

Advancing the Kingdom

Acts 19:1,9-10

By Phillip G. Kayser

A little boy, after attending Sunday school, was asked by his mother what he learned (or so the story goes). The boy thought a minute and said, “We heard about a man named Moses. He went behind the enemy lines and rescued the Israelites. Then he came to the Red sea, and called his engineers, and they built a pontoon bridge. After they got across, he saw the enemy tanks approaching, so he got on his walkie-talkie and called headquarters, and they sent the dive bombers and blew up the bridge. Then the Israelites rode on.”

The mother said, “Now son, you shouldn’t make up stories. It was like that at all, was it?”

“Well, not exactly. But if I told you how the *teacher* said it really happened, you would *not* have believed it.”

That is obviously a made-up story. But you know what? Many people do the same thing with other stories. They read of God’s power to conquer addictions, and they think, “That’s too hard to believe.” Or they hear stories from China, Africa, and South America of supernatural events, of miracles, healings, casting out of demons or some of the other things that are listed in this chapter, they are skeptical. So they come up with their own version of how the kingdom advances. Obviously they don’t substitute a story as crass as the little boys - of walkie-talkies, tanks and dive-bombers. But when our story completely ignores God’s supernatural intervention and it focuses only on what is humanly possible through programs and plans, the end result is much the same. It’s not the kingdom story that Scripture speaks about.

This whole chapter is a marvelous testimony to the advancement of the kingdom. The verses we will look at today are merely a brief summary of that advance. They include the boring and the not-so-boring. But it all starts in verse 1. One of the first things that Paul did when he entered the city of Ephesus was to introduce believers to the power of the Holy Spirit. We looked at that last week in verses 1-7. And Luke’s description of that infilling with the Spirit was more than just symbolic. Some people try to say that this had to be a one-time event. They say that there was a Pentecost for Jews in Acts 2, a Pentecost for Samaritans that included half-Jews into the body in Acts 8, a Pentecost for Gentiles in Acts 10, that included Gentiles

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into the body. They don't know quite what to make of this, but they know it has to be a one-time event. But it is not just symbolic. Luke is thematically preparing us to understand that the church's marvelous success could not be ascribed merely to human ingenuity. Instead, Luke wants us to understand that prayer for the filling of the Holy Spirit was the prelude to overcoming the deadness of the synagogue in verses 8-10 (which we will look at today), conquering the demonic of verses 11-17, bringing the reformation in verses 18-20, and taking on persecution in verses 21-41. And we saw last week that such filling of the Holy Spirit is an absolute imperative if we are to have victory in our lives. So I don't want you to see this passage as unconnected with the prayer for filling that we looked at last week or the supernatural things that are described later in this chapter. They are all bound up together. We can no more advance God's kingdom in our own strength than revivalists can schedule a revival. We *are* going to be looking at four characteristics that involve human activity, but it is all prospered by God's grace.

I. **Advancing the Kingdom sometimes involves efforts at reform (v. 8)**

Let's look at the first characteristic. Advancing the kingdom sometimes involves efforts at reform. Verse 8 speaks of a dead synagogue that Paul is trying to reform. The synagogues of Paul's day remind me of the mainline churches in America that were once on fire for Christ, and on the front lines of the battle. And in the same way, the Jews who started many of these synagogues (perhaps hundreds of years before) were visionary. They planted synagogues in almost every hamlet, town and city of the empire. Many were grace oriented and succeeded in attracting pagans into their orbit of influence. Many of the synagogues were transformational, and Jews were having an impact on every level of society just like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego did. But over time compromises crept in, and they weren't being disciplined, and (having lost God's favor) their faith began to be more and more dead; the joy and enthusiasm of the faith began to be lost, they operated in their own power, and became so used to the status quo that in the time of Paul they actively resisted the truth of God's Word. Synagogues followed the same downgrade pattern that our modern mainline denominations have followed over the last two hundred years. Some of them contained true believers, but even those believers had what Paul described as a *form* of godliness without the power. That was in part the case with the twelve in verses 1-7. I'm sure Paul was tempted to abandon these synagogues altogether because they had caused him so much pain and

suffering.

A. Flowed from Paul's concept of "the kingdom of God"

Can a liberal church or denomination be rescued? If you believe in the kingdom of God, you will say yes. In fact, in recent history, the first cult to repent and become evangelical was the World Wide Church of God. God's kingdom can advance into any area of satanic darkness.

