

## Wednesday Evening Bible Study

July 21, 2021

### Series - *The Life and Writings of the Apostle Paul*

#### Lesson One - *Paul's Crossings – Ministry in Ephesus*

Text – Acts 19



### Introduction (v. 1a)

The upper coasts are the places that Paul travelled to (and through) after he had left Antioch; they are mentioned in Acts 18:23:

*"And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples."* (Acts 18:23)

We are not told how long Paul spent in any of the places along the route, but it does not appear that he stayed in any one place very long. It seems that Paul wanted to get back to the city that he had abruptly left at the conclusion of the second journey – Ephesus.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians about the receptivity to the gospel that he found in Ephesus:

*"But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." (1 Corinthians 16:8-9)*

## **Background Information on Ephesus**

1. Paul had briefly visited Ephesus on his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey. (Acts 18:18 – 22)
2. Ephesus was a large city with:
  - a. The Temple of Diana - 425 feet long' 239 feet wide, 55 feet high, and 100 columns. The temple contained many statues and paintings.
  - b. A 30,000 seat theatre
  - c. It was a center of Pagan culture.
3. Leaders of the church at Ephesus included:
  - a. Aquila (and Priscilla)
  - b. Paul (for 3 years)
  - c. Timothy
  - d. The Apostle John (Revelation 2:1 – 7)
4. Paul wrote at least 4 letters to the Church at Corinth while at Ephesus, including 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians.

## **I. Paul Disciples the Seven "Disciples" (vs. 1b – 7)**

Paul inquires about whether or not these disciples had received the Holy Ghost when they believed, of which they replied that didn't know anything about the Holy Ghost.

A. They were originally baptized by John the Baptist

*"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:"*  
(Matthew 3:11)

John's baptism was explained to be a baptism of repentance, preparing people for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. However, it appears that these men knew little about the risen Lord, because they knew nothing about the Holy Ghost.

B. They were re-baptized by Paul

Paul explained the gospel to them, and since there was no evidence that they were genuinely saved prior to their first baptism, Paul re-baptizes them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Note – not everyone that was baptized by John had to be re-baptized. There is no evidence that the apostles were re-baptized. Apollos was said to have also known only the baptism of John, yet the Scriptures do not say that he was re-baptized.

I believe that Apollos was a genuine believer prior to his baptism by John, and there were evidences that demonstrated that. He was “mighty in the Scriptures”; “fervent in the spirit”; and he spoke eloquently about the Lord. These are all signs that there was a genuine conversion.

These 12 men that Paul was dealing with however, did not appear to have a genuine conversion, so Paul re-baptized them. This time, their conversion was followed by evidences of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

### C. They were baptized by the Holy Spirit

In the first century, some believers were given spiritual “sign” gifts by the Holy Spirit. These gifts included “tongues” and “prophecy”.

Paul dealt with the abuse of these sign gifts in his letters to the Church at Corinth, which was written from Ephesus.

He taught:

*"Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe." (1 Corinthians 14:22)*

The word “tongues” here is the Greek word glossa, which means language. In other words these believers were able to communicate the truth of the Bible with people of other languages. Ephesus was a city that contained many different nationalities of people. This gift of “language” was effectively used of the Holy Spirit to get the gospel to all of Asia.

Notice v. 10 – the gospel spread to all of Asia.

*"And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." (Acts 19:10)*

Prophecy is the spiritual gift where God divinely speaks truth through a believer. N. T. doctrine was spoken audibly to the people as the New Testament was not yet written. Up until this point, there were 3 letters written by Paul, and possibly 2 of the gospels (Matthew and Mark); but whether or not the believers in Ephesus had access to the gospels (even if they were written this early) is also unknown.

All of the sign gifts are listed in 1 Corinthians 12:1 – 11.

It is important for us to remember that today the believer is sealed by the Holy Ghost of God at the moment of salvation:

*"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6:19)*

*"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise," (Ephesians 1:13)*

There are Scriptural evidences that the Holy Spirit of God genuinely indwells each believer:

1. A Changed Life

*"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17)*

2. Conviction of Sin

*"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:" (John 16:7-8)*

Notice – the Holy Spirit reproves the world through the Word of God, and through the testimony of believers; but the believer has the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God inside of Him, which means that whenever the believer sins, the Spirit within him will bring conviction.

