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**A0929 – July 19, 2009 – Acts 19:21-41 – Great Artemis Of The
Ephesians**

Alright, we are following Paul on his third missionary expedition and we have come to Ephesus, the major city in the province of Asia, home of ~350,000 inhabitants. Paul always went to the major metropolitan cities to influence. Ephesus was a port city, though it was in decline as we'll see, but it was the port that fed all the other cities in Asia, cities like Smyrna, Laodicea, Thyatira, Colossae, Philadelphia, Sardis and there were trade routes established. And so the first thing we see Paul doing is teaching. Teaching the word of God from the school of Tyrannus. For two years Paul taught from 11am-4pm, six days a week, the word of God, a total of 3,120 hours of Bible teaching. So Paul used Ephesus as the central dissemination point of truth in all of Asia. The second thing we see is the character of the city of Ephesus. Every city is characterized by one particular strategy that dominates in the quest of autonomous man to suppress the truth, to shield him from God. And the strategy used in Ephesus was mysticism. It was the center of magic and dark arts in the ancient world. A strategy which says that man can manipulate the forces of nature by certain keys or secret spells and if one can merely tap into these forces then man can be sovereign over history and build the kingdom of man. Last week we saw that strategy smashed by the powerful forces of darkness. It is not true that man can manipulate the forces of nature but rather that there are demonic powers, real personalities operating behind the scenes in a highly organized manner to manipulate and destroy man. And third, Paul, by his extraordinary miracles demonstrated that such demonic powers do not control history but Jesus Christ controls history. It is His word that is sovereign, not the spells of the sorcerers and workers of divination; practices absolutely forbidden in Scripture for the man of God. Now today we meet with a fourth issue at Ephesus, the worship of Artemis and certain businessmen that were earning a living off her religious

shrine. But before we introduce it vv 21-22 intervene to teach an important lesson to every Christian.

You say, what do verses 21-22 have to do with the Christian life. Everything. So let's see. Verse 21, **Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the Spirit**, not the Holy Spirit, lowercase, the human **spirit**, this is Paul's plan, Paul's planning his life. **Paul purposed...to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."** ²²**And having sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.** So here we have insight into Paul's plan, he must have related this to Luke, otherwise we never would have known what was on Paul's mind. Paul is in Ephesus, he's had tremendous success, he's evangelized the entire province, he's trained top men to continue the ministry and he's conquered demonic powers putting a severe dent in the population's mystical suppression of truth. Now he begins to think, what do I want to do next. And his plan is this; to sail from Ephesus up to Macedonia and follow up with the churches there, the church at Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. Then he wants to head south into Achaia and follow up with the church in Corinth and probably Cenchrea. After that he wants to go to Jerusalem and then finally, to Rome. In the meantime he sends two men ahead of him into Macedonia, Timothy and Erastus, they'll prepare the way for his arrival.

Now, here's the lesson to us as Christians. As Christians we tend to go to one of two extremes. One extreme is to be so afraid of planning anything in life because God is sovereign and I don't want to step on His toes. So we don't have any plan whatsoever and your life becomes total chaos. What does God want me wear this morning; red socks or green socks? Should I wear shorts or pants? A white shirt is hanging out of the dryer; does that mean God wants me to wear that? Bologna! Give it up already. Those are decisions based on common sense. Stop worrying about all that. Put on something appropriate, beyond that, forget it. The other extreme is where we think we're sovereign and we make our plans and nothing is going to alter our plans, in which case we've gone too far the other way. So in between there's a balance; we can make plans but always be ready to respond when God changes the plans. But don't get caught without a plan for your life, you'll look like a chicken running around with its head cut off.

Those of you who are in high school or college: you're thinking about what you're going to do with your life, where you're going to go to college and so forth, what kind of a man or woman you're going to marry. It's silly not to have some kind of a plan for where you're going. Not that it has to happen down to the 't' but that you ought to say Lord, if this is your will then this is what I want to do and if You have other things in mind then I'm open to that, I'll change and adapt to You. Paul struck the balance. He **purposed in his spirit**, which means he made this plan; it turns out this plan never happened. God had other plans; nevertheless he did have a plan.

