

EFFECTIVE WORK FOR THE LORD

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First, let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.

INTRODUCTION:

Paul's third missionary journey consisted of two basic thrusts: evangelization of the lost and exhortation of the saints. Paul spent three years at Ephesus on this journey (20:31). He met some of John the Baptist's disciples when he first arrived and he taught them concerning the redemptive work of Christ (19:1-7). Paul used the synagogue for three months as a place to preach the gospel, but when the Jews hardened themselves to the gospel, he moved to the school of Tyrannus and stayed there for two years (19:8-10). He healed many of the afflicted by the power of God (19:11-12).

Some unsaved Jewish exorcists attempted to duplicate Paul's work by using the name of Jesus to cast out an evil spirit from a man, but the demon-possessed man overpowered and wounded them (19:13-16). This caused fear among all the people and resulted in a great revival. Many of the Christians confessed their sinful occultic deeds and burned their books that had taught them magical practices (19:17-20). The Word of God grew so mightily through this revival that the silversmiths that made silver shrines for the goddess, Diana, were in danger of losing a large profit from that business. As a result they caused a riot to try to turn the city of Ephesus against the Christians, but their effort failed (19:23-41).

Paul then left Ephesus and went to Troas where he had an open door to preach the gospel. When he did not find Titus in Troas, he left that city to find Titus in one of the churches in Macedonia. He had sent Titus to resolve some problems in the church in Corinth and then meet him in Troas. Paul was concerned that Titus had been delayed by a repudiation of Paul's ministry in that church. Paul was greatly relieved when Titus met him in Macedonia and brought good news from the church in Corinth (2 Cor 2:12-13; 7:5-7, 13-16). He sent Titus back to Corinth with 2 Corinthians to prepare them for his visit and then continued his ministry in the churches of Macedonia (20:2-3). It was on this journey that Paul took up the collection from these churches for the poor Christians at Jerusalem (2 Cor 8-9).

I. Paul's Ministry in Ephesus — 19:1-41

A. Explanation of the Gospel — 19:1-7

19:1 - "Upper coasts" was probably the upper road which was a more direct route to Ephesus.

19:2 - Paul found certain disciples of John and asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit. Paul was checking their faith because a person must be indwelt by the Spirit to be saved (Rom 8:9). Their answer in the Greek text simply says that they had not even heard if the Spirit is. Does this mean that they had not even heard about the Spirit? That is unlikely since John the Baptist taught that Christ would baptize with the Holy Spirit (Lk 3:16 John 1:32-33), but this would not happen until Jesus was glorified, that is, after His resurrection (Jn 7:39). It seems to mean that they had not even heard that the Spirit is being given to those that repent. In reality, they did not need instruction about the Holy Spirit; they needed instruction about receiving Christ for salvation, at which time they would be baptized with the Spirit.

Now the translation of Paul's question to these twelve men needs to be examined. He asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Ghost when you believed?" The translation, "since you believed" leads believers to think that the Holy Spirit is given subsequent to salvation. That is not true since Peter's experience in Cornelius' house (10:43-48), except in this case.

During the transition from God's work in the world through the nation of Israel to His work through believers in the churches, the Holy Spirit was given to the Jewish believers first in the upper room

during Pentecost, ten days after Jesus went back to Heaven. All Jews who repented and believed on Christ for salvation after Pentecost were baptized into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit without the apostles laying their hands on them.

When Philip led many Samaritans to receive Christ as Savior, Peter and John went to Samaria to lay their hands on them so they could receive the Holy Spirit. Why? They were not Jews, but the act of Peter and John showed that Samaritans also were baptized by the same Spirit into the body of Christ as the Jews were. They were brothers and sisters in Christ. (Gal 3:28).

In the case of the twelve disciples of John, they were Jews that had repented of their sins, but had not believed on Jesus as their Messiah and Savior (Christ Jesus). After Paul showed them that Jesus was their Messiah and Savior, they believed it and were saved. Then Paul laid his hands on them to receive the Spirit. Why did he do it to these Jews and not to other Jews that he led to Christ in foreign lands? These Jews were different. They had repented of their sins but had not believed on Jesus as their Messiah, so they were not yet saved. When they believed on Jesus as their Messiah, they were saved. To prove this, Paul laid his hands on them to receive the Holy Spirit and they spoke in tongues like those that were baptized by the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. It was an outward sign of the inward work of the Spirit. It also showed that Paul had been given the same authority as an apostle of Christ as Peter and John.