The title of today's sermon is "Advancing the kingdom of God." If you look at verse 8 you will see that this was the theme that drove Paul. Verse 8 says that he was **persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God**. With the ascension of Jesus to His throne, Christ was extending His kingdom to every square inch of planet earth. And Paul was driven by this kingdom vision to bring all of life under Christ's lordship. The synagogues were denying his Lordship, so that couldn't go unchallenged. Without Christ, they had no power.

I grew up in Ethiopia and had to study a bit of the history of that country. There was one story that rather humored me when I first heard it. Menelik was the emperor of Ethiopia from 1899 to 1913. He heard about a fascinating new device that dealt effectively with hardened criminals. It was called "the electric chair." He ordered one to experiment with, but found that it didn't work. Ethiopia had no electricity. So, not wanting to waste such an elaborate purchase, he turned the electric chair into a throne.¹ That is a great symbol of what has happened in the lives of many Christians. They don't have the power of the Spirit so they are content to have the form. They speak in glowing terms about the kingdom, but never experience its power. Over and over in the Gospels the kingdom is connected to healings and casting out of demons, but they don't want that power switch. That makes them nervous. In Matthew 12:28 Jesus said, "**But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.**" He connects the two. Throughout the book of Acts, the message of the apostles is the message of the kingdom. In fact, that's the last verse of the book of Acts: "**preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.**" The message of Acts is that Christ's kingdom is powerfully advancing into every area of life. People were rescued from deadness; demons were cast out, people were healed, and culture began to be turned upside down.

¹ Clifton Fadman, Gen Ed., The Little Brown Book of Anecdotes, (Boston; Little, Brown & Co, 1985), 396.

Lord willing, in later sermons we will see the culture of Ephesus being turned upside down.

B. Required faith

But Paul starts in a very tough place – the synagogue. These were the people who had run him out of so many towns. It took faith to seek to reform yet another synagogue when he had had a history of failure after failure in trying to reform synagogues. In fact, it almost always ended up transitioning into a sheep-rescuing venture instead of a reform. So why does he do it? Well, Paul knew that God is the one who connects the dots, and he simply sought to be faithful. There were some synagogues that got reformed. The book of James talks about one of them. But whether or not God would prosper that, Paul knew that Christ had called him to seek to bring reform.

And this has been of interest to me because I believe God has called me to be involved in reform. Often it is the leaders who get reformed and the churches shove them out and they have to go on to ministry elsewhere. But you never know what the results will be. Recently people from dead churches have been reading booklets they have downloaded from Biblical Blueprints and some of them have had their eyes opened. Others have wanted to engage me in debate on their forums. In my time off, I have tried to do so and I can see God's Spirit at work. You never know what a word, a prayer, a tract that you give or a book that you lend could do. We need to have faith that our labors in the Lord are not in vain.

I think of the discouragement one evangelist in Germany must have had as his evangelistic tracts were crumpled up by people and thrown onto the ground. He probably never knew the result of that wasted tract. But one of Hitler's bodyguards by the name of Kurt Wagner picked the crumpled piece of paper up. After Hitler committed suicide, he was planning to commit suicide. But he decided to get a final cup of coffee first. Why he did that, I have no idea. But on the way to get the coffee, he found the discarded Gospel tract and started reading it. At first, he read it carelessly, but one line grabbed him, and he began read it through with real interest. As a result of what was read, he sought out a pastor and got converted. He was turned from being a hardened man into a man of grace. And this is what was happening to some of the Jews in this city. God was connecting the dots.

C. Required boldness

Verse 8 says, **And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly ...** What is needed to bring reform to dead churches? We have already seen that it requires faith. It requires trying. But it also requires boldness. Usually a

compromised Christianity is not interested in having the compromises pointed out. A theologically deficient Christianity does not want to have those errors pointed out. This had gotten Paul into trouble numerous times in the past, and it could have easily gotten him into trouble here. But Paul is bold in confronting error. And in the early chapters of Acts we have seen that a filling of the Spirit gives boldness. Boldness is needed if reformation is to happen.

