

EPHESUS

ACTS 19



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A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

Ephesus: Acs 19
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Introduction to Acts 19

Paul returns to Antioch for a brief stay before heading off on his third missionary journey. Ephesus comes into view as an important center of Paul's ministry. He will stay there for three years, the longest he stayed anywhere.

We've seen the ongoing work of Christ *launched* in various places, from Jerusalem to Corinth. We also see that Paul and Barnabas worked continually to help *establish* the churches they had begun, both by visiting them and training leaders, as well as – in Paul's case – by his epistles.

These *established* churches became centers from which the Gospel of the Kingdom is *dispersed* so that the whole process of the ongoing work of Christ can be *replicated* over and over. The Holy Spirit has traction, and the Kingdom is coming in power.

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We hope you find this study of Acts instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

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1 Back to Ephesus

Pray Psalm 132.8-10.

Arise, O LORD, to Your resting place,
You and the ark of Your strength.
Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness,
And let Your saints shout for joy.
For Your servant David's sake,
Do not turn away the face of Your Anointed.

Sing Psalm 132.8-10.

(Finlandia: [*Be Still, My Soul*](#))

Arise, O Lord, come to Your resting place; Your holy Presence meet with us in might.
Clothe us with righteousness in Jesus' grace, and we will shout to Your divine delight!
For David's sake, turn not away Your face, but look upon us in Your holy light.

Read and meditate on Acts 19.1-7.

Preparation

1. Whom did Paul meet in Ephesus?

2. What did he do for them?

Meditate

Paul may have had Ephesus in his sights from the beginning of his third missionary journey, for we don't hear much about any stops along the way. When he arrived, he found a dozen or so men, true believers, but not well trained (vv. 1, 7). They seem to be stuck about where Apollos was, trusting in John the Baptist's word about repentance (v. 3).

We note that Paul took the time to discern the state of their faith (v. 2). Apollos had launched them into faith, now Paul would establish them in it. He gave them credit for true faith and then took them further into the work of Christ and the Spirit (vv. 4-6). This is what good teachers do, examine the condition of seedlings and cultivate from there.

These twelve men became the nucleus of a revival in southeast Asia Minor, as we shall see. Twelve men! From Ephesus the Gospel was dispersed throughout the region, as the Spirit convicted, converted, filled, equipped, and sent people into all the surrounding area.

God was orchestrating the progress of His Kingdom, using faithful servants and witnesses from all walks of life. Launch, establish, disperse, replicate – this is the pattern of the ongoing work of Christ. This is the way the Spirit flows God's grace through churches into the world.

Only the Spirit of God can superintend and give continuity and strength to such an effort. We need to make sure we're filled with, walking in, and empowered by Him in all we do.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“Apollos had launched them into faith, now Paul would establish them.”

How many churches today are headed by pastors who are teaching half the truth? Perhaps they are doing it with a good heart, like Apollos. But even Apollos, before Priscilla and Aquilla “took him aside and explained

to him the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18.26), was teaching only half the Gospel.

We see in Ephesus that Paul found twelve sincere men who only had a partial understanding of what their glorious faith entailed. Before Paul’s arrival, though, these men could have benefited from a little Berean study ethic. As we recall, the Bereans received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether the things they had been told were correct. (Acts 17.11)

If the men in Ephesus had searched the Scriptures, they would have read that John the Baptist was, the “voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God’” (Is. 40.3). And that he himself had said, “I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Lk. 3.16).

Perhaps those words should have made them a little curious?

Today, preachers preach a gospel that is more about what Jesus will do for you, instead of what you are called to do in the Kingdom – which calling will cost you your life.

Jesus says to us all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (Lk. 9.23).

And Paul said, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4.7). Sounds a little more strenuous than the promised Kumbaya around a campfire.

And the writer of the book of Hebrews said, “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls” (Heb. 12.1-3). Yes, we must consider what it cost Jesus.

Since we are blessed with having the Scriptures, and can employ the Berean study ethic for ourselves, it is incumbent upon us to live the whole Gospel. It is shameful that some pastors are not preaching the full Gospel; but just because they are not, is no excuse for us. We have the truth. We would do well to live it! Like Paul and the enlightened twelve in Ephesus.

For reflection

1. How can you know if what you’re hearing at any time is merely a partial gospel, rather than the Gospel of the Kingdom?
2. Why is it important that you search the Scriptures daily for yourself?
3. Do you have a study partner or prayer partner to help encourage you in daily reading and study of the Bible? How can study and prayer partners help one another continue growing in the Lord?