3. Direction in Life

*"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." (John 16:13)*

4. Spiritual Understanding

*"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Corinthians 2:14)*

5. Spiritual Fruit

*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." (Galatians 5:22-23)*

There is a difference between being indwelt by the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit. Fullness of the Spirit has to do with your surrender to the Holy Spirit's working in your life. Fullness of the Spirit is evidenced by an increased manifestation of the Spirit in each of the aforementioned areas; but it is also evidenced by a zeal for the souls of men, and a power in witnessing:

*"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)*

## II. Paul Disputes in the Synagogues (vs. 8 – 10)

Paul continued his practice of going first to the synagogue.

*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." (Romans 1:16)*

*"But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:" (Romans 2:10)*

Remember that Paul had visited this synagogue previously, at the end of the second journey:

*"And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not; But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus." (Acts 18:19-21)*

Note on v. 9 – *"when divers were hardened"*

This seems to be the raging debate in Christianity today. Does God arbitrarily harden the hearts of certain people? There is a growing numbers of Christians today who are following a doctrine that was first promoted by the Augustine who was a Roman Catholic theologian; and later by Calvin and many other reformers during the reformation. This system of doctrine is called by some "Calvinism" – named after John Calvin, the famous French reformer. It is also loosely known by some as reformed theology.

In this theological system, there are some that are elected, predestined by God for Heaven; and there are others that are predestined, or elected by God to Hell. This decision is made by the decree of God, and man has no choice in the matter whatever.

*"Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." (Romans 9:18)*

Let's go back and look at the preceding verse from Romans 9:

*"For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." (Romans 9:17)*

This is the classic proof text for the Calvinist position. But let's consider carefully their argument. The Calvinist would say that God created Pharaoh for the sole purpose of using Him to demonstrate the supremacy of the power of God, over the enemies of God's people.

The Scripture does say in the Book of Exodus several times that God hardened Pharaoh's heart; but it also says twice that Pharaoh's heart was hardened, without blaming God for the hardening; and it specifically says in three places that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. (Exodus 8:15, 32, 9:24)

So – who is responsible?

Did God harden Pharaoh's heart? – Yes

Was Pharaoh's heart hardened possibly by something else also? Could be.

*"But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." (Hebrews 3:13)*

Did Pharaoh harden his own heart? – Yes

How can we understand this?

God foreknew what Pharaoh would do:

*"And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand." (Exodus 3:19)*

The first time Moses met with Pharaoh, notice what he said:

*"And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness. And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go." (Exodus 5:1 & 2)*

God hardens Pharaoh's heart only after Pharaoh had already stubbornly determined that he would not let the people go. (see Exodus 7)

Predestination and election are all about foreknowledge:

*"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied." (1 Peter 1:2)*

*"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." (Romans 8:29)*

It doesn't say that God hardened Pharaoh eternally either. Pharaoh was hardened only after he had already stubbornly rejected God; and he was hardened for the purpose of shewing God's power to his people.

The Bible also speaks of the nation of Israel being hardened by God (Isaiah 63:17); but it also says that they hardened themselves.

*"Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:" (Hebrews 3:8)*

*"While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation." (Hebrews 3:15)*

*"Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." (Hebrews 4:7)*

The people that God "hardens" are willing participants.

Note – anything that is hardened is already in a certain form. An ice cube (or piece of clay, or a brick) that is hardened has already been shaped into the form that it is.

Judas was a willing participant in the betrayal of Jesus Christ.

The Israelites were willing participants in the rejection of their Messiah.

Did God use their rejection to fulfill another purpose? Yes

*"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in."* (Romans 11:25)

The other part is that Israel loved their sin more than the Saviour.

*"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."* (John 3:19)

Other Verses

*"A wicked man hardeneth his face: but as for the upright, he directeth his way."* (Proverbs 21:29)

*"He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."* (Proverbs 29:1)

The bottom line is that God has hardened people for His purposes, but no man was hardened against his own will; and no man is without excuse when it comes to salvation. You have the power to make a decision for Christ. God does the saving, and God certainly works in our hearts prior to salvation, but the decision to trust Christ is all yours.

These men from the Ephesian synagogue were not hardened by God.

It may have been their religion that hardened them.

It may have been their sin that caused them to stubbornly reject the truth.

It may have been the devil.

*"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."* (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)

But the bottom-line. It was not God. God wants to save people, not damn them. "He so loved the world". "He's not willing that any should perish". He wants people saved.

