

ACTS

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Acts chapter 19 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

Now keep in mind that Paul has begun his third missionary journey going back to the areas of Galatia, Phrygia and the city of Ephesus.

Now, as we saw in our last study in Acts chapter 18, we learned about this man named Apollos. He was a Jew from Alexandria and he was living in Ephesus.

And this man knew the Scriptures and what he knew he was sharing boldly with others. But we are told that **“he only knew the baptism of John”** or the baptism of repentance. He was not aware of Jesus at this point. (Acts 18:25)

When Aquila and Priscilla heard this, they took him aside and shared Jesus with Apollos. And Apollos goes to Corinth to share the Gospel with the people there.

Now, keep in mind that Aquila and Priscilla spent 1½ years with Paul in Corinth, so they sent back a letter with Apollos encouraging the brethren to receive him.

And the results were amazing. We are told of Apollos that **“... he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.”** Acts 18:28.

Now Paul is in Ephesus and as we open up we will see some very interesting, and for some, very controversial things regarding this church in Ephesus, were they saved or not? What happened to them when Paul arrived?

We will see and hopefully answer those questions this evening.

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Acts chapter 19, beginning in verse 1, and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

ACTS 19**VERSES 1-2**

Luke tells us that Apollos is in Corinth sharing Jesus, as we have already talked about.

And remember that Paul was last in Ephesus on his way back from Corinth on his second missionary journey.

Now, on his third missionary journey, he is traveling from the east and he is arriving in Ephesus from the region of Phrygia.

Keep in mind that Paul had promised the Ephesians that he would come back and see them in Acts 18:21, and he is making good on that promise here.

As Paul arrives in Ephesus he encounters 12 Men (Acts 19:7) who are called “**disciples**”.

Now let me say this. I don’t believe that makes them Christians for as John 6:66 says of some disciples that are not saved, “**From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.**” So I don’t believe these men were saved at this time and we will see that in a few minutes.

And notice the question that Paul asks these men, “**Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?**” Acts 19:2. I don’t know about you, but I have never asked someone that question. And yet, Paul recognized something was missing in their lives.

Now here is the question I will throw out at you. Was Paul speaking of the Spirit indwelling them when they are saved or the empowering with the Holy Spirit that can happen at the time of salvation or later on?

I’m not sure if it really matters for in a few verses both those issues will be dealt with.

But let me also say this. There are good arguments for both, but I personally believe Paul was speaking of their salvation and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and not the empowering of the Holy Spirit upon their lives with that question.

And their response is interesting as they say, **“We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.”** Acts 19:2.

In other words, they have no idea what Paul is talking about. And as we read on I think you will see, that by their response, they, like Apollos were not saved initially.

VERSES 3-4

I like what Paul does here because it shows that he cared about these men and if they were saved or not. So Paul wants to know what baptism they received.

And they tell Paul, **“Into John’s baptism.”**

Pretty simple but what is John’s baptism?

We dealt with this when we looked at Apollos and what he believed but I think it is important that we understand what is going on here.

Remember back in Matthew chapter 3 we are told what John’s baptism was all about.

We are told, **“In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!’ . . . and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. . . . Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance.”** Matthew 3:1-2, 6, 8.

Also, in Mark 1:4-5 we are told, **“John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.”**

I think this is pretty clear. John’s baptism was one of repentance from sins, to prepare for the coming Messiah, that is all they knew.

In saying that it tells me that they were not saved, they were waiting for the coming Messiah, not knowing that He had already come and paid in full the penalty for their sins.

They were what we might call Old Testament saints, the Spirit of God had not indwelt them for they had not received Jesus as yet.

You see, the moment you come to Christ, the moment you receive Him as Lord and Savior of your life then you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. You are sealed by the Holy Spirit. You are baptized into the body of believers by the Holy Spirit.

In John 14:15-17 Jesus said in regard to His leaving them, **“If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever - the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”**

The Holy Spirit is with us today drawing people to Christ. Once they come to Christ the Holy Spirit indwells them.

So what is happening here is that Paul shares Jesus with them, His atoning death and glorious resurrection and they got saved!

How do I know they got saved? Let’s read on and you will see.

VERSES 5-7

This is another reason that I believe they were unsaved until Paul shared with them the Gospel message. They were now baptized in Jesus, they immersed their lives in His, and they were saved! If they were already saved, then they would have already been baptized I would think. That is why I think the baptism here is dealing with their salvation.