*Therefore the baptism of John was an exhortation to repentance only, but it did not provide a purification from sins. This, then, is the difference between the baptism of John and that of the faithful: the baptism of the faithful gives the gift of the remission of sins. Ammonius (late 5th-early 6th century), *Catena on the Acts of the Apostles 19.5**

Pray Psalm 132.11-18.

Pray for the progress of God’s Kingdom, that righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit might increase on earth as in heaven.

Sing Psalm 132.11-18.

(Finlandia: [*Be Still, My Soul*](#))

Remember, Lord, the oath You swore to David; do not turn back, do not deny Your Word:
“One of your sons, with your throne I will favor, and He shall keep My cov’nant evermore,
and walk within My testimonies ever, thus He shall ever rule as Israel’s Lord.”

God dwells among us, and He will forever, to meet our needs and clothe us with His grace.
He has to us sent Jesus Christ, our Savior, and made us His eternal resting-place.
His foes are banished from His Presence ever, but we shall reign with Him before His face.

2 Ephesus to All Asia

Pray Psalm 54.4, 5.

Behold, God *is* my helper;
The Lord *is* with those who uphold my life.
He will repay my enemies for their evil.
Cut them off in Your truth.

Sing Psalm 54.4, 5.

(Beatitude: [*Father of Mercies, in Your Word*](#))

You are the Helper of our soul; You will sustain and bless.
Recompense evil to our foe in Your great faithfulness.

Read Acts 19.1-10; meditate on verses 8-10

Preparation

1. Where did Paul do his initial teaching in Ephesus?
2. Why did he move to a different venue?

Meditation.

Paul picked up where he left off, taking the Gospel to the synagogue, speaking boldly, reasoning and persuading people concerning Christ and His Kingdom (v. 8). For three months in Ephesus, he carried on this ministry, but then certain influential people had had enough. It will always be thus in the ongoing work of the Lord (v. 9).

Paul considered that he'd done all he could in this synagogue, so when some began to speak evil of the faith, he took his followers to a new venue, where he taught the people daily (v. 9). Whether Paul rented this hall or it was given to him for his use is not clear. We note the Gospel does not require some "sacred space" to flourish and bear fruit. For two years Paul taught the Word of the Lord – as he will remind the Ephesians in chapter 20, "the whole counsel of God" – concerning Christ and His Kingdom (v. 10).

The truth took hold, began to spread, and before long all Asia – the southwest part of what is today Turkey – had heard the Gospel. Paul didn't do all this work himself. Those who heard him understood that they, too, were to be witnesses to Christ, and so they were.

Everywhere the Gospel took root, opposition arose. But it seems the more people opposed the Gospel, the more it flourished. This is an aspect of the ongoing work of Christ we need to keep in mind. As Jesus Himself demonstrated, the Good News comes through suffering. And as Paul said, it is only through being tried and afflicted that we enter more deeply into the Kingdom of God (Acts 14.22). We must not shy away from opposition to the Gospel; rather, let us move on to more fertile fields and continue to proclaim Jesus as Lord and Christ.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Because people opposed the flourishing of the Gospel, and those who spoke of it, it was extremely important that they presented a united front. It was important then. It is equally important today!

When some hearers were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way, Paul departed from them and "withdrew the disciples" (Acts 19.9). There were to be no bleeding-heart stragglers left in the synagogue,

but all were to stand together with Paul for the truth of the Way.

The Church is to be one. It is the exemplar of our faith. Jesus warned of divisions in His Body, “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand” (Matt. 12.25).

But truly, “how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity” (Ps. 133.1). And Jesus prayed for us, “Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as we are” (Jn.17.11).

And the early Church understood the importance of this oneness by “continuing daily with one accord...” (Acts 2.46) Paul asked the Corinthians, “Is Christ divided?” (1 Cor. 1.13) The answer, of course, was no. Neither should His Church be. And Paul wrote these instructions to the church in Ephesus: “I...beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4.1-3).

Why should we? What is so important about believers standing together? Why did Paul withdraw the other believers to leave with him? Because part of the beauty of the Church is our bond of peace with one another. Because it is not easy to love others as Jesus loved us, but it is what we have been called to do. Because the uniqueness of presenting a united front in love will draw people to Jesus. As He said, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself” (Jn. 12.32).

And because of the opposition that we will face, isn't it nice to know that Someone, with His people, has our back?

For reflection

1. What are some ways you can contribute to the unity of the faith?
2. The believers in your Personal Mission Field need encouragement in working their Personal Mission Field. Whom will you encourage today?
3. How should you prepare each day to face any opposition or affliction you might encounter?

