Then, Luke gave us an example of what happens to those who try something like this. Luke recalled the story of the seven sons of Sceva, one of the Jewish chief priests. What is really interesting is that God did not correct them himself or use Paul to do it. He allowed the evil spirit to reprimand them very harshly.

1. They did not cast the evil spirit out of the man. It was not possible for them to cast out the spirit because only Jesus and those He delegates have authority to cast out evil spirits. (Luke 10:17-20, ESV 962), (Luke 11:18-20, ESV 963), (Mark 16:17-18, ESV 946-947)
2. The evil spirit told them that he knew Jesus, he knew about Paul, but he never heard of them. The evil spirit had no knowledge of them because they had no relationship to Jesus. (Luke 10:20, ESV 962), (James 4:7, ESV 1115), (2 Thessalonians 3:3, ESV 1093)
3. Using the man's body, the evil spirit beat them and took off their clothes.
4. They ran out of the man's house wounded and shamed.

All these harsh consequences stemmed from their attempt to misuse the name of Jesus. (Exodus 20:7, ESV 68), (Leviticus 19:12, ESV 109), (Matthew 7:22-23, ESV 901)

Verse 17-20- Once again, God took a situation meant for evil, and turned it to His purpose, to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. When this story became known among the Ephesians, they became fearful of their wrongdoing against God and repented. Then the word of the Lord continued to spread and grew more powerful.