

# DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

*Verses & Notes January 31, 2007*

*Acts 18:18-28, 19:23-35*

## Introduction:

- For nearly every one of us, our faith in Jesus Christ is something that has grown and developed over many years, from many sources and influences, some trustworthy and some not so trustworthy. All of this comes together to form what is called our spiritual formation. How we think about certain moral or doctrinal issues, how we understand prayer & worship, the Church, even Jesus, is based primarily upon how our faith and conscience have been formed. The problem is that we may be blind to how poorly we have been formed. This is what we will continue discussing today on **Deep In Scripture**.

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- [Expound on opening comment ... true for the Ephesians, true for us.]
- **Preparing for our study of Ephesians:**
  - Looking at the background of why Paul wrote this letter to the believers in and around Ephesus.
  - So far:
    - Acts 2:37-47 ... the First converts after Peter's Pentecost sermon & their first gathering as the First new Church.
      - Some of these may have returned to Ephesus. If so what happened to their witness? Was it received?
      - Centrality of baptism.
    - Acts 15:1-31 ... the First Church Council in Jerusalem.
      - Affirmed that Gentiles were equal recipients of the Gospel;
      - Softened OT requirements, especially circumcision.
      - (Implied) that baptism was new sign of covenant.
  - This week we'll look briefly at three things from Acts chapters 18 and 19:
    - What was Ephesus like before the Gospel?
    - Paul's Initial visit to Ephesus
    - The Influence of an Inadequate Witness: Apollos
  - Four levels of interpretation: Literal and spiritual (
    - Literal: the starting of the church in Ephesus;
    - Spiritual: how did we receive the gospel.

## I: What was Ephesus like before the Gospel? (19:23-29, 33-35)

- Ancient pagan city, founded ~ 11<sup>th</sup> century BC;
- From 27 BC had been capital of the proconsular province of Asia;
- Many illustrious poets, philosophers & painters;
- Chief renown: the temple of Artimus (Diana), considered one of the marvels of the world;

*(19:23-29)*

*About that time there arose no little stir concerning the Way.*

*For a man named Deme'trius,*

*a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Ar'temis,*

*brought no little business to the craftsmen.*

*These he gathered together, with the workmen of like occupation, and said,*

*"Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth.*

*And you see and hear that not only at Ephesus but almost throughout all Asia*

*this Paul has persuaded and turned away  
a considerable company of people,  
saying that gods made with hands are not gods.  
And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute  
but also that the temple of the great goddess Ar'temis  
may count for nothing,  
and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence,  
she whom all Asia and the world worship."*

*When they heard this they were enraged, and cried out,  
"Great is Ar'temis of the Ephesians!"  
So the city was filled with the confusion;  
and they rushed together into the theater,  
dragging with them Ga'ius and Aristar'chus,  
Macedo'nians who were Paul's companions in travel.*

*(19:33-35)*

*Some of the crowd prompted Alexander, whom the Jews had put forward.  
And Alexander motioned with his hand, wishing to make a defense to the people.  
But when they recognized that he was a Jew,  
for about two hours they all with one voice cried out,  
"Great is Ar'temis of the Ephesians!"*

*And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said,  
"Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know  
that the city of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great Ar'temis,  
and of the sacred stone that fell from the sky?"*

- This great temple: 400 x 200 feet & rested on 128 pillars; capacity of 23,000 people!
  - The center of the faith, their lives, & their welfare;
  - Attracted many visitors;
  - Stripped of riches by Nero & destroyed by Goths in 262 AD.
- They were pagans who believed in the power of hand-made idols;
- There were Jews in the city & a synagogue; but they were not in favor!
- **Like these pagans, many of us have a past that was dramatically different or even antagonistic to our Christian faith.**
  - **Many of us were baptized as children but then poorly formed;**
  - **Many of us were pagans before we heard the Gospel.**
  - **In both cases, it's possible that some of this poor formation remains uncorrected.**

## **II: Paul's First Visit to Ephesus: (18-21)**

- Paul finishing up his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey—his 1<sup>st</sup> after the Jerusalem council;
- He had just spent a long & difficult time defending the faith in Corinth.
- Turned his face to return to Syria ...