So when Peter preached in Cornelius' house and many Gentiles believed and were baptized by the Spirit without his hands laid on them (Acts 10:43-45), it showed that the transition was complete. The case of Paul with the twelve disciples of John was a special situation. All believers, whether they are Jews or Gentiles, are baptized into the body of Christ by the Spirit when they believe on Jesus for salvation.

19:3 - Since the twelve men had not received the Spirit, Paul asked them the purpose of their baptism. They said it was John's baptism, which was a baptism of repentance. Since they repented of their sins, but did not have the Spirit, Paul knew that they had not yet believed on Jesus Christ for salvation.

19:4-5 - John's baptism was given to those who had accepted his message by repenting of their sins and were looking for the coming of the Messiah. When Paul explained that Jesus was their Messiah, they believed on Him and were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

B. Expansion of the Gospel — 19:8-22

1. Geographically — 19:8-10

19:8 - Paul once again followed his custom of offering the gospel to the Jews first. Paul's manner was to reason and persuade the Jews boldly concerning the true facts of the Kingdom of God and Christ's relationship to it. Paul was able to spend three months (unusually long) ministering in the synagogue. Recall how the Jews earlier had given him a warm reception and desired him to stay (18:19-20). Ephesus was more cosmopolitan which tended to make it more tolerant to other views.

19:9 - As usual, the Jews hardened their hearts. They determined not to believe and began to speak evil of the Christian way with strong intent to injure the believers. This was not a new way for Jewish people to act (cp. Acts 13:45-46; Is 6:9ff; Ex 7:22; Heb 3:8, 15). Note the progression: hardness (refusal to believe) leads to hostility. Paul then departed from the synagogue and taught for two years in the school of Tyrannus. Tradition indicates that Paul taught from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., the resting time for the people in the middle of the day.

19:10 --Paul's ministry was so effective with these believers that within two years all of Asia heard the Gospel. It was probably at this time that the churches of Colosse, Hieropolis, and the seven cities of Revelation 2, 3 were founded. In addition to his teaching, Paul wrote his first letter to the church at Corinth from Ephesus (1 Cor 5:9; 16:8; 2 Cor 2:4; 7:8-12)

2. Spiritually — 19:11-20

Paul's ministry in word was accompanied by a ministry of miraculous works. No healing was accomplished by merely touching handkerchiefs or cloth, but God honored the people that put their faith in His power (cf. Lk 8:44-46; Mt 14:36).

19:13-16 - Paul's healing ministry was not limited to physical illness but also included exorcism (casting out of evil spirits). Some Jews were involved in exorcism (cf. Mt 12:27). There is usually great interest in this type of activity and many capitalize on it. Seven wandering Jews thought to apply Paul's technique to their advantage. They attempted to cast out an evil spirit by using the name of Jesus. However, their use of "Jesus" was not genuine and the evil spirit refused to recognize them, but instead abused the seven men. History does not record a high priest named Sceva. This may be explained by applying the high priest title in the broad sense as a head of one of the priestly families or it may be a false claim by these exorcists in an attempt to substantiate their claims.

19:17-20 - The effect of this incident produced widespread benefits for the believers. The power associated with the name of the Lord was recognized by the populace so that His name was magnified (v. 17). There was likewise a great effect upon the Christians. Apparently some Christians were still influenced in some way by the occult and they confessed their sins, recognizing the power of the Lord. (Christians should have NO part of the occult - this includes reading horoscopes for we are to be subject to Christ and the power of God, not to the occult and the power of the devil - James 4:7-8). These Christians proved the reality of their confessions by bringing their magical books to be burned. They were making no provision for a future possibility of sinning (Rom 13: 14). The exact value of the books cannot be determined but it was exceedingly large. There are two important lessons for Christians today: first, they must be taught the truths of Scripture so that they know how to live in accordance with their position (cf. Eph 2:10; 4:20); second, they must determine to be separatists and make no provision for the flesh (James 4:7-8). The revival of Christians at Ephesus caused the Word of God to have great power in the lives of people and caused the gospel to spread (v. 20).

