

Refuge City Church — September 4, 2022

“Beyond your control” [Acts 19:21-41]

Introduction

- **Last time:** God was working mightily through Paul in Ephesus; lots of focus on the purpose of the Holy Spirit and spiritual warfare.
- **Today:** The story carries on in Ephesus, when chaos overwhelms the city.
- **Think:** What is your response/reaction when things happen that are beyond your control? [both personally and in the world around you]

Verses 21-22

“Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome.” And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.”

- Paul sets his sights on Rome... to which the remainder of the book of Acts serves to get him there.

Verses 23-27

“About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way. For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, “Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many 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 Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship.”

- The temple of Artemis: one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world [great pyramids of Giza, Hanging gardens of Babylon, Statue of Zeus at Olympia, Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, Colossus of Rhodes, and Lighthouse of Alexandria]
- A structure of magnificent beauty. [Artemis was the goddess of the hunt and childbirth]
 - Artemis became the center of worship and attraction in Ephesus, and therefore many took advantage of this and made idols/shrines in her likeness to sell & profit from.
- We saw, not long ago, how financial gain was cloaked in religiosity when the demon-possessed slave girl hounded Paul and Silas in Philippi.
 - **Acts 16:16, 19**, “...we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling... But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas...”
- Demetrius gathers others to provoke discontent & disruption towards Christianity
 - **NOTE:** This is not so much about Paul as it is the affect Christianity is having on the people and the city.

- The people will *not* revere a temple to a pagan god, or purchase idols to that god if they no longer believe in her.
- **Deuteronomy 5:7**, “You shall have no other gods before me.”
- **Psalms 115:4-8**, “Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them.”
 - Either we’re a disciple of God, seeking to become like the one we serve, OR we become a lifeless, motionless, powerless being with no eternal purpose.
 - It’s extremely important we evaluate what we are giving our time & attention to... is it taking precedence over God? Is it your god?
- **Ephesus Divided:** Yes, Jesus came to set us free from sin, and give us life... *but* He also stated... **Luke 12:51**, “Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.”
 - The very nature of Christ disrupts sin & evil. Good vs. Evil. Light vs. Darkness. They *cannot* co-exist.
 - With Christianity on the rise in Ephesus, the culture and religion of the region was dividing.
 - And as this was affecting the pocketbooks of those idol-makers; their immediate response is anger and hostility.
 - **Luke 16:13**, “No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”

Verses 28-41 [\[read\]](#)

- The discontent of the few, turned in to a mob of confused thousands!
- *Interesting portion of scripture:* Jesus isn’t mentioned, the gospel is not proclaimed, Paul is not present, and those who got dragged along were kept from sharing or defending Christianity; even the Jewish dialogue was squelched.
 - What is mentioned: rage, confusion, yelling/screaming, commotion, rioting
 - Similar to Gallio coming to the defense of Paul in Corinth [\[ch. 18\]](#), the town clerk [\[ie. Mayor\]](#), steps in to calm the mob.
 - Ephesus is still an important city, and blessed by the gods above.
 - Paul’s acquaintances, Gaius and Aristarchus [\[Christians\]](#), were deemed innocent having done nothing against the law.
 - The idol makers should bring their complaint to the legal system and do things properly.
 - The city is in danger of losing it’s free status from Rome for causing such a commotion.
- **QUESTION: What do we do when situations [\[political, economic, cultural, etc.\]](#) get out of control, and there’s seemingly nothing we can do? [\[Paul was even prevented from interacting\]](#)**
 - Remember the Tower of Babel [\[Genesis 11\]](#)

- When man thinks he's in complete control over everything, it only serves to bring massive amounts of confusion & chaos [sin, pride, fall, repeat].
 - **1 Corinthians 14:33**, "For God is not a God of confusion but of peace."
- In this case, God inserts a little 'language confusion' to remind his creation that He is in control.
- **QUOTE:** "I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth—that God governs in the affairs of men... We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings, that 'except the Lord build the House they labour in vain that build it.' [Psalm 127:1] I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the Builders of Babel..." [Benjamin Franklin, 1787]
- Think about the hopelessness of the Israelites enslaved in Egypt for 400 years.
 - **Exodus 2:23**, "Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God."
 - Moses is chosen to save His people from Egypt.
 - **Exodus 3:11-12**, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" [God] said, "*I will be with you.*"
- Consider the hopelessness of Israel afflicted by Midian for 7 years. [Judges 6]
 - **Judges 6:1-6**, "The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord gave them into the hand of Midian seven years. And the hand of Midian overpowered Israel... And Israel was brought very low because of Midian. And the people of Israel cried out for help to the Lord."
 - Gideon is chosen to defeat the Midians.
 - **Judges 6:15-16**, "Please, Lord, how can I save Israel?... I am the least in my father's house." And the Lord said to him, "*I will be with you.*"
 - Midian defeated by Gideon's army of 300 with trumpets & torches.
- Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego in the Fiery Furnace. [Daniel 3]
 - **Daniel 3:17-18**, "If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. *But if not*, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."
 - God was with them in the fire.
- Think of the hopelessness the disciples felt when Jesus was arrested, tried, and crucified!
- What could we do as the LA Riots were happening?
- What could we do as the terror attacks were playing out right before our eyes?
- What could we do as the world was shutting down due to COVID?
- **What *should* we do when it seems as if everything is spiraling out of control?**
- I. **Cry out to God!** [in our confusion, uncertainty of outcome, but in trust & faith]
 - **Psalm 30:3-5**, "You brought me up from the grave, O Lord. You kept me from falling into the pit of death. Sing to the Lord, all you godly ones! Praise his holy name. For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime! Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes with the morning."

2. **Remain faithful** in the unknown/uncontrollable circumstances of life. He hasn't forgotten you!
 - **Hebrews 13:5-6**, "For God has said, 'I will never fail you. I will never abandon you.' So we can say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?'"
3. **Trust Him** with the outcome; if it goes your way *or* not. [Daniel vs. Stephen]
 - **Psalm 31**: "In you, O Lord, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me! Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily! Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me! For you are my rock and my fortress; and for your name's sake you lead me and guide me; you take me out of the net they have hidden for me, for you are my refuge. Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God... But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, "You are my God." My times are in your hand; rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors! Make your face shine on your servant; save me in your steadfast love!... Love the Lord, all you his saints! The Lord preserves the faithful but abundantly repays the one who acts in pride. Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord!"
- **Remember**: God is in control. He is a God of peace. He has a plan. Cry out to Him in your confusion/uncertainty. Remain faithful, as He is faithful. Trust Him with the outcome.