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Acts 19:8 - 41



Acts - Steve Gregg

In Acts 19:8-41, Steve Gregg discusses Paul's third missionary tour and his time in Ephesus. In this region, Paul converted many and confronted occult and demonic activity. Despite opposition from Jewish exorcists and rioting caused by local craftsmen whose business was impacted by Paul's teachings, the word of the Lord grew and prevailed in Ephesus. Additionally, the burning of books of magic by those in the region who were moved by Paul's message demonstrated the transformative impact of his ministry.

Transcript

Okay, we're turning to Acts chapter 19. And we already looked at the first seven verses. Paul is already on his third and final missionary tour.

There will be another journey he will make, his fourth journey, but it will not be a missionary tour per se. He'll be a prisoner, traveling to Rome in chains. That does not mean he ceases to do missionary activities, but he's not at liberty to, and it wasn't intentional for him to go on that as a missionary tour.

But this is his last intentional missionary tour. He has gone through the regions of Galatia. We're looking at chapter 18, verse 23.

He went through the regions of Galatia, Phrygia, and then he came to Ephesus, which is the chief city and capital of the province of Asia Minor. And this is where he settles for the whole chapter. He pretty much stays in Ephesus for this whole chapter, after which he goes back to Corinth.

He's been to Corinth already, but he's going to go back there. When he first came to Ephesus, apparently among the first people he met were persons who had known the baptism of John and nothing more. So he fills them in, and he baptizes them, and brings them into the full Christian experience in the first seven verses.

And then, beginning at verse 8, he begins the normal kind of activity he generally does when he comes into a town. He goes into the synagogue to evangelize the Jews there.

Now, by the way, these Jews in this synagogue knew him and were favorably disposed toward him, which is pretty unusual.

Synagogues are not usually very open to Paul. In fact, they drive him out pretty quickly. This synagogue, as we shall see, allows him to preach for three months in the synagogue before they drive him out.

And perhaps the reason he was able to be there so long with their welcome is that they had earlier asked him to stay. When he had passed briefly through Ephesus, you may remember on his way to Jerusalem, returning homeward from his second missionary journey, he had stopped in at Ephesus. Priscilla and Akula had been with him.

He left them there and moved on, but not before he preached one Sabbath in the synagogue. And the people, the Jews of the synagogue, begged him to stay and preach more. And he said, I need to get to Jerusalem before the feast.

So he said, I'll come back if God wills. So they were eager to hear him. They actually wanted to hear more from him, and he left them wanting more.

That's always good for a preacher to do, you know, make people think the sermon is too short rather than too long and they'll come back. And so that's that's how it was. So when he came back, they were eager already.

They'd been waiting for him to come and they had wanted to hear what he had to say. So they gave him a much longer opportunity to speak in the synagogues than most of the towns did. We read in verse eight, he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months.

It doesn't mean he never took a breath during that three months, but he spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. Now, the term kingdom of God has come up quite a bit in Acts, perhaps not quite as often as in the Gospels, because Jesus was continually talking about the kingdom of God. His parables were about the kingdom.

He began by saying the kingdom of God was at hand before long. He was in the kingdom of God is in your midst. The kingdom of God has overtaken you.

And now the apostles are spreading the message of the kingdom of God. It's not always stated that that's what they're talking about in every city they go to, but that is the message. Jesus said in Matthew 24, 14, this gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations.

And then the end shall come. So it's the gospel of the kingdom that's being preached. And he spends three months speaking to them about things concerning the kingdom of God.

And when some were hardened and did not believe. But spoke evil of the way. Remember, the way is a term that's used for Christianity or the Christian message.

We find it called that again in this chapter later on in verse 23. It says in about that time there arose great commotion about the way. The way is a reference to the Christian movement, the Christian, what we call Christianity today.

Some spoke evil of the way before the multitude. He departed from them and withdrew the disciples reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. Now, Tyrannus must have been a local teacher, a secular teacher.

He had a school or a lecture hall of some kind. He was perhaps a philosopher or an educator who had students and he had his own facilities. And as often happens today, churches, you know, they don't have church buildings.

Often they'll rent a, you know, a hall that's available to be rented by the public. And Tyrannus apparently only taught in the cool hours of the day. According to the Western text of this passage, it says that Paul taught each day from 11 in the morning till 4 in the afternoon.

That would be the hot hours of the day when lots of people want to be taking siesta. And so probably since the day began at 6 o'clock, the first four hours of the day, Tyrannus taught in his own school. But he had it kind of available for rent.

I assume for rent. He might have allowed Paul to use it for free, but there's no indication this man's a Christian. He's just a landlord as far as we know.

So Paul probably rented this school and taught it every day. Tyrannus, interestingly enough, in Latin means tyrant. And commentators, when they mention this often say they wonder whether this is the name his parents gave him or his students.

