



32 | ACTS 19:8-41

RIOTING AND REJOICING IN EPHESUS

The misery of worldliness is far more damaging and difficult and dangerous than the suffering we have in sanctification.

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Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth! ²Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. ³Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples! —Psalm 96:1-3

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All Creatures of Our God and King

Good, Good Father

To God be the Glory

He Leadeth Me

Christ the Sure and Steady Anchor

Announcements

WELCOME: We are glad you are here! Be sure to grab a Welcome Packet if you are visiting with us.

GIVING: You can give over Zelle through your bank with no fees (use secretary@livinghopechurch.net). We also have a collection box on the Welcome Center. Malachi 3, "Test me in this" Proverbs: "**Give of your firstfruits.**" We believe blessing comes by putting God first.

PACIFIC GARDEN MISSION: Pastor Matt is preaching at Pacific Garden Mission on Sunday, May 1, at 6:15pm. Service begins at 7pm and ends at 8pm.

Introduction

What are you afraid of? Sometimes we are afraid to really draw near to God because we know that he conforms us to the image of Christ through suffering. My desire is to demonstrate from Paul's church plant at Ephesus this key though

Key Thought: The misery of worldliness is far more damaging and difficult and dangerous than the suffering we have in sanctification.

The Christian can maintain a deep and satisfying joy in Christ, despite the most impossible suffering. **Do not be afraid of any kind of suffering** or trials in the Christian life. Suffering in the world bring far worse misery. Dare to trust in your Abba, Father. He will always see you through if you trust in him.

God uses us the most when we suffer for Christ. He's trying the dross out of our lives, that we might come forth as gold. That's exactly what Job testified.

Job 23:10 | When he has tried me, I shall come out as gold.

Choose to live the Christian life, all for Christ, no matter what the suffering. It is the suffering that draws us near to God and makes us the most productive for his kingdom.

1. THE PREPARATION FOR SUFFERING (19:8-12)

Don't be afraid to preach God's word and share the gospel. Let any suffering you endure drive you deeper into the riches of Christ's love. Abide in him. Drink deeply of his love. In this way we can agree with Paul.

2 Timothy 3:12 | All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

Romans 8:18 | The sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Whatever the sufferings of the Christian life bring, they are far more merciful than anything in the world. When we suffer as Christians, we have the love, joy, peace, and patience to endure because Christ is with us. We can dive deeper into his love. But **when we choose sin, we choose suffering in the world, and it is attended with fear and anger and despair.** We are eaten up with bitterness and gall, terror, dread, and even illness. Stress and demonic harassment can cause so much suffering that leads to more feelings of rejection, abandonment, and deep insecurities.

Dear saints, let us be done with this kind of worldly suffering, and let us tend to the miracles of the Spirit that come for every saint as we resist the devil. He must leave. He can no longer harass us. Don't open the door of your heart to him even an inch.

WORKING IN THE WORD

Don't be afraid to lay the foundation of the gospel even though it will be accompanied by suffering. Paul went to the synagogue as was his custom. His method was "reasoning" or literally "**dialoguing**"—exchange, question and answer, give and take. Some were persuaded by Paul's reasoning, and "some of them became obstinate."¹

The Message of the Word

Acts 19:8 | And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.

Paul persuaded them about the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is the rule of Christ in the hearts of his people. It was portrayed in a picture in the Old Testament and for Israel, but then in the New Testament, Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is at hand!" (Mk 1:15). The King has come! The Messianic kingdom has arrived. It comes first in the hearts of his people and then he will rule and reign on the earth. He will dash the unbelieving people into pieces like the shards of a potter's vessel. He will comfort and protect his people from any harm.

