

God had done a great work through Paul in Ephesus. The years he spent publicly teaching at the lecture hall of Tyrannus bore fruit. All of Asia was hearing the Word of God as a result (Acts 19:10ⁱ). The fear of God was causing people to give up their practice of magic and idol worship.

²¹ Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."

²² And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while. Acts 19:21-22 Paul intended to make one last trip through some of the churches he had planted and then move on to new territory. He wanted to see the church in Rome and then move on to Spain (Romans 15:24ⁱⁱ), the westernmost end of the Roman empire. He was a man with a passion to see that the world heard about Jesus' death for us and resurrection. He sent Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia ahead of him while he finished his work in Ephesus. In 1 Corinthians 16:8-9ⁱⁱⁱ he wrote that he wanted to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost because of the door that was open to him and the many adversaries who opposed him.

Whenever you see a work of God, you can be sure the enemy will do something to try to hinder it. Because so many were turning to Jesus for salvation, the sale of idols was decreasing. That is a great sign unless you are an idol maker. One such idol maker who opposed Paul was Demetrius. *²³ About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way. ²⁴ For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen.* Acts 19:23-24 Demetrius was making money from selling shrines and the craftsmen who depended on his sales were easily influenced by him. He gathered these craftsmen together for a speech to incite them against the Way. The Way was the early name of the Christian movement because Christians claimed Jesus was the way to have peace with God (Romans 5:1^{iv}).

²⁵ These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. ²⁶ And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. Acts 19:25-26. Demetrius speech starts right off with the real issue. They are losing money because Paul is successful in turning people from idolatry. Demetrius is complaining that Paul has had great success all over Asia, a region of what is now Turkey. That hurt their bottom line because when people traveled through Ephesus on business, there weren't as many who wanted to buy a shrine to Artemis (aka. Diana) (Matthew 6:24^v). Wouldn't it be great if we were so successful in proclaiming the good news of Jesus that the New Age businesses weren't making as much money! That is one great difference from the truth of Jesus and the merchandising of other beliefs. Jesus is free. Give if you want, but it isn't necessary. Salvation is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8-9^{vi}). But if you want to have your chakra aligned it will cost you. If you want your aura read or your fortune told, you better have a credit card handy.

Demetrius continued, ²⁷ *And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship.* Acts 19:27 Demetrius cloaked his business concerns with a pretended religious zeal. If Artemis could be deposed from her magnificence by the preaching of one man, she wasn't very magnificent after all. Isn't it strange how he tried to get the crowd worked up to defend a goddess? Can't she defend herself? Not much of a goddess, wouldn't you say? This isn't about Artemis, but rather Mammon!

The fear of the loss of business caused the craftsmen to begin to riot. ²⁸ *When they heard this they were enraged and were crying out, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"* ²⁹ *So the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's companions in travel.* Acts 19:28-29 Why didn't they yell, "We are all losing money!"? It's probably because most people wouldn't care. But they could get people worked up over the pride of their city, the temple to Artemis. So the craftsmen grabbed a couple of Paul's Macedonian companions and dragged them to the theater.

The excavations of the city reveal a main street 36 feet wide (the Arcadian Way) that was paved with marble and had colonnades on each side. The street runs directly to a theater that could seat about 25,000. One can stand in those ruins today and see right where this would have taken place.

³⁰ *But when Paul wished to go in among the crowd, the disciples would not let him.*

³¹ *And even some of the Asiarchs, who were friends of his, sent to him and were urging him not to venture into the theater.* Acts 19:30-31 Paul wanted to go himself, probably to take the focus off his disciples (John 10:11)^{vii}, but the other disciples and members of the provincial council of Asia who had become friends of Paul, urged him not to go. Good shepherds are ready to lay down their lives for the sheep, but there are other sheep who also need their care. Sometimes bravery can make matters worse.

³² *Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together.* ³³ *Some of the crowd prompted Alexander, whom the Jews had put forward. And Alexander, motioning with his hand, wanted to make a defense to the crowd.* ³⁴ *But when they recognized that he was a Jew, for about two hours they all cried out with one voice, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"* Acts 19:32-34 It was chaos. Many people didn't even know why they were there. Some people wanted to put forth the ruler of the synagogue, but the city knew Jews were against idols. Alexander may have wanted to make a distinction between Jews and Christians to save Jews from any repercussions, but he never got the chance. The riot ended like it started with the crowd screaming, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians" for two hours! It reminds me of politics today. If you can't defend your position, just keep repeating the talking points with vigor.

