

## **MAKE JESUS YOUR POWERADE!**

**Today's Text: Acts 19: 11- 20**

### **Extracts:**

Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them. Then *some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches."* Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. *And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?"* Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of the house naked and wounded. This became known both to all the Jews and Greeks, dwelling in Ephesus, and *fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified* [Acts 19: 11-17].

*Powerade, a nutrient-enhanced sports drink manufactured by the Coca-Cola Company, has been an official sports drink of the Olympics since 1988<sup>1</sup> In the recently completed London 2012 Olympic Games, we saw most of the athletes drinking it. But Usain Bolt of Jamaica who was voted social media's favourite for winning gold medals in the 100-metre and 200-metre races as well as helping the Jamaican team to win a gold medal in the 4 X 100 metre-relay race, has his favourite Powerade drink. He makes the sign of the cross before each race and openly gives thanks to God after winning. He was quoted as saying, "I want to thank God for everything he has done for me [be]cause without him none of this [would] be possible." On his coach, Glen Mills, Bolt thanked his heavenly Father for bringing Mills into his life. Again, his tribute went more to God than to his coach. Bolt's energy came not from the Coca-Cola drink but from God.*

*There is something there for us all to learn, namely, that your best Powerade for success is God through His only begotten Son, Jesus. In this week's Bible story, some exorcists tried to invoke the name of Jesus Christ to cast out demons as Paul had done and yet they did not know Him. What they got is an eye-opener for us that success in our ministries or careers has much more to do with our standing before God than anything else. So what Powerade do you drink? Find out from this week's interesting study.*

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<sup>1</sup> Story is based on the following sources: "Powerade," From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Powerade>, and Joseph Owens, "Usain Bolt gives God glory: 'Nothing possible without him'," <http://www.examiner.com/article/usain-bolt-gives-god-glory-nothing-possible-without-him>; August 10, 2012

## 1. Background: The power of Jesus in Paul's Ministry

Every four years, at the Olympic Games, the best athletes from over 200 countries of the world showcase their talents. They come to vie for gold medals by running faster or jumping higher or scoring more points. In the process, they burn a great deal of energy. That is why, as you watch the games on television, you see exhausted athletes trying to replenish their energies by taking nutrient-enhanced drinks. Gatorade and Powerade are among the most popular of such products, especially in the United States. Energy drinks are allowed at international sports events as long as they do not contain prohibited (doping) substances that can give undue advantage to their users.

In spiritual matters, we face races that are more ferocious than we see at the Olympic Games. Each new day, we strive with spiritual opponents that play foul, trying to kill, steal or destroy [Jn 10:10]. For example, when the prophet Jeremiah once complained to God why wicked people prosper even when He is far from their mind, God replied, "If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses?" [Jer. 12: 1-5]. Therefore, you need more than the 'ordinary' Powerade that you see athletes take during sports events. You need a superior brand of Powerade to successfully wrestle against principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age and spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places [Eph. 6: 12]. So, *what energy drink would you like to take to boost your spiritual power for victory when you engage in spiritual warfare? That is the question that we shall attempt to answer in this week's study.*

Our Bible story is based on Paul's experience in Ephesus during his third missionary journey. He had spent two years there and "all who dwelt in Asia [Minor] heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" [Acts 19: 10]. Signs and wonders followed and that provoked reactions both from believers and his adversaries as follows:

### *a) Miracles followed Paul the believer*

We are told that "**God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul**, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them, and the evil spirits went out of them" [vv. 11-12]. Before you go collecting handkerchiefs and other items from your priest or pastor, it is important to understand what happened here!

You will recall that after choosing His twelve apostles, Jesus sent them out on a test run of their future ministries. He empowered them to preach the kingdom of God, "heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, [and] cast out demons" [Matt. 10: 5-8]. They did so, went through the towns "preaching the gospel and healing everywhere" [Lk 9: 6]. On another occasion, He sent out seventy disciples, two by two, to go before

Him to cities and places that He was about to go. They returned to Him with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.” Jesus said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven” [Lk 10: 1, 17-20].