Paul was preaching the kingdom of God. The kingdom is centered in the King—the one who was crucified at Calvary and risen on the third day. He came to restore true freedom and victory for man under submission to God, a life that glorifies God. It is the kingdom of which the Lord spoke to Nicodemus when he said: "Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (Jn 3:3), the kingdom that today is inward rather than outward—"the kingdom of God is within you" (Lk 17:21).²

The Persecution of the Word

Acts 19:9-10 | But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus.¹⁰ This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

When persecution set in, Paul and his followers made arrangements to continue the **dialogue in a rented hall** belonging to a local philosopher named **Tyrannus**, which literally means "tyrant." Certainly this must have been a **nickname** given by the **philosopher's students**.³

What was Paul's reward for faithful teaching? **The enemy stirred several in the congregation and slandered Paul**, twisting the word of God. This was such a satanic attack, that Paul had to withdraw. He goes from the synagogue to the hall of Tyrannus. It

¹ R. Kent Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1996), 254.

² John Phillips, *Exploring Acts: An Expository Commentary*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp., 2009), Ac 19:8.

³ Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Volume 9, *John-Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 495.

turns out to be a fantastic move, and Paul teaches there for two years. It's one of the most popular lecture halls in all of Asia Minor. **Notice that where God allows the enemy to drive us is a better place.** Don't be afraid of where persecution might take you. God will make it a place of fruitfulness.

Paul put preaching the word first. Above all, people come to faith in Christ and grow in him through receiving and applying the word. Don't be afraid for any persecution both internal or external that may come to you. It is **far easier to suffer with Christ** than to suffer in the world.

WORKING IN THE WORLD

Paul of course was not paid to lecture in the word at the hall of Tyrannus. Likely he had to pay rent. **He also took care of his own support.** Therefore, he had to work. Remember Paul is a leather worker and a tent maker.

Acts 20:34 | You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs.

On the surface, this move to the halls of Tyrannus does not seem very significant. The **synagogue authorities** in Ephesus tolerated Paul's preaching for three months—but at last **they decided that enough was enough.** When opposition reached a point which made it impossible for him to use the synagogue any longer, Paul found another auditorium in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. Tyrannus vacated his lecture hall during the **hottest part of the day**, and it was then (11 am to 4 pm, according to the western text) that it was at Paul's disposal.⁴

This change shows Paul's aggressiveness and **determination in assaulting the powers of darkness.** The Western text says Paul rented Tyrannus' quarters "from the fifth hour to the tenth"—that is, from 11 A.M. to 4 P.M. That was when **the people of Ephesus took their midday siesta.** The workday began at 7, broke at 11, and continued from 4 until about 9:30 at night, as it is in Spain and other parts of the European world today. Evidently Paul made tents during the morning hours, taught between 11 and 4, and then went back to work. Paul used his siesta to teach, but still had a fulltime job. **Paul kept a killer schedule!**⁵

There is a strength and perseverance when it comes to the Christian life. We will face difficulty. At times we will be exhausted. We are to "**preach the word in season and out of season**" (2 Tim 4:2). But there is a joy to working hard. Paul was willing to work with his own hands for the Ephesian believers. This was a sweetheart church for him. He stayed there longer than anywhere else. **Hard work is worth it. God is our employer. We work for him and do all for his glory.**

WORKING WONDERS

When we faithfully teach the word, ministering the presence of Jesus through the Spirit, **extraordinary miracles will occur**, namely healing of demonic symptoms and the departure of evil spirits.

Acts 19:11-12 | And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, ¹² so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were

⁴ F. F. Bruce, *Acts: Bible Study Commentary* (Nashville, TN; Bath, England: Kingsley Books, 2017), Ac 19:8–20.

⁵ R. Kent Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1996), 255.

carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them.

WHAT ABOUT THE HANKERCHEIFS? What exactly does this mean for Paul then and for us today? Certainly, in Paul's day as it is today, sickness caused by demons was cured. **Handkerchiefs or aprons Paul had from tent making were brought to the sick and demonized.** This was not some kind of superstition, but a sign of faith in Jesus.

This reminds me of the woman who touch just **the hem of Jesus' garment** who was healed (Lk 8:43–48). Or how **Peter's shadow** would fall on people, and they would be healed (5:15).