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: (Acts 17:30)

Read Romans 5:12 – 21

Therefore as by the offence of one [judgment came] upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [the free gift came] upon all men unto justification of life. (Romans 5:18)

The results of these hardened men from the synagogue:

- 1 They were influential on the others in the synagogue.
- 2 Paul had to separate from them. He ended up teaching in the school of Tyrannus.
- 3 The gospel then went forth to all of Asia.

Though it was not God who hardened these men, it appears that God used it for His glory, and man's good because the gospel went forth everywhere as a result of their hardening. What was initially seen as a setback, turned out to be a great bonus for the cause of Christ.

*"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to [his] purpose." (Romans 8:28)*

People will resist what God is doing, and they may even try to stop you from doing the will of God; but God's purposes are going to be accomplished.

### **III. Paul Displays the Power of the Spirit (vs. 11 – 12)**

*"And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them." (Acts 19:11-12)*

Notice in vs. 11 – 12 – Paul was given special gifts of healing.

It is important to note two things from this passage:

1. God worked the miracles through Paul. Paul had no power in himself.

It is important to remember that we are to display the power of God in our lives. We are His ambassadors. We are to show people God. Everything we do should glorify God in the eyes of this world.

2. Paul's gifts were limited to God's purposes. Paul himself had a thorn in the flesh that God would not take away:

*"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." (2 Corinthians 12:7)*

Paul didn't heal Trophimus. I'm sure he would have if he could have.

Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick. (2 Timothy 4:20)

The miracles themselves were not completely unique, though we do not see too much of this kind of miracle in the Bible. There were, however people healed by touching the hem of Jesus' garment (Mark 5:27 – 34 [the woman healed of the issue of blood]; Mark 6:56); and there were also people that were healed by the passing shadow of Peter. (Acts 5:15) These were certainly all special miracles, but it is important to remember in all these cases that it was the Lord who wrought them, and the people that were healed expressed their faith in the God who healed them.

### **IV. The Vagabonds Attempt to Duplicate the Power (vs. 13 – 17)**

*"Then certain of the vagabond [wanderers] Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the*



*man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified." (Acts 19:13-17)*

These people were trying to duplicate the power that was displayed through the Apostle Paul. It may look easy, but unless you are gifted by God to do something, be careful.

You need to also make sure it is something that God is calling you to do. God did not tell these men to do this; it is something that "took upon them"

These men saw the power and the miracles as an end in themselves. The only reason why anybody would attempt to duplicate miracles, or specifically these exorcisms, would be because they wanted to steal God's glory for themselves. They saw Paul do it, and no doubt, the people praised the Lord for what Paul did. These men obviously mistook the Lord's praise for praise for Paul. They also misunderstood the power of God. They thought Paul had the power in himself.

Peter dealt with a similar problem in his ministry. (See Acts 8:17 – 24)

It is also important to note here that the devils knew all about Jesus, and all about Paul. They seemed to be afraid of Paul, not because of anything special about Paul, but because they knew about Paul's relationship with the One they did fear.

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. (James 2:19)

## **V. God Directs a Great Revival in Ephesus (vs. 18 – 20)**

God changed the entire area for the better. This was a great revival. Not only were there a lot of professions of faith, there were also a lot of changed lives, which proved that the professions were genuine. When a genuine revival takes place, it will make a big difference in the community.

Notice v. 18 – there are two ways that we can look at this verse:

1. At first glance, I understood this text was to see that people were getting saved, they were publically professing their faith in Christ, and their lives were changing:

Notice in v. 18, many (not all) of the believers:

A. Came – where? To the place where other believers were gathered. When a revival takes place, there will be an increase in the numbers of people that come and gather together for worship, fellowship, and instruction from the Word of God.

- B. Confessed – They publically confessed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ:

*"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Romans 10:9)*

*"For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." (Romans 10:11)*

*"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 10:32)*

*"Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God:" (Luke 12:8)*

*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." (Romans 1:16)*

*"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;" (2 Timothy 1:8)*

C. They Communicated Their Deeds – “shewed” - ἀναγγέλλω [anaggellō (ä-nän-ge'l-lō)] - they not only talked about their faith in Christ, they also demonstrated that their faith had in fact changed them. There were things that were done by these believers that could be seen by others. V. 19 gives an example of one type of “deed” that was done.