*For your name to be written in heaven, you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Saviour for*, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he can neither see nor enter the kingdom of God [Jn. 3: 3,5]. It means that you have faith on Jesus that has made you a son of God [Jn 1: 12]. In the words of Jesus Christ Himself, these are the signs that will follow believers: in His name, they will cast out demons, speak with new tongues, take up serpents or drink anything deadly and they will by no means be hurt. They will lay hands on the sick and they will recover [Mk 16: 17-18]. That was the authority that Paul exercised during his missionary journeys, and signs and wonders followed, to the extent that even handkerchiefs and aprons from his body were sent to the sick or demon-possessed and they were healed. *Jesus was Paul’s Powerade!*

*b) But unbelieving exorcists discovered otherwise!*

Some itinerant exorcist Jews thought that they could replicate Paul’s ‘feat’ by also calling on the name of Jesus. So, they said to some people who had evil spirits, “We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.” The seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, did likewise. The evil spirit answered, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?” [Acts 19: 13-15].

Interestingly, it was unclean spirits that first recognised the divinity of Jesus before humans did. For example, soon after Jesus had returned to Galilee “in the power of the Spirit” (after fasting and being tempted by the devil in the wilderness), He went into a synagogue in Capernaum, where He came across a man with an evil spirit. The demon cried out, saying, “Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are- the Holy One of God!” [Lk 4: 14, 31-34]. Therefore, the demonic spirit in the man in Ephesus knew Jesus as well as His servant, Paul. *The exorcists did not know Jesus because they did not believe in Him.* They were drinking Powerade from another source-Satan’s! Since Satan cannot cast out demons without causing a division in his kingdom [Matt. 12:25-26], the exorcists were helpless before the demon-possessed man. He attacked and overpowered them, and “they fled out of that house naked and wounded” [Acts 19: 16]!

Do you know how many demon hunters in your place of worship have inflicted hardships on themselves and their families by misusing the name of Jesus? They are hypocrites, in that their profession of faith in Jesus is not matched by their fear of Him. So, when they call on His name, the demons know that such people do not know Jesus. Like the sons of Sceva, they are mere exorcists using the name of Jesus for pecuniary gains. Their power is from another source; certainly not from Jesus. Therefore, ***just as Powerade does not work for every sports person, merely calling on the name of Jesus without a relationship with Him will not work!***

c) *And magicians gave up sorcery for faith in Christ!*

As many people who had believed came “confessing and telling their deeds”, many others that had practised magic brought their books together and openly burnt them in the sight of all. The value of the destroyed items was fifty thousand pieces of silver [Acts 19: 19]. When you realize that a piece of silver was a day’s wage in those days [Matt. 20: 9-10], we are talking of over 136 years of an average worker’s wage! No magicians would be that stupid to forgo so much if they did not see something better in giving their lives to Christ. Understandably, therefore, “the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed” [Acts 19: 20].

From the foregoing, it is clear that ***only faith in Jesus can give us the spiritual Powerade to fight our spiritual battles.*** That was why Paul had the audacity to tell the Philippian church, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” [Phil. 4: 13]. Can you say the same thing about yourself? What Powerade do you currently drink for your spiritual battles?

## 2. Assessing the Powerade you currently drink

***God does not force people to believe in Him and not all religions believe in the same God.*** Consequently, people drink different kinds of Powerade when they encounter spiritual forces. Here are some of the methods that people rely on:

a) *Expertise*

Some people rely on expertise, that is, ***skill, knowledge or professional opinion, derived largely from empirical sources: what can be seen, heard, touched, tasted or felt.*** Therefore, expertise deals with ***facts***, not opinions or assumptions. Expertise cannot handle issues of life after death because they cannot be proved. If what cannot be proved does not exist, it is not an accident that a majority of atheists tend to be scientists. ***Unfortunately, truth is larger than facts*** and that is why the fool has said in his heart that there is no God [Ps. 14: 1]. Truth is constant but facts keep changing,

depending on new scientific discoveries. Therefore, any Powerade based on expertise will not last.

