

"The Third Missionary Journey"

Part 6

Acts 18:23-21:26

Introduction: Last week in our study of Acts we were with Paul as a great revival broke out in Ephesus. The name of Jesus Christ was magnified and as the Gospel spread many of the people repented openly as they brought their books of magic and burned them.

Notice Acts 19:17-19

To burn their books was a picture of true repentance. The books were very expensive because everything was handwritten. It has been estimated by some who say the books were valued at 5 million dollars. We do not know for sure but whatever the value was it was substantial. But that is not the greatest thing that happened here. The greatest was the changed hearts in those who repented, the burning of the books was just a manifestation of the miracle which God did in their hearts. Now this revival was truly amazing and as we are going to see the Gospel was changing the entire city as well as the region of Asia around them. But there is something else where in the Bible that we need to look at as a warning.

Revelation 1:1-5

Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

² I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

³ And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

⁴ Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

⁵ Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

Here we gather much more information about what the church faced in Ephesus. We see in this text that as the church was planted in Ephesus it was then that Satan brought in his false apostles. We also see that the saints at Ephesus found the false apostles liars which

tells us they took the time to search the Truth. We can also see that the saints were diligent and labored without fainting, meaning they stayed the course. But we also see the sad evaluation. They had left their love for the Lord. The word "left" tells us that they made a choice to turn to something which caused their love to grow cold.

Application:

We have considered this many times but we always need to be reminded that no matter how strong we are in our walk today we all have the potential of falling into sin tomorrow. Our sin nature is just like the believers in Ephesus. They made the choice to turn away from the Lord and they allowed something to cause their love to grow cold. Let us be very careful because the world's system has much power and we can be led astray so easily.

2 Timothy 4:10a

¹⁰ For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world,

Do not ever think that this cannot happen to you.

1 Corinthians 10:6-12

⁶ Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

⁷ Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

⁸ Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

⁹ Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

¹⁰ Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

¹¹ Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

¹² Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

Getting back to Acts, last week we looked at the revival and this week is the opposite.

➤ **The Revolt**

Notice Acts 19:21-22

We touched briefly on verse 21 last week but there is more here to see. Paul desired to visit the churches in Macedonia and Achaia, which would be the church at Philippi, the church at Thessalonica, the church at Berea, and the church at Corinth. One reason for his desire to visit was to gather the love offering for the saints in Jerusalem as they were deep in poverty. Then in verse 22 we see that Paul sent Timotheus and Erastus and he himself remained in Asia for a season. I believe there is a passage that helps us to see why he remained in Asia.

1 Corinthians 16:5-9

⁵ *Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia.*

⁶ *And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go.*

⁷ *For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit.*

⁸ **But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.**

⁹ **For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.**

Paul would stay at Ephesus for a season because there was an open door to preach the Gospel. He knew there were others who could collect the love offering so he therefore delegated Timothy and Erastus.

Application:

The lesson for us in this is that one man cannot do everything. The church is to function as a body which it is. What often happens in churches today is that when there is a good laborer for the Lord who steps up to serve then most of the workload is placed upon them. There are also churches where the pastor is expected to do most of the work and then what happens is he gets spread out in so many areas that he is no longer effective in any area. He has no time to study God's Word nor time for his family. This should not be so. The church is not a spectator sport. We are all to serve together.

Galatians 6:2a

² *Bear ye one another's burdens,*

Notice Acts 19:23-24

One thing that can be expected when the name of Jesus Christ is magnified is that there is going to be Satanic opposition. This is exactly what happened in Ephesus. Satan came in and he stirred up the unbelievers.

In the city of Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the world. It was the Temple of Artemis and also known as the Temple of Diana. Notice the words of Constable on the temple.

"Temple of Artemis (Diana) - The temple of Diana in Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, and many historians believe it was one of the most beautiful buildings ever built. It stood about a mile northeast of the city and served as a bank as well as a place of worship and cultic immorality. It could accommodate 50,000 people (OTHERS SAY 25,000) and was probably the largest Greek temple ever built. Its centerpiece was evidently a meteorite that resembled a woman with many breasts."

The fact that the idol was considered a meteorite has the idea that Diana fell from heaven. In Ephesus there were many who made a living from selling silver shrines which were replicas of the Temple as well as idols of Diana. Notice the words of Utley on the shrines.

"Shrines "refers to small silver images (1) of the Temple of Artemis or (2) the meteorite which looked like a multi-breasted woman. Archaeology has found many silver images of this goddess, but none of the shrine (temple) itself. It was one of the seven wonders of the world. Its base was 100 feet by 340 feet. It had 177 columns that were 55 feet tall and 6 feet thick. It was four times larger than the Partheon in Athens. "

The Temple and the shrines brought in much money to the city and to the people.

Notice Acts 19:24 again.

Demetrius made a very substantial living from selling the shrines to travelers. This Temple brought many tourists into the city of Ephesus and before they returned home, they bought these silver shrines. Notice the words of J. Vernon McGee.

"The temple of Diana was a great pagan temple, and it was the center of business. It was the bank of that day. It was also the center of sin. Gross immorality took place around it. It is true that religion can go to a lower level than anything else."

Notice Acts 19:25-27

We need to look closely at the words of Demetrius here. He had heard the Gospel and he admits this but he would not allow the Gospel to have a place in his life. He and those who will join him are a picture of Romans 1.

Romans 1:18-25

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

¹⁹ Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

²⁰ For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

²¹ Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

²² Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

²³ And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

²⁴ Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:

²⁵ Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

Demetrius and those with him had the Truth handed right to them. They even were witnesses of how the Gospel changed the lives of the people and that was the problem that Demetrius had with all of this. They suppressed the Truth and for that reason they went deeper into the spiritual darkness. Satan had them blinded and deceived and therefore they would continue to worship Diana.

2 Corinthians 4:3-4

³ But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

⁴ *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.*

Satan used the money coming into Ephesus to blind these people to their greatest need. Notice the words of J. Vernon McGee again.

"You cannot step on a man's pocketbook without hearing him say, 'Ouch!'"

Notice Acts 19:27 again.

These people were more concerned about their craft being endangered than their own soul. We can truly see the ability of Satan in all of this to blind a person's eyes.

Conclusion/application:

What we read about in Ephesus is what happens when the church lives in obedience to the Great Commission. Lives are changed and Satan rebels. If the church were as diligent in sharing the Gospel today as the Ephesians, we would be seeing more lives changed, more idols destroyed and we would be seeing persecution. Throughout the book of Acts, we have seen time after time when the Gospel is proclaimed and people's lives are changed, then there is opposition. The opposition that follows the Gospel is a good barometer that Satan hates it when the Gospel is shared and he will do all he can to hinder the church. Let us not be surprised when the opposition comes.

2 Timothy 3:12

¹² *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*

1 Peter 4:12-13

¹² *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:*

¹³ *But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.*