When arguments and persuasions only harden men in unbelief and blasphemy, we must separate ourselves and others from such unholy company. God was pleased to confirm the teaching of these holy men of old, that if their hearers believed them not, they might believe the works. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Acts 19.8-12

Pray Psalm 54.1, 2, 6, 7.

Offer yourself as a living sacrifice to the Lord this day, and praise Him as often as you can. Rejoice in His salvation and in your calling to be a witness for Jesus.

Sing Psalm 54.1, 2, 6, 7.

(Beatitude: [*Father of Mercies, in Your Word*](#))

Save us, O God, by Your great Name; vindicate us with power.
Answer our prayer, remove our shame, in this our desperate hour.

Willingly will we praise You, Lord, gladly adore Your Name!
You have redeemed us by Your Word and blessed us by the same.

From all our trouble, by Your grace, You have redeemed us, Lord.

Ephesus: Acts 19

While all our foes in sad disgrace reel backward from Your Word.

3 Accept No Substitutes

Pray Psalm 66.1-4.

Make a joyful shout to God, all the earth!
Sing out the honor of His name;
Make His praise glorious.
Say to God,
“How awesome are Your works!
Through the greatness of Your power
Your enemies shall submit themselves to You.
All the earth shall worship You
And sing praises to You;
They shall sing praises to Your name.”
Selah

Sing Psalm 66.1-4.

(Regent Square: [*Angels from the Realms of Glory*](#))

Shout for joy to God, all people, sing the glory of His Name!
Give Him glorious praise and say, “How great Your pow’r and great Your fame!
All the earth shall worship gladly as they praise Your glorious Name!”

Read Acts 19.1-16; meditate on verses 11-16.

Preparation

1. Who began imitating Paul’s mighty works?
2. What happened to the sons of Sceva?

Meditation

Here we see Psalm 66.1-3 in action. Unbelieving Jewish exorcists followed the example of Paul and submitted themselves to the Name of Jesus against demons (vv. 11-13). When the Gospel spreads and lives are changed, even many of God’s enemies will feign obedience to Him (Ps. 81.15).

Like Simon in Acts 8, these sons of Sceva may have been looking for some “edge” for themselves, something to bring a little more glitz and bang to their exorcising business (vv. 14-16). They get their comeuppance in a most unexpected way.

The Gospel has been going forward everywhere, on all fronts, and nothing the devil might try can stop it. The demon in the little girl in Philippi? Toast! Wicked rulers and phony religious leaders? Not a chance of their succeeding against the Gospel. Jesus has the devil on a leash (Matt. 12.22-29), and the more Paul and the others preached and made converts, the angrier the devil became. But all for naught.

The ongoing work of Christ continues amid ferocious and continual spiritual warfare, and Luke doesn’t want us to forget this. Spiritual warfare is serious business, but they who believe in Jesus know how to handle the devil and his ilk.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

We all want to be known by our family and friends. We would like to have a good name in our community and church. “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold”

(Prov.22.1).

But more importantly, we want to be known by God. And for that to happen, we must know Him, and do what He commands.

We must heed Jesus' words when He said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord', shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matt. 7.21). He goes on to say, "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'" (Matt. 7.22) Like the brothers' Sceva attempt at heroics.

Then the really disconcerting bit of this dialogue, when He concluded the thought with, "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Matt. 7.23)

In the case of the seven sons of Sceva, they were so lukewarm in their faith that even the demon didn't know them. "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" (Acts 19.15) Brutal.

To be known by God, and by a demon, we must know and serve King Jesus with our whole hearts. Realizing that here on earth we will only "know in part"; but gloriously in heaven, when we see Him "face to face", we will know Him as fully as He knows us (1 Cor. 13.12).

We will grow in our knowledge of the Lord Jesus when Christ dwells in our hearts, when we are rooted and grounded in His love for us, when we can comprehend the width, length, depth, and height of this insurmountable love, and we are filled with "all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3.17-19).

How do we know that we know Him? "If we keep His commandments." (1 Jn. 2.3) It's as simple as that! And when we are assured in this knowledge, we go forward to serve as known disciples of the Lord: "For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day" (2 Tim. 1.12).

When we love Him, serve Him, and obey Him, neither He nor the demons will ever ask us: "Who are you?" Because God says to us, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine" (Is. 43.1).

Known.

For reflection

1. Why were the unbelieving exorcists copying Paul? What should we want unbelieving people to copy from us?
2. How can you know that you are known by God? Why is it important to know this?
3. What do we mean by saying that spiritual warfare is "serious business"? How should we prepare for this warfare?