But it's interesting the man's name would be Tyrant. But he let them use the school. So Paul starts out in the synagogue and moves out of the synagogue when he has to into another place.

Remember in Corinth, he moved out of the synagogue into the house of justice and continued to work there. The church generally met in homes, but there were also public gatherings, larger gatherings. And Tyrannus school probably is large enough for the larger gatherings that Paul was teaching in.

So it says this continued for two years. Now, later on in chapter 20 and verse 31, when Paul is rehearsing among the elders of Ephesus, the life he had had among them, he says there that he'd been with them for three years. In chapter 20, verse 31, it says, Here we read he continued in the school of Tyrannus for two years.

But there was, of course, the three months before that when he was in the synagogue. And there is a story that takes place at the end of the chapter at the end of his stay, which probably took place outside the two years. It probably interrupted his teachings in the school of Tyrannus.

But to the Jewish mind, a part of a year was considered a year. So three years inclusive would really only mean necessarily two years and a little more of another year. So even if he's only there two years, three months, he could speak of that in the manner of speaking of the time is a time of three years.

In any case, we know that when he was expelled from the synagogue, he continued for another two years. So that all who dwell in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. So he's in Ephesus, the capital of the province of Asia.

And while he's there for two years teaching, all of Asia hears. Now, the seven churches of Asia that are mentioned in Revelation would be among the churches that were founded at this time. Just north of Ephesus was Smyrna.

And there was also Thyatira and Pergamum and Sardis and Philadelphia and Laodicea. There was also besides those seven churches of Asia mentioned in Revelation, there were some more. Colossi was in Asia.

Hierapolis was in Asia and also Troas was in Asia. There were churches in all those places, as we shall see. So there are at least 10 churches known to us from the Bible in Asia.

There could have been others that are not mentioned. And all of these probably were founded during this two years that Paul was stationed in Ephesus. I say stationed because he didn't stay in Ephesus every day.

He went out. We have evidence of this. In fact, in Second Corinthians, which he wrote at the end of this day, mentioned certain places that he went.

He had preached in Troas. He'd actually made a trip to Macedonia during this time. He traveled around a little bit.

And Colossi, for example, a church in Asia that was founded around this time. We know Paul did not found that church because he actually says to the Colossians in Colossians 1-7 that their church was founded by a companion of Paul's named Epaphras. And this man was probably an Asian Christian, maybe converted in Ephesus, and who became an associate of Paul's, a deputy of his, to go out and start, for example, the church of Colossi.

It's possible. Actually, Epaphras was probably a Colossian himself. But because Ephesus was such a central commercial part of Asia, people from all these other towns would

come there for business.

And in all likelihood, since Paul tells the Colossians that Epaphras is one of their own, meaning he's a Colossian, he must have come to Ephesus, met Paul, gotten converted, and gone back and converted his friends and family and started the church of Colossi. This may be how other churches in Asia got started, too. Paul didn't necessarily have to go to all these places, though he may have gone to some of them.

But simply people from those towns coming to Ephesus would providentially run into Paul. Just like Onesimus, the runaway slave of Philemon, came to Rome, apparently, and providentially ran into Paul and got saved and went back to Colossi, as it turns out. He's from Colossi also.

But during this two years was a tremendous expansion in this region, which is now modern Turkey, of the gospel of the kingdom of God. And these churches were planted and many of them, of course, healthy. As we know from the letters, the seven letters, the seven churches in the Book of Revelation, not all of them were healthy, but there were some who were.

The Church of Philadelphia, the Church of Smyrna are both churches that Jesus can only commend in Revelation 2 and 3. There are a couple of churches he can only condemn. One was Laodicea and one was Sardis. But the other churches that Jesus addressed had some strengths and some weaknesses.

He had some things to commend them for and some things to rebuke them for, as is probably the case with most churches. But these were churches that lasted a long time. Now, these churches aren't there anymore.

Even the city of Ephesus isn't really there anymore. The city of Ephesus is today a Yassaluk. I don't know if that's pronounced correctly.

OK, I couldn't quite make out the syllables there, but there's something there, a village. But it's not on the exact side, because Ephesus was at the river mouth on the coast. And they had to continually clean out the silt from that river mouth because it tended to fill in.

And at some point, neglect caused that whole river mouth to become silted over, so it's not a harbor anymore. And Ephesus is not the city that it once was. And many of the cities that had churches, either the cities are gone or the churches at least are gone.

I'm told that there is a small group still in Izmir, Turkey, which was Smyrna in Bible times. And there is a fellowship of some sort near Philadelphia, I believe. But for the most part, most of the churches of Asia are not there now, but they were for centuries.

It's not that Paul didn't produce fruit that remained. It did remain for centuries. It's just in

many cases, the Islamic invasion tended to eradicate the influence of Christianity in that region.