*After this Paul stayed many days longer [in Corinth],  
and then took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria,  
and with him Priscilla and Aq'uila.*

*At Cen'chre-ae he cut his hair, for he had a vow.*

*And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there;  
but he himself went into the synagogue and argued with the Jews.  
When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined;  
but on taking leave of them he said,  
"I will return to you if God wills,"  
and he set sail from Ephesus.*

- Priscilla & Aquila were Jews that Paul met in Corinth:
  - They were from Pontus;
  - We don't know when they converted but they were believers;
- We have no information on Paul's vow? (See Numbers 6:2, "When either a man or a woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to the Lord.") One suggestion is that he may have taken the Nazirite vow until he was out of danger or until the Corinthians accepted the Gospel.
- He separated from Aquila & Priscilla, and as was his custom went to synagogue:
  - Says he "argued" with them yet they asked him to stay but he declined!
  - Why?
    - Ship may have needed to move on;
    - Or the Jews here were too argumentative (prepped by earlier converts);
    - Or they were ripe but he could only be content to plant a seed.
- **In our own lives: occasional seeds are planted that only later take root.**

### III: An Inadequate Witness: Apollos (24-28)

- Soon after Paul leaves, an otherwise unknown young evangelist arrives: **Apollos**.

*(24-25) Now a Jew named Apol'los, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus.  
He was an eloquent man, well versed in the scriptures.  
He had been instructed in the way of the Lord;  
and being fervent in spirit,  
he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus,  
though he knew only the baptism of John.*

- Alexandria
- Eloquent; well versed in the Scriptures (OT); fervent in spirit;
- Instructed in the way of the Lord = "The Way" = possibly the full title of this new movement;
- Problem: Says, "*he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.*"
  - He had an accurate yet inadequate formation;
  - He was passing this along!
  - Reminiscent of Jesus' warnings: Mt 5:17-20; Mk 9:42
- He followed Paul's practice but God works in strange ways:
 

*(26) He began to speak boldly in the synagogue;  
but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him,  
they took him and expounded to him  
the way of God more accurately.*

  - God had planted A & P to be there when he arrived!
  - No mention of problems with Jews in synagogue so maybe what he had been taught & was teaching was watered down enough not to make waves;
  - A & P took him aside & corrected his formation, but he wished to move on...

*(27-28) And when he wished to cross to Acha'ia,  
the brethren encouraged him,  
and wrote to the disciples to receive him.*

*When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed,  
for he powerfully confuted the Jews in public,  
showing by the scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.*

- Interesting: A & P corrected Apollos, but what about those he had taught?
  - We'll see next week (19:1-20) that many had been poorly taught;
  - Why had not A & P corrected these? Probably bec. Ephesus was a large city where the Jews and therefore those of "The Way" had to hold back. Therefore, there may have been unconnected groups of believers.
  
- [What do we know so far about the formation of the Ephesian disciples:
  - Originally pagans who believed the power of hand-made idols;
  - Jewish presence through the local synagogue, but not accepted;
  - Possible witness of those who had been at Pentecost, but no apparent lasting influence;
  - Quick argumentative visit by Paul that may have planted a seed of interest;
  - The brief enthusiastic but inadequate teaching of Apollos, that left poorly formed disciples;
  - The continuing witness of Aquila & Priscilla;]
  
- **In what ways is this like our own formation?**
- **Short of an A & P or a Paul, how can we correct our formation?**
  - **Prayer;**
  - **The sacraments and Mass;**
  - **The Catechism and the Scriptures;**
  - **Faithful Spiritual writers;**
  - **Good Catholic television & radio!**