For to free people from a demon is not so great as to rescue them from sin. It is not demons that prevent one from attaining to the kingdom of heaven. On the contrary, they assist, albeit unwillingly, by making him who has the demon more sensible. Sin, on the other hand, expels him. John Chrysostom (344-407), *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles* 41

Pray Psalm 66.5-20.

Pray that, as God delivered His people out of Egypt, so He will deliver many people out of the darkness of sin into the Kingdom of light. Rejoice in the Lord's salvation, and pray for all who today will declare the Good News of Jesus in their Personal Mission Field. Prepare to share your testimony of God's grace in

prayer before the Lord.

Sing Psalm 66.5-20.

(Regent Square: [*Angels from the Realms of Glory*](#))

Great and awesome is our Savior in the works which He has done.

He the sea and river dried to let His people cross as one.

Then our joy was great to worship Him our mighty, sovereign One.

He the nations watches ever – all you rebels, humbled be.

Bless our God, all men and nations, praise His Name eternally!

He preserves our souls, and He will keep His paths beneath our feet.

You have tried us, Lord, as silver, and have brought us into nets,

made us carry heavy burdens, let men trample o'er our heads.

But through all Your grace sustained us and has brought us through to rest.

To Your house we come with offerings, what we vowed, Lord, help us do.

O, receive our praise and homage as we give ourselves to You.

Come and listen, all who fear Him: hear what this great God can do!

When we cried to You, You answered, filled our mouths with highest praise.

Let not sin abide within us, lest we languish all our days.

Bless the Lord, Who hears our pleadings and preserves His love always.

4 Fear and Praise

Pray Psalm 116.4-6.

Then I called upon the name of the LORD:
“O LORD, I implore You, deliver my soul!”
Gracious *is* the LORD, and righteous;
Yes, our God *is* merciful.
The LORD preserves the simple;
I was brought low, and He saved me.

Sing Psalm 116.4-6.

(Mit Freuden Zart: [*All Praise to God Who Reigns Above*](#))
I called to God, “O Lord, I pray, my soul redeem with favor!”
The Lord is gracious in His way, and righteous is our Savior.
His mercy to the simple flies; He lifted me up to the skies –
I rest in Him forever!

Read Acts 19.1-22; meditate on verses 17-22.

Preparation

1. How did the people respond to the attack on the sons of Sceva?
2. How did this situation contribute to the progress of the Gospel?

Meditation

Word about the thrashing of the sons of Sceva provoked fear among the people of Ephesus; but the kind of fear that is necessary for worship, obedience, and discipleship to follow. They feared the name of Jesus (vv. 16, 17), because of the evident power they saw His name could wield. But rather than turn *from* Jesus in their fear, they turned *to* Him in worship. Fearing God and loving Him are both essential for full faith.

The public expression of this wave of fear and worship took two forms. First, believers were shaken to forsake many practices which they knew to be not consistent with the faith, but which they had heretofore continued and concealed (vv. 17, 18). Second, magicians brought the tools of their trade together and burned them, thus dramatically declaring a full and final break from their idolatrous and demonic practices (v. 19).

The effect of these two responses was to bolster and spread the Gospel even further (v. 20). Seeing the progress of the faith, Paul considered that he could leave the churches of Ephesus and Asia in the hands of their leaders, and he determined to push on to visit the churches in Greece (v. 21). He sent Timothy and Erastus ahead of him to begin making preparations, while he stayed on in Asia for a while to finalize details there. As it turned out, that was nearly a fatal decision (v. 22).

The deeper the Gospel penetrates the souls of people, the more dramatic are its effects. It's clear that many people today who confess faith in Jesus Christ are living superficial Christian lives. If it were not so, would we not expect to see more impact of the Gospel in the social, cultural, and moral arenas of life? We might wonder what it will take to drive the Gospel more deeply into the souls of the faithful – and to rattle those who, to this point, have opposed or denied the faith, preferring instead their own forms of “magic arts”. Whatever it takes, it will be a work of the Spirit, and we should pray for it.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“Fearing God and loving Him are both essential for full faith.”

When Jesus was in Bethany having dinner with friends, a woman came in with a flask of very costly oil. And she broke the flask and poured the contents on Jesus’ head to anoint Him and show Him love. With this act of giving some were indignant. Why? Because, they said, she could have sold the oil and given the money to the poor.

What was Jesus’ response to her act of love? He said, “Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial” (Mk. 14.3-8).

The oil and the magic books. Both items are examples of something better to do with our stuff than sell it. One showed love for Him, the other fear of displeasing Him (Acts 19.19).

Giving to God’s work is important, and we do that through tithing from our income. Also, through extra offerings that God lays upon our hearts. But selling and giving isn’t always the right response.