Now, to see that this plan of Paul's to go to Rome is not to preach the gospel turn to Rom 15:20. Paul had a policy when he preached the gospel and that policy is outlined in v 20, "And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was *already* named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation;" So had Christ already been named in Rome? Sure had. It was the name of Chrestos which caused such a problem in Rome Emperor Claudius expelled all the Jews. 20,000 of them had to leave. So Paul's not interested in building on another man's foundation. Why does he want to go there? Verse 23, "...but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you ²⁴whenever I go to Spain—for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while—" And here we see a far-reaching plan in Paul's mind. Paul's intent is not to stay in Rome, but to pass through Rome on his way to Spain where no man has laid a foundation.

Now turn to 1 Cor 16:5 to find out what time of year it is. And by way of a side note here, I've given you a chart today that sketches the Book of Acts and the epistles that were written. One on the first journey, two on the second journey, three on the third journey, four on the fourth. And from that you can see what we're going to do after the Book of Acts. We're going to follow Paul's spiritual development as he wrote epistle after epistle starting with Galatians. Well, the first letter to the Corinthians that you're now turning to was written while Paul was in Ephesus, near the end of his stay, about AD56. Now, in chapter 16:5 we learn the time of year. "But I will come to you after I go through Macedonia, for I am going through Macedonia; ⁶and perhaps I will stay with you, or even spend the winter, so that you may send

me on my way wherever I may go. ⁷For I do not wish to see you now *just* in passing; for I hope to remain with you for some time, if the Lord permits.” Again, notice, Paul has plans but their contingent on the Lord’s will. Verse 8, “But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost;” aha, that tells us it’s close to May, Pentecost was in the month of May and Paul’s going to stay in Ephesus until May and that sets us up for the next event. As verse 9 concludes, “a wide door for effective *service* has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.”

Paul is going to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, the month of May, but there’s a growing animosity against Paul in the city and now we can come to identify these “adversaries” in the passage before us. Verse 23, **“About that time there occurred no small disturbance concerning the Way.”** The Way being, of course, the early name of Christianity. Paul’s preaching the Way and the preaching is making waves. Verse 24, the adversaries, **For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, was bringing no little business to the craftsmen; ²⁵these he gathered together with the workmen of similar *trades*, and said, “Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business. ²⁶“You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods *at all*. ²⁷“Not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be regarded as worthless and that she whom all of Asia and the world worship will even be dethroned from her magnificence.” ²⁸When they heard *this* and were filled with rage, they *began* crying out, saying, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”** So the rise of the silversmiths.

Now to appreciate this conflict you have to understand the economic situation at Ephesus. There’s a transition in the commerce of Ephesus underway. As we said before, this is where the harbor was located; at one time you could sail right up to Harbor Street and park your merchant ship, unload your cargo, and load different cargo. It was a very important import/export city. But a problem had developed. The city sat on the side of Mt Pion and you have problem A, soil washing down the mountain into the harbor. Problem A was compounded by Problem B, the Cayster River flowing into the harbor carrying silt. Mud and silt coming into the harbor. Now, everything would

have been fine and dandy if the Roman engineers hadn't made a mistake about a century before. They came in under imperial orders and made the mouth of the harbor narrower. But what that did was make this harbor into a bathtub, now all this dirt is coming in and you've made the drain too small, so it can't wash out. So what happens? The thing starts filling up. The Roman engineers tried to dredge it several times but to no avail. And so at this time the port at Ephesus was becoming more and more difficult to enter and so more and more merchants were passing by. And therefore the import/export business was in decline and a new business was on the rise; the rise of the silversmiths who depended on the goddess Artemis for their living. So when that business starts to decline you can see why these people are agitated. First our import/export business comes to a halt, now our silversmith business is coming to a halt. That's the situation.

Now the **silversmiths** were making these **little shrines** of the goddess **Artemis**. If your Bible says Diana it's not Diana, Diana was the Roman goddess corresponding to the Greek Artemis, she was a "queen and huntress, chaste and fair," but this Artemis is the many-breasted fertility goddess derived from Cybele. Her Temple was located 1.2 miles NE of the main town. It was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. They built it on marshy ground so earthquakes wouldn't destroy it. Today only one column is left on-site, but originally it had 127 beautiful columns of vari-colored marble. It was four times the size of the Parthenon with a base measuring 425 ft x 225 feet. So marvelous was it that Pliny said, Here is a picture of the great theatre mentioned in the text that held the 25,000 people that are shouting **great is Artemis of the Ephesians** for two solid hours. And the object of it all is the hundred breasted statue of Artemis, the goddess of fertility, this is mother nature. Here she is in all her glory, portrayed as an exhaustive supply of nourishment. You hear about mother nature and we flippantly talk about her, we forget in the ancient world they really meant that, nature was always conceived as female. The reason for that is that the seeds are put into the soil and therefore the earth was always the receiver and the nourisher of the seed, it was always the female. And there's a tremendous paganism behind that expression.