³⁵ *And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, "Men of Ephesus, who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great*

*Artemis, and of the sacred stone that fell from the sky?*³⁶ *Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash.* Acts 19:35-36 The town clerk was the elected head of the city executive. He had a staff of clerks that kept the records for the city. He was apparently a very wise man for he made three succinct points that ended this disturbance. The first was that the city's fame wasn't being questioned. A meteorite had fallen in the past and was in the temple. That couldn't be changed. The city's fame remained intact.

³⁷ *For you have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess.* Acts 19:37 Apparently Christians didn't speak out specifically against Artemis, but rather against all idols. Wisdom lets the Holy Spirit fill in the details and convict new converts of specific sins (John 16:8)^{viii}. Some believers get the law book out and teach rules over relationship, but the church in Ephesus had avoided that error.

³⁸ *If therefore Demetrius and the craftsmen with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another.* ³⁹ *But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly.* Acts 19:38-39 If it is a city issue, wait for the city council meeting. Got a complaint? You know where the court is; file a charge.

⁴⁰ *For we really are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion.*⁴¹ *And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.* Acts 19:40-41 He declared there was no cause for the way the people were acting. It was a riot over nothing! At least that is the way the city executive read the circumstances. Basically, he was saying to be civil and if you really have an issue with someone use the legal system.

¹ *After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia.* Acts 20:1 These kinds of uproars were usually a sign that it was time for Paul to move on. With his presence no longer there, the disciples would have rest as the opposition would feel like they were successful and leave the church alone for awhile. The new converts could go on being disciplined and grounded in their faith. Paul bid them farewell, encouraged them, and left to join up with Timothy and Erastus.

I'd like to say a little more on Paul's method of evangelism in Ephesus. He worked in the morning hours and lectured in a public space for about five hours six days a week. On Sundays he would meet with the local church and preach to strengthen the disciples. The growth of the church there probably meant there would be a number of house churches and Paul would most likely rotate between them. We can see two kinds of ministry. There was a public setting where people could come and listen to the arguments Paul presented and ask him questions. The text tells us many were persuaded by Paul's reasoning. Salvation is a work of the Holy Spirit. However, people often need to be persuaded to consider salvation in Jesus. Both the head and the heart are involved. "Arguments of course are no substitute for the work of the Holy Spirit. But then trust in the Holy Spirit is no substitute for arguments either. We must never set

them over against each other as alternatives. No, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, and He brings people to faith in Jesus not in spite of the evidence, but because of the evidence, when he opens their minds to attend to it.^{ix}”

Paul’s five years in Corinth and Ephesus also show us that discipleship takes time. Evangelism on the go has its place, but so does persistent, enduring discipleship. It can take years to see that a church body is on the right track to continue to stay on that path without the presence of the original pastor/teacher.

As to this journey Paul is making to Jerusalem, John Stott points out the parallels with Jesus’ final journey to Jerusalem and suggests that this very well may have been on Luke’s mind. (i) Like Jesus, Paul travelled to Jerusalem with a group of his disciples (20:4ff.^x). (ii) Like Jesus he was opposed by hostile Jews who plotted against his life (20:3^{xi}, 19^{xii}). (iii) Like Jesus he made or received three successive predictions of his ‘passion’ or sufferings (20:22-23^{xiii}; 21:4^{xiv}, 11^{xv}) including his being handed over to the Gentiles (21:11). (iv) Like Jesus he declared his readiness to lay down his life (20:24^{xvi}; 21:13^{xvii}). (v) Like Jesus he was determined to complete his ministry and not be deflected from it (20:24; 21:13). (vi) Like Jesus he expressed his abandonment to the will of God (21:14^{xviii}). Even if some of these details are not to be pressed, Luke surely intends his readers to envisage Paul as following in his Master’s footsteps when he ‘steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem’.^{xix}

² When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece. Acts 20:2 We see an example of the encouragement Paul would have given the churches in his message at Miletus in the last half of this chapter. He would have encouraged them to remain faithful to Jesus despite persecution and hardship. He would certainly have encouraged them to live as redeemed children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (Philippians 2:14-15^{xx}).

One of Paul’s first stops would have been Troas where a door of opportunity was opened for him (2 Corinthians 2:12-13^{xxi}). He expected to find Titus there but did not and that troubled him, so he moved on to Macedonia. Paul finally caught up with Titus (probably in Philippi) and his lack of peace was turned to joy (2 Corinthians 7:5-7^{xxii}). The phrase “much encouragement” literally means “much word.” In these churches that had been planted on Paul’s second missionary journey, Paul proclaimed the Word. There is nothing that encourages the church like the proclamation of the Word. Paul’s center for ministry in Greece (Achaia) was Corinth.