Do we have things in our possession that need to be destroyed? Are there things in our lives that need to be done away with and not passed on to anyone else? And what about sins that cannot be sold or burned? Sins that are not tangible, but dwell in our hearts, nonetheless?

Has enough fear fallen on us that we confess and tell our deeds and turn from them? (Acts 19.18)

And what about ways to show God that we love Him? Do we obey His commands? (Jn. 14.15)

Do we do the works, like the woman of Bethany, that God has prepared beforehand that we should do? (Eph. 2.10)

When we as believers fear God and love Him, and do the works that accompany those faith essentials, Jesus will be magnified, and the word of the Lord will grow mightily and prevail. The Scriptures prove that to be true (Acts 19.17, 20).

For Reflection

1. We’re not saved by works, but we’re not saved without them. Explain.
2. How do fear of God and love for Him work together to strengthen and grow our relationship with Him?
3. “The deeper the Gospel penetrates the souls of people, the more dramatic are its effects.” Has this been your experience? Explain.

*The idolaters and magicians were so many in Ephesus that they prepared magicians’ books at a high price, as if these books held the most noble things in life. Upon believing in Christ, they did not sell them, even though there were many who wanted to obtain them, but they burned them. And they did this first so that no one could take part in their soul-destroying ruin, and second so that they could have no profit from it. Ammonius (late 5th-early 6th century), *Catena on the Acts of the Apostles 19.18**

Pray Psalm 116.7-14.

Thank the Lord for His many blessings and the mercy and grace He supplies in all your times of need.

Sing Psalm 116.7-14.

(Mit Freuden Zart: [All Praise to God Who Reigns Above](#))

Full well the Lord has dealt with me; my soul from death He delivered.

Ephesus: Acts 19

My weeping eyes, my stumbling feet, He has redeemed forever.
Forever I before His face shall walk with those who know His grace,
and dwell with them forever.

Afflicted, I believe His Word, though lying men would undo me.
What shall I render to the Lord for all His blessings to me?
Salvation's cup I lift above and call upon the God of love
and pay my vows most truly.

5 Tumult

Pray Psalm 54.1, 2.

Save me, O God, by Your name,
And vindicate me by Your strength.
Hear my prayer, O God;
Give ear to the words of my mouth.

Sing Psalm 54.1, 2.

(Beatitudo: [*Father of Mercies, in Your Word*](#))

Save us, O God, by Your great Name; vindicate us with power.
Answer our prayer, remove our shame, in this our desperate hour.

Read Acts 19.1-29; meditate on verses 23-29.

Preparation

1. Why were Demetrius and the others upset?
2. What did the people do?

Meditation

Tumult. Again. Yawn.

The Gospel threatened to bring economic hardship to a certain class of Ephesian citizens (vv. 23-25). From Demetrius' speech we can see that Paul was pointing the Gospel directly at the cultural lives of the people of Ephesus, calling them to forsake certain specific practices and ways and to come to Jesus and His Way (vv. 26, 27). For many today, the Gospel threatens a way of life they have come to enjoy – autonomous, materialistic, self-indulging, and free of unbending moral restraints. Like Demetrius and his cronies, they will find some phony premise, sure to rile the masses, on which to take their stand against the Good News.

But what such people are really seeking to preserve has little to do with truth, and much to do with moral practice.

In Ephesus, someone would have to pay for all this upset – caused not by the believers, we note, but by the *un*believers – and when they couldn't find Paul, they laid hold on two of his companions in ministry (vv. 28, 29).

The world of unbelief will often lash out at the Gospel in one way or another. This is because their putative *unbelief* is no such thing. They have *strong beliefs*, usually of their own devising or choice, which allow them to be their own god in their own minds and to do as they please. We should neither be surprised nor dismayed when outrage or oppression come against us. God uses even these responses to further the ongoing work of Christ.

The Gospel wants to jar people out of their sins so that they can find full and abundant life in Christ. Unless we, making room for the Holy Spirit to work, point out the specific sins of our generation, and the lies in which they have become ensnared, believing in Jesus won't benefit them very much.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Unbelievers, confronted with Jesus' truth, may lash out, and it will be at the wrong thing. In this situation

Demetrius, a silversmith, was angry because Paul's preaching was threatening the Diana shrine purchases which they feared, would begin to wane. But let's think about this for a moment. If you are a talented silversmith, and one god goes out of fashion, there are lots of other gods and jewelry you can make to keep the money flowing. But alas, what Paul was preaching was "threatening a way of life" ... "autonomous, materialistic, self-indulging, and free of unbending moral restraints." Cash-flow was secondary.