The story of how this goddess came to be is that a meteor fell from heaven and it carried in it the semblance of this many breasted female. And so these silversmiths are making these little silver images of Artemis in her *naos*, her

temple niche. And they had a heck of a market because if you were a worshipper of Artemis, Ephesus was the place to go. Ephesus was the Temple Guardian of this goddess. She was worshipped in 33 other Roman cities but this was the central shrine. So if you worshipped her you'd pilgrim over to Ephesus, get off your boat and start making your way to the Temple. But, of course, you didn't want to go to the Temple empty-handed, you wanted to buy one of these little silver shrines of Artemis to dedicate at the Temple, so on the way you'd stop on Harbor Street where the vendors would sell you the shrine. And that's the product these men are marketing. But there's a problem this year. It's almost May and what do you suppose is happening in the month of May. May is springtime, fertility goddess time, you had the annual celebration for Artemis, sort of like Christmas time. So what's going on is this is the big time of the year for these businessmen to market these idols. But what's happened this year? It's March, it's April and nobody is buying our idols, how come?

Everybody became Christians, that's how. It shows you the payoff, after 3,120 hours of constant teaching the word of God, teaching the word of God, teaching the word of God, hour after hour after hour after hour in that lecture hall, then there's a payoff. It did not come because someone signed a petition against trinkets, it did not come because someone made a law outlawing the trinkets. That's an impotent form of Christianity. The way to bring about change, according to the pagan flesh, is we make all these laws which force conformity. Conform to our pagan agenda or else. Now, we've bought into this agenda in our day and we really have a lesson to learn from Paul here about how to win ground. Paul didn't win ground by starting a crusade against the trinkets, hey we got to make a law to outlaw the trinkets, gotta make a law to outlaw magicians. Paul studied and Paul taught, Paul studied and Paul taught and over the course of two years that changed the way people thought and a bible friendly culture developed in Asia. It's astonishing what the word of God can accomplish just by faithfully teaching it on a consistent basis. When we go out and try to legislate our morality in society two things happen: First it reveals how impotent our form of Christianity is today. And secondly, it reveals that we've let paganism set the agenda for how to enact change. Change comes when people's thinking changes and these people listened to Bible teaching for hours and when it came time for the annual fertility goddess festival they said, "I don't need that stupid product, it's a worthless product. It's not going to make my crops

grow, God makes my crops grow. I'll pray to Him. And that shifted the market. If you teach the word of God enough and the people respond positively to the word then it will change the way a community thinks and all these pagan markets will basically disappear. There will be little to no demand since demand is determined by how people think. It's that simple.

And so v 28 **When they heard *this* and were filled with rage, they began crying out, saying, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"** The riot begins and notice verse 29, ²⁹**The city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia.** ³⁰**And when Paul wanted to go into the assembly, the disciples would not let him.** ³¹**Also some of the Asiarchs who were friends of his sent to him and repeatedly urged him not to venture into the theater.** ³²**So then, some were shouting one thing and some another, for the assembly was in confusion and the majority did not know for what reason they had come together.** ³³**Some of the crowd concluded *it was Alexander*, since the Jews had put him forward; and having motioned with his hand, Alexander was intending to make a defense to the assembly.** Now one of the trademark tactics of Satan is to confuse. Satan never wants to clarify issues, Satan wants to confuse issues. Satan wants to confuse issues to the point no one even knows what the issue is, the real issue never even gets on the table. And so whenever you see confusion know that Satan is at work. When the Holy Spirit is at work it is just the opposite, there is always clarity, the issues are put forth and the issues are resolved. For a good contrast to Acts 19 check Acts 15, the Council of Jerusalem. That will give you the difference between the work of Satan and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Now, the very verbs used in this section show very rapid movement, there's rapidity to the text. In v 29 **they rushed with one accord...they dragged along Gaius and Aristarchus.** Gaius is from Derbe and Aristarchus is from Thessalonica, they get swept up by the rioters because they'd been seen with Paul. They probably gave the eyewitness testimony to Luke so he could write these details. But notice v 30 Paul was not swept up in the riot, Paul was peacefully on the outside but he **wanted to go into the assembly**, (that word by the way, assembly, is the Greek word for "church" *ekklesia*, which shows you the basic root of the word church is just an assembly, a gathering,

here it's a riotous assembly.) Paul wants **to go into the assembly** but **the disciples would not let him**. Also some of the **Asiarchs who were friends of his...urged him not to venture into the theater**. Who are the **Asiarchs**? These were the chief citizens of the province. This was the title given to the most important men in all Asia. And they were Paul's friends. So evidently Paul was very well respected by the more educated class in Ephesus. It was the less educated and more superstitious types that were swept into this frenzy. **So then**, verse 32, some were shouting one thing and some another, more confusion and most of them didn't even know why they had come together. Obviously the work of Satan.

