

THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

A RIOT AT EPHESUS, ACTS 19:21-41

A. Paul's plans (19:21-22)

1. He made plans to go to Jerusalem and then to Rome (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."*
 - a. *after these events* (in Ephesus)
 - 1) Paul led 12 disciples of John the Baptist to faith in Jesus Christ.
 - 2) He spent two years in ministry in Ephesus with extraordinary miracles confirming his ministry.
 - 3) He saw the power of God overcoming the demonic powers of the occult.
 - b. Paul determined his next course of action
 - 1) It was by the leading of the Holy Spirit.
 - a) *spirit* could refer to his own spirit.
 - b) I believe the resolve was his personal assurance based on direction by the Holy Spirit.
 - 2) He would return to Jerusalem through Macedonia and Achaia
 - a) He wanted to see how converts were doing.
 - b) Also, he intended to take a monetary collection from prosperous Christians in Greece to poor Christians in Judea
 - 1] Acts 24:17, *Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings.*
 - 2] 1 Corinthians 16:1-3, *Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come. And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem.*
 - 3) His ultimate purpose was to see Rome
 - a) Even as Paul had been directed by the Holy Spirit on his missionary journeys, he now sensed the Spirit's leading to Rome.
 - 1] F. Bruce, *The rest of Acts shows how Paul attained his purpose of reaching Rome in spite of many obstacles all of which he overcame.*
 - 2] Romans 1:15, *So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.*
 - 3] Romans 15:23-27, *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, 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. At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings.*
 - b) *to see*
 - 1] Christianity had already been established in Rome.
 - 2] He probably wanted to encourage them and be encouraged by them.
 - 3] He most certainly had a desire to declare the Gospel to the most powerful person in the Roman Empire, Caesar.
 - 4] Donald G. Barnhouse on what would take place in Paul's life for him to see Rome, *Probably many of us would not be able to cope with what is in store for us if we knew it in advance.*
 - c) Beyond Rome, he hoped to go to Spain, the furthest point in the Roman Empire, Romans 15:28, *When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you.*

2. He sent Timothy and Erastus ahead while he remained in Asia (22), *And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.*
 - a. Timothy and Erastus were sent by Paul to Macedonia.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 4:17, *That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.*
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 16:10, *When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am.*
 - 3) Paul's purposes in sending them ahead.
 - a) To minister to the Macedonian churches.
 - b) To prepare the way for a collection Paul planned to take to the poor Christians in Judea (note 1 Corinthians 16:1-3).
 - 4) Erastus is probably not the person mentioned in Romans 16:23, *Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you* but is possibly the one in 2 Timothy 4:20, *Erastus remained at Corinth, and I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus.*
 - b. Paul stayed in Ephesus several months.
 - 1) He planned to stay until Pentecost, 1 Corinthians 16:8, *But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost,*
 - 2) The following incident took place at that time.
 - a) This time would coincide with the great festival of Artemis (Diana).
 - b) It must have been the backdrop for the disturbance caused by Demetrius.

B. Trouble in Ephesus (19:23-41)

1. Luke noted a disturbance that arose concerning the way (23), *About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way.*
 - a. *The Way* was the name earliest ascribed to Christianity, note Acts 9:1-2, *But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.*
 - b. Thomas Constable, *The antagonism that Luke proceeded to record was not opposition to Paul personally; it was a reaction to the effect of the gospel in Ephesus.*
 - c. The Gospel's negative affect on the Ephesians' income sparked the disturbance.
 - d. J. Vernon McGee, *...you cannot step on a man's pocketbook without hearing him say, "Ouch."*
2. Demetrius instigated the disturbance (24-27)
 - a. He reminded them that their livelihoods depended on the worship of Artemis (24-25), *For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth.*
 - 1) There were two goddesses named Artemis (Greek) or Diana (Latin) worshiped in the Roman Empire. One was goddess of the hunt and normally shown carrying a hunting bow. The other, especially worshiped in Ephesus was a goddess of fertility.
 - 2) The Temple of Diana in Ephesus
 - a) It was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.
 - b) It served as a bank, a place of worship and cultic immorality.
 - c) It could hold 50,000 people and was probably the largest Greek temple ever built.
 - 3) Demetrius, a silversmith, reminded other craftsmen that their financial well-being was based on profit from religious souvenirs.
 - a) William Barclay, *When pilgrims came to Ephesus they liked to take a souvenir home. These silversmiths were makers of little silver model shrines which were bought and sold as souvenirs.*
 - b) Thomas Constable, *Obviously financial loss motivated Demetrius to organize this protest as much as, or perhaps more than, veneration for the goddess Artemis.*