2. The other way to look at this verse is that there were believers who were caught up in the occult practices that was prevalent in Ephesus, but because of what had happened to the exorcists, and also because of the great movement of God that was taking place it caused the believers to fear, and so they came to confess their deeds – the bad things that were doing. They publically came to get things right. The word translated “deeds” is the word πράξις [praxis (prä'-ksēs)], which is usually used to refer to deeds of the flesh. (Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:9)

I believe the context would support the second view, though an application of the first interpretation would not be wrong principally.

The bottom line is that this revival that was taking place in Ephesus made a visible difference in the neighborhood. Things were different. People were doing some wonderful things, and people were refraining from doing some things; all because they believed. Faith in the heart, if it is real, will eventually manifest itself into the life. You will not be able to maintain on the outside for long, what is not genuinely residing on the inside.

Notice in v. 20, a statement similar to 6 others in the Book of Acts:

*"So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." (Acts 19:20; see also 2:47; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 28:30–31)*

### **Finney Illustration:**

While making my home in Utica, I preached frequently in New Hartford, a village four miles south of Utica. There was a precious and powerful work of grace, a Mr. Coe being at the time pastor of the Presbyterian church. I preached also at Whitesboro, another beautiful village, four miles west of Utica; where also was a powerful revival. The pastor, Mr. John Frost, was a most efficient laborer in the work.

A circumstance occurred in this neighborhood, which I must not fail to notice. There was a cotton manufactory on the Oriskany creek, a little above Whitesboro, a place now called New York Mills. It was owned by a Mr. W, an unconverted man, but a gentleman of high standing

and good morals. My brother-in-law, Mr. G A, was at that time superintendent of the factory. I was invited to go and preach at that place, and went up one evening, and preached in the village schoolhouse, which was large, and was crowded with hearers. The Word, I could see, took powerful effect among the people, especially among the young people who were at work in the factory.

The next morning, after breakfast, I went into the factory, to look through it. As I went through, I observed there was a good deal of agitation among those who were busy at their looms, and their mules, and other implements of work. On passing through one of the apartments, where a great number of young women were attending to their weaving, I observed a couple of them eyeing me, and speaking very earnestly to each other; and I could see that they were a good deal agitated, although they both laughed. I went slowly toward them. They saw me coming, and were evidently much excited. One of them was trying to mend a broken thread, and I observed that her hands trembled so that she could not mend it. I approached slowly, looking on each side at the machinery, as I passed; but observed that this girl grew more and more agitated, and could not proceed with her work. When I came within eight or ten feet of her, I looked solemnly at her. She observed it, and was quite overcome, and sunk down, and burst into tears. The impression caught almost like powder, and in a few moments nearly all in the room were in tears. This feeling spread through the factory. Mr. W, the owner of the establishment, was present, and seeing the state of things, he said to the superintendent, "Stop the mill, and let the people attend to religion; for it is more important that our souls should be saved than that this factory run." The gate was immediately shut down, and the factory stopped; but where should we assemble? The superintendent suggested that the mule room was large; and, the mules being run up, we could assemble there. We did so, and a more powerful meeting I scarcely ever attended. It went on with great power. The building was large, and had many people in it, from the garret to the cellar. The revival went through the mill with astonishing power, and in the course of a few days nearly all in the mill were hopefully converted. Finney, Charles G. (2010-03-30). Autobiography of Charles G. Finney (Kindle Locations 2956-2979). Unknown. Kindle Edition.

## **VI. A Great Disturbance in Ephesus Caused by Demetrius (vs. 21 – 41)**

### **A. Paul Delays "His" Purpose to Return to Jerusalem (vs. 21 – 22)**

Notice the text says that Paul purposed "in the spirit". There is no capital "S" here. This was Paul's purpose, not God's. We will see in Acts 21 that The Holy Spirit (capital "S") warns him twice not to go; and then in 22, after Paul arrives in Jerusalem, Jesus appears to him and tells him to leave Jerusalem "quickly".

For some unknown reason, Paul delays His purpose. His original intent was to travel back through Achaia and Macedonia (see Map), and then head back to Jerusalem. Instead he sends Timothy and Erastus to re-visit the Macedonian churches.

One of the reasons why Paul wanted to head back through Achaia and Macedonia was to collect an offering for the saints at Jerusalem.

*"Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings." (Acts 24:17)*

See Romans 15:25 – 33 (Note – Romans was written from Corinth probably while Paul revisited Corinth as he passed through Achaia and Macedonia); 1 Corinthians 16:1 – 11.