D. Required reasoning

It also requires use of reason. Verse 8 says **for three months reasoning ...** It doesn't take three months to tell a synagogue the four spiritual laws. He wasn't saying the same shallow things over and over again, like some churches do. Paul was going much deeper. He was answering the objections; challenging the assumptions; systematizing the truth. Bringing reform is not an easy thing. Paul elsewhere said that it requires tearing down strongholds and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. It requires reasoning.

I should hasten to add that just because you have reasoned effectively does not mean everyone will buy into the theology. There is the sin nature to deal with. Some people have their minds made up and don't want to be confused by the facts. But there were many who were convinced. Why? Because he was willing to reason with them. He had an intellectually satisfying faith. The reduced, compromised and often vacuous faith of the modern church will never succeed in bringing reformation. Every reformation in history has been a very reasoned reformation.

E. Required calls for change

But verse 8 goes on to indicate that Paul is calling for change. This is not just academic. The word "persuading" contains the idea of obedience, so it is persuading (as one dictionary worded it) "to come to a particular point of view or course of action." Paul was not content with academic discussion. He wanted to see changes in that church. And for change to happen, people need to understand *how* to change, and secondly, they need to be willing to open their lives to the Lord. And that's scary for some.

Jill Briscoe was approached by a young woman who wanted help. The woman said, "Jill, I've lost my joy, I've lost my peace, and I want it back." Jill Briscoe asked her, "Where did you lose it?" And the woman replied, "That has nothing to do with this. Help me get it back." Jill asked again, "But where did you lose it?" "I don't want to talk about that," was the reply. Eventually she did talk. She said that she lost her peace and joy when she

moved in with her boyfriend.² She didn't like the fruit of her sin – loss of power, fellowship, joy and peace, but she wasn't willing to get rid of the sin itself. But I'm sorry; you can't have it both ways. If we want kingdom power, then we must embrace kingdom repentance and kingdom living. It's not just a theology of kingdom, but also a practice of kingdom that we must embrace. And this is what got Paul into trouble in this congregation as well just about every other congregation he had visited previously. If we are not interested in change, then all preaching will do is harden us. So if we are to successfully advance the kingdom of God by way of reformation, we must confront wrong theology and wrong practice.

F. Involves comprehensive teaching

The last thing that we see in verse 8 is that, if reform is to be successful, it will involve comprehensive teaching. As I mentioned earlier, Paul didn't just give the way of salvation. It says, “**...he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.**” His teaching was as broad as the kingdom. How broad is the kingdom? Jesus said, “All authority is given to me in heaven and on earth.” It is as broad as the heavens and the earth. Christ claims every square inch of planet earth. And that requires a lot of teaching. If he claims authority over economics, then we need to teach the biblical principles of economics. If He claims authority over politics, then we better be able to apply the Scriptures to every area of politics. And that's exactly what Paul did. Later in Acts 20:20 he told the Ephesian elders, “**I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house.** Then in verse 27 he said, “**For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.**” That's why it took three years of daily teaching for five hours a day to do it. Some people are willing to bring reform on one subject, but won't touch other subjects with a ten-foot pole. But if reform is needed, all of truth is interconnected, and reformation won't happen without comprehensive teaching. This was the genius of the Protestant Reformation: the comprehensive teaching transformed politics, economics, business and so many areas of life. In fact, one historian said that Calvin founded America even though he never set foot on this continent. His teaching profoundly shaped American institutions. And that's the kind of teaching we need today – kingdom teaching; comprehensive teaching.

² Jill Briscoe, "Hanging Up Our Faith," Preaching Today, Tape No. 148

II. Advancing the Kingdom sometimes involves rescuing sheep (v. 9). This is allowable when

But any time you bring the truth it cuts two ways: it reforms some and hardens others. And that's what was happening in verse 9. **“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.”** Some people would call it sheep stealing. Paul would no doubt call it sheep rescuing. The document, “Evangelicals and Catholics Together” condemns what they call Protestant “sheep stealing” from Rome. But this is definitely a parallel. Paul deliberately pulled the true believers out of the synagogue. Some might argue that this left the synagogue even worse off than before. That is true. But it left the true believers much better off than before. So the question comes, “When is it legitimate to rescue sheep from other congregations? And when is it legitimate for such people to leave such denominations? (For today, I will leave aside the question of transferring from one good denomination to another. That's a different question that we ourselves are thinking about.)