What we see here is that the Holy Spirit has come in them, as Paul says in I Corinthians 6:19, **“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?”**

Also, in Romans 8:9 Paul says, **“But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.”**

So I believe that the Holy Spirit had come in them at this point and they were baptized, they are saved!

Remember what Jesus said in John 14:16-17 **“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever - the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells *with* you and will be *in* you.”**

There are two Greek prepositions that are used of the Holy Spirit here.

First of all, the Holy Spirit is **“with”** us, PARA in the Greek, drawing us to Christ.

Once we are saved the Holy Spirit comes **“in”** us, EN in the Greek, to dwell with us.

That is where these men were and are now, the Holy Spirit was with them and drew them to Jesus and then the Holy Spirit came in them.

But there is still one more Greek preposition that is used of the Holy Spirit and that is found in Acts 1:8 where we read, **“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”**

The Holy Spirit will come **“upon”** us or EPI in the Greek and empower us for service. This empowering for the believers is what we will see next.

And that is what we see in Acts 19:6, **“And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.”**

In Mark 1:7-8 John the Baptist said **“And he preached, saying, ‘There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.’”**

He is speaking of Jesus baptizing believers with the Holy Spirit, empowering them to move the Gospel message forward, and we see that manifested in the lives of these believers and that same power is for us today, not to toot our whistle but to drive the Gospel message forward!

So how does this relate to us? As people look at our lives, as we look at ourselves, do they notice, do we notice a lack of power in our lives?

Spurgeon put it this way as he said, “Have ye then received the Spirit since you believed? Beloved, are you now receiving the Spirit? Are you living under his divine influence? Are you filled with his power? Put the question personally. I am afraid some professors will have to admit that they hardly know whether there be any Holy Ghost; and others will have to confess that though they have enjoyed a little of his saving work, yet they do not know much of his ennobling and sanctifying influence.”

God does not want a superficial relationship with Him, He wants us to go deeper, receive all that He has for us and all we must do is ask and believe!

Now as you read this about these men, please understand that this is not what the church in Ephesus believed, just in the baptism of John before Paul came. We are told, “**Now the men were about twelve in all.**”

This was only a small group of men, about 12, and the church in Ephesus was growing, people were being saved, they knew who Jesus was and they received Him into their lives. And now these twelve men also came to saving faith in Jesus!

VERSES 8-10

This was Paul’s custom, to first go into the Synagogues to share Jesus with the Jews and any Greeks who had come to learn of the God of Israel.

Here in Ephesus Paul was going for a record with the Jews, he spent 3 months with them debating the Jews before they threw him out! It usually was a lot quicker that they threw him out!

In speaking of these Jews, it says that their hearts were “**hardened**” which is in the imperfect tense of this verb in the Greek, showing it was a gradual process, their unbelief.

The hardening of a person’s heart to the Gospel doesn’t happen all at once, it is a process.

And that is what we see here. They started to come against what Paul was saying about Jesus and they started to fight against the Way, a term used for Christians, causing Paul to now go to the Gentiles, and taking with him those Jews who did believe.

Now in Ephesus there was the School of Tyrannus, who was a philosopher.

Some ancient writings regarding Paul say that he used this school during the hours of 11 am to 4 pm, when businesses and other activities were shut down due to the heat of the day, even this school.

But Paul took advantage of the situation and taught the Good News of Jesus to the people of Ephesus during the heat of the day.

So in the morning, before 11 am, he went about his tent making to help support himself. We see that in Acts 20:33-34 which tells us, **“I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me.”**

Then, in the evening, he went house to house sharing the Gospel and building up believers in the faith. We see that in Acts 20:20-21 as Paul is saying goodbye to the Ephesian elders in Miletus. He said, **“how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Ministry is hard. Many have jobs outside the church besides serving in the church. But if God has called you to a ministry, He will equip you with what you need to complete the work!

Now, what was the fruit of Paul’s work in Ephesus? Notice what Acts 19:10 says again, **“And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.”**

Paul spent over 2 years in Ephesus after leaving the Synagogue because of the hostility of the Jews towards the Gospel message. And we see that the Word of God has now spread throughout Asia.

How did that happen? Paul was only one man; how could he do that?

Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:11-13, “**And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.**”

You see, healthy sheep reproduce, and we see that here with the people in Asia as they got saved. We see the Gospel message spread to Colosse, Laodicea, Hierapolis, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, as God was working through His people!