There were other factors probably, too. But the fact is that Paul started churches at this time, which lasted for a very long time, for centuries. Now, the fact that many of these churches are gone now, virtually all of them are gone now, makes you think, well, what a shame, what a waste.

Paul's efforts were wasted then. But not so. I mean, it is a shame that Turkey is in the condition it's in now, spiritually.

But for several centuries, thousands and thousands of people from that region actually became believers and followed Christ probably to their death. And besides that, you and I are here, Christians, because of Paul's efforts. Not necessarily his efforts in that town, but his efforts in general.

So not every church lasts forever. But sometimes old ones go down and new ones come up, and there's new churches being founded all the time. And Paul's efforts are very much to be credited with, frankly, the continuing presence of the Christian witness in the Gentile world.

Now, during this two years, these two years in Ephesus, that's the longest time Paul spent in any city that we know of. The second longest was Corinth, and we read he stayed 18 months there. But this city, he stayed two years and more.

He called it three years in the city. And those years were characterized by two significant things that were unusual for Paul. One was an unusually large number of unusual miracles.

We read that in verse 11. Now, God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them. Now, healings and exorcisms of demons, that's not all that unusual in either the mystery of Jesus or the apostles, but for it to happen without Paul ever seeing the subject is unusual.

It's like when Peter was walking down the street and his shadow fell on the sick and healed them, or when Jesus could heal from a distance, or when a person could touch Jesus' garment and be healed. These are, you know, this is different than a deliberate healing in the presence of the person. I mean, this is an unusual kind of a miracle that apparently was happening a lot.

This almost, but not quite, gives credence to the whole idea of relics, you know. The Roman Catholics have some superstitious ideas if you have a splinter from the cross, or if you have, you know, a toenail clipping of St. Andrew or someone, you know, that this will bring blessing into your life in some way. I don't think that's true at all.

There's no biblical basis for it, but this is almost the same kind of thing. Paul's hanky, you know. Now, there's ministers today that will offer to send you their hanky, or at least a small piece of it, for a sizable donation.

And they suggest that, like Paul, their hankies can heal you. You can put it in your shoe, and it'll protect you wherever you go. Put it in your wallet, you'll never run out of money.

Put it under your pillow, no one will break into your house while you sleep. It's magic. That's exactly what these people are suggesting.

Now, Paul wasn't doing magic. The Holy Spirit was working unusual miracles. If the Holy Spirit's not working unusual miracles, your hanky's going to do no good to a demon-possessed person.

You can send it to him in the mail. And it's amazing to me how audacious it is for modern preachers who give no evidence of having the kind of authority Paul had. That they think that you can just send them money, and they can send you a hanky, and what happened with Paul will happen with them.

They don't realize it actually says these are even special for Paul. Paul didn't do this everywhere. As far as we know, the other apostles didn't do this kind of thing.

These were unusual miracles at this time. But demons were growing out of people. By the way, Ephesus was very well known for its obsession with magic and the occult.

In fact, in those days in the Roman Empire, books about magic spells were actually called Ephesian scripts or Ephesian letters. Because Ephesus was so known as a center for magic. Later on in this chapter, we'll see that the people who got converted, they brought all their magic books and burned them.

And there was a big pile of them, and they were worth a lot of money. We're told the value of it in a moment. We'll see it.

But you can see there's a lot of occult activity in that town. A lot of magic, a lot of demonic stuff. And Paul apparently didn't have time to go around to every demon-possessed person in that big city.

So if someone heard about him and said, hey, my mother's demon-possessed, my daughter's demon-possessed, they can come get a sweatband. And that's what the word handkerchief means. It's a sweatband.

It's pretty hot, and Paul was a laboring man. He made tents. And so he'd wear a sweatband.

That's what the meaning of the word handkerchief is. So they'd take his sweatband and take it to their demon-possessed friend or relative, and the demons would come out.

That's unusual.

Don't think that because that happened here, you can necessarily do that. Or that any preacher you know can necessarily do that. So we see that one of the things that happened out of the ordinary while Paul was in Ephesus was unusual miracles, but along with it was unusual suffering.

Now, actually, Acts does not record in detail very much of Paul's suffering at this time. But Paul in his writings makes reference to it. When he writes to the Corinthians, he was actually still in Ephesus when he wrote 1 Corinthians.

That's another thing that happened during this two years. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians during that time. And when he wrote to the Corinthians, and he's defending his doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, one thing he says in 1 Corinthians 15, verse 30, is, Why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? I affirm by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

If in the manner of men I have fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is that to me if the dead do not rise? So he describes his experience at Ephesus as like he's fighting with wild beasts. Now, some people think Paul may have actually been arrested and put in the arena with wild beasts and God delivered him like Daniel or something. But it's more probable that Paul is using this metaphorically, that the kind of opponents he has are like wild beasts.