A. *The church is “hardened”*

This text gives five criteria for sheep rescuing. First, verse 9 says, **“when some were hardened...”** Is there hardening happening in the leadership? The word hardening means stubborn, unyielding or hardened and impervious to something. This is a scary state to be in, and I have seen Christians from time to time exhibit this kind of hardening. And it may be stubbornness over a small issue, but when you become stubborn or hardened to small areas of truth, you automatically have started the hardening process and this hardening of arteries will spill over into more and more areas. I have seen this happen so many times. I have seen people who do not have a Biblical answer, but they still refuse to believe. What is that? It is hardening your heart. They are hardened to the truth of a Biblical passage. And Scripture indicates that when this happens, we grieve the Spirit, He no longer gives insight on other passages, and an increasing hardness happens until finally they are not able to hear anything spiritually. It's like blindness is on their eyes and deafness in their ears. It doesn't matter how many Scriptures you throw at them they are impervious. They've got their minds made up, and they don't want to be confused with the facts. Scripture indicates that it is often better not even to argue with such people. Just leave them be. God may rescue them with a Nathan's confrontation. But for most, Paul's advice would be to leave.

Does this mean that none of them were believers? No. Scripture is quite clear that believers can be hardened too. It just means that they have proven themselves to be willful in their unbelief, and not worth the effort. Even believers can get so hardened that they are insensitive to the Spirit's teaching. Let me give some examples of initial hardness that could lead to increasing hardness if it was not repented of: In Mark 16:14 Jesus spoke to his disciples of their hardness of heart: **"He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen."** Jesus was saying that they were being stubborn in their unbelief. In Hebrews 3:8 the writer warned believers, **"Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness,"** That's the same Greek word, and it is addressed to believers. A few verses later it says, **"Beware, brethren, [there you can see that they are fellow Christians. "Beware, brethren"] lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God, but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end."** (vv. 12-14). That's the kind of hardness that Paul was debating with under point #1. Sometimes even hardened people can be convinced to change by God's grace. But when a church or denomination has had numerous testimonies brought against it and they prove stubborn even in the face of overwhelming evidence, it is better to just leave. It doesn't make any sense for people to stay in the PCUSA or the Methodist Church. Paul's admonition would be to come out of her my people lest you share in her sins and receive of her plagues.

B. The church does not "believe" fundamental truths

The next criterion is failure to believe the Word of God. **"But when some were hardened and did not believe..."** How much didn't they believe? Obviously Jews would have believed some things in common with Paul. They believed in the inerrancy of Scripture; they believed in one God, in a recent creation, in a resurrection and a day of judgment. In many ways they had some conservative doctrines. But there were other fundamental truths that they refused to believe, despite the fact that Paul had overwhelming evidence that he had been presenting over a three-month period.

C. When the church actively opposes “the Way”

The third criterion is that the person or group has started actively opposing the truth. It’s not just ignorance. It’s not just that they don’t understand. It’s not just confusion. These people were actively in opposition. Verse 9 says, “...**but spoke evil of the Way...**” This is an undermining of the Scripture. I’ve got this happening in one group that I have ministered to. Most in the group are receptive, but there is one person who brilliantly, but obstinately does everything he can do keep people from believing fundamental doctrines like inerrancy. And I have been astonished at how he can make himself look so good and God-centered in doing so. I just shake my head. But as I have been debating with this fellow, upwards of 100 others have been reading the posts. Others are recognizing for the first time that he is a closet liberal. So the debate (as per point I) has been helpful. It has flushed out some of the bad guys and has revealed who is open to the truth. And it is my prayer that these people would leave their liberal denominations.

D. When the leaders publicly oppose “the Way”

The fourth criterion for knowing when to rescue sheep out of a church is when the leaders of the church publicly oppose the truth of the Word. This wasn’t just a private disagreement with Paul. They made a public stand against the truth and therefore had a lot hanging on their pride. It says, “**but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude.**” They are trying to persuade everyone of their error. This doesn’t mean that such people can’t change. But when churches publicly repudiate sound doctrine, and make it hard for others to believe sound doctrine, it is one of five indicators that it may be time to leave.

E. When a sufficient amount of time has passed (in this case “three months”) to make it evident that change won’t happen.

