

Living Out Our Faith Part 27

Acts 19:21-41

Pastor Keith Gardner

- Paul is on his third missionary journey. From the very beginning he was told by the Lord that he had been chosen to do a great work for Him. In fulfilling this work, though, there would be a great personal cost to Paul. His health would fail (**2 Corinthians 12:7-10**), his reputation would suffer attack (**Acts 21:21**), and his family would abandon him (as evidenced by historical accounts which say that to be a part of the Sanhedrin, as Paul was, he had to have been married; yet we find he was a single man during his time preaching the Gospel).
- Let's look at a more contemporary quote reflecting what Paul had endured. Last century, a man came up to the great preacher Donald Barnhouse and said, "Sir, I'd give the world to be able to teach the Bible like you." Barnhouse looked him straight in the eye and replied, "Good, because that's exactly what it would cost you." As we're following the book of **Acts**, it's easy to get caught up in the stories and forget why this book was written. It is a documentary detailing the lives of men and women doing what Jesus had commanded them to do. As a result, their entire lives had been given in order to advance the Gospel.

V21-26

- Verse 17 – Paul, having started by ministering to 12 men, sees God's work explode throughout the whole city so much so that everyone, both Jew and Greek, had heard the name of Jesus the Christ.
- Verses 18-19 – Interestingly, the revival that's being highlighted here is not about unbelievers coming to the Lord, but of believers confessing and forsaking their sin. The reason is illuminated in **1 Peter 4:17**. Folks, whenever our appetite for the meat of the Word diminishes, it's often because we're filling up on the junk food of the world. It doesn't have to be blatant sin but rather subtle activities that eat up space in our hearts that had once been reserved for the things of God.
- Verse 21 - At this time a famine had hit Jerusalem hard and instead of seeing the event as a catastrophe, Paul saw it as an opportunity. Visiting these churches at such a cataclysmic time would accomplish a two-fold purpose in the Body:
 1. Paul would affirm these Gentile churches as authentic and he would strengthen them.
 2. Paul could take up an offering displaying unity as Gentile churches come to the aid of their Jewish brethren in need.
- Before Paul could travel anywhere he had to address unfinished work in Ephesus. He therefore sends Timothy and Erastus ahead of him to prepare the churches

for his arrival. Meanwhile, as Paul is thinking of new strategies for evangelism, a full-blown attack is about to hit right under his nose.

- Verses 23-27 - Throughout the entire book of Acts there had only been two recorded riots (the first is mentioned in **Acts 16** in the case of the Philippian fortune teller, and the second is here in **Acts 19**). In both cases the underlying motive was money.
- Verse 24 - Demetrius is a silversmith whose business is providing items needed for the sin of idolatry. He's been getting rich making silver shrines of Diana the Ephesians goddess, but as more and more people are hearing the Truth and being converted it's affecting his business. He therefore has a meeting with others whose bottom line is suffering from this outbreak of Christianity as well.
- Verse 26 - Their gripe is not of Paul standing outside their shops and preaching against their business practices, it's more of Paul's challenge to their clientele: 'If your god can be made by men's hands and subject to being stolen then your god is no god at all,' which is a teaching supported by **Isaiah 44:10, 15-17**. The best way to fight the darkness is to turn on the light. For example, when George Whitfield preached in Philadelphia during the 18th century, the saloons eventually shut down. Why? It wasn't because he preached against drinking, he simply preached Christ.

V27-34

- It has been said that "Whenever the gospel is preached with power it will always be opposed by those who make money from superstition and sin." Well, the silversmith's meeting in Ephesus succeeds as he riles the city up by tricking them into thinking he's upholding the integrity of their culture. What hypocrisy! All he's concerned about is preserving his means of profit. Around the time the aforementioned George Whitfield preached, Benjamin Franklin had been known to say "A mob is a monster with heads enough, but no brains." How sad it is when people permit themselves to be led by a few selfish leaders who know the art of manipulation. Back during Acts 19, Demetrius had made use of the two things the Ephesians loved the most so that he could continue what he loved most: earning money. Ephesians loved
 1. The honor of their city.
 2. The greatness of their goddess and her temple.
- Verse 29 - Since they can't find Paul they grab two of his companions. Here, you see a three-fold satanic attack:
 1. Deception (**2 Corinthians 11:3-4**)
 2. Wrath & fierceness (**1 Peter 5:8**)
 3. Confusion (**1 Corinthians 14:33**)
- Paul sees this mounting threat as an opportunity but his friends see a violent end. Paul, however, appears unafraid of death. The only thing Paul seems to fear is

not taking advantage of a God-given opportunity to advance the cause of Christ.

- Verse 32 - The anger in the city becomes so out of control that people don't even know why they are there. This type of climate is when folks can be the most dangerous: No rationale, no morals, no common sense, just anger. This is why drugs or anything that renders a person mindless and without self control is so hazardous: Victims of these substances become obedient puppets of Satan, the puppet master. Paul, though, is the opposite: Calm in the midst of confusion.
- A Jew named Alexander attempts to address the crowd and tell them that the Jews living in Ephesus did not endorse Paul's message or ministry, but the Lord shuts him down. Interestingly, some believe this is the same Alexander mentioned in **2 Timothy 4:14**.

V35-41

- Amazingly the Lord uses an unnamed city clerk to calm down a mob who'd been shouting for two hours straight desiring Paul's head. He speaks in a language they all understand. Ephesus had been allowed by Rome to exist as a free city so they were able to elect their own officials. But if the Romans found out there was civil unrest, they would revoke Ephesian privileges and bring in their own officials to run the city. No one in Ephesus wanted that because all their wealth, status and freedom would be taken. Ephesian culture would be swallowed up by Roman law. This was one of the reasons for outbreak of emotion in the city.
- Verse 40 - This is the second time we see Paul trying to defend himself only to see God intervene from seemingly nowhere. This shows us we are never the star of the show; only privileged to be participants.