What is certain is that it is faith—not in any apostle, but in Jesus Christ alone—that brings healing and the resistance of Satan and the demonic. “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jas 4:7).

DEMONS AND SICKNESS: Do demons still harass Christians? Are some sicknesses caused by demons? The answer is yes. Christians are harassed only if they allow it. This can lead to terrible sickness. **Lost people are demonized constantly.**

Much of the sickness we have is due to the **atrophy of our bodies** and minds due to the **curse of sin**. Ten out of ten people die, and it is due to the curse. The second law of thermodynamics is that all things are falling apart. God can heal that kind of sickness. We deal a majority of the time with physical ailments due to the atrophy that old age and the broken world we live in brings.

TESTIMONY: But there are many illnesses as well that are **demonically induced**. For several years as a child, **I lived with a kind of fear and PTSD** due to abuse that was mostly due to demonic harassment. The more I gave into fear, the more irrational controlling thoughts paralyzed me. I would sweat through my clothes at night because of the deep fear within me. I could hardly eat. I could hardly speak at times. When **I resisted the devil through saving faith**, coming to a full salvation in Jesus one night in September 1989, that PTSD left me, and I was as light as a feather. I was free. I experienced overwhelming peace. The harassment of the wicked one left me.

When I submitted myself to God through the word of truth, believing the gospel that Jesus died for me, **the signs of the Spirit manifested to me. No longer was I filled with fear. Now I was filled with hope and peace and protected by trust in the almighty God.** He holds me in his hand.

SICKNESS CAN BE FOR SANCTIFICATION: You may be harassed by the devil to the point of sickness even if you are living a righteous life. But God's purpose for the child of God is sanctification. He **destroyed Job's body, even though he was a righteous man.** Sickness often has nothing to do with disobedience, but is a test and trial for the righteous, that they might “come forth as gold” and not please themselves, but please God.

SICKNESS DUE TO DEMONIZATION: But **there is sickness due to demonic harassment** and demonization. And the **only protection** from that harassment is a **total surrender to Jesus**. This is what the apostles preached. And when we preach the

gospel and we lift up Jesus, and people surrender, **sickness caused by demonic harassment will depart.**

What about you? Are you dabbling with demons, dear saint of God? Do you think you can be double minded and remain protected by God? Don't you know that **whom the Lord loves he chastises?** There is a point when you could be "given over to Satan for the destruction of the body" so that your soul might be saved in the day of Christ?

DON'T OPEN THE DOOR TO DEMONIC HARRASSMENT: When you open the door to fear and anger, worldliness, drink or lust, or any sin, and you **decide not to repent**, not to deal with it, don't you understand that the devil comes immediately to **harass you?** Shut the door through repentant faith. Confess your sins to one another. Abide in Christ and enjoy his perfect peace (Isa 26:3). Rejoice in fellowship, walking in the light, despising even the spot of sin in your life. Humble yourself in God's sight and receive the empowerment of grace.

Surrender to the Spirit. Be controlled by the Spirit, not drunk with wine or substance. When you suffer, don't open the door worldliness and satanic harassment. Go to the Spirit and be filled and satisfied with Christ. Drink deeply of the wells of living water. Eat to the full of the Bread of life. He is all you need.

Paul was working wonders, preaching the word, and he was working this whole time, leading people to Christ. Did that bring suffering, yes! But the **suffering we have in Christ** is a thousand times **better than suffering in sin.**

2. THE POWER OF SUFFERING (19:13-20)

One thing this next story illustrates is that we are all going to suffer, and we have to make a choice. Are we going to suffer for the gospel like Paul, or will we suffer with the oppression of the wicked one? What's your choice? Everyone is under supernatural power, either under the power of Christ and his Holy Spirit, or under the power of the one who is utterly depraved, the wicked one. Each choice we make, we are choosing sides. We find a curious story about seven Jewish exorcists.

THE POWER OF OPPRESSION

Acts 19:13-14 | Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims." ¹⁴Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this.

