

Series: Acts

Title: The Kings Use of Enemies

Scripture: Acts 19

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Place: SGBC, Princeton, NJ

When the apostle Paul purposed in spirit to revisit the churches then go on to Rome, a riot broke out in Ephesus, in Asia. We have seen various lessons which Paul could have learned through this time of great trial.

1. We are reminded of the sinfulness of natural man. Demetrius and the craftsmen loved themselves and their idol and were willing to see their fellow man slaughtered.

2. We are reminded that the gospel of God's free grace in Christ Jesus is the only word that unites sinners and makes us of one mind. The people of Ephesus were all shouting, "Great is Diana" but the whole multitude was confused. They had no idea why they were there. But the gospel of Christ the Way had "turned away much people" from this idolatry. The gospel made men to "despise" the idolatry of the goddess Diana and made them unite with brethren to worship Christ alone.

3. We are reminded by the faithfulness of Paul and his brethren contrasted with the inconsistency of Alexander that only the grace of God can preserve the believer. Apart from God's grace we can't oppose Satan OR stand for the truth.

4. We are reminded that it is the Lord that separates the wheat from the chaff. Our Lord is like a refining fire, like fuller's soap. He cleansed his people of all sin at Calvary by the sacrifice of himself, satisfied justice on behalf of each chosen child of God whom he represented. In time, through his word and through trials he separates his redeemed: from unbelief to belief of the truth, from the dominion of our flesh to the rule of Christ, from evil companions to our brethren, from this world to his glorious kingdom. So we see this has been a profitable trial.

Proposition: Tonight, we will see that our God is absolutely sovereign. Our God uses whom he will, what he will, how he will to glorify his holy name and to edify his saints.

I. GOD OUR SAVIOR, KING JESUS, USES IDOLATERS FOR HIS GLORY AND OUR GOOD.

Acts 19: 23: And the same time there arose no small stir about that way. 24: For a certain *man* named Demetrius...

Demetrius was a "certain man". God's servant.

Not one of God's elect but God's servant to bring about this riot.

Proverbs 16:4: The LORD hath made all *things* for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

The LORD often stirs the hearts of men to rise up against other men.

The LORD used the king of Assyria and the whole nation of Assyria to chasten his people in Judah. Then the LORD of hosts used the king of Babylon and its whole nation to punish the high-looks of the king of Assyria. Then concerning the Medes, the LORD says,

Isaiah 13: 3: I have commanded my sanctified ones, I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger...17: Behold, I will stir up the Medes against [Babylon.]

Jeremiah 51:11:...the LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device *is* against Babylon, to destroy it.

Why does he use men and nations like pawns? That he might make his power known—glory his name and bring good to his people. In Egypt we read:

Psalm 105:25: He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtilly with his servants. (He told Abraham over 400 years beforehand that he would do so.)

Then he destroyed Pharaoh and delivered his people from the Egyptians. This is what he said of Pharaoh.

Romans 9: 17: For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. 18: Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth. 19: Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? 20: Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed *it*, Why hast thou made me thus? 21: Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

Evil men—even Satan himself—can do nothing but what God stirs them up to do or gives them divine permission to do.

Christ Jesus is the Sovereign Majesty King Almighty over all heaven and earth.

- Isaiah 9: 6: He shall be called the MIGHTY GOD...the government is on his shoulder.
- He said, "I AM." The armed-guards fell on their backs.
- John 19: 10: Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? 11: Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power *at all* against me, except it were given thee from above.
- Matthew 28: 18: All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

The triune God of glory put the government of maintaining his holy name, his universe, the world, and his church on the shoulder of Christ Jesus, the Son of God. Christ our King glorified God in declaring him just and the Justifier of every sinner who is given faith to believe. Christ our King purged the sin of his people with his own blood, made us unblameable, unprovable, the very righteousness of God in him. God the Father is so satisfied with his Son:

Ephesians 1: 20:...[The Father] raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*, 21: Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: 22: And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, 23: Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

The government is still on his shoulder. Christ the King is sending forth his messengers with his gospel in truth and in spirit. Our King is taking dominion in the hearts of his people through the Holy Spirit, graciously leading and correcting in the heart of every believer. Sin shall not have dominion over you because you are not under the law but under the gracious rule of Christ the King. You were the servants of sin unto death, But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. (Ro 6: 22.) Our King subdues all our enemies, protects our persons and properties, our rights and liberties, and supplies us with everything necessary.