³ There he spent three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. Acts 20:3 Paul had a lot of teaching to do in Corinth. He wrote them at least three letters and possibly four. Now he is clearing up any issues that remained while writing one of his most important letters, the letter to the Romans (Romans 15:22-23^{xxiii}).

Paul desired to go to Jerusalem by sea in time for Passover. He wanted to celebrate with the church in Jerusalem and present the support from the churches at that special time of year. But this also means that the boat would have been filled with Jews, many

of whom wanted to be rid of Paul. It would be convenient to leave his body in the ocean somewhere along the journey. When he learned of a plot on his life he decided to go by land back through Macedonia.

⁴ Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus. Acts 20:4 This was delegation made up of representatives from churches of the different regions that had donated to the needs of the central church in Jerusalem which was caring for many poor widows. I can imagine how excited Paul was to introduce the apostles to these godly men and their gifts. It would show the unity of the church body throughout these various regions where Paul had ministered. Because of Paul's faithful labor they were one in Christ Jesus, sharing the same Lord, the same faith, the same baptism (Ephesians 4:4-6^{xxiv}). Paul saw the need to work as a team. I wonder if this example of anointed disciples from different regions encouraged the apostles to get out of Jerusalem and start making disciples, which they soon would do.

⁵ These went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas, Acts 20:5 The "us" here must indicate that Luke alone was with Paul. Luke would have been representing Philippi.

⁶ but we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days. Paul ended up celebrating Easter, the Christian Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7^{xxv}) in Philippi with the church there. What took two days by ship going took five returning as the winds were not favorable at that time of year. Now in Troas, Paul and Luke join up with the team. Paul would soon take his last sea voyage to Jerusalem.

We have seen the details of the Paul's final missionary journey. The riot in Ephesus only pointed out how successful a ministry the Lord had given Paul. We see the diversity of the body of Christ and their unity in the Spirit. We see God guiding Paul away from places and situations that would have cost his life and we know God does the same for us (Psalm 121:7-8^{xxvi}). While Paul was encouraging the churches and collecting donations for the Jerusalem church, he was also writing letters to these churches, letters from which we learn and grow to this very day. The enemy of the church can rage and threaten, but gates of hell will not stand the against the church triumphant (Matthew 16:18^{xxvii})!

Questions

- 1 Why did Paul decide to go to Jerusalem? Rome?
- 2 Why was Demetrius upset with Paul?
- 3 How did the town clerk stop the riot?
- 4 What were the two kinds of ministry in Ephesus?
- 5 Why are both important?
- 6 What was the fruit of those methods?
- 7 What can we learn from them?
- 8 List the parallels of Jesus' and Paul's last journeys to Jerusalem.
- 9 Why so many men with Paul and what did it represent?
- 10 What can we learn from this passage?

ii **Acts 19:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

ii **Romans 15:24 (ESV)**

²⁴ I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while.

iii **1 Corinthians 16:8-9 (ESV)**

⁸ But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost,

⁹ for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

iv **Romans 5:1 (ESV)**

¹ Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

v **Matthew 6:24 (ESV)**

²⁴ "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

vi **Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)**

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

vii **John 10:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

viii **John 16:8 (ESV)**

⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:

ix The Bible Speaks Today – The Message of Acts: To the ends of the earth.

x **Acts 20:4-6 (ESV)**

⁴ Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus.

⁵ These went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas,

⁶ but we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days.

xi **Acts 20:3 (ESV)**

³ There he spent three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.

xii **Acts 20:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews;

xiii **Acts 20:22-23 (ESV)**

²² And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there,

²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.

xiv **Acts 21:4 (ESV)**

⁴ And having sought out the disciples, we stayed there for seven days. And through the Spirit they were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.

xv **Acts 21:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"

xvi **Acts 20:24 (ESV)**

²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

xvii **Acts 21:13 (ESV)**

¹³ Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

xviii **Acts 21:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, "Let the will of the Lord be done."

xix The Bible Speaks Today - The Message of Acts: To the ends of the earth.

xx **Philippians 2:14-15 (ESV)**

¹⁴ Do all things without grumbling or disputing,

¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,

xxi **2 Corinthians 2:12-13 (ESV)**

¹² When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, even though a door was opened for me in the Lord, ¹³ my spirit was not at rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia.

xxii **2 Corinthians 7:5-16 (ESV)**

⁵ For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within. ⁶ But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, ⁷ and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more.

xxiii **Romans 15:22-23 (ESV)**

²² This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you.

²³ But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you,

xxiv **Ephesians 4:4-6 (ESV)**

⁴ There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—

⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

xxv **1 Corinthians 5:7 (ESV)**

⁷ Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

xxvi **Psalms 121:7-8 (ESV)**

⁷ The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.

⁸ The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.

xxvii **Matthew 16:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.