The story told by Luke demonstrates **the power of demonic oppression.** There is no high priest named Sceva, though he was likely distantly related to a high priestly family. We may compare Sceva's title to the way in which modern hucksters take on such titles as **'Doctor' or 'Professor'** without earning the degrees, like donated dignity.⁶ These Jewish peddlers were casting out demons with the name of Jesus, like those **tricksters on television** today. They have an air of religion, but their real motive is they

⁶ I. Howard Marshall, *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 5, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 329.

love money. They are **using an incantation**—using Jesus’ name as some kind of magic word. They **are fleecing the people** with false promises. The interesting thing is they are exposed by the demons they are attempting to exorcise.

The Devil Leaves You Harassed

What we find first is that the devil will leave you harassed. You are nothing to the demons. They don’t even hardly know the names of the lost. They are utterly depraved and they don’t care.

Acts 19:15 | But the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?”

The devil could care less about those he harasses. The seven sons of Sceva had used an incantation with Jesus’ name. Jesus’ name is not a magic word. That’s dangerous. the evil spirit in the man whom they were trying to cure confessed to knowing about Jesus and about Paul but challenged their right to use the name.⁷ Luke must have enjoyed writing this episode. It is filled with humor. Upon their abjuration, the demon responded: “**Jesus I know, and Paul I respect, but who are you?**” Remember how James told us: “Even the demons believe and shudder” (Jas 2:19). As so often with the exorcisms performed by Jesus, **the demon confessed Jesus** and even respected that Jesus’ power was working through Paul. However, **the evil spirit was not about to yield any turf to these seven sons of Sceva**. They had no power over him whatever. He turned on them with a vengeance.⁸

You ought to be afraid to use the name of Jesus you are not on the side of Jesus. You are just asking for demonic harassment.

The Devil Leaves You Humiliated

The seven sons of Sceva thought they would have another quick exorcism and an easy buck—until they intoned the name Jesus. Then the demoniac rolled his frenzied eyes and said, “I know who Jesus is, and I know who Paul is, but who do you think you are?” After that, all they remembered were some rights and lefts, the door opening, and streaking madly for cover!⁹ **The demon came after these hucksters with a vengeance**. He overpowered them, and sent them running naked from the house.

Acts 19:16 | And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

The hucksters lived, but they **fled the house naked and wounded**. You can’t make this stuff up. It’s a fitting understanding of what Satan wants to do. He has no care for you. He uses the pleasure of sin to bankrupt you and leave you broken, bruised, hardened, and abandoned. Remember the warning of Jesus.

John 10:10 | The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

⁷ I. Howard Marshall, *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 5, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 329–330.

⁸ John B. Polhill, *Acts*, vol. 26, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 404.

⁹ R. Kent Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1996), 258.

Which power will you submit to? Are you under the power of the Holy Spirit day in and day out, or have you given yourself to the power of the devil? If you continue in sin, you should be very afraid. The devil has no mercy.

THE POWER OF REVIVAL

As people heard of **the devastating power of Satan, and the mercy of the Lord**, and they said, “**Enough is enough!**” That’s what we need to say. And they **turned to Christ**. They no longer wanted to be under the power of the wicked one. He is utterly depraved with no mercy. Many citizens of Ephesus were moved to resist the devil because they experienced the fear of the Lord. They worshipped and lifted up the name of Jesus in a powerful way. The devil had to flee.

Acts 19:17-18 | And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled.¹⁸ Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices.

People were awed at what was happening. **There was power—soul-saving, demon-conquering, life-transforming power**—in the name of Jesus. But it was no name to take lightly on one’s lips.¹⁰ There was **deep awe and reverence** at the name of Jesus. People were extolling and worshipping the risen Christ.

THE PRICE OF REVIVAL

The power of the gospel at Ephesus **broke the shackles Satan had fastened** on the people. Many confessed their involvement in the black arts and showed their repentance by publicly burning their books on magic and their curios covered with charms and spells. They had previously treasured these things, whose commercial value was enormous.

