

Acts 19:21-41

"A Failed Effort Of The Enemy"

Recalling the context; the work of God's word has been spreading like wildfire throughout all of Ephesus & the surrounding region of Asia Minor. As Paul made mention when he wrote of it to the Corinthians saying, "For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries."¹ (One of which we'll see today).

But Paul the apostle had been pouring the word of God into the disciples at Ephesus 4-5 hrs a day, some 6 days a week & he maintained that pace (to the best of our knowledge) for 2 yrs. He poured thousands of hours of teaching into them & not only was he eager & willing to teach, the believers were willing & eager to receive it & respond appropriately to it.

The fruit of which is found in Vs 20, "So the word of the Lord grew mightily & prevailed." Prevailed in the region, prevailed in people's lives... God was just really encountering people in remarkable ways. Lives were being changed, hearts were being transformed, old things were passing away & people were walking the newness of life in Christ. They were gaining victory over *temptation* & leading lives of *consecration* to the Lord. & Not only were they experiencing the tremendous work of God themselves, but they were out in their daily lives sharing the good news of the death & resurrection of J.C. for the sin of the world & countless others were being saved as well! Back in Vs 10 we discovered that all of Asia (again the ancient Roman Province) heard the word of the Lord! It was just a tremendous time of spiritual revival & awakening in that region.

Family, I want you to realize that you have an edge over every individual who doesn't know the saving grace of J.C. What I mean by that is that in the heart of every man is the instinctive understanding that there's got to be more. That something is missing. It's found in Ecc Ch 3, we read there of God, that, "He has put eternity in their hearts,"² Mankind has an instinctive understanding that there's more than this world, that it's not just live, die, game over. Now; people will try to convince themselves of that (because they don't like the idea of being accountable to their Creator), but I can deceive myself all I want, deception doesn't alter truth. You have the key that unlocks that mystery for them. The veil, (the blindness) is removed & answers, fulfillment & purpose is found in the Person of J.C. He is the wellspring of life & you can lead them to Him.

That's what they were doing in Acts Ch 19. But as you know, anytime God is pressing forward, the enemy pushes back, trying to thwart & stifle the work of God's Spirit.

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [1 Co 16:9]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ec 3:11]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Vs 21-22

I think it's important to see that Paul stayed until, "these things were accomplished". That is, he stayed the course & finished the work. The work he'd been called to pioneer in this region was *accomplished*, so he sensed in his spirit a release to move on.

He wasn't a flaky, flighty kind of person. When he grabbed hold of the plow, he committed to the work. When the work was done, he was done. But not until then...

Here it seems he received in his spirit some new marching orders. Let's not forget that he was called, commissioned from the beginning to testify to the Lord J.C. before Gentiles, kings & the children of Israel. God didn't call him as a pastor (per say) or to serve in the local assembly, but as an apostle, he was sent out of God to be instrumental in sharing/spreading the gospel. So, here he is, nearly 3 yrs after he entered Ephesus, the work is flourishing, it's time for him to move on.

He purposed in the Spirit (or perhaps in *his* spirit, there's room for either in the translation) that he was going to pass through Macedonia (we know from his other writings it was to encourage the believers & receive an offering from the churches to take to the church in Jerusalem) & after that, he was determined to get to Rome.

Of course, we know that, get to Rome he will, but it won't be in the manner he'd envisioned. He won't get there as a trail blazing pioneer, but as a prisoner. But why Rome? Well, he wasn't talking about sight-seeing, but soul winning, ministering to the saints who were there, making stronger disciples in the epicenter of the Roman Empire. He's probably thinking, "Man, if we can establish in Rome, what we just accomplished in Ephesus, it'll change the world!" ---

Now; I want to talk to you for a minute about being in God's will. Because sometimes I think we make this huge deal out of "the will of God". & I believe we should strive to be in God's will, don't misunderstand me. But I want you to notice that Paul would so often set out to go various places, & he was just living life, loving God & sharing w/people as he went. In other words, how did he know he was supposed to go to Rome, by way of Jerusalem, after he'd passed through Macedonia & Achaia?

