

**Paul's Third Missionary Journey Begins****Lesson Scope:** Acts 19

*References in brackets refer to Acts 19 unless otherwise specified*

**Lesson Focus**

Paul returned to Ephesus on his third missionary journey after visiting and strengthening disciples he had made in his previous travels. Here he proclaimed the Gospel with boldness in the Jewish synagogue for three months. He discontinued his ministry to the Jews when they spoke evil of “that way” (19:9). Then he turned to the Gentiles, defending the Gospel in the school of Tyrannus. This gave the Gospel great, wide-spread exposure so that in those two years he spent there “all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks” (19:10).

The power of Christ to heal and cast out evil spirits led some vagabond Jews to attempt to copy Paul's evident power over evil spirits by using the name of Jesus. They soon learned that Jesus was not a magic word to be used by the practitioners of curious arts.

Because of the success of the Gospel, worship of the goddess Diana, along with the business prospects of the silversmiths, faced an uncertain future. The defenders of Diana worship created “no small stir” (19:23).

But Paul saw possibilities that far outweighed the problems caused by his opposers. Satan seeks to control men by blinding them to the truth. But the Gospel challenges every false religion and offers to fallen men the only way of salvation.

Paul's perseverance in spreading the Gospel in spite of many negative responses provides us with an example of how to face the opposition we encounter as Christians today. There are many ways we can respond and relate to people who oppose the Gospel.

Give some practical examples of books we should burn or items of high monetary value we should destroy to avoid Satan's efforts to exercise his power in our lives. No price is too high to pay in order to loose ourselves from the devil's efforts to control us

**Lesson Aim:** To present principles related to the enmity between the Gospel and false religions.

**Theme Verses:** **2 Corinthians 4:3-4.** But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

## Lesson Text

### Distraction of Unbelieving Jews

**Acts 19:1**

<sup>1</sup> (KJV) And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,

**Acts 19:8-12**

<sup>8</sup> (KJV) And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. <sup>9</sup> But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. <sup>10</sup> And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. <sup>11</sup> And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: <sup>12</sup> So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

### Conflict with Evil Powers

**Acts 19:13-20**

<sup>13</sup> (KJV) Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches. <sup>14</sup> And there were seven sons of *one* Sceva, a Jew, *and* chief of the priests, which did so. <sup>15</sup> And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? <sup>16</sup> And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. <sup>17</sup> And this was known to all the Jews

and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. <sup>18</sup> And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. <sup>19</sup> Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all *men*: and they counted the price of them, and found *it* fifty thousand *pieces* of silver. <sup>20</sup> So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

## Opposition from Idolaters

Acts 19:23-28

<sup>23</sup> (KJV)

And the same time there arose no small stir about that way. <sup>24</sup> For a certain *man* named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; <sup>25</sup> Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. <sup>26</sup> 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: <sup>27</sup> 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. <sup>28</sup> And when they heard *these sayings*, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great *is* Diana of the Ephesians.

Acts 19:32-41

<sup>32</sup> (KJV)

Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together. <sup>33</sup> 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. <sup>34</sup> 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. <sup>35</sup> And when the town clerk 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? <sup>36</sup> Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly. <sup>37</sup> For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess. <sup>38</sup> 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. <sup>39</sup> But if ye enquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly. <sup>40</sup> 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. <sup>41</sup> And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

## **Questions for Study**

### **Distraction of Unbelieving Jews**

1. What was happening in the hearts of the Jews who were hardened?
2. For what reasons do people reject the Gospel?

### **Conflict with Evil Powers**

3. Why were the exorcists overcome by the very power they sought to control?
4. How can we guard against the influences of magicians, fortune-tellers and others who claim occult powers?
5. What are some books and information sources we must reject?

### **Opposition from Idolaters**

6. On what factors did Demetrius base his speech to the craftsmen?
7. How do human reasoning and rationalism lead to confusion?