Acts 19:19-20 | And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver.²⁰ So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.

SEWERS OPEN: Notice when Christ visits a people through his Holy Spirit, the people open up the sewers. They expose the works of darkness by dragging them out into the light. And they repent no matter what the cost.

MASSIVE PRICE: A piece of silver for the average person was quite small, valued around twenty dollars. Yet for these Ephesian residents, they rid themselves of what **amounted to at least a million to a million and a half dollars’** (\$1 million to \$1.5 million) worth of items from their old life.

When people are truly born again, they are willing to **pay any price**. When we repent and are willing to **pay any price to follow Jesus**, there is **revival and joy and freedom from demonic harassment**. You want revival? At what price? Are you willing to be done completely with the old life? Or will you just live a life half in the world and half in the church, being harassed like the seven sons of Sceva? Won’t you be like

¹⁰ John Phillips, *Exploring Acts: An Expository Commentary*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp., 2009), Ac 19:17.

those citizens of Ephesus, who came to know Christ, and were willing to pay the price and get rid of anything that kept them chained to the world? Won't you surrender everything? Isn't Jesus worth it?

3. GOD'S PROTECTION DURING SUFFERING (19:21-41)

Don't be afraid to follow the Lord wholeheartedly. He's got you, and **no one can pluck you out of his hand** (Jn 10:28). Satan cannot harm you if you follow the Lord. That's not to say you won't suffer difficulty and persecution. But you'll understand as you grow in Christ, that even this is part of your sanctification. Every difficulty brings you more into conformity with the loving, peaceful heart of Christ. **Your whole world could be falling apart, and you can have perfect peace** (cf Isa 26:3).

TRUST GOD'S PROVIDENCE

Despite all the persecution and suffering, Paul's steps were guided by God. Paul decides it's time to depart from Ephesus, but he's not allowed. So he sends two of his co-workers ahead to Macedonia.

Acts 19:21-22 | Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." ²² And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

PAUL DIVERTED HIS PATH TO TAKE OFFERING: Almost three years had now passed since Paul arrived in Ephesus on this, his third missionary journey. Paul began to feel that his work in Ephesus was about over. Why would Paul have such a **strange itinerary** if he wanted to go to **Jerusalem**? Because Jerusalem had endured a deadly famine. As a result, many in the church at Jerusalem were poor and in need of sustained financial assistance. To meet that need, Paul wanted to **take to Jerusalem with him a love offering** from the largely Gentile churches he had founded. Before returning to Jerusalem, he revisited **Macedonia and Achaia** (i.e., Philippi and Corinth) to collect that offering (Rom 15:25-27; 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8-9).¹¹

Paul also desperately wanted to have "**Rome**" on his itinerary. How he wanted to preach the gospel in the imperial city so that he might be a help and blessing to the church there, too.¹²

Prior to leaving Ephesus, however, a climactic event of the gospel confronting pagan idolatry takes place in this beloved city of Diana's temple, and a riot ensues.¹³

NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS: IT'S GOD'S PLAN TO SANCTIFY YOU.

What does it mean for you to trust the providence of God? You have to realize that all the difficulty, all the trials, all the upside-down events in your life are actually pushing you to Christ, to be conformed to his image. What is ugly today will one day be beautiful.

¹¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Acts*, vol. 2, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 181.

¹² *Ibid.*, Ac 19:21-22.

¹³ James M. Hamilton Jr. and Brian J. Vickers, *John-Acts*, ed. Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar, vol. IX, *ESV Expository Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 519.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 | He has made everything beautiful in its time.

Isaiah 61:1, 3 | He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted; ... he will give a crown of beauty for ashes.

Trusting God's providence means **believing God will redeem everything in his time**. Paul had his Jerusalem, where famine was destroying their livelihood, but it was also bringing the Jewish and Gentile churches together into one. Remember "all things work together for good" for God's people to conform us to Christ (Rom 8:28-30).

Ephesians 1:10-11 | God has a "a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹ In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will."