Are you unsure about our nation's government right now? The government is on Christ's shoulder. Do you see how frail and weak you are to provide for yourselves? The government is on Christ's shoulder. Do men entice

you, try to turn you to elements of this world, away from Christ? The government is on Christ's shoulder. Who shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus?

Demetrius was a "certain" man, set apart by God that through him King Jesus might manifest his glory as he saved his people in the face of a host of God-haters.

II. OUR GOD USES IDOLATERS TO PROVIDE SAFETY FOR YOU WHO BELIEVE HIM.

Acts 19: 30: And when Paul would have entered in unto the people,...31: And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring *him* that he would not adventure himself into the theatre.

These were priests of Asia. They presided over the games at the theatre. They managed the lions and such. When it came to Demetrius and the craftsmen, the Lord allowed them to vent their hatred and stir up this great riot against Paul. With these governors of the theater, the Lord gave them a heart to like Paul and to save Paul from danger.

III. THE LORD USED AN IDOLATER TO STOP THE TRIAL.

Note how the townclerk defends Paul and scolds the Ephesians.

Acts 19: 35: And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said, *Ye* men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the *image* which fell down from Jupiter? 36: Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly. 37: For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess. 38: Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another. 39: But if ye enquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly. 40: For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse. 41: And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

God may or may NOT use you and yet still edify you and still bring glory to his name.

Acts 19: 30: And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not. 31: And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring *him* that he would not adventure himself into the theatre.

The Lord used Paul in many other cases. Here, Paul was ready. He did not sit idly. He "would have entered unto the people." But the Lord used brethren and friends to stop him.

APPLICATION

I. (Turn to Pr 16) First, when we behold men around us--whether they be for us or against us—what is it we must remember?

Proverbs 16:1: The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, *is* from the LORD.

Before God exercised his power in you, you could not make yourself believe on Christ. Once the Holy Spirit drew you in cords of love, you can't do anything else but believe on the Lord. Remember that our God works the same sovereign power over all men—good and evil.

Proverbs 16: 9: A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.

Proverbs 21: 1: The king's heart *is* in the hand of the LORD, *as* the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.

II. Secondly, how can we understand the way we are to go?

When you behold the Lord's hand so sovereign in the hearts of all men, so sovereign in your own life, does it make you ask the question: how then can I understand which way to go? The Spirit of God asks that through Solomon:

Proverbs 20:24: Man's goings *are* of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?

The answer is, we can not know what lies ahead in our way or why it comes to pass or what will be the outcome. Someone said, "We don't know what tomorrow holds. But our peace is in knowing WHO holds tomorrow."

Proverbs 16: 3: Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.

Proverbs 3:6: In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

(Turn to 2 Corinthians 1.) Why did Paul not insist and enter into the theater?

2 Corinthians 1: 8: For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: 9: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: 10: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver *us*.

Get this verse memorized and repeat in the face of all evil:

Psalms 76:10: Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.

III. Thirdly, remember that God really does work ALL THINGS together—good and evil--for good, according to his divine purpose, for those he has called by grace.

2 Corinthians 4:15: For all things *are* for your sakes, that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God.

God's abundant grace put you in Christ in eternity. His abundant grace redeemed you at Calvary. His abundant grace gave you life and brought to rest complete in Christ. His abundant grace made you willing to promote and proclaim this gospel of Christ. Through his gospel, as God abundantly gives grace to more and more of those who Christ redeemed. He makes them to cry out in thanksgiving and to glorify God. Knowing all things are for you and for the sake of his sheep, knowing his abundant grace, knowing he is bringing sinners to glorify him—no matter what we face in this world:

2 Corinthians 4: 16: For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day. 17: For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory;

You see how our hearts have been blessed by this riot in Ephesus? That is the exceeding weight he works by these light afflictions. These afflictions last but a moment, but they establish our hearts on eternal, heavy, weighty, glorious truths of our eternal security. Here it is: **For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (2 Cor 5:1).**