The fifth criterion is a bit subjective, but it is giving enough time to make it evident that change won’t happen. Paul didn’t make a snap decision after one day of dialogue. Paul had spent three months there. In contrast, some people stay in the PCUSA for their whole lifetimes hoping for some miracle of change. Paul would say that that is a waste of time, and will negatively affect you. How long is sufficient time? I don’t know. But I know it isn’t a whole lifetime. Here Paul figured it out in three months.

F. Paul was involved in “sheep rescuing”

So what Paul was doing in this passage was sheep rescuing. He was letting the sheep know that staying in the congregation would adversely affect their health. As he told some in Corinth (right around this time), **“Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.”** (2 Cor. 6:17). Some people weigh themselves down unnecessarily by staying in liberal denominations. They are unwilling to count the cost of losing a beautiful building, the nostalgia of membership in that church, friends and relatives who remain there, a stained glass window dedicated to grand pappy. And it is tough for them to leave. But Paul almost always called for a radical break.

I read that when Alexander the Great was advancing against Persia, his troops were losing their effectiveness in combat because they were too weighted down with booty and plunder from previous campaigns. Alexander commanded that all the spoils be thrown into a heap and burned. The soldiers complained bitterly, but their fighting improved dramatically once their burdens were removed. Someone wrote, “It was as if wings had been given to them – they walked lightly again.” This is what Christians need to do with their burdens. Yes, they can be involved in reform of churches, but when it appears that no change is possible, they need to cast off the burdens and get on with life. And those who have left such liberal denominations have found themselves with wings. They didn’t realize the extent to which they had been weighted down. They are free; they are joyful.

G. He formed a new fellowship

The last thing that Paul did in verse 9 was to form a new fellowship. **“...he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.”** The name Tyrannus means “tyrant.” Who would name his kid, “Tyrant?” And so, commentators assume that this was a nickname given to him by his philosophy students. We don’t need to assume that he was a Christian, though he may have become one. Apparently Paul rented a facility from this Greek teacher and used it when the teacher was not using it. Early tradition states that the teacher used it in the cool of the morning and the later afternoon, and Paul rented it during the hot hours from 11 am to 4 pm. Whether that is true or not, we do know that he immediately found rental facilities that would accommodate daily training in the Scriptures. Out of this school would come a host of young leaders who would transform the face of the whole province of Asia. And so we see an exponential increase in ministry fruit once they left the synagogue. God blessed that decision.

III. Advancing the Kingdom always involves intensive teaching (vv. 8-10)

A. ***Paul didn't just teach the Gospel. He taught "the things of the kingdom of God" so extensively that it took a lot of time (v. 8 - "three months"; v. 9 - "the Way"; v. 10 - "this continued for two years")***

The third thing that I briefly want to touch on is the intensive nature of the teaching. Advancing the kingdom always involves intensive teaching. It is clear that Paul didn't just teach the Gospel. He taught the things of the kingdom of God so extensively that it took a lot of time. Verse 8 mentions the first three months that the disciples were taught. Verse 9 mentions the next two years, And we assume that the remainder of the chapter takes another nine months because Acts 20:31 says, **"Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears."** Three years of intensive teaching of much of the same people for at least 4-5 hours a day (and other hours house to house) is an incredible amount of teaching. Does it mean that every believer got taught that much? No. But at least the leadership that goes out and plants churches was taught an enormous amount. And that is my gripe with modern Christianity. It is not interested in in-depth teaching. It's not interested in reading. It is not interested in having every thought taken captive to Christ. But the direct result of this intensive teaching was the success of the Gospel throughout Asia in verse 10. Daniel 11:32 says that it is those who know their God who will do great exploits.

B. ***It was teaching a whole new way of living ("the Way" v. 9)***

Second, the teaching was no esoteric or purely theoretical teaching. We have already seen this hinted at in verse 8. But the phrase, **"the Way"** in verse 9 implies a practical living out of the Word. And it indicates that the word was applied in such a way that it was truly a whole new way of living. Until churches start teaching specific biblical blueprints for every area of life, they can kiss verse 10's success goodbye. And by the way, *what* Scripture was it that Paul taught to these people for 5500 hours? (I came up with the figure of 5500 hours because early tradition says that he rented the hall from 11am to 4 pm. Multiply that times 7 days a week, and you come up with 5500 hours.) So let me repeat my question? What Scripture was it that Paul taught to these people for three years - for 5500 hours? It was the Old Testament. They didn't have the New Testament. It was the Old