I suggest to you, it's what he wanted to do, it's what he felt *persuaded* to do... Here's what I'm saying. If you love God, seek God, trust God & submit your life *to* God. It seems to me, He'll lead you in the way you should go.

We read in Ps 37, *"Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart."*³ If the Lord is the love & delight of your life, He will place His desire in your heart. Your heart will desire what His heart desires. Paul loved God, he found it in his heart to want to see Rome, so he was trusting that's the way God was leading Him.

Here's another, Pr 3:5-6, *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths."*⁴ You & me, we have to be able to trust in the Lord, w/*all* our heart. *Not try to figure everything out, "Well what about this, what about that?" Listen, lean not on your own understanding. You see, I'm casting my cares on Him, learning to trust in Him... & through that He'll direct me in the way that I should go (He will direct your paths).*

I delight in Him, I trust in Him, He gives me His desire & directs my path... are we together? Here's one more. Rom 12, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."*⁵ Now, I'm not trying to oversimplify things (though I think we can be guilty of over complicating things at times), but follow the flow here.

I'm loving on, trusting & delighting in the Lord, giving my life fully & completely to the Lord, taking care so that the world doesn't squeeze me into its mold, but rather I'm subjecting my mind to God's word, God's ways, allowing Him to shape how I think, & from there I just pray & go... If my plans are contrary to God's word, or I can't really support my position scripturally, then I don't do it. If I can find biblical support, let's go for it!

For instance, I see a lot of people move due to a job promotion or they just want a different environment or whatever. None of that's a problem, but when you begin to ask if they've found a place where they can be fed, disciplined & continue to grow spiritually... 5 out of 6 times they answer, "No, but I figure there's a church around there somewhere." Now again, I'm all for bettering your life, but not at the expense of starving & struggling spiritually.

Or people who plan on getting married decide to go ahead & move in together. Well, is that God's heart, God's will, supported in scripture? No. So you see, there are principles that will guide us if we'll simply yet sincerely subject ourselves to the scrutiny of scripture.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ps 37:4). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Pr 3:5-6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ro 12:1-2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Now; Paul had purposed in his spirit (& had a biblical basis) to go to Rome. Sometimes *we* purpose to do something, but it still fails, that's ok. We don't always hit the nail on the head or hit a home run even when our eye is on the ball. Mistakes are what they are. But I'd rather make a mistake w/a desire to please the Lord, than risk a swing & miss so I don't swing the bat at all... (Superbowl, if we don't play, we can't lose! Terrible idea! Step out, give it all you got, you might win it all!)

I encourage people around here, if you're going to make a mistake, make a mistake being active, not passive. I'd rather you try something & fail than fail to try something. Paul wants to go to Rome...

Jesus spoke of the man who gave various amounts of money to his servants & said, "Hey, I'm going away, do business till I come again." 2 of them invested, the other, worried that he might lose what he had, just buried it & gave it back... The master (upon returning) said, "Why didn't you put what I entrusted to you in the bank? At least then it would've gained some interest..." He rebuked him, took it from him & gave it to the one who was willing to take a risk...

Err to the side of seeking to serve the Lord, rather than being afraid you might not serve Him in the right way, or in the right place, just serve *Him* & He'll lead *you*! That's what Paul is doing, he's serving the Lord, looking to change the world for J.C.

But before he left, he sent Timothy & Erastus into Macedonia to begin to prepare for his coming & receiving of the offering. Here's what I love about Vs 22. These 2 guys are referred to as those who "Ministered to him." They were Paul's trusted assistants.

Listen, if you're an assistant, (assistant manager, assistant pastor, assistant director or you assist in any area, anywhere you may be), be true to your role & bless the one whom you're called (or perhaps paid) to assist. Be true to the vision of the one who's over you. Should you become the manager, or leader, then it'll be about *your* vision, meanwhile do your best to support *their* vision. Find out what's in their heart, what's on their agenda & work like crazy to make it happen...

Eventually Timothy will be the pastor in Ephesus, for now he's Paul's assistant, he's ministering *to Paul*. Paul says, "I need you guys to head on out to Macedonia, collect the offering & when I come I'll take it w/me, meanwhile I have some things to finish up here."

They did it, that was it. They helped maximize his ministry, because they ministered (not only *for* him) *to* him so faithfully.