It is like a virus, as Christians come in contact with others, they catch it, and what a glorious thing that is, building people up, restoring them to life!

VERSES 11-12

As people read this, some have a hard time with what Luke tells us. But I want you to notice that God is the one working these miracles through Paul, this is not something that Paul just did. And Luke tells us that they are “**unusual miracles.**”

Because of that some argue that God doesn't do these things anymore, but that is not what is being said, they are just unusual miracles, unexpected miracles, not the way you would think God would work and yet He did, and He still does!

Now your Bible may say “**handkerchiefs**” but in reality, they were nothing more than Paul's sweat-bands along with his aprons or rags he wore and when he was done with them, when he put them down, people would come and take them and place them on a sick friend and they were healed, others were freed from demon possession.

So, Paul went into business and started selling these sweat-bands and aprons for \$19.95, plus shipping and handling, right? Wrong!

Does this still happen today? I believe it still does and I also believe that people try to profit off of God by these things at times but that doesn't negate the point.

Pastor Chuck told of a story that happened many years ago as he worked for a pastor who had a radio ministry. This pastor had these 4 X 4 pieces of cloth that he would pray over and anoint with oil before sending them to people who requested them.

One lady who received one of these clothes sent a letter back and Chuck read it. He said that one evening her unbelieving son stopped by before going to the movies with his wife and saw the cloth. He asked her what it was, and she told him it was a prayer cloth. Not thinking he just placed it in his pocket and went to the movie.

At the movies he turned to his wife and told her that he smelled smoke. She thought he was nuts because he could not smell at all. But he insisted and finally went to the front of the theater and told everyone to leave the theater immediately.

After everyone was out the theater went up in flames! She was writing this letter asking for another prayer cloth because her son would not give her back the one he took from her!

But, I am sorry to say, for the most part, what you receive in the mail, these prayer clothes or really just pieces of paper, are not from God. God can heal and do miracles anyway that He wants, but don't be taken in by these profit makers who are trying to take advantage of you.

VERSES 13-16

As we have seen, God was working, people were getting saved, miracles were being done, lives were transformed and many were set free from the bondage they were in. And when God is working, Satan is right there trying to stop the work of God.

And here, we see he is working through these Jewish exorcists. What is interesting is that “Ephesus was a stronghold of Satan. Here many evil things both superstitious and satanic were practiced. Books containing formula for sorcery and other ungodly and forbidden arts were plentiful in that city.” (Gaebelein)

Now this word for “**exorcists**” only appears here in the New Testament. It derives from a root word meaning “to bind with an oath.”

You see, ancient exorcists attempted to expel demons by invoking the name of a more powerful spirit being. Exorcists were common in the ancient world, even among the Jews (Matt. 12:27; Acts 13:6). Their fanciful spells and ritual formulas were very different from the absolute authority delegated by Christ and exercised by the apostles.

As you read this story it is kind of a humorous story. We see these traveling Jewish exorcists, who saw the power of Jesus, and thought they would use it in their work even though they didn’t know Jesus, they had no relationship with Him.

So as they tried to do this the evil spirit said that he “**know[s]**” Jesus, GINOSKO in the Greek which speaks “to know by interaction and experience.”

They “**know**” Paul, EPISTAMAI in the Greek which speaks “to know about, to understand.”

But this demon didn’t know these men and the man who was possessed came after the others and they fled from the house naked and beaten!

There are some who say that you just have to use the name of Jesus, even unbelievers, and you can get anything you want. Obviously, that is not true. The name of Jesus is not some kind of magical charm to be used by whoever wants to use it in whatever way they want to use it whenever they want! That needs to be clear and again, I think this story makes it abundantly clear!

I like the way the F. B. Meyer put it regarding this incident, a bit amusing but also very true. He said,

When the sons of Sceva started on the demon, he turned on them, and said, “You little dwarfs, you lilliputians, who are you? I know Paul! I don’t know you, I have never heard about you before; your name has never been talked about down in Hell. No one knows you, nor about you outside of this little bit of a place called Ephesus.”

Yes, and there is the question that was put to me today: “Does anyone know of me down in Hell?” Do the devils know about us? Are they scared about us? Are they frightened by us? Or do they turn upon us? When we preach on Sunday, or when we visit in the streets, or take our Sunday School Class, the devil says, “I don’t know you, you are not worth my powder and shot; you can go on doing your work. I am not going to upset Hell to stop you.”