After all, both Peter and Jude in 2 Peter 2 and the book of Jude refer to false teachers in the church as brute beasts. And so he's probably thinking of human beasts that he's fighting, ravenous beasts that want to destroy him. He says he dies daily, which only means, preachers sometimes or individual Christians think, that means, oh, I die to myself, I have to die to myself daily.

That's not what he means. He means I'm facing death daily, every single day. It could be my last.

In my own mind, I'm dying every day. And I know what he means because I once, years ago, I received a rumor. I didn't know if it was true or not, but a man who I knew hated me had let it out to somebody that he had put a contract out on me.

And through the grapevine, this report came back to me and said, do you know he put a contract out on you? Well, I didn't know if he had or not, but he could have. He was the type and he was so disposed and I thought maybe he did. I remember every day you walk out of the door and you think there could be a contract on him.

Someone could be waiting out there to kill me. And in your own mind, you die daily. Frankly, it was a very positive experience.

You just stay close to God. And, of course, I try to anyway, but I've always been ready to die. So it's never been a problem.

If someone said someone's going to kill you today, okay, this is the day. I know it's going to happen someday. Why not today? What day would be better? Yeah, what day would be better than today? And why would it be better then? But I do know that thinking there's a sort of Damocles hanging over my head, that there's a person out there perhaps who's being paid to end it for me, that when I go outside, I think, well, maybe someone will be in a car across the street or in a building across the street or down an alley that I'll be walking by.

You never know. And I know what it means to say I die daily. And that's what Paul is actually saying.

He says we stand in jeopardy every hour. I die daily. I've wrestled with wild beasts in Ephesus.

Why would I do that if the dead don't rise? Now, later, when Paul left Ephesus at the end of chapter 19 and went to Macedonia, he then wrote 2 Corinthians. And in 2 Corinthians 1, he reflects back on his time in Asia, the two years we're talking about here. And in 2 Corinthians 1, verse 8 through 10, Paul says, For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia.

That's Ephesus when he's in Ephesus. That we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves.

That we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us, in whom we trust that he will still deliver us. Now, Paul says, I don't want you to be unaware, brethren, when I was in Asia, it was really rough. I mean, we were troubled beyond measure, above our own strength.

We despaired of life. But that's okay, because I just made us trust in God who raises the dead, and not in ourselves. That's a positive thing.

But it didn't feel positive. No suffering at the present time, no chastening seems joyous, but grievous. But afterwards, it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who are exercised by it.

But at the time, it's no fun. And it was those two years that Paul was going through this situation where he despaired even of his life. He wrestled with wild beasts.

He stood in jeopardy every hour. Now, Paul was always more or less in danger, but this kind of language sounds pretty extreme. And therefore, we could say that Paul was in unusual danger and hardship, but he also seen unusual miracles.

And perhaps they were related. Perhaps it was because of the unusual danger that he received the encouragement and support of the Holy Spirit to the extent that he received in terms of having special miracles brought by his hands. Or maybe it's the other way around.

Maybe it's because of the special miracles, the special working of the Holy Spirit, that the devil launched a special attack on him. Or both. The two could feed each other.

In any case, both of these things characterized his time in Ephesus, we read in Scripture. Now, chapter 19, verse 13. Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call on the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, We admonish you by Jesus, whom Paul preaches.

Now, the magicians in Ephesus had spells for exorcism. And some of these have survived. Some of these Ephesian scripts have survived.

There's museums that have quite a collection of them. And most of it is nonsensical gibberish. But a lot of it is an attempt to invoke divine names and titles.

The magicians thought that they could get power over the demons by uttering the names of divine beings. And these guys were Jewish, so you might say, Well, they wouldn't be magicians. They'd be more like regular Jewish exorcists.

Jesus pointed out to the Pharisees that they had exorcists. Remember when they said he was casting out demons by bells above? He said, If I'm doing that, who are your sons casting demons out by? He knew they had exorcists that were casting out demons. Not as successfully as he did, certainly.

But, you know, just like the Catholic Church has exorcists. Apparently, demons go out once in a while, but they had an awful lot of rigmarole to go through. Jesus and the apostles didn't have to do that.

They just commanded a demon, and the demon recognized their authority. But the Jews, sort of like the Catholic exorcists, they had these rituals and so forth. And most of it was hocus-pocus.

Most of it was superstition and magic, which is a lot like the Catholic rituals, too, of exorcism, as a matter of fact. But there's not much resemblance between these exorcisms and what Jesus did or the apostles did. But because it was clear to these Jewish exorcists, and there were seven in particular who were all the sons of one man, a man named Sceva, who's described as a chief priest.