- b. He was outraged by Paul's teaching against man-made idols (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.*
 - 1) Demetrius understood why their businesses were at risk.
 - 2) Paul devalued their products by devaluing Artemis.
 - 3) Gods made with hands did not refer to the trinkets that were manufactured but the manmade goddess Artemis.
 - c. He raised concerns (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.*
 - 1) That they would lose business (27a)
 - a. If people increasingly believed Paul's teaching on idols, the silversmiths could easily be out of business.
 - b. Not only was the goddess discredited but also the temple, both of which were best-selling trinkets.
 - 2) That Artemis would no longer be worshiped (27b)
 - a. It is uncertain whether Demetrius was a religious person or just a shrewd businessman.
 - b. William Neil, *...vested interests were disguised as local patriotism—in this case also under the cloak of religious zeal.*
 - c. Artemis had a following but Demetrius was embellishing his point by saying she was worshiped worldwide.
3. Responses to the speech by Demetrius (28-34)
 - a. The craftsmen were filled with rage (28-29), *When they heard this they were enraged and were crying out, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" 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.*
 - 1) The crowd was enraged by the thought that Artemis might become unimportant.
 - 2) Many in the crowd did not know the issue concerning Paul and Artemis.
 - 3) The crowd headed to the theater with Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions.
 - a) It is not certain that Gaius is the man mentioned Acts 20:4.
 - b) Aristarchus came from Thessalonica.
 - c) Apparently, they were released without harm.
 - b. Christians feared for Paul's safety (30-31), *But when Paul wished to go in among the crowd, the disciples would not let him. And even some of the Asiarchs, who were friends of his, sent to him and were urging him not to venture into the theater.*
 - 1) Paul wanted to speak to the crowd but was kept from doing so by Christian followers.
 - 2) Some Asiarchs urged Paul not to go into the theater.
 - a) They were political leaders of the cities of the Roman province.
 - b) William Neil, *They were men of substance and influence in the cities of the province of Asia who were or had been presidents of the provincial council.*
 - c) Thomas Constable, *Notice that Paul had made friends with leading men of the city; he did not keep a low profile as he evangelized.*
 - c. The crowd's agitation was fueled by confusion (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.*
 - 1) Some in the crowd knew nothing of the silversmith's grievances but were drawn by the commotion.
 - 2) Thomas Constable, *Most of the people did not understand the reason for the gathering; they just went along for the excitement.*

- d. They were further enraged by Jews who were present (33-34), *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. 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!"*
- 1) Alexander was an unbelieving Jew who was encouraged by other Jews to speak to the crowd.
 - a) Possibly, he wanted to assure the crowd that they did not approve of Paul or his teaching.
 - b) Some believed that Alexander was a worker in copper who made his living making idols. Therefore, Jews weren't aligned with Paul.
 - 2) The crowd recognized him to be a Jew and would not listen to him but cried out for two hours of the greatness of Artemis, Richard Lenski, *There was no leader, no sense, no object and purpose, no consideration even of the foolishness of its own demonstration.*
4. A chief official took charge (35-41)
- a. He reminded the crowd of their devotion to Artemis (35-36), *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? Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash.*
 - 1) The town clerk
 - a) He was equivalent to a modern day mayor.
 - b) Richard Lenski, *...(the town clerk) had charge of the city funds, was in control of the assembly of the citizens when this was called out to transact city affairs, and communicated with the Roman proconsul who governed the entire province.*
 - c) He was eager to keep the peace by ending the demonstration.
 - 2) He quieted the crowd.
 - a) He had a position of authority which demanded their attention.
 - b) They must have been exhausted after several hours of screaming.
 - 3) He reminded the crowd of the greatness of Artemis.
 - a) Everyone was aware of Ephesus' important role as temple keeper of Artemis.
 - b) Also, Artemis was not a false god made by the hands of man since her image in the temple fell straight out of the sky.
 - 4) He encouraged the crowd to calm down and do nothing reckless based on the undeniable facts concerning Artemis which he just proclaimed. - b. He gave reasons why the crowd should disperse (37-40)
 - 1) He encouraged them to calm down and not falsely accuse others of defaming Artemis (37), *For you have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess.*
 - a) *these men* refers to Gaius and Artistarchus as noted in Acts 19:29.
 - b) They had committed no crimes, Thomas Constable, *They had neither physically damaged anything nor had they spoken against Artemis.*
 - c) The town clerk declared that they were
 - 1] *neither sacrilegious*, not temple-destroyers.
 - 2] *nor blasphemers of Artemis*, not those who defame her name.
 - 2) He reminded them that they had the right to take their case to court (38-39), *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. But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly.*
 - a) The town clerk declared that Demetrius should have taken his complaints to court.
 - 1] The courts were open and ready to address concerns of their people.
 - 2] Proconsuls (provincial governors) were available if satisfaction could not be found at that lower level.
 - b) He emphasized that any further concerns must be addressed at the regular assembly.

- 3) He warned them that their behavior could cause them to be accused of rioting (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.*
 - a) The crowd was warned that they could be charged with rioting which could incur fines on the city.
 - b) There was no justifiable reason for the disturbance.
- c. He dismissed the assembly (41), *And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.*
 - 1) The town clerk had gained the attention of the crowd.
 - 2) He dismissed the crowd and they dispersed.
 - 3) Sometimes, cooler heads prevail.

<i>CONCLUSION</i>

- A. Paul's greatness was fueled by godly ambition.
- B. Be careful not to get involved in something just because others do.
- C. God uses unbelievers to promote good and put down evil.