God restores the years the locusts have eaten. We have to believe this. **Satan may mean all the suffering you are enduring for evil, but God means it all for your good** (Gen 50:20). This is what it means to trust in God's providence.

TRUST GOD'S POWER

"Greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 Jn 4:4). Before Paul was able to leave Ephesus, a man named Demetrius, who was a silversmith and an idol maker, tries to cause a riot. People may rebel against the gospel, but they can do nothing against the power of God. God's power is working in the hearts of people. **Try as they may to defeat God's people, God's enemies will not prevail, since the battle and the power is the Lord's.**

Acts 19:23-28 | About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way. ²⁴ For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. ²⁵ These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. ²⁶ And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. ²⁷ And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship."

Demetrius the silver smith is frightened about what "the Way" will do to his idol making business. The Way was an early title for the Christian faith (cf Acts 9:2; 19:9; 22:4; 24:14, 22), probably deriving from Jesus' description of himself as "the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6).¹⁴

GOD'S POWER IS GREATER THAN ANYTHING MAN CAN DO TO YOU.

Prior to the fresh growth of the church, the local artisans had a good thing going—big business! The epicenter of Artemis worship was a black meteorite that either resembled or had been fashioned into a grotesque image of a woman. The lower part was wrapped

¹⁴ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Acts*, vol. 2, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 183.

like a mummy, and the upper image was covered with round objects resembled a woman's body (breasts) symbolizing fertility.¹⁵

Wherever the church boldly and faithfully proclaims the gospel it faces Satanic opposition. It comes as no surprise, then, that persecution also arose in Ephesus, stemming from a pseudo-religious materialism. Hardened hearts, hypocrisy, and hatred energized the opposition to the gospel.¹⁶ Don't be afraid of what man can do. Look to the power of God.

TRUST GOD'S PLAN

God's ways are not our ways. **His plans are higher than our plans** (Isa 55:8-9)! Paul sees the riot coming, and he wants to address the crowd, but God has a different plan. **Often when things seem to be unravelling, it's actually just Satan's smoke and mirrors.** He can harass and try to cause havoc, but he has no real power to destroy the plan of God. When Paul told the Ephesians that "**all things work after the counsel of his own will**" (Eph 1:11) They had learned about God's **plan and providence** by many treacherous experiences, one of which we read about in our passage. **A riot was almost started.**

Acts 19:28-34 | When they heard this they were enraged and were crying out, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"²⁹ So the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's companions in travel.³⁰ But when Paul wished to go in among the crowd, the disciples would not let him.³¹ And even some of the Asiarchs, who were friends of his, sent to him and were urging him not to venture into the theater.³² Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together.³³ Some of the crowd prompted Alexander, whom the Jews had put forward. And Alexander, motioning with his hand, wanted to make a defense to the crowd.³⁴ But when they recognized that he was a Jew, for about two hours they all cried out with one voice, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

Here it looks like a defeat for Paul. After three years of successful ministry, his time in **Ephesus, it seems, will end in a riot with the church in ruins.** But don't believe it. God's plans include both rioting and rejoicing, but **God's plan always ends with a victory** for the child of God!

During **Napoleon's Battle of Waterloo**, England waited silently for news of the outcome. Would Napoleon's armies win? If England's General Wellington could not defeat Napoleon, England had a frightening future. Finally, from the top of Winchester Cathedral, trained eyes read the symbols for the **morse code**. The message read:

W-E-L-L-I-N-G-T-O-N-D-E-F-E-A-T-E-D

Just **then fog set in**, and no further transmission was possible. "Wellington Defeated" was relayed throughout England. Despair reigned as people prepared for the

¹⁵ R. Kent Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1996), 263.

¹⁶ MacArthur, *Acts*, vol. 2, 181.

worst. What would the treacherous Napoleon do to their beloved land? But later the fog lifted, and the full message was revealed:

W-E-L-L-I-N-G-T-O-N-D-E-F-E-A-T-E-D-T-H-E-E-N-E-M-Y

How different history would be without those final two words.¹⁷ Listen, there are times when you may feel defeated in the plan of God, but defeat is impossible for the Christian. The Christian is predestined to be conformed to Christ. Paul told us that we cannot fail. God will complete his plan for us.