The children of Israel did the same thing in the wilderness.
"They made a calf in Horeb, and worshiped the molded image.
Thus they changed their glory into the image of an ox that eats grass.
They forgot God their Savior, Who had done great things in Egypt,
wondrous works in the land of Ham, awesome things by the Red Sea." (Ps. 106.19-22)

Their problem was not so much the golden calf, but that they forgot God. And in forgetting God, they did things that angered God. Like worshiping a golden calf.

Unbeliever's unbelief is, indeed, as *strong belief*. And when the Holy Spirit treads near it, or on it, they are "full of wrath" and everything around them becomes "filled with confusion" (Acts 19.28, 29).

The only Assuager of this anger and rage is the Holy Spirit. And the gift of a new heart. And a new way of life. And new ways to behave. And new thoughts to think.

God said that He would cleanse us from all our filthiness and from all our idols: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them" (Ezek. 36.25-27).

There is a very good reason why Jesus said, "love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you?" (Matt. 5.44-46)

God showed us mercy. We are called to do the same for others.

Because who knows, maybe our loving actions, and total dependance upon prayer and the Holy Spirit, will assist unbelievers to be angry at the right person. "He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it" (Jn. 8.44). Satan is tumult. And a deceiver. And deserves everyone's wrath.

"Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5.5, 6, 8)

He did it for us. He will do it for others! He turned our misplaced anger in the right direction and gave us a new heart. Which makes all the difference.

For reflection

1. What is the "heart" in a person? What makes the heart so important in helping a person change?
2. Why do some unbelievers "lash out" at the Gospel? Should that keep us from proclaiming it? Why not?
3. How can believers support and encourage one another in sharing the Good News of Jesus?

*But in the case of Demetrius it is plain how injurious the plague of avarice is. For one man, in the interests of his own private gain, does not hesitate to throw a great city into an upheaval with sedition. But the artisans, who are like torches set alight by him and spreading fire everywhere, are a warning to us, how easy it is to incite sordid people, who are devoted to their bellies, to any sort of crime, especially if their living comes from an unrewarding occupation and their expectation of making money is snatched away... John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Acts 19:24.3**

Pray Psalm 54.3-7.

Call on the Lord to embolden and protect you as you head out into your Personal Mission Field as His witness. Pray for the Church throughout the world, that Jesus might protect His Bride from all adversaries and adversities.

Sing Psalm 54.3-7.

(Beatitudo: [*Father of Mercies, in Your Word*](#))

Strangers and foes against us rise, threatening woe and strife.
They have not set You in their eyes, but seek to take our life.

You are the Helper of our soul; You will sustain and bless.
Recompense evil to our foe in Your great faithfulness.

Willingly will we praise You, Lord, gladly adore Your Name!
You have redeemed us by Your Word and blessed us by the same.

From all our trouble, by Your grace, You have redeemed us, Lord.
While all our foes in sad disgrace reel backward from Your Word.

6 Disaster Averted

Pray Psalm 5.1-3.

Give ear to my words, O LORD,
Consider my meditation.
Give heed to the voice of my cry,
My King and my God,
For to You I will pray.
My voice You shall hear in the morning, O LORD;
In the morning I will direct it to You,
And I will look up.

Sing Psalm 5.1-3.

(Angel's Story: O Jesus, I Have Promised)

O Lord, attend and hear me, consider how I groan.
Receive my cries and near be, and love me as Your own.
By morning, Lord I seek You, for You will hear my voice.
My every need You speak to, and make my soul rejoice!

Read Acts 19.1-41; meditate on verses 30-41.

Preparation

1. What did Paul want to do? Why could he not do it?
2. What directive did the city clerk give?

Meditation

What began as a loud vocal protest and demonstration was turning into a riot. Most people didn't know what all the hubbub was about (v. 32), but they joined in the drama anyway.

Paul thought he might go among this throng and explain himself, but neither those he was teaching in the faith nor those public officials he had befriended were willing for this to happen (vv. 30, 31). As is clear from the reception given Alexander (vv. 33, 34), Paul would not have had any success in trying to speak to this mob, and worse could have happened than merely being shouted down. The Romans believed in order. It only took a warning from the local magistrate to remind the irrational crowd that there were proper ways to deal with grievances, and this was not one of them (vv. 35-41).

Demetrius and his colleagues were told, in effect, to shut up and put up – disperse and, if you're serious about your complaint, take it to the courts (vv. 38, 39). End of discussion. Disaster averted. It's quite possible this whole situation might have had a powerful effect on Demetrius.