It is possible that Paul delayed leaving the area because of the problems in Corinth. 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians (and at least two other letters) were written from Ephesus. (See 2 Corinthian Teachers Notes)

See 1 Corinthians 4:14 - 21

We are very familiar with Timothy, but Erastus is only mentioned 3 times in the New Testament. Assuming that each references the same person, Erastus was the “chamberlain” of the city of Corinth. He is mentioned in Romans 16:23, which was written from Corinth most likely after the events that we are now examining; and he is mentioned again in 2 Timothy 4:20 (Paul’s last letter) as remaining in Corinth.

#### B. The Silversmiths Determine To Regain Their Lost Business (vs. 23 – 34)

Notice - “that way” in v. 23 (compare with v. 9)

This is the meat of this section. Here we learn that some local silversmiths (led by Demetrius) incite a riot because they have lost a lot of money as a result of people converting to Christianity. They were no longer selling many statues of the goddess Diana.

Diana is the Roman name for the Greek goddess Artemis.

The temple of Artemis was indeed a hub of Ephesian economic life. It was an impressive building, some 165 feet by 345 feet in dimension and built on a platform 240 by 420 feet. The entire edifice was elaborately adorned in brilliant colors and gold leaf. The altar area was 20 feet square and contained a massive image of the goddess with a veiled head, with animals and birds decorating her head and lower body and numerous breasts from her waist to her neck. The animals and breasts were symbolic of her status as the ancient Asian Mother Goddess, the goddess of nature who was believed to protect and preserve the fecundity (means fertility) of all living things. (Polhill, J. B. (1995). Acts. The New American Commentary (Vol. 26, pp. 408–409). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Some believe the original statue (see v. 35) was actually a meteorite that resembled a woman with many breasts.

We have already seen in this chapter that persecution to Christianity came because of religion, and now we see here that persecution comes because of money:

*"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Timothy 6:10)*

Even though the root cause of their anger was a loss of money, they use religion to incite the violent mob.

Notice in v. 31 – certain of “the chief of Asia”, which were his friends. Paul was not involved in this dispute at all, though he was certainly instrumental in causing their anger. He was warned by some prominent friends of his to stay out of the theatre. These “Asiarches” were very wealthy and prominent citizens in the community, and Paul was friends with them; and they helped Paul out of this jam.

Notice in vs. 33 – 34 – The Jews put a man named Alexander at the forefront of the riot, and he tried to speak on behalf of the Jews, but the crowd shut him down. It is believed that there was a good deal of friction between the Jews and the Gentiles of Ephesus:

The reasons for this hostility from the wider city of Ephesus may include the social distinctiveness of Jewish religious practices, that Jews were generally non-citizens, the lack of tolerance by the city, that Jewish rights were supported by Roman intervention in the affairs of the city, that the Jewish communities wished to send significant amounts of money (as Temple tax) out of the city and region to Jerusalem. [Paul Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 40 – 41]

The Jews were no doubt attempting to convince these angry Ephesians that they had nothing to do with Paul and his Christian brothers and sisters.

### C. The Ephesian Authorities Dispel The Mob (vs. 35 – 41)

Benjamin Franklin said that a mob was “a monster heads enough, but no brains.”

Here is another case where the secular authorities were a friend to the church. We saw in Acts 18, Gallio, the deputy of Achaia, protected Paul from the Jews.

Notice – “robbers of churches” – not ecclesia here. The word literally means temple desecrator or temple thief.

This whole ordeal that Paul and the other Christians endured may have been the reason that Paul wrote:

*"If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die." (1 Corinthians 15:32)*

*"Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles." (Romans 16:3-4)*

*"For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us; Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf." (2 Corinthians 1:8-11)*

### Practical Points

1. Religion will attempt to shut down the gospel. (i.e. the Jews in Ephesus, as well as the devout followers of Artemis / Diana)
2. Greed will try to shut down the gospel. (i.e. – the businessmen in the community – Illustrate – Rev. George Siebold complained about a new liquor license being issued in his town – the next day the township officials came in and shut him down.)
3. Wickedness will try to shut down the gospel. (not in this text – but we are seeing the opposition to Biblical principles in our nation today by the homosexual crowd, and others who promote immorality.)

But none of these things can be effective when you are preaching God's Word, in the power of the Holy Spirit, in the specific place that He has called you to go. It may temporarily look like you are losing but if God is in what you are doing you cannot be shut down.