Testament blueprints that transformed businessmen like Aquila and Philemon. It was the Old Testament case laws that enabled these people to have a rubber-meets-the-road Christianity. It was the Old Testament that provided “the Way” in which they should walk and that gave them success. And why would it *not* give them success? Joshua 1:8-9 says that when believers meditate upon God’s law day and night and are saturated in it, “...then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” Moses told believers in Deuteronomy 32, “Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to be careful to observe – all the words of this law. For it is not a futile thing for you, because it is your life, and by this word you shall prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess.” They were possessing a new land – taking the conquest of the Great Commission, but it was the Old Testament that provided “the way” in which they should walk. We need the Old Testament if we are to effectively advance God’s kingdom. Psalm 1 tells us to meditate in it day and night, for then we will prosper.

C. On verse 9 - see early tradition of 11am-4pm)

IV. Advancing the Kingdom involves multiplying leaders (v. 10)

So far we have seen that advancing the kingdom sometimes involves efforts at reform. It sometimes involves rescuing sheep from poor churches. It always involves intensive teaching. But lastly, it also involves multiplying your leaders.

A. Paul did not evangelize all of Asia himself – he had the help of Timothy, Erastus, Titus, Gaius, Tychicus, Trophimus, Philemon, Archippus, Aristarchus, Sosthenes, Fortunatus, Achaicus, Aquila, Priscilla (the “twelve” in v. 7?)

I believe that a lot of what Paul was doing was training up new leaders to replace him when he moved on. Paul was constantly involved in leadership training. No one person can do all the work by himself. Some years ago I believe God led me to the conclusion that I must be involved in raising up at least one to three Spirit-led leaders every year for the rest of my life. I’ve been doing that with our pastoral interns. But we are having weekly leadership training of Mike, Ben Kayser and Andrew Denekas. Ben Leuders wants to benefit from leadership training, and if he can get enough money in

the next week or two, he will go with me to China this Fall. If any of you feel so led, you can make a tax-deductible contribution to Biblical Blueprints to help cover his expenses. Other young people like Andrew have been interested in doing this as well. But I want to multiply leaders.

Multiplying leaders is essential to the advancement of God's kingdom. And I have culled from the commentaries the names of the some of the leaders that Paul was training during these three years. He had leaders from previous works like Timothy and Titus, but consider the list in your outline: Erastus, Titus, Gaius, Tychicus, Trophimus, Philemon, Archippus, Aristarchus, Sosthenes, Fortunatus, Achaicus, Aquila, Priscilla and the "twelve" that are mentioned in verse 7. It is possible that at least some of those names were the twelve that were rebaptized in verse 6. Look at the results of this pattern that Paul established when they pulled out of the synagogue to quit fruitless fighting and to start having a positive, synergistic ministry. Verse 10 says, "**And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.**" That is an amazing statement. *All who dwelt in Asia heard the word.*

B. Yet Paul stayed in the headquarters in Ephesus "the whole time...for three years... night and day" (Acts 20:18,31; compare the added time of "three months" of 19:8, "two years" of 19:10 and nine months of 19:13-20:1)

They didn't hear it directly from Paul's mouth. We know that because he didn't do much traveling. He stayed in Ephesus for the most part. Acts 20:18 says that from the moment he came to Asia, he spent the whole time with the leaders of Ephesus. Acts 20:31 says, "**Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.**" If he stayed in Ephesus, how did he ensure that the whole of Asia heard the word? It was through numerous leaders that were raised up because they were passionate about the kingdom. By the way, it is interesting to note that he didn't raise up pastors with a four year bachelor's degree and a three year Master of Divinity Degree. That's a Greek model, and it is inadequate for full kingdom living. Paul followed the Hebrew model of mentorship in which a leader invests his life into another. He raised up leaders who were with him, and then sent them out to have influence just like Jesus sent His disciples. That's how all of Asia heard the word.

C. Churches were established by Epaphrus in Colossae (Col. 1:7), Laodicea and Hierapolis (Co. 4:12-13). Other churches were established in Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia (see Rev. 2-3).