- F. B. Meyer

I will tell you this. If you are causing trouble for the Devil, which means you are serving the Lord and lives are being touched, then he is going to come against you. And I pray that each of us, our names send shivers down the spine of Satan and his demons, not because who we are, but because who is working in us and through us!

May they say of us, “**These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.**” Acts 17:6.

VERSES 17-20

Look at what had taken place here. As word got out regarding what happened to the sons of Sceva, it impressed the people with the reality of the demonic realm. It made them fear the Lord and the demonic (both in healthy ways). As a result, the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

It would seem that some of them had come to the Lord but they held onto things that were demonic, and they were not aware of it. Once they saw what this was all about, they got rid of those things.

You see, the power of God working in the lives of the people of God and it is manifested in the things that they do and the things that they say.

You see, when God gets hold of your heart it leads to a change in your actions as they burned, not sold all their demonic books.

What a great lesson for us as Spurgeon said, “You will have enough temptation in your own mind without going after these things. Is there any habit, any practice, that you have got that defiles your soul? If Christ loves you, and you come and trust in him, you will make short work of it. Have done with it, and have done with it forever.”

And as this church was purged of the garbage it grew in the Lord.

That is a powerful lesson for us today. Removing books, images, computer files, statues, charms, games, false doctrine or teaching or whatever else might have a connection with demonic spirits. They should be destroyed so they are of no use to others. Don't go and sell them to someone else! And as you eliminate them from your life, not only will you grow but as the church does this the church will also grow. Don't hold onto things that will put you in bondage and keep you from growing!

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

When did the Word of God grow and prevail? When the believers burned their junk. If you're burned-out with Bible study, prayer, or meditation - chances are it's because you need to burn something up.

When my appetite is dull, when I'm not interested in spiritual things the way I once was, when I find worship a drudge or a discipline - inevitably I say, "Father, search me and show me the junk in my life that has caused my appetite for You to be diminished." And you know what? He does.

I've been there a thousand times. Whenever my appetite for the meat of the Word diminishes, invariably it's because I'm filling up on the junk food of the world. I'm not talking about blatant sin, but rather empty calories for my mind, Twinkies for my spirit. But when I finally say, "Enough of that," my appetite for the Word returns."

- Jon Courson, *Jon Courson's Application Bible New Testament*, p. 767

Now let me also say this because I don't want you to leave here terrified at what the Devil can do. Remember, the enemy may try to come against us, but the enemy could not prevail – may we not forget that as John said, **“You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”** I John 4:4-6.

VERSES 21-22

Paul was truly a man on a mission. He is being led by the Spirit of God and his desire is to go to Jerusalem.

Luke doesn't mention it here, but we know that one reason why Paul wanted to go through Macedonia and Achaia, then to Jerusalem was to collect and deliver a fund he had been collecting from other churches to help out the church in Jerusalem. You have to love the heart of this man. He loved the people because he loved the Lord! (Romans 15:25-31; I Corinthians 16:1-4)

We are also told that after he went to Jerusalem he wanted to go to Rome, the heart of the world at that time, to tell them of Jesus Christ. Paul was going to go to Rome but not in the way he thought as we will see as we continue on in Acts.

Also, we are told that Paul sends Timothy and Erastus on to Macedonia and he stayed in Ephesus (Asia) for a while longer.

Now let me also say this. A significant part of the work of Timothy and Erastus was simply to help Paul. They were truly assistants to the apostle, helping Paul to maximize his ministry.

I am so blessed that there are those who come alongside me and assist in the work of this ministry. There is no way that I could do it all on my own, nor is that something that God wants. It is the body of Christ working together for the glory of God and the building up of the body of Christ so they can go out and do the work of the ministry!

So things are happening, God is moving and what do you think is going to happen next? I think you know. There will be opposition to the work that God is doing, and we will see that as we read on.

VERSES 23-28

Now we see the opposition to the work of God. These new believers, with their lives transformed, were irritating the unbelievers. The light of God was exposing their sin and they didn't like it and it also was hurting the profits of those making idols.

Keep in mind that Ephesus was the center of the worship of the goddess Diana, also known as Artemis.

Her temple in Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was some 418 feet long, 239 feet wide, and 60 feet tall with a roof that was suspended by 127 marble pillars 60 feet high!

