

A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

UNDER THE EXALTED CHRIST, THE GOSPEL BEGINS TO SPREAD

THE ACTS

† THE BOOK OF ACTS

OF THE APOSTLES

WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRIES, Associated

An overview of the Book of Acts, by Given O. Blakely

ACTS 5:31-32

"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Lesson #81

COMMENTARY ON: 19:21-29

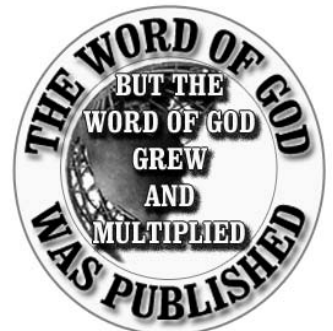
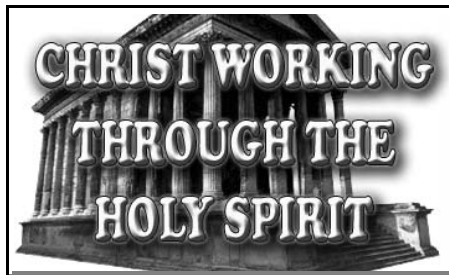
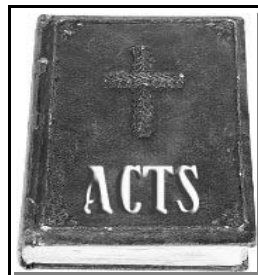
DEMETRIUS CAUSES TROUBLE

With the growth of the Word of God, and it prevailing over all competing influences, a devastating blow was struck to the idol-worshipping community. Not only were "curious arts" abandoned by a significant number of people, but idol-centered religion was being forsaken as well. This impacted the business community in Ephesus, causing no small stir among those who crafted images. Demetrius, a local silversmith who made images, called for a special meeting, determined to launch a campaign against Paul. His reasoning unveils the manner in which spiritually uncultured minds think. It also reveals how hard hearts can be that are devoted to false religion. Another thing to see is the confusion that is wrought by a commitment to idols, as compared to the peaceful fruits of righteousness that are produced by the Gospel in those who receive it. This kind of contrast exists today as well, and is to be duly noted.

ACTS 17:26-27

"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."

"... and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

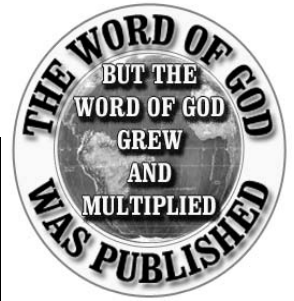


Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



The Book of Acts

Lesson Number 81



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

TRANSLATION LEGEND: ALT = Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED = Amplified Bible (1965), ASV = American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA = Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV = English Revised Version (1885), ESV = English Stand Version (2001), GNB = Good News (1966), GWN = God'S Word (1995), IE = International English (1973), ISV = International Standard Version (1967), JPS = Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV = King James Version (1611), L.ITV = Literal Translation of the Bible ((1976), LIVING = Living Bible (1971), MKJV = Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY = Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD = Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB = New American Bible (2002), NASB = New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU = New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB = New International Bible, NIV = New International Version (1984), NJB = New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV = New King James Version (1979), NLT =New Living Translation (1996), NRSV = New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS = J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT = BISHOP'S New Testament (1595), RSV = Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK = JPS Tanakj (1985), Webster = The Webster Bible (1833),WEYMOUTH = Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS = William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE = Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE = Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT =Young's Literal Translation (1862).

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF HOW THE ENTHRONED CHRIST, BY MEANS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WORKED THROUGH HIS HOLY APOSTLES AND GODLY MEN, TO SPREAD THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD, AND TO BRING EDIFICATION AND STABILITY TO MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY.

----- *Lexicon and Bible Translation Codes with Identification* -----
LXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT = Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER = Thayer's Greek Lexicon, LEH = LEH Lexicon, GINGRICH = Gingrich Lexicon

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

DEMTRIUS CAUSES TROUBLE

“19:21-29 After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome. ²² So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season. ²³ And the same time there arose no small stir about that way. ²⁴ For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; ²⁵ Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. ²⁶ Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands: ²⁷ So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth. ²⁸ And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians. ²⁹ And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theater.” (Acts 19:21-29)

INTRODUCTION

A SUMMATION OF THE TEXT

With the growth of the Word of God, and it prevailing over all competing influences, a devastating blow was struck to the idol-worshipping community. Not only were “curious arts” abandoned by a significant number of people, but idol-

centered religion was being forsaken as well. This impacted the business community in Ephesus, causing no small stir among those who crafted images. Demetrius, a local silversmith who made images, called for a special meeting, determined to launch a campaign against

Paul. **His reasoning unveils the manner in which spiritually uncultured minds think.** It also reveals how hard hearts can be that are devoted to false religion. Another thing to see is the confusion that is wrought by a commitment to idols, as compared to the

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peaceful fruits of righteousness that are produced by the Gospel in those who receive it. This kind of contrast exists today as well, and is to be duly noted.

THE GROWING AND PREVAILING WORD

In Ephesus, the Word of God "grew mightily and prevailed." Not only were there a great number of people turning to the Lord, there were even a significant number of people who had been devoted to the occult who abandoned their way of life, confessed their deeds, and even burned the books that taught the ins and outs of "curious arts." However, that is not all that took place. **The whole fabric of the system of idol-worshiping began to unravel, and this caused no small stir among the merchants who earned their living by making idols.** The people who were embracing what Paul preached simply could not continue in their old ways. They could not put the wine of newness of life into the old wineskins of the flesh.