It says in verse 14, there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. Now, there was no chief priest in Israel called Sceva, and no chief priest of Jews was in Ephesus. The chief priests were serving in the temple in Jerusalem.

There were priests scattered around different places. That is, Levites descended from Aaron might be in the diaspora anywhere, but the chief priest was a very specific title for the high priest and his close associates in the temple. This man almost certainly was not one of those.

He might have been a relative of the chief priest, and that might be why he's called that. Or I think most believe that it's just a title he assumed upon himself, that he was a Jewish guy who wanted to get some status, and he's a fake, and he called himself a chief priest so that he'd get respect from people as an expert, especially on the divine name. Who but a chief priest of the Jews would know how to pronounce the divine name? The very thing that even the magicians in Ephesus, from their letters that have survived, there are attempts at pronunciation of Yahweh.

You can see it spelled different ways in their letters, trying to pronounce the divine name Yahweh. Well, who would be a better expert than a chief priest? I think Sceva could have been a fake. He was Jewish, to be sure, but it sounds like he and his sons were more of the magical class than the orthodox Jewish order.

We don't know anything else about him but what we read here, but it does say that these seven sons decided to test out the name of Jesus, the divine name of Jesus, upon a demon-possessed man, see how it works. They saw how it was working for Paul. He definitely was getting better results than they had ever seen, so let's try his formula.

In verse 14, there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. Did what? Did what it says in the previous verse. They addressed a demon and said, We adjure you in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches.

Take him out. Well, it didn't work out well for them. In verse 15, the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you? Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of the house naked and wounded.

One guy taking on seven men. He's tougher than Liam Neeson, I'll tell you. But seven men were beaten up and their clothes stripped off.

They're wounded. They're running out in the street. It's a huge embarrassment for them, but it was a tremendous testimony to Jesus.

As we see, the very next verse says, This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus, and fear fell on them, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. I guess people got the idea, you don't toy around with this name Jesus. You don't just take it and try it out.

See how it works on a demon. If you're not part of Jesus, if you're not one of his members of his body, then his name is not yours. Now if you're in Christ, his name is yours.

But these guys were not in Christ, and they're trying to invoke the name. It's clear how unfamiliar they are with it when they say, The name of Jesus whom Paul preaches. In other words, we don't know who this Jesus is, but we know there's another guy in town using this name.

His name is Paul. That's the one we're talking about. And they said, Well, we acknowledge Jesus, the demons say.

We acknowledge Paul. We know who they are. We respect their authority, but we don't respect yours.

Who are you? We don't acknowledge you. And then that was when things got really bad. The man leaped on them and beat them up.

And this was apparently a significant news item. Everyone in town heard about it. These guys were shamed, obviously, terribly, but the name of the Lord was magnified as a result of it.

And many who had believed, verse 18, came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all, and they counted up the value of them, and it totaled 50,000 pieces of silver, or 50,000 drachmas. A drachma was a day's wage for an average laborer.

So this would be the price of a person working for 50,000 days. That would be the value of these books. Or, to put it otherwise, it would be more than 150 men's annual wage.

So the annual wage of over 150 people was the value of these books. I mean, think of a, let's just say, a really poor, today, in our economy. What would be an average working man's annual wage? Maybe, is 30,000 about right? I don't know.

It's hard to tell. It's changing. But \$30,000 isn't much to live on.

The average laborer probably makes more than that. Maybe closer to 50. So multiply that by 150.

150 annual wages. That's, I'm not doing the math, but that's how much these books were worth. And it shows how much they were willing to sacrifice in order to be sincerely converted.

They came, it says, confessing their sins. This is not common. At least, it's not recorded in Scripture that when people got saved, they came and confessed their sins and all their deeds.

We do see that happening in Matthew chapter 3, in verse 6, when John the Baptist was baptizing. It says, in Matthew 3, 6, that the people came to him to be baptized, confessing their sin. And so here also, the magicians are confessing their sins.

Now, it may be that that's specifically noted here because demon possession was such a normal phenomenon in Ephesus. Obviously, a great number of demon-possessed people were being delivered. Some people would say that demon possession is a condition that if you've been involved in magic in the ark hole, you've given permission for those demons to come in.

Part of not giving them permission to stay is to confess those sins and to renounce them. And then deliverance would come more readily. I don't know if that's how that was understood, but confession of sins is not mentioned elsewhere in the book of Acts as a factor in people coming to the Lord.

Though it may have been more common than is mentioned. Also, many of those who had practiced magic, oh, we read that. And so verse 20, so the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

So you can see there's a real Jesus movement revival going on in Ephesus. Multitudes are coming to Christ and miracles are being done. They are being recognized as being from Christ.

People are being converted. They're facing a culture that's got a lot of demonic occultic activity. But in every way, as always, the gospel confronts the occult and defeats it.