And out of this confusion we come to verse 33, **Some of the crowd concluded it was Alexander, since the Jews had put him forward; and having motioned with his hand, Alexander was intending to make a defense to the assembly**. Now, we don't know exactly why the Jews put Alexander forward but we do know that the Jews did not worship Artemis, they were against the worship of all the pagan gods and goddesses. So it appears that they're afraid they're going to get caught up in the anti-Paul sentiment and suffer along with them and so Alexander's defense is to show clearly that the Jewish colony is separate from Paul. But the confusion was so great, verse 34, that **when they realized he was a Jew, a single outcry arose from them all as they shouted for about two hours, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"** For two solid hours they shouted, invoking the Great Artemis.

The conclusion, vv 35-41, **After quieting the crowd, the town clerk said, "Men of Ephesus, what man is there after all who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of the *image* which fell down from heaven? ³⁶"So, since these are undeniable facts, you ought to keep calm and to do nothing rash. ³⁷"For you have brought these men *here* who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess. ³⁸"So then, if Demetrius and the craftsmen who are with him have a complaint against any man, the courts are in session and proconsuls are *available*; let them bring charges against one another. ³⁹"But if you want anything beyond this, it shall be settled in the lawful assembly. ⁴⁰"For indeed we are in danger of being accused of a riot in connection with today's events, since there is no *real cause for it*,**

and in this connection we will be unable to account for this disorderly gathering.”⁴¹After saying this he dismissed the assembly.

Now, the town clerk was the most important official in Ephesus and he reported directly to the Roman provincial administration. And if it were found out that a riot had occurred the city could be given a severe penalty. No one had done anything illegal. Neither Gaius or Aristarchus or Paul and therefore we return to a minor theme in the Book of Acts the major theme is transition, the minor theme must be the emphasis of this passage. Why does Luke give such an extensive report on this event? We must admit that of all the events disclosed so far, this is one of the most elaborate descriptions. And we gather that it is to demonstrate that Christianity is not a threat to Rome. It is not a rival kingdom. Christianity is peaceful. Remember, Acts was written to a man called most excellent Theophilus. Now we don't know much about this man. His title "excellent" suggests he was a Roman official but the name Theophilus, "friend of God," suggests he was also a Christian. What we think is that he was a Roman official who had been given this name Theophilus after his conversion to Christianity and so we don't know his Roman name. In any case we gather that he was investigating Christianity on behalf of the Roman administration because part of the message of Peter and Paul as they went around the Roman Empire was that of the kingdom offer to the nation Israel. And Luke's argument is that yes, the kingdom was offered to the nation Israel but it was never accepted by the nation Israel and therefore it was no rival kingdom. Christianity is shown again and again to be a peaceful religion, even more so than Judaism. And therefore this fills in part of Luke's apologetic to Theophilus, that Christianity was not a threat. The passage before us shows that Roman authorities did not think that Christianity was a threat or that it was illegal. And therefore Christianity grew and thrived inside and under the protection of the Roman Empire.

And so we've seen, vv 20-21 the importance of making plans as a believer in Christ but not being rigid about it, the Lord can change our plans and we need to adapt to Him and His plans for our lives. We've seen how Paul caused a shift in the market of Ephesus, it was not by going out and legislating Christian morality, it was by simply by teaching the word of God, teaching the word of God, hour after hour, day after day to the point that most of the people in Asia had changed they way they thought and therefore nothing done by Paul was illegal, though it got into people's pocketbooks and made

them upset. Paul hadn't done a thing wrong. And this shows a powerful form of Christianity, when the general population is so moved by the truth of the word of God that whole markets just dry up. Of course, Christianity has the ability to open new markets where goods and services consistent with Christianity can be bought and sold. And finally, Luke shows that Christianity is a peaceful religion. It was not a threat to the Roman Empire, at least from the outside. What Christianity would do in the next centuries though is change men from the inside and this would affect the empire, it would affect it in a tremendous way.

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