C. Encroachments upon the Gospel — 19:21-41

1. The riot caused by Demetrius — 19:21-34

19:21, 22 - While Paul was at Ephesus, he determined to visit Rome but only after he had made a tour of Macedonia and Achaia and had returned to Jerusalem. Paul elsewhere indicates the trip to Jerusalem was to deliver the collection to the needy saints there (1 Cor 16:1-3; Acts 24:17). Paul remained at Ephesus for a time but sent Timothy and Erastus ahead into Macedonia.

19:23-27 - Ephesus was a very popular city because of its commerce and the headquarters of Artemis worship. In fact, her temple was one of the seven wonders of the world. Artemis (Diana) was a multi-breasted image which signified the fertility of nature. Christianity was known as "the way" (9:2; 22:4; 24:4; Jn 14:6). A riot in Ephesus was caused by Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis. The preaching of Paul had caused many citizens of Ephesus and people in the area to forsake idol worship. This caused a serious decline in business for the silversmiths. These craftsmen had had a lucrative business selling small silver shrines of Artemis seated in her temple but now it was disappearing. Demetrius cleverly approached this problem by stirring up the religious feelings of the people and said nothing about his business, even though his primary interest was economic and not religious. His god was money, not Artemis. If Artemis was really a god, could she not protect herself (Ps 115:6ff; cp. Judges 6:28-32)?

19:28-34 - The craftsmen joined together to bring praise to Artemis and soon mob psychology enraged the crowd and many rushed to the town theater (archaeologists have uncovered this theater which was large enough to seat 25,000). Apparently some of the Jews were fearful that they would be blamed for

the disturbance and set forth Alexander to defend the Jews. However, he was not allowed to speak when they discovered he was a Jew and the uproar continued for two hours.

2. The Ruling commanded by the town clerk — 19:34-41

The town clerk, a chief executive officer of the municipality who acted as a liaison between the city and Roman government, allowed the people to expend their energies and then intervened. He expressed the belief that Artemis was a great god as accepted by the Ephesians and that the town did not have to prove that point. He adopted a policy similar to that of Gamaliel (cf. Acts 5). He claimed the missionaries could not be legally incriminated, that is, they could not be judged as robbers of temples, nor blasphemers, because they had not stolen any money from the temples, nor attacked the tradition of Artemis directly. Hence, the town-clerk rebuked Demetrius and told him that if he had a complaint, he was to use legal means, not mob action, to settle his dispute. This is one more of God's providential over rulings to further Christ's work by the use of a government agent, a pagan one (Acts 18:12ff; Rom 13:1ff)!

II. Paul's Ministry in Europe — 20:1-6

A. Macedonia — 20:1-2

20:1-2 - This action follows Paul's earlier plan in 19:21. Other epistles indicate he went to Troas where he expected to meet Titus (2 Cor 2:12, 13), but he did not meet him until he reached Macedonia (2Cor 7:57)

B. Achaia — 20:3-6

20:3-6 - After the Macedonian visit, he came to Greece, usually called Achaia, and spent three months at Corinth. It was from here that he authored Romans. He planned to board a ship bound for Syria in order to return to Jerusalem. However, he learned of a Jewish plot which probably included murdering him at sea. He then changed his plans and chose to go by land through Macedonia which meant he would not reach Jerusalem in time for the Passover. The rest of his companions sailed to Troas where they rejoined Paul.

III. Paul's Ministry in Troas — 20:7-12

20:7-12 - On Paul's return trip to Jerusalem he stopped at Troas. He had many exhortations to give to them and the urgency of his warnings compelled him to preach a long sermon for the believers at Troas. This reference to the meeting on the first day of the week is a clear reference to the Christian practice of meeting on Sundays. Sunday worship is also indicated in I Corinthians 16:2. This day was used by Christians to commemorate the Lord's resurrection. He arose on the first day of the week and met with His disciples on Sunday. He also broke bread with them on Sunday (Lk 24:1, 13, 29-30, 33-36; Jn 20:1, 19).