And shows the impotence of other efforts to defeat the occult, as in the case of the seven sons of Sceva. They were impotent to say the least. Verse 21.

Now, when these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, after I have been there, I must also see Rome. Now, at this point, while Paul is still in Ephesus, he starts to get it in his mind that he should go to Rome, but first to Jerusalem. Now, we know this was his plan when he wrote the book of Romans.

And it's around this time that he wrote the book of Romans. Not while he was in Ephesus, but later when he came out, as we shall see, in the early part of chapter 20, he goes, or the latter part of this chapter, no, it's the first verses of chapter 20, he goes back to Corinth. And that's where he writes the book from.

But at this point, before he's left Ephesus, it's now become part of his plan. I'm going to go to Rome. First I go to Jerusalem, then I go to Rome.

But before he was going to go to Jerusalem, he's going to go back to Macedonia. And Achaia, back to Greece. And he doesn't say why, but the obvious reason would be he needs to check on the health of the churches there.

In Macedonia, he left churches in Philippi and in Thessalonica and in Berea. In some of these churches, he had left them under persecution. And then down in Achaia, of course,

he had primarily the church of Corinth.

And so he was going to go back there, then he was going to go to Jerusalem, then he was going to go to Rome. That's the plan he makes here. Now, it's interesting that it tells about that plan here.

Because immediately after this, there's a story told that gets him driven out of Ephesus by persecution. And one might say, well, Paul left Ephesus only because he was persecuted. No, Luke tells us he was already planning to go.

He was already making plans to go. It's just that before he could get away, this persecution broke out and it simply expedited his plans to leave. Verse 22 says, So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus.

But he himself stayed in Asia for a time. So he didn't leave Ephesus yet. He's planning to go to Macedonia and Achaia.

So with that plan in view, he sends a couple of his of his lieutenants to go ahead of him to Macedonia to sort of just, you know, prepare the way for him to go. Now, who are these guys? Timothy, we know very well. He's one of the main team members on the on the lean team that Paul is traveling with.

Timothy and Silas and Paul had been the whole team initially. Then Luke. Now, Luke, apparently we won't talk about Luke quite at this moment.

He's he rejoins them soon. He was left at Philippi before. So Timothy, we know, but who's Erastus? Well, Erastus is mentioned by Paul in a couple of other places.

In Second Timothy, chapter four and verse 20. He tells Timothy Erastus stayed in Corinth, but Trophimus I've left in Meletus sick. We're going to encounter Trophimus a little while later, too.

But Erastus stayed in Corinth. Now he's writing to Timothy, who is in Ephesus. Paul, when he wrote Second Timothy, was apparently in prison in Rome.

And Erastus was in Corinth, which actually was his hometown. And we know this because Paul wrote to Rome in Romans, chapter 16. He's writing from Corinth.

And he's sending greetings from Corinthian Christians to Roman Christians. And in this particular verse in Romans 16, 23, he says. Gaius, the host, my host and that of the whole church, greets you.

Erastus, the treasurer of the city, that is, the treasurer of Corinth, where he's writing from. Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you and quarters a brother. Now, Erastus was the city treasurer of Corinth, but obviously became a Christian and a traveling partner of Paul.

One thing is interesting, and one of the several ways that archaeology has confirmed things in Scripture, is that in Corinth a pavement has been uncovered from this period that mentions, it says, this pavement was laid by Erastus, the city treasurer, at his own expense. So we know that there was a city treasurer in Corinth at this time named Erastus. And he apparently left his job when he began to travel with Paul, because we find him here with Paul in Ephesus.

And Paul sends him back to Greece with Timothy to sort of pave the way for him to come back too. But he himself, verse 22, Acts 19, 22, stayed in Asia for a time. And while he was there, trouble broke out, as we'll see.

About that time there arose a great commotion about the way for certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsman. Now, the New King James says Diana. I'm pretty sure the King James says Diana.

In the Greek, it's the word Artemis. Artemis is the name of the goddess who is also known as Diana. And Ephesus was the guardian of the temple of Diana, a magnificent temple of Diana, which was at that time one of the seven wonders of the world.

You've heard the expression, the seven wonders of the world. I can't name all seven for you, but the temple of Diana in Ephesus was one of them on the list, a magnificent temple to this goddess. In the temple, it housed an artifact, which they took to be an image of the goddess Diana, but they said it fell from heaven from Zeus.

Scholars believe it was probably just a meteorite. And whether they carved it into an image or it looked roughly like a woman, and they said, ah, it's an image of Diana. We'll put it in the temple.

We don't know. But this was a geographic fact about Ephesus. This great temple to Diana was there.

There was actually an image of her, as they called it, that had fallen from heaven in this temple. And they were very proud of that. And so and also, of course, Ephesus being a commercial center, people would come there and they'd be exposed to Diana worship.

