

THEME: *Third missionary journey of Paul (Paul in Ephesus).*

Paul's third missionary journey began in the previous chapter at verse [Act 18:23](#) when he left Antioch. In this chapter he retraces part of his first and second missionary journeys. Then he comes to Ephesus, where he speaks daily in the school of Tyrannus for two years. Paul performs miracles which lead to the march against him led by Demetrius and his fellow silversmiths. The move is quieted by the town clerk who urges them to appeal to the law rather than resorting to violence.

Paul in Ephesus

Act 19:1-2 *And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples, he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So, they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."*

You will remember that Paul had come through Ephesus on his return trip from his second missionary journey and had told them that he would come back to them if God so willed. He had not stayed in Ephesus previously and had had no ministry there. Now he returns to Ephesus, but he has been preceded there by that great preacher, Apollos. You recall that Apollos did not know anything about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ until Aquila and Priscilla had talked to him. All he had been preaching was the baptism of John, which was as far as his knowledge went. As a result of this, the people who had heard his preaching had been instructed only as far as the baptism of John and had not even heard of the Holy Spirit. Paul detected that.

"Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" is a poor translation. Both verbs receive and believe are in the same tense. The American Standard Version translates the verse more accurately: "Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?" Paul is asking them, "When you believed, did you receive the Holy Spirit?" Their response was that they had not even heard that there was a Holy Spirit. They had been instructed up to the baptism of John. They had not been taught about the Lord Jesus and didn't know anything about Pentecost. - McGee

Act 19:3-5 *And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So, they said, "Into John's baptism." Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*

You see that these people were baptized, but they were not saved. They had not received the Holy Spirit because they were not saved. Friend, the moment you trust Christ you are regenerated by the Spirit of God, you are indwelt by the Spirit of God, you are sealed by the Spirit of God, and you are baptized into the body of believers by the Spirit of God. This happens the moment you believe and trust Christ. Paul detected that this had not happened to these people. Now Paul explains to them that they must trust the Lord Jesus to be saved. They respond to his message, and many believe.

The baptism of John was a "baptism of repentance." It was a preparation for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now the people turn to Christ and are saved. They did not get saved under Apollos because he didn't even know about Christ when he preached to them. Some people interpret this passage to mean that they had been saved, and then later when Paul came, they received the Holy Spirit. That is not true, as you can see. - McGee

Act 19:6-7 *And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Now the men were about twelve in all.*

These men could now speak the gospel in other languages—in tongues that could be understood. Ephesus was a polyglot city of the Roman Empire. There were many languages spoken there, just as there had been in Jerusalem on

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the Day of Pentecost. East and West met all along that coast. It was a great city of that day. These men were now able to give the good news of Christ to the entire city.

Notice there were twelve men. This was the beginning of the ministry at Ephesus. Paul had a great ministry in Corinth and an even greater ministry in Ephesus. - McGee

Act 19:8-10 And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

Paul had to leave the synagogue because there was a great deal of opposition to him. He moved his place of operation and did his speaking daily in the school of Tyrannus.

What was this school of Tyrannus? Well, it was a school that was conducted for the Ephesians. They had a siesta in the middle of the day, probably for two or three hours. Paul, I imagine, rented the space and at siesta time, in the middle of the day, he preached the Word of God for a period of two years. As a result, the whole province of Asia heard the Word of God, both the Jews and the Greeks.

This gives us some concept of how the Word of God was growing in that day. Apparently from this vantage point the church in Colosse came into existence. You see, Paul wrote to the Colossians as he did to the Romans before he had visited them. Yet he was the founder of those churches. How could this be? By the simple fact that from the school of Tyrannus the gospel sounded forth—it went out everywhere. When the Corinthians wanted Paul to come over to them, he wrote to them, “For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit. But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries” (1Co_16:7-9). For two years the gospel sounded out so that everyone in the province of Asia had heard it. Probably the seven churches of Asia Minor came into existence through the preaching of Paul the apostle here at Ephesus. This may have been where he had his greatest ministry. - McGee

The Sons of Sceva

Act 19:11-12 Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.

There are different words used in the Greek which our Bible translates as “miracles.” Here the word for “miracle” is *dunamis* from which we get our word *dynamite*. It means “an act of power.” God wrought special powers by the hands of Paul. He is exercising the gifts of an apostle.

This was a great religious center, possibly more than Athens or any other place. The great temple of Diana was there, and the worship connected with it was satanic to the very core. Now in order to meet that kind of opposition, God granted some special powers to Paul.

What were these handkerchiefs and aprons which are mentioned here? Well, actually we could call them sweat cloths. Paul used them as he worked. Remember that he was a tentmaker, and this was in a warm climate. While he was working, he would be perspiring. He would use these cloths, these handkerchiefs and aprons, to wipe his brow. They were dirty. They had perspiration from his body on them. People would come and pick up these dirty cloths and would be healed of their diseases! In that area there were the mystery religions which used white garments and emphasized that everything must be very clean and white. Everything had to be just so. It seems that God was rebuking all of that sort of thing. He used these dirty sweaty cloths to heal people.

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This reveals the special power that was granted to the apostle Paul. As far as I know, this is the only incident like this that ever took place—including the day in which we live. It is almost blasphemous for anyone to send out a little handkerchief and claim there is power in it. Paul's handkerchief was an old sweat cloth. God used that to rebuke the heathen, pagan religions of that day. Diseases were healed and evil spirits went out of them when they picked up these dirty, sweaty cloths. - McGee

Act 19:13-15 Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." Also, there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?"