Vs 23-28

Here we're seeing some of those "adversaries" that Paul wrote of... I mentioned to you a couple weeks ago that the temple in Ephesus (which housed the Greek goddess Diana) was one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world. People would travel from all over to come & see it, to worship & take part in the pagan rituals surrounding it.

& No different than any magnificent or super structure today, you could literally buy souvenirs of it to take home w/you. These little silver shrines that reminded you of your time there. But here we learn just how effective Paul's ministry was while he was there in that so many people were turning to Christ that the economy of those who trafficked in the crafting of little pagan gods/temples was beginning to tank! Ministry was bad for the ungodly or "sin centered" businesses of Ephesus!

Much like the Welsh Revival of 1901, the pubs & taverns in Wales were going broke & shutting down! Not because Evan Roberts was preaching against or picketing taverns, but because he was proclaiming Christ! When you give your life to Christ, you don't need to drown your sorrows at the bottom of bottle!

In like manner Paul wasn't preaching *against* or picketing Diana, he was teaching truth! Sharing the good news of J.C. Salvation by grace through faith in Him. You don't have to preach *against* darkness, *proclaim* the light! The quickest way to dispel darkness is simply to turn on the light. Jesus said, **"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."**⁶ As people were getting saved, the business of making & selling idols was drying up! The gospel was bad for business, so they were ready to get rid of Paul.

That I'm aware of there are only 2 incidents recorded in Acts where Gentiles opposed Paul. Here & in the case of the Philippian fortune teller. In both cases it was because Paul's ministry impacted their pocketbooks.

Demetrius tries to rationalize the "religious" aspect of their worship, but at the bottom line was the fact that the gospel was bad for their business. It's crazy what people can be persuaded to do because of money. Be careful... Is money a bad thing? An innately evil element? No; it can be a tremendous force for good!

It's been said that money makes a wonderful servant, but a terrible master. & This is why covetousness is such a dangerous thing. You've got it, but I want it. Be careful. Godliness w/contentment is great gain.

We've got food, we've got clothing we're to be content. Again, if something comes your way, or you've positioned yourself to make a good deal, or have a good career, be blessed. But to have that all-consuming passion can poison your soul. Paul wrote to Timothy, *"But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."*⁷

Demetrius was looking at the bottom line, business was falling into the red, idol shops were going out of business. Paul was proclaiming truth & people were turning from idolatry to the living God. "Why worship the work of men's hands? Having eyes, they can't see, mouths, they can't speak, ears that can't hear... Those who worship them are like them, turn from these useless things to the *Living God*, who created the heavens & the earth & gives to all life, breath & all things!" This was Paul's message & it was making a tremendous impact...

So Demetrius gathers the silversmith's guild & says, "Fellas, we gotta do something about this." Look at **Vs 27**.

As I mentioned, being one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world, the temple of Diana in Ephesus truly *was* famous around the world. It was supported by 127 pillars, each 60 feet high, each donated from a different king, & decorated w/ornate sculptures. The trinkets & idols being sold by the silversmiths would've been a *substantial* trade believe you me...

But wouldn't it be great to see something like this blossom & come to fruition in our community? That bars/night clubs just start closing down, not because we're picketing or going on some weird campaign. But because so many people are coming to Jesus that they just don't go there anymore! **The community cleans up because there's no one left to buy drugs, no one's left to sell them to because Christ is enthroned upon the hearts of the people! No more meth business in S.W. MO. Jesus is changing lives!**

Well, Demetrius warned them about losing their business, then sealed it all in through civic pride. ("Everyone loves our city, our temple, & Paul's going to destroy all of that.") **Vs 28-34**

Classic mob mentality. Most of them didn't even know what was going on or why they were even there, they just wanted in on the action!

⁷ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [1 Ti 6:9-10]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But this was bordering on a riot of epic proportions. The ancient amphitheater held some 25,000 people, & it's maxed out w/people confused & on the edge... "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" They guy next to him, "Why are we doing this!?" "I don't know!" (In unison) "Great is Diana of the..." ☺

But this is how we discern the Satanic roots in all this. You might write down James Ch 3:13-18 & look it up later. You'll discover that where envy & self-seeking exists, *confusion* & every evil thing is there. & James calls it earthly, sensual & demonic. Satan was seeking to destroy the work of God...