The restraining power of the Holy Spirit sometimes works through civil magistrates. God is the King of all the earth, and rulers are His servants for good (Rom. 13.1-4). We can't know how many disasters have been averted for the progress of the Kingdom because of the rule of law. We should not take the rule of law and an orderly society for granted, but give thanks to God and pray for our civil authorities (1 Tim. 2.1-8).

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together” (Acts 19.32). Unruly mobs are very frightening; most certainly, not

everyone there knows why they are there, or what they are mad about. It is tumultuous. It is confusing. It is a rebellious rabble without purpose and meaning.

But what about the church? What about the gatherings of believers all over the world? Do we know why we come together? Is it that we can all be happy together? Or maybe simultaneously feel gratified about our salvation? Are we, indeed, merely a self-serving, law-abiding, clueless mob?

“Give unto the LORD, O you mighty ones,
give unto the LORD glory and strength.
Give unto the LORD the glory due His name;
worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.” (Ps. 29.1, 2)

Church time today reminds me of the way one of our grandchildren, at the ripe old age of 2, sang a praise song she had learned and then jumbled. And her version went like this: “Make me a servant, humble and me. Lord, let me lift up, those who are me.”

Cute, right? And funny. But sadly, she was singing the attitude of many in today’s Church. It seems that the church is more about how we’re feeling, how we’re doing, or how happy we are, than it is about: worshipping God correctly. Are we glorifying Him? Are we celebrating His beauty and greatness?

He is not looking for a thumbs up from us as we intone, “My God’s enough.” Well, of course He is enough! HE IS GOD!

We might really be a bit confused as to why we have come together.

Jesus said, “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (Jn. 4.23, 24).

Worship is defined as: to honor or show reverence for; to regard with great or extravagant respect, honor, or devotion. Ramp that up exponentially for our worship of the holy God (Ps.99.5), and we might come close to what we are supposed to be doing: “...for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God...” (Ex. 34.14). “...but the LORD, who brought you up from the land of Egypt with great power and an outstretched arm, Him you shall fear, Him you shall worship, and to Him you shall offer sacrifice. And the statutes, the ordinances, the law, and the commandment which He wrote for you, you shall be careful to observe forever; you shall not fear other gods” (2 Ki. 17.36, 37).

Worship is serious business. And we must count the cost (Rom. 12.1, 2). We must know for certain why we have come together to worship. And it’s not about us.

The catechism asks: What is the chief end of man? The answer: To glorify God and enjoy Him forever. It is only and always about Him. “Worship God” (Rev. 22.9).

We must not be confused.

For reflection

1. Mindlessness – doing things in a careless and unthoughtful manner – is always wrong in the church, as well as in our lives with the Lord. Explain.
2. What can you do to keep your focus on the Lord, His glory, and His honor as you come before Him in worship?

3. Why do people get upset about the Gospel? Does that mean we shouldn't try to explain the Gospel to them?

The regular methods of the law ought always to stop popular tumults, and in well-governed nations will do so. Most people stand in awe of men's judgments more than of the judgment of God. How well it were if we would thus quiet our disorderly appetites and passions, by considering the account we must shortly give to the Judge of heaven and earth! Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Acts 19.32-41*

Pray Psalm 5.7-12.

Declare your trust in the Lord and your confidence in His grace. Call on Him for power to serve Him today as you go forth to work your Personal Mission Field. Rejoice in His promises and Presence.

Sing Psalm 5.7-12.

(Angel's Story: O Jesus, I Have Promised)

O Lord, Your lovingkindness escorts me in this place.
I bow before Your highness and praise Your glorious grace!
In righteous ways You guide me; Your pathway I will know.
No good will be denied me as I with Jesus go.

My foes would fain deceive me and crush me in the way;
their lying tongues would grieve me and lead my soul astray.
Their guilt hangs on above them; their guile shall be their fall;
they spurn the One Who loves them: reject them, one and all!

Let those rejoice who seek You and shelter 'neath Your wing.
Their tongues shall rise to speak to Your praise; Your grace they sing.
Your people You will bless, Lord, all those who to You yield;
preserve them with Your best Word, and guard them like a shield.

7 The Testimony of Truth

Pray Psalm 72.5-8.

They shall fear You
As long as the sun and moon endure,
Throughout all generations.
He shall come down like rain upon the grass before mowing,
Like showers *that* water the earth.
In His days the righteous shall flourish,
And abundance of peace,
Until the moon is no more.
He shall have dominion also from sea to sea,
And from the River to the ends of the earth.

Sing Psalm 72.5-8.