And there were a whole industry of silversmiths who made little silver images of shrines to Diana and sold them. Now, their business was being compromised by people being converted, because people who are converted to Christ do not worship goddesses, and they don't buy trinkets commemorating goddesses. And so these guys were seeing their business cut into, just like the guys in Philippi who owned the slave girl, who was able to tell fortunes until Paul delivered her from demons.

And then she couldn't do it. They threw Paul in jail because their bottom line had been adversely affected by the success of Christianity. That was happening to the silversmiths

in Ephesus also.

It says a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines of Diana or Artemis, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. He called them together with the workers of similar occupation and said, Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. Moreover, you see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people saying that they are not gods which are made with hands.

What a funny way to say that. Paul is telling people that things that are made with human hands aren't gods. Well, duh.

You know, I mean, it seems like they might say he's denying that this image from heaven is a god. But what Paul is denying is very clearly you make something with your hands. It's not a god.

It's something you made. It's like obvious. Right.

And so he says Paul is telling people that images made with hands are not God. So, I mean, that's really hurting our bottom line. And so he says not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship.

Now, at some point with his haranguing his fellow silversmiths and coppersmiths, probably, he realizes that he sounds that he's being grossly mercenary in his concerns. Our business is being damaged by this. Oh, we have other reasons, too.

Of course, Diana herself may be dishonored if this continues. It's not just about the money, of course. It's also about the honor of the goddess, you know.

So he tries to appeal to a religious motivation just in case he sounds a little too mercenary. Yeah. And when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians, or Artemis of the Ephesians.

Now, this guy must have been quite a charismatic character, this Demetrius. With that kind of speech, he gets everyone riled up to a fervor and it causes a riot. So he must have been quite an orator, though it doesn't really come out necessarily in the brief record of his speech.

So the whole city was filled with confusion and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul's travel companions. And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him. Then some of the officials of Asia, who were Paul's friends, sent him pleading him that he would not venture into the theater.

Now, the theater in Ephesus, the ruins have been found, and it, too, is a very magnificent thing. It could seat about 25,000 people. And apparently the whole city was in uproar, and they proceeded down the streets to the theater and filled the stadium to spend their whole time shouting, Great is Diana of the Ephesians, or Great is Artemis of the Ephesians.

And in the meantime, they grabbed a couple of Paul's traveling companions, Gaius and Aristarchus, who were from Macedonia, and they were some of Paul's friends. They apparently recognized them as having been with Paul. Clearly, Paul was not available for them to grab, so they grabbed a couple of his guys.

And what they were going to do to them, we don't know. Paul himself wanted to intervene. He wanted to go out on stage in the theater and start speaking to them.

But there were cooler heads that understood that this would not be a good idea. First of all, the disciples forbade him to go. The Christians said, No, Paul, we're not going to put you in that kind of danger.

But also there were city officials, actually provincial officials, people in the Greek who are called agiarchs. They were like officials over the province of Asia, and some of them were Paul's friends. That's interesting.

In two years' time, Paul had made a lot of friends, even with government officials. You see, this points out again that it's not the Romans that had a problem with Christianity. It was the Jews, generally.

Now, here we have Ephesian, Gentile, Silversmiths having problems, but that's an economic concern to them. In terms of just general opposition to the gospel, it's the Jews in Acts that are the problem. The Romans mostly are friendly, including these Roman agiarchs.

It says they're friends of Paul, and they sent messages to him. Please don't go out there. It's not a good idea.

And it's obvious that they want to protect him, but also they probably want to avoid whipping up the crowd and causing more disorder in the city. And it says in verse 32, Some, therefore, cried one thing and some another. For the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they'd even come together.

A crowd just draws a crowd. Most people said, hey, party time. It's like Mardi Gras, you know.

Let's go down the streets and make a lot of noise. We don't even know why we're here, but we're glad someone started this parade, you know. And they all end up as this big crowd in the theater in Ephesus.

The majority of them not even know why they're there, but there's plenty of them there who are angry and are stirring up a commotion and a danger to Paul and to the safety of the city itself. And it says in verse 33, And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand and wanted to make his defense to the people.

But when they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice, they cried out for about two hours, Great is Artemis of the Ephesians. Now, who is this Alexander? Interestingly, Luke mentions him as if we are to know, as if he is well known to his reader. But there's no explanation for who Alexander was.

He was a Jew. And the Jews put him forward at this point to speak. But when the audience saw that he was a Jew, they shouted him down.

Because, of course, the Jews had the same problem the Christians did with Diana. You know, the worshippers of Diana would have as much of a difference of opinion with the Jews who are monotheists as they had with Paul, who is a monotheist. The difference is the Jews were not a threat to him because they weren't converting people.