And by the time Paul's three years are done, we can deduce that his leaders had established churches in at *least* Colossae, Laodicea, Hierapolis, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis and Philadelphia. And given the way he raised leaders, it was clear that those leaders were involved in raising further leaders. The on-fire churches engaged in personal evangelism as some of our young people are doing. They were obviously passionate about their Christianity. And by the end of two years and three months, Luke could honestly say, "**And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.**"

O that we could have this kind of impact! Paul didn't always have that in every place that he stayed, but this is obviously a pattern that is healthy. It's the pattern he always strove for. And it is a pattern that our church desires to have.

It is not our desire to become a huge church. Instead, we would like to start a pattern of preaching points, and other points of influence that would be decentralized and would take off in the next three years. We don't want to be held back by lack of zeal or lack of faith. We very much desire that our labors would see preaching points established in at least three communities. Only the Lord knows if He will prosper this. But we desire to see God's kingdom advancing, and we want to labor diligently to accomplish that. Please, pray that God would prosper these desires and that we would have His mind and His approval every step of the way. Pray that as opposition comes from Satan, as it came in this chapter, that we would respond with the power of the Spirit. Pray that when resistance arises from men, as it arose in this chapter, that we would never become bitter, and never be overcome, but that God's Spirit would give us the victory through Christ Jesus. Paul had a lot of opposition during the three years that he was in Ephesus. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 15:30-32 he says, "**In danger every hour, I die daily, I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus.**" It appears that he had been thrown into the Coliseum there to be devoured by beasts, and this little man by the power of God's strength fought with them and survived. It was no doubt one of the unusual miracles that verse 11 talks about.

The point is, that life wasn't always hunky dory. In 2 Corinthians 1 he said, "**For we do not want you to be unaware brethren of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively beyond our**

strength, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed we had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead.” And the God who raises the dead empowered him supernaturally, did miracles through him, spread the faith through him, and raised up a church that powerfully advanced the kingdom of God and turned Ephesus upside down. Building on last week’s sermon, let’s commit ourselves to advancing the kingdom of God, not by the imaginary tanks, pontoon bridges and diver bombers that the boy concocted to his mother; not by means of what human ingenuity and abilities can achieve, but let us be committed to advancing the kingdom by the supernatural power of the filling of God’s Spirit. And may He receive the glory. Amen.

Charge: Receive the filling of the God’s Spirit for the advance of His kingdom into every area of darkness.

Advancing the Kingdom
Acts 19:1,8-10
Outline by Phillip G. Kayser

- I. Advancing the Kingdom sometimes involves efforts at reform (v. 8)
 - A. Flowed from Paul's concept of "the kingdom of God"
 - B. Required faith
 - C. Required boldness
 - D. Required reasoning
 - E. Required calls for change
 - F. Involves comprehensive teaching

- II. Advancing the Kingdom sometimes involves rescuing sheep (v. 9). This is allowable when:
 - A. The church is "hardened"
 - B. The church does not "believe" fundamental truths
 - C. When the church actively opposes "the Way"
 - D. When the leaders publicly oppose "the Way"
 - E. When a sufficient amount of time has passed (in this case "three months") to make it evident that change won't happen.
 - F. When it is truly "sheep rescuing"
 - G. When it forms a new fellowship

- III. Advancing the Kingdom always involves intensive teaching (vv. 8-10)
 - A. Paul didn't just teach the Gospel. He taught "the things of the kingdom of God" so extensively that it took a lot of time (v. 8 - "three months"; v. 9 - "the Way"; v. 10 - "this continued for two years")
 - B. It was teaching a whole new way of living ("the Way" v. 9)
 - C. On verse 9 - see early tradition of 11 am-4pm

- IV. Advancing the Kingdom involves multiplying leaders (v. 10)
 - A. Paul did not evangelize all of Asia himself - he had the help of Timothy, Erastus, Titus, Gaius, Tychicus, Trophimus, Philemon, Archippus, Aristarchus, Sosthenes, Fortunatus, Achaicus, Aquila, Priscilla (the "twelve" in v. 7?)
 - B. Yet Paul stayed in the headquarters in Ephesus "the whole time...for three years... night and day" (Acts 20:18,31; compare the added time of "three months" of 19:8, "two years" of 19:10 and nine months of 19:13-20:1)
 - C. Churches were established by Epaphrus in Colossae (Col. 1:7), Laodicea and Hierapolis (Co. 4:12-13). Other churches were established in Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia (see Rev. 2-3).