Now you might be thinking, "25,000 people chanting for their god (for 2 hrs)... seems unlikely..." You do know it's super bowl Sunday, right? ☺ (10's of thousands gathered together in a giant stadium), not to mention across the nation, chanting, cheering & rooting for their favorite... Family, it still happens today, just change the monologue.

Have you witnessed a Trump rally? Be it your favorite sports team, your political candidate, this kind of thing isn't altogether unusual. Of course if you were to begin to rally around something like, "Great is the Lord J.C.!" Well, now you're weird, all that other stuff is completely acceptable, but don't get weird on me & get excited about the love of God in your life...

Now Paul, he wanted an access pass... "25,000 people collectively captive! Let me at em'!" He wanted to preach the gospel! Those around him, had a little more rationale about them. He didn't seem to recall that this is the kind of scene that got him stoned, drug outside the city & left for dead!

But the Jews put a man by the name of Alexander forward. Evidently, they wanted to ensure the crowd that they didn't sanction Paul either (drawing the dividing line between what was happening in the synagogue, Vs what he was out doing). But when they found out he was a Jew they went all the more antisemitic. They just drowned him out; rejected all things monotheistic, & just kept shouting, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

In reality they were just trying (not unlike so many today) to drown out the truth. They didn't want to hear about the vanity, aimlessness & emptiness of their way of life, the need to repent of sin & believe on the Lord J.C. ... & for all this uproar that's being caused, where's Diana today? What's become of her temple? Or the silversmith guild of Ephesus? Yet the word of God, the message of the gospel & the Lord J.C. are still alive & thriving... Millions of people who live for Him, worship him & would willingly die for Him.

What's the take home? Don't drown out the truth, don't turn a deaf ear or a blind eye to it. Don't stand resolute in your sin, repent & receive the Lord J.C. who has loved you & given Himself for you. You'll be forgiven of your sin & receive everlasting life.

Telling yourself something loud enough, for long enough, trying to convince yourself that it's ok, it's appropriate or whatever. It won't alter the truth.

Vs 35-41

So this "city clerk" (the chief executive officer of the city) steps in & says, "Hey folks, you realize that if you keep this up, Rome is going to want answers & we don't have any!" He says, "Look, everyone knows that we're the temple guardians of Diana" (evidently it was built around a Meteorite or something that fell from "heaven"). #2 Paul & his associates haven't been blaspheming your goddess or doing anything illegal. (Which against testifies to the fact that they weren't on a campaign to close down Diana's temple. They were just preaching Jesus & as people turned to Him, they quit worshiping Diana & buying the trinkets & idols associated w/her. & Finally, if you have a legal argument w/Paul, sue him, take him to court, there are legal methods for dealing w/illegal activity & this isn't one of them. So settle down & scoot on out of here before we all find ourselves in trouble w/big brother (Roman authority)."

& W/that he did what we'll do in a few, he dismissed the assembly. ☺ Family, the warfare is real; when you live for Jesus you become a threat to Satan's strategies. But God is well able shield you about. He will never leave nor forsake you.

Let me encourage you w/this, spend more time explaining to people what you're for, not what you're against. You don't have to fight against darkness, just turn on the light & the darkness will flee. Just share the truth of the word of God & leave the results to Him. Paul & his associates never said a word here, God just worked it out & the warfare was resolved. We might call it a failed effort of the enemy. So, let's pray & thank God that He is our shield, our fortress & our strong tower in whom we find refuge.

Prayer Points:

Thank You God that You love us, that You never leave nor forsake us & that You are a shield about us. As we sing, it may look like I'm surrounded, but I'm surrounded by You. God we trust in You, we delight in You, we give ourselves once more to You, lead us in the way we should go & be glorified in our lives.

Maybe you're in that place where you've been trying to convince yourself that your way of life, or your direction in life is fine. But you haven't been shouting for hours, but for yrs trying to drown out the truth, that you need to repent of your sin & receive J.C. He loves you, He's waiting on you, come to Him today.