## **Analysing the Passage**

Paul's typical pattern was to go to the Jews first. They were his kindred. They professed to believe the Old Testament Scriptures foretelling of the Messiah who would come. But a majority of the Jews at Ephesus and elsewhere rejected Jesus whom Paul preached. Note the words used in 19:8, which describe Paul's teaching methods: spake, disputing, persuading. Paul attempted to reach his audience, knowing that their hearts were unreceptive to truth. Note their negative responses: hardened, believed not, and spoke evil (19:9).

That way (19:9) indicates that Christianity is not merely a verbal declaration, but it also includes a manner of life.

The exorcists who worked by casting spells discovered that the power of Jesus was not at their disposal. Their failed attempt to use this power convinced many who used curious arts or magic to turn to Christ and to burn their books as a public testimony of their new-found faith.

Idolatry suffered a blow at Ephesus when Paul's preaching convinced many that the gods made with hands were not truly gods. The lavish expenditure to build a magnificent temple to Diana shows the devotion of the Ephesians to their goddess. The silversmiths feared that they would lose their income if most of the people abandoned the worship of Diana.

The town clerk's statement indicates that these people accepted the legend about the image of Diana as an unquestioned fact. He brought calm to this volatile atmosphere by his diplomatic speech, thus sparing Paul and the other believers from legal charges. This also allowed the idol worshippers to continue their deluded belief in their false religion.

## **Principles and Applications**

### **Distraction of Unbelieving Jews**

1. The Gospel challenges the life and thinking of unbelievers (19:8-9). Paul spoke boldly, disputing with and challenging the unbelieving Jews. Though the Jews professed a belief in God, they were blind to God's work in their own time. The Gospel finds unbelievers where they are and shows them their sins, challenging them to change their way of thinking about themselves and about Jesus.
2. Those who refuse to believe the truth become hardened and actually oppose the truth (19:9). These Jews who held to God's revelation through the Old Testament actually opposed the fulfillment of that revelation in the coming of Jesus Christ. We who have many opportunities to hear God's Word preached can also become hardened if we fail to accept the truth and make a consistent application to the issues of our time.
3. The Gospel addresses the needs of the soul (19:12). Every man is under the control of the one to whom he yields obedience. He who disobeys God demonstrates that some other power is in control of his life. When God who can meet our soul's needs is allowed to work, the power and control of the devil is broken. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

### **Conflict with Evil Powers**

4. False religions may have a "form of godliness" but deny "the power thereof" (19:13-16). The devil's power, though greater than human power, is no match for the almighty power of God. Those who do not

obey Jesus do not have this power. Paul had received power through the Holy Ghost, which Jesus promised to send after His ascension. Knowing that Jesus is stronger than the devil, we do not need to fear the devil's power.

5. The Gospel calls for a thorough break with false religion at any cost (19:19). Books and other avenues of ungodly influence must be abandoned to ensure that the Gospel of Christ can have top priority and hold our highest allegiance. Any financial loss we may suffer will be amply repaid in eternal recompense.

6. The Gospel will ultimately prevail (19:20). All false religions will disappoint those who devote themselves to them. Their unwarranted faith in their cherished myths should challenge us to stand more firmly on God's unfulfilling promises. It should give us courage to endure opposition patiently.

### **Opposition from Idolaters**

7. All idolatry is at enmity with the Gospel of Jesus Christ (19:23-28). Idolatry has no power and is a worthless source from which to expect help. Though men today do not typically worship images of their own making, they often idolize their own accomplishments. They reject Christ, believing they can save themselves. Neither form of idolatry can do what Jesus has done, nor serve as an effective substitute for His saving work for us.

8. The enemies of God may employ the mob spirit in an attempt to overthrow the Gospel (19:28, 32). Might does not make right. Many times those who are in the wrong seek safety in numbers. Since they cannot mount a successful attack on God, they mobilize a campaign against His followers. They fail to realize that to fight against God is to fight a losing battle.

9. Opposing the Gospel causes confusion (19:28, 32). Sensing the futility of their religious system, those opposing the Gospel resort to rash actions. Confusion results as they align themselves with the enemy of their souls to oppose the true God who sent His Son to save them. We should not be surprised at what those incited by the devil will do.

