

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for February 5, 2017

The Riot in Ephesus
Acts 19:21-41

Acts 18:23-21:16 details Paul's third missionary journey, which centered on the city of Ephesus. Ephesus was the spiritual capital of the Roman Empire.

1. The course to Rome (19:21-22)

Paul's travel plans emphasized the final destination of Rome. This desire to visit Rome is seen in his epistle to the Romans (Romans 1:10-12, 15; 15:22-23). The rest of the book of Acts will show God's sovereignty in Paul's arrival in Rome.

The purpose of the ministry of Timothy and Erastus to the believers in Macedonia included the gift that would be sent by them to serve the church in Jerusalem (Acts 24:17; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4). Paul's ministry was broad-based and multi-faceted.

2. The cause of the riot (19:23-27)

Demetrius was correct regarding Paul's teaching about the Greek gods and he testified to the growth of the gospel (19:26). 1 Corinthians 8:4, written by Paul while he was in Ephesus, teaches that there is no such thing as an idol (cf. Psalm 135:15:18).

Paul did not teach directly against Artemis but taught that the result of the Gospel included the turning from idols to serve a living and true God (1 Thessalonians 1:9). The result was a detrimental effect on Demetrius' business.

There is no more certain way to get people upset than to affect their income. As believers follow the truth of God's Word, our society will see a result, and even a financial impact.

3. The confusion in the riot (19:28-34)

The Asiarchs were educated, socially involved men of influence in the region surrounding Ephesus. Paul's friendship with some of them became helpful. "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men" (Romans 12:18).

Alexander was a Jewish unbeliever who attempted to distance the Jews from this uproar but to no avail. The crowd saw no distinction between the Jews and the followers of Jesus.

4. The conclusion to the uproar (19:35-41)

The "town clerk" was similar to a local mayor who oversaw the affairs of the city. His goal was to quell the riot and he gave four reasons:

- a. Do nothing rash since it would change nothing (35-36).
 - We ought to consider the outcome before we act.
- b. Gaius and Aristarchus had not robbed or blasphemed (37).
 - There is no need to attack unbelievers.
- c. There is a proper way to bring charges (38-39).
 - Societies have a justice system to abide by.
- d. They might upset the provincial authorities (40)
 - Governments value peace.

This episode contrasts with Paul's visit to Philippi in Acts 16 where the economy of the city was similarly considered to be threatened, but where the chief magistrates arrested Paul and Silas. The freedom granted to the church in Ephesus explained its significance in the early church era. Church leaders who lived in Ephesus included: (1) Aquilla and Priscilla, (2) Onesimus, (3) Timothy, and (4) John the Apostle.

May God sovereignly guide us through the upheavals in our society to bring us to where we can serve Him according to His will.