(Martyrdom: [*Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed*](#))

Let nations fear You while the sun and moon endure on high;
refresh, renew us, every one, like sweet rain falling from the sky.

Let righteousness abundant be where Jesus' reign endures;
let peace increase from sea to sea 'til moonlight shall be no more.

Read Acts 19.1-41; meditate on verses 8-10.

Preparation

1. How did Paul present the truth to the Ephesians?
2. What were the results of this?

Meditation

For all its commerce, regional power, religious devotion, and civic life, Ephesus lacked the most important thing any people or culture can know: the truth. Paul brought the truth to the Ephesians, unlocking the power of God's Word by daily reasoning and persuading, first in the synagogue and then in what was probably a rented hall (vv. 8, 9). From a beginning of twelve men, over a period of two years, "all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus" (v. 10). That was an achievement of more than twelve men; many came to the testimony of truth and eagerly shared it with their families and neighbors.

The testimony of truth transformed the province of Asia, and the church in Ephesus became one of the great Christian centers of the first centuries. It's possible that even the rowdy Demetrius came to faith in Jesus and the testimony of truth (3 Jn. 1.12; Eusebius, the early church historian, reports that John served in Ephesus prior to his exile to Patmos; his epistles were likely written to that church). Imagine the impact Demetrius' conversion must have made.

Do not underestimate the power of sharing the Gospel. By conversation, reasoning, questions and answers, and sharing God's Word, many in your Personal Mission Field will be persuaded to believe in Jesus and embrace the testimony of truth. Don't keep it from them.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Paul's time in Ephesus was first noted as three months (Acts 19.8), and then in another venue, it turned into

two years (Acts 19.10). God's timing is always perfect, and when mentioned like this, it is specific and special. It gives credence to the fact's historicity.

In God's economy there is no rush. His will is done, on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6.10), as He orchestrates it. And while we are on earth, we get to participate with Him in its fulfillment.

But time as He knows it, is not how we know it. Peter said, "Beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3.8, 9).

The important thing to God is not how long it all takes. He desires that no one should perish; and so, He waits. And wants all to come to repentance. This is how believers, all through the ages, have been allowed to participate with Him in getting His will accomplished.

Three months, two years, a day, a thousand years. It is all the same to God. "The LORD has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all" (Ps. 103.19).

He is, thankfully, longsuffering with mankind, and patient. Waiting for us to realize and accept His perfect gift, and then get busy about telling others of this Good News. (Actually, the best news ever.) That God so loved the world "that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (Jn. 3.16).

This is the timely testimony of truth that changes hearts and lives.

For reflection

1. How would you summarize your own testimony of truth in the Gospel?
2. What does it mean for you to have the patience of God in working your Personal Mission Field?
3. Is there anyone in your Personal Mission Field you think is unlikely ever to believe? What would God say?

*Luke doth not mean that the men of Asia came thither to hear Paul; but that the smell [savor] of his preaching went throughout all Asia, and that the seed was sown far and wide; so that his labor was fruitful not only to one city, but also to places which were far off; and that cometh to pass oftentimes, that when the truth of God is preached in one place, it soundeth where the voice of the minister cannot sound, being spread abroad far and wide; because it is delivered from hand to hand, and one doth teach another. For one man were not sufficient, unless every man were for himself diligent to spread abroad the faith. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Acts 19.10**

Pray Psalm 72.12-20.

Pray for the continuing spread of the Gospel and the truth of God throughout the world. Pray for your Personal Mission Field, for missionaries and church leaders in distant and troubled lands, and for the truth of Jesus to become the testimony of many new believers today.

Sing Psalm 72.12-20.

(Martyrdom: [*Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed*](#))

The Lord the needy rescues when he cries to Him for grace;
all they who suffer violence find mercy before His face.

Let Christ be praised and all the gold of Sheba be His right;
let blessings to His Name be told, and prayers made both day and night.

And let the earth abound with grain, let fields His fame proclaim;

Ephesus: Acts 19

and may our King forever reign and nations bless His great Name.

Now bless the God of Israel Who wondrous works performs.
And bless His Name, His glory tell both now and forevermore!

Ephesus: Acts 19

For reflection or discussion

1. Paul seemed to regard Ephesus as strategic in the ongoing work of Christ. He stopped there briefly, then hurried back to it and spent a long time there. What seems to have been strategic about this city?
2. How can you see that spiritual warfare frequently takes a “human face”? What might that look like in our day?
3. The Gospel speaks *into* cultures, but it also speaks *to* them. Explain.
4. What does an established church look like as it is beginning to mature in the Lord?
5. What’s the most important insight or lesson you’ve learned from Acts 18.18-19.29?

For prayer:

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