

# DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

*Verses & Notes March 7, 2007*

*Acts 19:20-20:1*

- 20: So the word of the Lord grew and prevailed mightily.
- 21: Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit  
to pass through Macedo'nia and Acha'ia and go to Jerusalem, saying,  
"After I have been there, I must also see Rome."
- 22: And having sent into Macedo'nia two of his helpers, Timothy and Eras'tus,  
he himself stayed in Asia for a while.
- 23: About that time there arose no little stir concerning the Way.
- 24: For a man named Deme'trius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Ar'temis,  
brought no little business to the craftsmen.
- 25: These he gathered together, with the workmen of like occupation, and said,  
"Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth.
- 26: 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.
- 27: 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."
- 28: When they heard this they were enraged, and cried out,  
"Great is Ar'temis of the Ephesians!"
- 29: 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.
- 30: Paul wished to go in among the crowd, but the disciples would not let him;
- 31: some of the A'si-archs also, who were friends of his,  
sent to him and begged him not to venture into the theater.
- 32: Now some cried one thing, some another; for the assembly was in confusion,  
and most of them did not know why they had come together.
- 33: 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.
- 34: 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!"
- 35: 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?
- 36: Seeing then that these things cannot be contradicted,  
you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash.
- 37: For you have brought these men here

- who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess.
- 38: If therefore Deme'trius and the craftsmen with him  
 have a complaint against any one,  
 the courts are open, and there are proconsuls;  
 let them bring charges against one another.
- 39: But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly.
- 40: For we are in danger of being charged with rioting today,  
 there being no cause that we can give to justify this commotion."
- 41: And when he had said this, he dismissed the assembly.
- 1: After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples  
 and having exhorted them took leave of them and departed for Macedo'nia.

### Introduction:

- In Acts chapter 19, we hear the account of an experience in the early Church that has consequently been experienced over & over throughout history, everywhere that the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been preached. It has happened whenever missionaries have entered new territories and, by grace, proved successful in converting hearts to Jesus Christ and His Church. But it also happens whenever any of us make an effort to speak or live boldly our faith, especially when this means confronting the non-Christian values and practices of our culture or community. This is part what we will be discussing today on **Deep In Scripture**.

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- Welcome ... website / phone numbers / special:
- Preparing for our study of Ephesians:
  - Looking at the background in the book of Acts to understand why Paul wrote this letter to the believers in and around Ephesus.
  - For the last several weeks, we have examined the spiritual development of the Ephesians:
    1. (Acts 19:23-29, 33-35) The Ephesians began as pagans;
    2. (Acts 18:18-21) They received some seeds from Paul's first visit;
    3. (Acts 18:24-28) They then received accurate but inadequate teaching from Apollos;
    4. (Acts 19:1-7) Their faith was corrected by St. Paul;
    5. (Acts 19:8-20) The fruits of St. Paul's ministry.
  - We also reflected on how this illustrates our own spiritual development:
    1. Many of us begin far from God;
    2. We may have had seed planted tho un-nurtured;
    3. We may have received inaccurate or incomplete teaching;
    4. Hopefully, we have discovered the fullness of the faith;
    5. Hopefully, we have seen fruit in our lives & those around us.
- **The first three verses in today's text summarize the fruit of Paul's ministry in Ephesus:**
  - 20: *So the word of the Lord grew and prevailed mightily.*
    - This summarizes 19:1-19 = 2 years of preaching, baptisms, healing, miracles, & conversion.
    - What does this verse mean?
      - "Thus mightily did the word of the Lord spread and prevail" (Douay-Conf).
      - "Thus did the word of the Lord continue to spread with influence and power" (NAB).

- Many equate the “word of the Lord” with the Bible;
- But this meant more than the written word: the oral & written tradition!  
(Acts 8:25; 13:49; 15:35-36; 16:32; 19:10; 1 Th 1:8; 2 Th 3:1; 1 Ptr 1:25)

21: *Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedo'nia and Acha'ia and go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."*

22: *And having sent into Macedo'nia two of his helpers, Timothy and Eras'tus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.*

- Paul is feeling quite satisfied that all if well in Ephesus!
- Time to delegate (20:17, elders) and look forward!
- He sends his helpers on, but then he lingers behind? **Why?**
  - Maybe he suspected trouble!
- You see, Jesus has warned those who would follow Him & teach what He taught, “I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (Jn 15:19).
  - Later, in His great priestly prayer, Jesus prayed, “I have given them thy word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (Jn 17:14).
  - St. Paul may have suspected that things were just going a bit too good, so he waited around to see what would happen.
  - And happen it did!

### **BREAK---**

### **Let's hear Luke's account in Acts 19:23-41 of what happened after Paul's successful preaching of the word of the Lord:**

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

24: *For a man named Deme'trius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Ar'temis, brought no little business to the craftsmen.*

25: *These he gathered together, with the workmen of like occupation, and said, "Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth.*

26: *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.*

27: *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."*

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the courts are open, and there are proconsuls;  
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1: *After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples  
and having exhorted them took leave of them and departed for Macedo'nia.*

- A pagan leader, Demetrius, speaks out against Paul's success (23-24)
  - Why? Because it is threatening his business; (24)
  - He brings together others of similar trade who also are threatened; (25-26)
  - He couches his true motives with a religious covering to win their support; (27)
  - They become an enraged mob in defense of their faith! (28)
  - This brought confusion & mob violence against Paul's companions (29)
- Paul wanted to step in, but was held back by his friends (30-31)
- Many in the mob were so confused they didn't know why they were there! (32)
- A Jewish leader tried to make a "defense to the people," maybe disclaim any responsibility, but this only incited them more (32-34)...for 2 hours they chanted in one voice ...
- Finally a town clerk took charge: (35-40)
  - He presided over the assembly & ruled the city;
  - His importance is attested by inscriptions; he was the link to imperial authorities;
  - He may also have been a friend of Paul's;
  - He spoke like a politician, calmed them down, pointed them to the courts, and then dismissed them.
- After calm was restored, Paul met with the disciples (elders & believers), exhorted them, & finally moved on with his plans.
  - What did he tell them? Probably how to live, faithfully but safely!

**What aspects of this story parallel how the Gospel has always brought resistance?**

1. Often major resistance doesn't come until after major success;
2. Often the reasons for resistance are not religious, though couched as such;
3. Often the resistance lead to confusion & conflicting resistance;
4. Often the resistance lead to persecution!
5. Often order is restored, but without eliminating the resistance;
6. In all cases, the disciples must live out Jesus' warning: "if the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its

own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:18-19)

- Disciples are to live in the world but not of it.

## **Break**

### **In what ways does this story parallel our own experiences today?**

1. Often major resistance doesn't come until after major success;
  - We can safely avoid resistance by taking the wide path!
  - However, this is not living as our Lord calls us to live!
  - The last of his Beatitudes included the promise of persecution!
  - When we do chose to live our faith, we can expect resistance!
2. Often the reasons for resistance are not religious, though couched as such;
  - What is really behind resistance to the faith?
3. Often the resistance leads to confusion & conflicting resistance;
  - This is where many fo the "myths" about Catholicism come from!
4. Often the resistance leads to persecution!
  - Sometimes we are attacked directly, but more often shunned!
5. Often order is restored, but without eliminating the resistance;
  - Often we end up living in awkward peace with friends & family, as long as we don't talk about our faith!
6. We too must remember Jesus' warning: "if the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:18-19)
  - We are called to live in the world, helping the word of the Lord spread, but not of it.