10. Humanistic rationalism attempts to neutralize the power of the Gospel (19:35-36, 40-41). The town clerk told the people what they wanted to hear, giving official sanction to their worship of Diana. Let us learn about our true condition as God's Word reveals it to us. Let us not

rationalize our way around God's standard of holiness to make room for the permissiveness commonly condoned today.

### **Important Teachings**

1. The Gospel challenges the life and thinking of unbelievers (19:8-9).
2. Those who refuse to believe the truth become hardened and actually oppose the truth (19:9).
3. The Gospel addresses the needs of the soul (19:12).
4. False religions may have a "form of godliness" but deny "the power thereof" (19:13-16).
5. The Gospel calls for a thorough break with false religion at any cost (19:19).
6. The Gospel will ultimately prevail (19:20).
7. All idolatry is at enmity with the Gospel of Jesus Christ (19:23-28).
8. The enemies of God may employ the mob spirit in an attempt to overthrow the Gospel (19:28, 32).
9. Opposing the Gospel causes confusion (19:28, 32).
10. Humanistic rationalism attempts to neutralize the power of the Gospel (19:35-36, 40-41).

### **Answers to Questions**

1. What was happening in the hearts of the Jews who were hardened? They professed a belief in God's revelation in the Old Testament but did not accept and believe the fulfillment of that revelation in their own time. Since Jesus did not fit their perceptions and expectations of a political liberator, He became the stone which the builders rejected. In their blindness they rejected their only hope of salvation. Satan was at work, and he succeeded in hiding the truth from them. Their choice to reject Jesus led to further hardening and blindness.
2. For what reasons do people reject the Gospel? They do not believe what the Bible says about their sin. They think the cost is too high to follow Jesus. They are unwilling to give up all to be Jesus' disciples. Material things hold their heart's affection. They believe the false teachings that appear to offer an easier way.
3. Why were the exorcists overcome by the very power they sought to control?

No human being has the power to overcome or control the devil. The devil can easily overcome anyone who has no power other than his own for his defense. Since the exorcists relied on Satan's power and magic, they were at the mercy of Satan, who could overcome them with his superior power.

4. How can we guard against the influences of magicians, fortune tellers, and others who claim occult powers?

We must reject the seemingly miraculous feats performed by persons who are obviously outside the will of God. Satan's work includes a display of power, signs, and lying wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:9). We must not be deceived by Satan's work through fortune tellers and all others who are his agents to bring people under his control. Rather, we should trust in the power of our almighty God to enlighten us and alert us to the devil's deceptive devices.

5. What are some books and information sources we must reject?

Obviously books pertaining to magic and occult practices must be burned lest some innocent person be influenced by them. Most books on modern psychology are hinged on humanistic philosophy and focus on what man can supposedly do apart from the power of God. Many books on child rearing assume that man is basically good and thus begin from a faulty premise. All of these undermine the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus and must be rejected.

We do not expose ourselves to the television, radio, or other electronic media, which are pipelines of the world's music, entertainment, and philosophy. The games and toys we purchase must first be evaluated to determine how they may affect and condition our children's thinking.

6. On what factors did Demetrius base his speech to the craftsmen?

He tried to stir them up to oppose the Gospel because their means of gaining wealth was threatened. He pointed to the fact that worship of Diana was so popular and her worship worldwide, implying that this proved her right to be a goddess. He appealed to their sense of pride by reminding them that Ephesus was the site of the magnificent temple of Diana.

7. How do human reasoning and rationalism lead to confusion?

By using his reasoning powers, man finds a way that seems right to him, but it leads to death (Proverbs 16:25). Modern psychology tries to

find explanations for man's sin and failure, but the remedy for these problems remains elusive. The solutions proposed by man's rationalizing end in disappointment and confusion. All of man's attempts to save himself are futile.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only answer to man's need.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

The Gospel of Christ "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16). All other religions lack this power and can offer no salvation or meet man's spiritual needs.

Satan seeks to blind men to these facts and proposes a way that is pleasing to the flesh, but which will ultimately destroy them. Our God has power to save

### **Research Guide**

1. Read Psalm 115, which contrasts the power of God with the utter uselessness of the idols of the heathen.
2. From accounts of church history, find some examples of how people holding tenaciously to a false religion opposed the Gospel.