Even today its ruins are impressive. It was four times the size of the Parthenon in Athens! She too was a fertility goddess whose worship involved sex and her priestesses were nothing more than prostitutes!

And here is the problem in Ephesus. The profits are down for Demetrius and his idol trade and thus, Demetrius calls an emergency union meeting to stop what Paul is doing, stop the work that is bringing people to Jesus and away from purchasing their idols! He is stirring these men, getting them fired up to fight.

And make no mistake about it, these tradesmen were a powerful group of people. Of this group of tradesmen, James Montgomery Boice wrote,

There was a guild of silversmiths in Ephesus, just as in the Middle Ages. A guild is an organization of artisans, and in the Middle Ages there were guilds of leather workers, who made shoes; guilds of tailors, who made clothes; guilds of people who worked with wood and fine metals, and so forth. Guilds were like trade unions, only in the ancient world guilds were more important than our trade unions. . . .

The Ephesus guild had great enthusiasm and certainly also great concern for their own well-being, particularly their financial well-being. Christianity had caused people to lose interest in the temple and therefore naturally in buying the kind of things that were sold at the temple for use in worship. Formerly people would buy these cult objects, little statues of Artemis or of the temple, and would take them to the temple, where they would offer them as part of their worship. None of these silver objects have been found, but the reason is probably that the priests would melt them down and make hard currency of them. Of course, people would sometimes take these objects home as souvenirs, just as today when you visit a foreign country you might buy a little silver spoon.

Demetrius and the others in his trade noticed that their profits were slipping. . . . Demetrius was clever in the way he went about it. He talked to the silversmiths about money because that is what concerned them. But when he talked to the population, not all of whom were silversmiths and not all of whom naturally would be harmed by the decline in the silversmiths' business, he talked not about financial matters but about civic pride. Everybody knows how important Ephesus is because of the great temple of Artemis, he said. These people have come to take away the glory of our great Artemis.

- James Montgomery Boice: Acts: An Expository Commentary, Acts 19:23-41

As these people were getting saved, they were not buying these idols any longer, they had Jesus, they had Almighty God! Isn't that awesome! And I believe God is still in that business. I believe as people come to Jesus bars will close down, strip joints will shut down, drug use will cease, jails will be empty, not because of the laws that are passed but because as people are saved, as God gets a hold of their hearts, they will not desire to do these things.

Now many would say that could never happen today, but I disagree. Listen what transpired in the Welsh Revival and one of the men that was involved in this revival, Evan Roberts (1878-1951). We are told,

Roberts began to go to various towns to speak of his changed life. "Oh, Syd," he said to his best friend, Sydney Evans, in late 1904, "We are going to see the mightiest revival that Wales has ever known - the Holy Spirit is coming just now." In great anticipation, he added, "We must get ready. We must get a little band and go all over the country preaching." Suddenly Roberts stopped, looked at Sydney, and said, "Do you believe that God can give us 100,000 now?"

Within six months, 100,000 souls were converted in Wales.

Social impact was similarly reported. Judges were presented with white gloves signifying no cases to be tried. Alcoholism was halved. At times hundreds of people would stand to declare their surrender to Christ as Lord. Restitution was made, gamblers and others normally untouched by the ministry of the church came to Christ. In fact, esteemed G. Campbell Morgan recalled a conversation with a mine manager about profanity. The manager told him, “The haulers are some of the very lowest. They have driven their horses by obscenity and kicks. Now they can hardly persuade their horses to start working, because they have no obscenity and kicks.”

- Dr. Alvin L. Reid, *The Power of Evangelism in the Welsh Revival*, www.openheaven.com

That is my prayer for Manitowoc, that lives would be transformed by the power of God and those things that destroy lives will be gone. Can it happen? Not by my efforts but by the power of God all things are possible!

So we see Demetrius call an emergency union meeting to stop what Paul is doing, stop the work that is bringing people to Jesus and away from purchasing their idols! He is stirring these men, getting them fired up to fight. Did it work? You bet it did, and you will see this as we read on.

VERSES 29-34

This is interesting to me. We see that the people are angry, they are upset, they want something done and they want it done now!

So, in a spur of the moment, a town meeting is called, and this was not just a few people. You see, the theater in Ephesus held some 25,000 to 30,000 people!

And did you notice that “**the whole city was filled with confusion . . .**” They did not know exactly what was going on but they all got caught up in the excitement.