When they saw what Paul did, they tried to duplicate it. Now a specific incident will be related. Notice that these were priests. The priests had actually gone into this type of thing. The Greek word here for “know” is ginosko. It does not imply a knowledge by faith. It means simply that the evil spirit knows who Jesus is. - McGee

Act 19:16-17 Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

The attempt of the sons of Sceva to try to duplicate the miracles of Paul backfired. It backfired to their humiliation and hurt and apparently was a great embarrassment for them.

You can see the effect that this had. It caused the name of the Lord Jesus to be spread through that entire pagan city. Ephesus was a great city, and it was shaken by this.

The miracles which Paul and the other apostles performed were not the type of thing that one hears about today. For many years there have been stories of miracles being performed in Los Angeles and in Southern California, but they made no dent or impression on this great pagan city. The miracles of Paul shook Ephesus to its very foundation. The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified through them. - McGee

Act 19:18-19 And many who had believed 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 fifty thousand pieces of silver.

So mightily did the Spirit of God work among those who had practiced various forms of magical art that a great number turned to Christ, confessing ... their deeds. After doing so, they made a public demonstration of their faith by gathering up their books that dealt with magic and burning them in a great bonfire. The original cost of the books would have been fifty thousand pieces of silver. It is difficult to determine exactly how much that would be in our currency—perhaps between eight and ten thousand dollars. – Believers’ Bible Commentary

Act 19:20-22 So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. 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." So, he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time.

“After these things were ended”—that is, these experiences which Dr. Luke has recorded here—it apparently was Paul's intention to go to Rome on this missionary journey. The interesting thing is that he did go to Rome, but not the way he had planned to go.

This is the time that he wrote Corinthians. Apparently, Timothy and Erastus took the letter to deliver it. Although it was addressed to the Corinthians, the letter would reach the people in Macedonia, which would include Philippi and

Thessalonica, and also the churches in Achaia, which would include Athens and Corinth. It was in this letter that Paul wrote that a great and effectual door was open for him in Ephesus but that there were many adversaries. We can see now that the adversaries were satanic. This was a center of pagan religion and of Satan worship. The Satan worship we see today is not something new at all. - McGee

Act 19:23-27 And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, 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 at 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. So 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."

As a result of Paul's ministry, many Ephesians turned to the Lord from their idols. The spiritual awakening in the city was so widespread that it caused a business recession among the idol-makers. Demetrius, a silversmith, was one of those seriously affected. He made silver shrines of Diana. Serving as a spokesman for the trade, Demetrius gathered together all his fellow craftsmen and sought to stir them up to take some resolute action. He reminded them how Paul had been so successful in persuading many people that there are no gods which are made with human hands. He revealed his real motive when he said that their trade was in danger, but he sought to give it a religious coloring by pretending great reverence for Diana and her temple. – Believers' Bible Commentary

When your faith starts to impact someone else's pocketbook, things start heating up. Nothing has changed today, right?

Act 19:28-31 Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" 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 his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater.

The meeting of silversmiths soon developed into a mob scene in which the whole city became involved. Chanting "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!", the crowd rushed into the theater (arena or coliseum), and seized Gaius and Aristarchus, two of Paul's traveling companions, doubtless with the purpose of killing them. Paul himself wanted to step in and speak to the mob, but he was prevented by the disciples, and also by the Asiarchs (officers elected by the cities who at their own expense furnished festivals in honor of the gods). These civic benefactors who had befriended Paul told him that it would be most unwise for him to enter the arena. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 19:32-34 Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together. 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 cried out for about two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

By this time the mob was completely out of control. Many did not know why they were there. Conflicting voices were heard on every hand. A Jew named Alexander sought to step forward and address the mob. Doubtless his purpose was to defend the Jews as being completely innocent in the matter. But when the crowd found out that he was a Jew, they put up a tremendous protesting roar. For about two hours they chanted, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 19:35-36 *And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: "Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, 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.*

The town clerk was, of course, a local official who told them that they were making too much out of this whole thing. He says, "Look at this great temple and at the great Diana. Nothing could happen to them. Nothing could be said against them!" Now, of course, they have been in ruins for nearly two thousand years. - McGee

Act 19:37-38 *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.*

He is saying that if the silversmiths want to make a legal charge, the court is open.

Act 19:39-41 *But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall 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 dismissed the assembly.*

He told them that if they had some issue to bring up, they should all sit down and have an orderly meeting. They were to put down their placards and quit their shouting and running around. They were actually in danger of being accused of rioting. Riots are not something new, friend. This whole scene sounds very up to date.

He dismissed the crowd. When he called their attention to what they were actually doing, the crowd broke up and the people went home. Paul's ministry in Ephesus is over now. He leaves Ephesus and goes back to Macedonia. – McGee

The word, **assembly** (vv. 32, 39, 41), translates the Greek word, *ekklesia*, meaning a called-out company of people. It is the same word translated as *church* in other parts of the NT. Whether the word refers to a heathen mob, as here, or the congregation of Israel, as in [Act 7:38](#), or the NT church, must be determined from the context. The word, *assembly*, is a better translation of *ekklesia* than the word, *church*. The word, *church*, comes from a Greek word meaning "belonging to the Lord" (*kuriake*, cf. Scottish "kirk"). In modern usage, it commonly refers to a religious building. That is why many Christians prefer the word *assembly*; it expresses the fact that the church is a called-out group of people, not a building or even a denomination. – Believers' Bible Commentary