

The Tennessee Tribune

Volume 23, No. 29, 3 Sections

THURSDAY, July 19-25, 2012

\$1.00

Overcoming Evil with the Power, Presence and Persistence of Love

A Commentary by Jason Curry



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The Apostle Paul was a fascinating person. He was both a teacher and a preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul was once a persecutor of Christians, but through a personal experience with God, he accepted Christ as Lord and Savior and became a builder of the early church. The book of Acts reminds us that "... God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul (19:11)," and through the power of the Holy Spirit, Paul was able to rid people from evil thoughts or the evil presence (e.g., spirit) within them (Acts: 19:12). People marveled the spiritual power and authority that was given to Paul through the presence of the Holy Spirit. On one occasion, a group of people decided that they were going to cure a person who was possessed with an evil spirit without the power and presence of God through the Holy Spirit. As they approached the person with the evil-spirit, the "evil-spirit" said to the group: "...Jesus, I know, and Paul, I know, but who are ye (Acts 19:15)."

According to Acts 19:16: "And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded." Essentially, the people were neither familiar with the love of God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit (i.e., the Trinity); therefore, they did not have the spiritual power to overcome evil with good.

Recently, our congregation was reminded of the power and the love of God through the stanza of a great, church hymn: "What can wash away my sins, nothing but the blood of Jesus." Indeed, there are personal sins or evils (e.g., stealing or lying) and society evils (e.g., racism, classism and sexism). Humanity is often like the people in this text inasmuch as our "solutions" to the evils (e.g., hating those who hate us or lengthening prison sentences instead of promoting rehabilitation) do not always concern the love of God. God is love (1 John 4:8), God is good

(Mark 10:18), and Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12). Paul's love of God and fellowship with the Holy Spirit provided him with power and guidance for addressing evil, and it is the power, persistence and presence of God in our lives that can help us to address the evils and sin that affect us. Political leadership that invests in people over profits, rehabilitation over retribution and toleration over exclusion also helps to promote God's love in society. Jesus' proclamation to "bless those who curse you (Matthew 5:44)" declares that love conquers hate; therefore, let us identify, embrace and promote God's love in all that we do.