And as they are going to the theater they grab two of Paul’s traveling companions, Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians and when Paul sees this crowd he wants to go into this theater to share Jesus. But, wisely, the disciples and some of the city officials wouldn’t let Paul go, it was too dangerous!

And make no mistake about it. When the enemy is around, when he is in control of a person’s life, there is much confusion and that is exactly what we see here multiplied many times over.

They saw the crowds gathering and they followed into this theater not even knowing why and yet they were ready to fight, a mob mentality had grown, and this thing is getting ready to explode into a riot!

Benjamin Franklin said that a mob was “a monster with heads enough, but no brains.” How sad it is when people permit themselves to be led by a few selfish leaders who know the art of manipulation. And we see this far too often today in our nation!

And there is a problem that could arise out of this for the people of Ephesus. You see, Rome had an iron-fisted attitude towards such civil disorder and that is where things are heading!

And we see that some of the unbelieving Jews put Alexander on the stage to try and calm the people down by saying that the Jews did not support what Paul and his men were saying but as soon as the people recognized that he was a Jew, they began to shout, “**Great is Diana of the Ephesians!**” Acts 19:34.

We don't know how many people were there but enough to cause a huge commotion for over 2 hours as they shouted those words! Some have a hard time believing this, but we see it today.

For instance, look at a football game, it can be 20 degrees outside and the stadium is packed with people shouting for some 3 hours for their team! We are not much different. If it walks like an idol, talks like an idol, and looks like an idol, guess what? It is an idol!

Now, notice what happens as word gets back to the city clerk about this commotion.

VERSES 35-41

We see that the city clerk or what we might call the Chief Executive Officer, or the Mayor of the city tries to calm the people down.

He speaks of Ephesus being the guardian of Diana worship because at one time a meteorite fell from Zeus, or Jupiter and they carved this rock into this image of Diana and worshiped it.

They all knew it and it didn't matter what Paul or anyone else said, it was their heritage and they were not going to let that go. Remember, this official is doing all he can to get this crowd to calm down.

He was a politician. He is telling them that their religious foundations were secure, and that nothing could ever topple the worship of Diana, he told the people that they were foolish to make such a fuss. And yet, who is worshiping Diana today and who is worshiping the Lord Jesus Christ? Diana is gone, and Jesus is worshiped!

And keep in mind that the men against whom they were crying out had not been robbers of temples or blasphemers of Diana.

If Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen had a just complaint, the regular courts of law were open to them, with proconsuls ready to hear their charges. If they had anything else to say, there was always the possibility of gathering together in the lawful assembly. But they had been gathering as a disorderly mob. He is good!

And think about what Paul and the other Christians were doing. He was not going around condemning these people but proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What a great lesson for us, you don't fight the darkness, try to drive out the darkness, you just turn on the light and the light will dispel the darkness!

It is as Jesus said in Matthew 5:14-16, **“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let you light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”**

As I have said, the Roman government did not tolerate riots, uprisings and thus, Ephesus was in jeopardy of losing its status of a free Roman city.

So he tells the people to break it up, to go home before we have Rome coming down against us! So, in a sense, the government is protecting Paul and his men.

Let me throw this question out to you to think about. “Where in this story is the greatest danger, with the silversmith's or the government?”

As I read through the Scriptures, as I look at church history, the greatest danger is when the government steps in to protect the church.

We saw that when Constantine stepped in and made Christianity the state religion, protected it and in doing so, all kinds of pagan practices also came in.

The church seems to be the strongest when there is persecution against it. You see, then the uncommitted, those that don't believe will not risk their lives and thus, their evil influence in the church is removed.

It is as Jesus said to the persecuted church in one of His letters to the seven churches in Asia, one of only two that were not rebuked. He said, "**And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, 'These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: 'I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.'**"

Revelation 2:8-11.

We may not like persecution, the heat of its fire, but it truly causes us to draw close to the Lord and it makes us stronger as we put into practice those things that we believe.

Whatever may come our way, may we rest in Him and be faithful till the end, for He has a crown of life waiting for us!

As I close this evening, listen to what one writer had to say. He wrote, "This chapter teaches us all a permanent lesson: that when disciples have a true *revival*, society gets a *revolution*. When the Spirit moves mightily upon children of God we may look for other mighty movements among unbelievers, and need not be surprised if the devil himself comes down, having great wrath, as though he knew that his time were short." (Pierson)

When God is working be ready for the assault from the enemy but also remember that He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. The gates of Hell will not overcome His church!