During his sermon a young man, Eutychus, went into a deep sleep about midnight and fell from the loft of the third story to his death (20:7). Paul went and fell on him and revived him back to life. Paul handled the situation much like Elisha did (2 Kgs 4:33-35). After the communion service and love feast, Paul continued his ministry and fellowship with these believers until sunrise (20:10-12).

IV. Paul's Ministry in Miletus — 20:13-38

20:13-17 - Paul traveled from Troas to Assos by foot (it was 20 miles shorter by land than sea and it may have given him more time for his ministry). He then boarded the ship and sailed to Mitylene, Chios, Samos, and then to Miletus which was about 30 miles from Ephesus. He now had to make haste to arrive at Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost; therefore, he chose to have a private meeting with the pastors of the Ephesian church rather than meet with the congregation as a whole. The terms used for these men are elder (v. 17), bishop (v. 28) and pastor or shepherd (implied in v. 28 by the

word, "feed," which means to tend the flock). These terms are part of the responsibilities that are associated with the office of a pastor.

A. His Ministry: Dedication - 20:18-21

20:18-21 - Paul reviewed his ministry with them as one which was characterized by total dedication. From his arrival at Ephesus, he was with them at all times (seasons). He had devoted himself to the task rather than leave when opposition arose (tears and temptations - v. 19). In spite of trials, he had not kept back anything that was profitable to them.

"Kept back" is a naval term used for drawing back the sails of a ship.

B. His Goal: Fulfillment — 20:22-24

20:22-24 - There is a disagreement as to whether Paul's compulsion to go to Jerusalem was his own spirit or that of the Holy Spirit. It appears the Holy Spirit was warning him, but not forbidding him to go to Jerusalem. In this way Paul was prepared for a most difficult time in his life. Imprisonment for a busy, energetic man would not be easy. Nevertheless, Paul looked at human bonds and persecutions as second to the primary goal of completing his course according to God's plan (cf. Phil 1:20-21; 2 Tim 4:7).

C. His Warning: Watchfulness — 20:25-31

20:25-27 - Paul indicated that he would no longer be present to guide them; he had taught them sufficiently and now the responsibility was given to these elders. He had faithfully preached to them the whole counsel of God so that there would be no accusing fingers in eternity pointing at Paul for his lack of faithfulness to watch over them.

20:28 - These pastors first were to watch after their own lives, then after the welfare of the local church. God purchased the church with blood, the blood of His own Son. A better translation is: "He shed the blood of His own."

20:29 - Two sources of danger posed a threat. First, there would be grievous wolves (Jn 10:12) who would come from without and would destroy the flock. Wolves have no concern for sheep - they only care for their own appetites (cp. Lk 10:3; Mt 7:15). He most likely was referring to Judaizers and Gnostics. The pastors must be careful to guard against the intrusion of heretical teaching. He must expose false movements; sometimes he must do it forcefully.

20:30-31 - Second, there would be schisms which would arise from within the church. These are those with **SHEEP'S CLOTHING**. These people would be those who would try to create their own following in a local church. (For the reality of these problems in the early church, see 1 Tim 1:3-7; 2 Jn; 3 Jn; and Rev 2:4). Therefore these pastors were to watch, to stay awake; the responsibility lay upon the shoulders of these pastors and their task could only be accomplished by their dedication to God and constant dependence upon His Word.

D. His Example: Christian Living — 20:32-38

20:32-35 - Remember, Paul is speaking to pastors and he gives his own example. He was not one who served for monetary value (cf. 1 Pet 5:2ff). Elsewhere, Paul indicates a pastor is worthy of wages, **BUT WOE** to him if money is his prime purpose or desire to be a pastor (1 Tim 5: 17-18). Paul could not be so accused. He even labored with his own hands to support himself (18:3). In fact, Paul evidenced true Christian conduct when he labored in the gospel and rightly could expect remuneration, but instead, he sought to aid the poor (1 Cor 11:1).

20:36-38 - True Christian fellowship and love is expressed here. First there was prayer, then personal expressions of genuine Christian love. We need to have such love and appreciation for those whom God has placed over us in faithful leadership.