Take the case of the Alexandrian ship that took Paul and some other prisoners to Rome. The trip was delayed because of bad weather and Paul, a man of faith, told the ship owner and operators, “I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives.” But the centurion, leading the prisoners to Rome, “was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship [the experts] than by the things spoken by Paul” [Acts 27: 6-11]. Not quite long after setting sail, they ran into a storm, *Euroclydon*. They were exceedingly tempest-tossed until they lost the hope of survival. That was when the man of faith, Paul, came up to them and said, “You should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss.” From that point on, the experts listened to the prisoner who relied on his faith in Jesus to lead one hundred and seventy-six passengers to safety [vv. 12-43]! Indeed, cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength [Jer. 17: 5].

b) *Luck*

Some people rely on luck, that is, *chance* to succeed, ascribing to their circumstances the popular biblical verse, “The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favour to men of skill; but *time and chance happen to them all*” [Eccl. 9: 11]. However, people who attribute their successes and victories to luck will hardly accept that their misfortunes are due to bad luck! *Can you afford to rely on luck to fight demonic forces or even human pressures?*

Take the case of the Chinese 110-metre hurdler, Liu Xiang.<sup>2</sup> At the 2004 Athens Olympics, he was the gold medalist. He had hoped to repeat that feat at the 2008 Beijing Olympics where he was the face of the local team. But when it came time to run, he injured his right Achilles tendon and withdrew. The 2012 London Olympics was another chance to redeem his credibility. Again, when the last heat came, he hit the first hurdle and could not complete the race. Was that fate or luck? *In spiritual battles, do you think Satan will give anybody a second chance?*

c) *Magic/satanic forces*

The Jewish exorcists and magicians that Paul encountered at Ephesus had remained in their trade because they were obtaining “good” results for

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<sup>2</sup> Jim Caple, “More Olympic heartbreak for Liu Xiang,” [http://espn.go.com/blog/olympics/post/\\_id/3353/more-olympic-heartbreak-for-liu-xiang](http://espn.go.com/blog/olympics/post/_id/3353/more-olympic-heartbreak-for-liu-xiang); Tuesday, Aug. 7, 2012

their clients by relying on satanic forces. After all, Satan always transforms himself into an angel of light and so do his messengers [2 Cor. 11: 14-15]. At Samaria, for instance, Simon, a sorcerer, mesmerized the people with his magic for a long time that they even regarded him as “the great power of God.” Then, he encountered Philip, one of the seven deacons appointed by the apostles, and gave his life to Christ [Acts 8: 5-13]. In the island of Paphos during Paul’s first missionary journey, Elymas the sorcerer, a false prophet, withstood Paul’s team from sharing the gospel of Jesus with the local proconsul, Sergius Paulus. Full of the Holy Spirit, Paul pronounced the sorcerer blind in the name of Jesus for “perverting the straight ways of the Lord” and he staggered out blind [Acts 13: 6-11]. The Egyptian magicians could turn sticks into snakes like Moses but they soon realized that they could not go far. By the time the land of Egypt was infested with lice and the magicians could not replicate it with their enchantments, they said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God” [Ex. 8: 16-19].

*From the foregoing, it is clear that the only brand of Powerade that can energise and enable you to fight and win spiritual battles is “Jesus-ade,” the type that Paul used! What Jesus did through Paul became well known both to all the Jews and Greeks [Gentiles] in Ephesus and “fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.” All the experts, magicians and lucky charm dealers burnt their books and wares and gave their lives to Christ [Acts 19: 17-20]. That is the message for all of us in this week’s study.*

### 3. Conclusion: Make ‘Jesus-ade’ your Powerade!

Jesus has said, “if anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” *That living water is the Holy Spirit [Jn 7: 37-39].* But here comes the catch. *No one can call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit [1 Cor. 12: 3], and without Jesus, you can do nothing [Jn 15: 5]!* To do the works of God is to “believe in Him whom He sent” [Jn 6: 29], that is, Jesus Christ, by whom we become sons of God [Jn 1: 12]. Indeed, those who know their God shall be strong and do exploits [Dan. 11: 32]. So, stop deceiving yourself or others. Get saved. Get the Holy Spirit and drink the living water. Drink Jesus-ade and you will become more than an Olympic champion. You will become more than a conqueror through Jesus who loves you [Rom. 8: 37].

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