Paul was. That was the problem. So they they were angry at Paul, but they weren't friendly toward a Jew either.

And especially if what their complaint was, is that Paul is undermining idolatry of the goddess Diana. Well, the Jews would, of course, be of the same mind as Paul about that. So when they saw it was a Jew up there, they shouted him down.

But why did Jews put this man up there anyway? He's one of their own. He's a Jew. Why did they what did they have to do with this? This is between Paul on the one hand and the idolatrous Ephesians.

What do the Jews say? They should just state clear this. Why are they putting a man up there? We're not told. It's not explained.

But I have a theory that has come to my head. It may not be true. The fact that Luke thinks that we know who Alexander is when we don't.

May mean that there is a very notorious Alexander known to the Christians in Ephesus. And Paul mentions when he writes to Timothy, who is in Ephesus at the time that Paul writes to him. He mentions an Alexander in 2nd Timothy 4. And amazingly, this Alexander happens to be a coppersmith.

Which makes me wonder, is this the Alexander we're reading about in Acts? In 2nd Timothy chapter 4 and verse 14. Paul says, Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works.

And you also must beware of him for he has greatly resisted our words. Now this is one man in Ephesus named Alexander who happens to be a smith, a coppersmith. And he has done great harm to Paul and put up a lot of resistance to Christianity.

In that very town that we're reading about. I can't help but wondering if this is that guy. Now if it is that guy, we know he's a Jew.

Because we're told in Acts 19 that the crowd knew he was a Jew and they shouted him down. He was a smith, however. He was a coppersmith.

Now Demetrius and the protesters were mostly silversmiths. But coppersmiths and silversmiths were in similar trades. Might have even been in the same union or the same guild.

In any case, it may be that the Jews took one of their own smiths. Since this problem was stirred up by the guild of the smiths. And put up one of their own to maybe try to calm things down.

Or perhaps even to distance themselves from Paul. Perhaps they intended for Alexander to get up there and say, Hey you guys, I know you don't like Paul's monotheism and you don't like ours either. But guess what, we don't like Paul either.

He's not with us. If you're angry at him, don't get mad at us. He might have the same kind of belief about there being only one God and so forth.

And I know that's riled you up, but don't blame us for it. We're not with him. My assumption is that would be the only reason the Jews would even get involved in this situation.

And possibly put a man like this up. Now it doesn't say in Acts that Alexander was a smith at all. But it doesn't say why this man was selected by the Jews to go up there.

But if he was a smith, and therefore of the same guild as the protesters, it would make some sense to me that they might say, Maybe he can connect with them. Maybe he can address them. Maybe he can let them know that whatever it is they don't like about Paul, they don't have to impute that to us, even though we kind of have the same monotheism Paul has.

I don't know. Anyway, he didn't get listened to. If he was, of course, well he was.

There was a coppersmith named Alexander, we know, in Ephesus, because Paul mentions him in 2 Timothy. But a Jewish coppersmith would not make images of Diana, but would make other things out of copper. But if he was of the same general trade, perhaps it was thought that he would connect favorably with these people and be able to make peace.

Well, he got shouted at. So we read in verse 35, And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, Now the rest of this chapter is essentially the speech by this city clerk. The city clerk was actually the most important political official in Ephesus.

He was the liaison between the civil or civic administration and the Roman provincial administration. And so he had a tremendous amount of political influence and responsibility. In fact, if things stayed out of hand and the Romans got upset about this, he would be the guy who probably take the heat.

And so he's the guy responsible to get up there and solve this problem and stop the riot. So he gets up there. And he says, Men of Ephesus, What man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Artemis and of the image which fell down from Zeus? Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly.

For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess. Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another.

But if you have any other inquiry to make, it should be determined in the lawful assembly. For we are in danger of being called in question for today's uproar. There being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering.

And when he had said these things, he did dismiss the assembly. So the riot was quelled by the highest political official who got there and said, Listen, we're in danger of being called into question about this. Now, there is some evidence in history that the Romans did not much like the popular assemblies of the Ephesians.

They were a self-governing people. They ran the city after a Greek order, but the Romans didn't much like the democratic assemblies. And they let them do them.

They tolerated them. But with this kind of thing happening, it could bring down the disapproval of Rome on them. They could lose some of their liberties.

He's saying we're in danger of being called into question about this disorderly thing. And people, after they'd screamed for two hours, great as Artemis of the Ephesians, and didn't seem to have anything else to say, their throats apparently were sore enough. They were willing to stop.

They'd made their point. And so Paul's going to leave town anyway. He already was planning to leave town.

But this probably made it easier for him to leave town, made him more eager to go. And so he does. And in chapter 20, verse 1, we find him leaving Ephesus to go back to

Greece.

And we'll talk about that next time. Thank you.