

Part 49 The Ephesus Riot

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney Wednesday, Sept. 07, 2016

† Acts 19:21-41; 20:1

Last week we looked at Acts 19:8-20 which covered Paul's time in Ephesus preaching, working miracles, driving out evil spirits and increasing the Word of God. We spent some time discussing the vast amount of demon possession in Paul's day and also in our current day.

Tonight we are going to finish out this chapter and look at a very turbulent time in Paul's ministry, the infamous Ephesus Riot.

21 After these things were ended, 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.

"After these things," meaning the revival that had broken out in Ephesus and the book burning the people had after being convicted of their idolatry and demonic worship. The Gospel was fully established there and it was no longer necessary for Paul to stay around.

Paul had a great desire to travel to Rome to preach the Gospel there. His purpose for going to Macedonia and Achaia was to collect the money that the Churches there had collected to give to the poor Saints in Jerusalem. But after that he wanted to come to Rome and preach there and to minister unto the saved in Rome. We can read about that in his letter to the Romans:

Romans 15:19-28

19 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:

21 But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

22 For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.

23 But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you;

24 Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.

25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.

26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

28 When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.

Paul finally did get to Rome years later, however, it was from being arrested and led there in chains where he would serve out the rest of his life until being beheaded.

22 So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season.

Paul didn't leave Ephesus yet, but he sent Timothy and Erastus to go ahead of him to collect the money from Macedonia and Achaia. This is the first time we hear of this man Erastus. Over in Romans 16 we are told that he is the "chamberlain of the city." **Romans 16:23: Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.**

So this Erastus was a type of treasurer of the city, someone that was experienced with handling money. He would be the perfect one to send ahead to handle the collection. And of course Timothy was a very trusted helper to Paul.

23 And the same time there arose no small stir about that way.

Let's stop right here for a few minutes and talk about this. Anytime the Gospel is being preached and great things are happening in the work of the Lord, the devil has to try and interfere. This has been happening since the first human sinned.

The phrase, "**no small stir**," means this was a huge riot that was taking place. Similar to other places Paul had preached, the devil uses someone to stir up all of the people. Hey, he will use people the same way today. The devil never just stands up in the middle of the Church and announces himself; "hi I'm the devil and I'm about to cause a lot of problems," no, he uses someone to do his dirty work. If you are not careful he will use you to do his bidding.

24 For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen;

This Demetrius is a silversmith. That is someone who works with silver to form it into something useable. He made silver shrines for Diana. This Diana was the Roman Goddess of the hunt, the moon, and nature. She was also known as the virgin goddess of childbirth and women.

There was a big business in making and selling these silver shrines for Diana. The Temple that was built for her in Ephesus was known to be one of the 7 wonders of the world. It was a huge Temple. This is the way that Albert Barnes describes it in his commentary: *"It was 425 feet in length, 220 in breadth, and was supported by 127 pillars of Parian marble, each of which was 60 feet high. These pillars were furnished by as many princes, and 36 of them were curiously carved, and the rest were finely polished. Each pillar, it is supposed, with its base, contained 150 tons of marble. The doors and panelling were made of cypress wood, the roof of cedar, and the interior was rendered splendid by decorations of gold, and by the finest productions of ancient artists."*

These silver shrines would be images of Diana or images of her Temple that they would sell to people that came to worship there. It was a large tourist destination and you better believe these silversmiths made a lot of money off of tourists buying their shrines and Paul's preaching the Gospel has cut into their livelihood, as we see in our next verses:

25 Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. 26 Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands:

This Demetrius has done some checking in to Paul and has discovered that everywhere Paul goes, he teaches the same things and it causes people to give up their false idol and god worship. This is putting a huge dent in his paycheck so he

rounds up all of the other silversmiths and has a meeting about it. I guess this is sort of like our modern day union; the Silversmith Union of Ephesus.

27 So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.

He tells these men that not only are their jobs in danger but so is the Temple of Diana. I can't tell if Demetrius really has such compassion about the Temple or if he is just using it to bolster his rhetoric. If he can get folks stirred up over their religious practices then he can really bring notice to his cause.

28 And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

His stirring worked! When the men heard that Paul was causing the Temple to be despised they became highly irate and started crying out "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." It's a full-on riot chant which will keep growing as we will see when we get to verse 34.

29 And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre.

Here is two more of Paul's fellow laborers. This lynch mob has found them and has dragged them out into the theatre. The theatre was a public place for holding hearings, assemblies, and elections. It was where everyone went for anything public that was going to take place.

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.

Paul started to go into the theatre to defend himself and his friends but the disciples stopped him, no doubt because they feared for his life. It's always good to have friends to watch out for you when you are about to do something dumb.

32 Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.

Well this riot and crowd is so riled up that some people didn't even know why they were there. They were yelling out all kinds of things. It was total chaos and everyone was confused about what was going on. This is often the case when you get caught up in a crowd. Friends, 9 times out of 10 the crowd is wrong.

33 And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people. 34 But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

Now we see another man by the name of Alexander. We don't know anything about this man or who he was. All we know is the Jews put him forward to try and make a defense. We don't know if he was a Jew that had become a Christian and the Jews were forcing him to stand up to take the blame or if he was a Jew trying to stand up to defend the Jews from being included in with the Christians. It doesn't really matter because they wouldn't listen to him anyway. They just starting yelling for 2-hours. What a racket this must have been.

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?

Then a voice of reasoning steps forward, the town clerk. The town clerk was typically a scribe or some kind of lawyer that dealt with legal matters. He feeds them more propaganda about Diana. He tells them that the worship of Diana is so strong in the City of Ephesus that there is no way this "Christianity" could ever damage it. He obviously knows nothing about the power of Jesus and the Gospel, because it has the power to transform lives and turn the world upside down!

He says that the image of Diana had "fell down from Jupiter." The Romans believed that Jupiter had sent them the original image of Diana many years ago and that he had sent down from the heavens.

36 Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly.

The clerk tells the men they need to be quiet and not doing anything rash. No doubt they had plans to kill Paul and his companions or at least have them beaten, arrested, or thrown out of the city.

37 For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess.

He said they "are neither robbers of churches." The word church here is not referring to a Christian Church, an **ekklesiá**; a **called out assembly**, the word churches in this vers is translated from the Greek word **hierosulos**, which means **a temple**. The town clerk said that Paul and his men were not robbing their Temples. He reminds them that these Christians haven't done anything illegal or blasphemed against their goddess Diana.

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.

The town clerk is speaking from a legal standpoint here. He advises them to do things lawfully if they have something against these Christians. Bring it before the deputies and the courts to be settled.

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.

The Romans were always in fear of upsetting the Roman government. If word got out that they were unlawfully assembling to take revenge out on someone and causing an uproar then they would be subject to the laws of Rome themselves and would have to answer to their actions. So finally the crowd dispersed and Paul and the other men were let go. **Acts 20:1:** And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia.

ⁱ All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version of the Bible

ⁱⁱ Albert Barnes Notes on the Bible, Acts 19:27