Philippians 1:6 | He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

You can bank on it. God is not finished with you yet. No matter how sorrowful your circumstances, God promises to turn you mourning into laughter.

Jeremiah 31:13 | I will turn their mourning into joy; I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.

Psalms 126:3 | Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy!

Dear saints, the enemy is already a defeated foe. Don't act like he's in charge, even if he tries to pretend that he has the victory. We have our victory in Jesus! God's plan is unstoppable. "We are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Rom 8:37).

TRUST GOD'S POSITION

In this final section, we see **God's position over the magistrates** of Ephesus. God has ordained the powers that be (Rom 13:1-7). He put them there, so we can trust God even if we can't trust our magistrates. "**He removes kings and sets up kings**" (Dan 2:21).

In Psalm 2, the Bible says that **God "sits in the heavens and laughs" at man's attempts at derailing the gospel**. It's impossible. We have nothing to fear because God is in absolute control. Jesus said, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it" (Mt 16:18). We see God's power exercised through the magistrates in Ephesus.

Acts 19:35-41 | And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, "Men of Ephesus, who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great Artemis, and of the sacred stone that fell from the sky? ³⁶Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. ³⁷For you have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess. ³⁸If therefore Demetrius and the craftsmen with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. ³⁹But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly. ⁴⁰For we really are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion." ⁴¹And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.

¹⁷ Hughes, *Acts*, 253.

At the end of this attempted riot, nothing significant happened. As in so many other cities where Paul was, the fury of the people only worked to increase the spread of the gospel. Henry Martyn, Anglican missionary to India and Persia summed up what our attitude should be.

I am immortal until God's work for me is done. —Henry Martyn¹⁸

When Isaiah got a vision of the great position of our Lord and King, he said, “I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple” (Isa 6:1). How exalted is our Lord! He rules and reigns in the kingdoms of men. We have nothing to fear. Listen to the words of King David.

Psalm 118:6 | The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?

What are you afraid of dear saint? All magistrates and kings, governors and presidents are put there by the living God. **What can the enemy do to you without God's permission?**

Conclusion

Someone asked C.S. Lewis, “Why do the righteous suffer?” “Why not?” he replied. “They're the only ones who can take it.”¹⁹

We are told at the Nicene Council, an important church meeting in the 4th century A.D., of the 318 delegates attending, fewer than 12 had not lost an eye or lost a hand or did not limp on a leg lamed because of the persecution they endured for their faith in Christ.²⁰

We are going to suffer dear saints. The question is: will you suffer for Christ or for this world? There is glory and honor and joy in suffering for Christ. There is misery and bitterness and despair in suffering for worldliness. Stop turning to the wicked one and turn to Christ anew and afresh. Paul told us that our suffering would lead us to the glory of Christlikeness.

An artist in Florence, Italy once asked the great Renaissance sculptor Michelangelo what he saw when he approached a huge block of marble. The famous sculptor stood back and looked at that big square block of white marble, rubbed his chin thoughtfully, and replied, “I see a beautiful form trapped inside and it is my responsibility to take my mallet and chisel and chip away until the figure is set free.” I love that illustration because you can relate to it. It is “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

God uses affliction like a hammer and trouble just like a chisel, and he chips and cuts away at us through trials to reveal Jesus' image in you and me. God chooses as his model his Son, Jesus Christ because Romans 8:29 says:

“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son.”

¹⁸ Henry Martyn in John Piper, *Future Grace: The Purifying Power of the Promises of God*, revised edition (Colorado Springs, CO, 2012), 287.

¹⁹ C.S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1955), 229.

²⁰ John M. Perkins, Karen Waddles, *Count It All Joy: The Ridiculous Paradox of Suffering*. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2021), 96.