THE ILLOGICAL NATURE OF CONTINUANCE IN SIN

For those who are in Christ Jesus, continuance in sin, however minuscule men may imagine it to be, is contrary to sound thought. In fact, it is a form of insanity – the worst form of it. As it is written, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may

abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom 6:1-2). If it is true that those who are baptized into Christ's death, having obeyed from the heart the form of the doctrine delivered to them, are "dead indeed unto, but alive unto God," **then precisely how is a continuation in sin to be explained** (Rom 6:3,11,17)? If the purpose for Jesus Christ dying for all was that from now on those in Him are to live no longer for themselves, but unto the One who died and rose again (2 Cor 5:15), **what is really the cause that moves people to fail to do exactly that?**

And, why aren't these questions being addressed by the educational branch of the professed church? Why are the supposed leaders of the Christian community consulting with the psychologists and motivational gurus? **Whatever the answers that are put forward, they will not be supported by the book of Acts!** In this record there is a genuineness of both doctrine and life that stands in stark contrast to what is called the church of our day.

READING THE BOOK OF ACTS THROUGH SECTARIAN GLASSES

It is possible to read the book of Acts through sectarian glasses – in fact, once a people have devoted themselves to a Christian sect or denomination, it is virtually impossible to avoid perusing this volume in such a manner. Subconsciously, the person begins to think that in writing the book of Acts, Luke is actually presenting a defense for their emphasis.

However, Luke is not trying to justify the stance of the early church. He is rather reporting it. He is not establishing HOW people became Christians, but the fact that they **did** believe on the Lord Jesus, obey Him, and

conduct their lives in harmony with what He is doing. **His aim was not to show how churches were organized, or where they met, but that those in Jesus do, in fact, gravitate to one another, and delight in one another's company.**

Through the Spirit, Luke reports the effects of genuine and God-sanctioned preaching and teaching. From the standpoint of WHO was preached, it was Jesus Christ (8:5,35; 9:20; 17:18). From the perspective of Divine purpose, the Kingdom of God was preached (8:12; 19:8; 28:23,31). If we view it from it from the position of text, it was the Word of God or the Scriptures (8:35; 13:5; 14:25; 15:36; 17:13). The marvelous results recorded in this volume mark the beginning of Christ dwelling within men. The results that are chronicled by Luke are because of the message that was preached and believed. It impacted the earth, the domain of darkness, and heaven as well. While these outcomes were wrought by the hand of the Lord, they did not differ in order from the manner in which God works in this present day.

BAD FRUIT INDICATES A BAD TREE

Most honest people know that the modern church is riddled with sin – sin of the worst order. **Such lives are, in a sense, the fruit of the teaching that has been accepted.** Unlike Paul's teaching, much of the preaching and teaching of our time has little or nothing to do with the kingdom of God. A man-centered message is being presented. Rather than delivering a word from God, feeble attempts are being made to give an answer for the pain and complexity of life that is caused by spiritual stupidity and a love for sin. **Whatever is intended by such miserable dissertations, the**

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fruits they are producing confirm God is not in them.

All religion that allows for, or excuses, deviate conduct, is to be

Acts, and described in the Epistles. There are 2.5 billion professing Christians in the world today – nearly twice as many as the total number of Muslims (1.5 billion). **They are all the products of what they have been taught.** Oh, there is a remnant among them, for God has always reserved a remnant for Himself.

Like it or not, our day is marked by false teachers who are presenting a God, a Christ, and a gospel, that does not produce the kind of disciples prophesied by the prophets, recorded in the book of Acts, and described in the Epistles.

At some point men must begin to question the validity of preaching and teaching that, when accepted, does **not** produce growing and maturing disciples. Jesus does not produce faltering and halting disciples. The Holy Spirit does not lend His indispensable influence to making such followers. The Gospel itself, which is God's "power unto salvation" does not produce such fruit. Heaven neither makes nor condones lives that are not advancing toward the prize of a high calling. A good tree not only DOES not produce evil fruit, it CANNOT do so. Further, an evil tree CANNOT produce good fruit (Matt 7:15-20).

forthrightly abandoned. The teaching that has produced a flawed life is like a corrupt tree that must be cut down. That is precisely why John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus, said, "And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matt 3:10).

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If the Kingdom of God is an ever-increasing kingdom, as declared in Scripture (Isa 9:7; 11:9; Dan 2:35,44-45; Hab 2:14; Matt 13:31-32), exactly how does one explain spiritual deterioration? What is the source of such phenomenon? If what the prophets and Jesus said about the nature of the Kingdom and spiritual life is true, what **does** cause spiritual decline? Is it the nature of newness of life to wane? Is growing up into Christ a kind of abnormality, or is it really the nature of spiritual life? Does Jesus promote mediocrity? If not, who does? **Does the Holy Spirit have anything to do with disinterest, a preference for the world, and self-centeredness?** If not, what spirit does promote, or advances such things? These are certainly things to think about.

A GODLY MAN PURPOSES IN THE SPIRIT

19:21 After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome."

As is characteristic of Scriptural history, the next recorded event is one of significance in which a very brief literary transition is made. This is true notwithstanding the remarkable report that has just been given. The nature of the incident involving the burning of books, could have been drawn out, with a strong appeal to the curiosity of men. **That is what men in the flesh would do, specifying some of the books, and commenting specifically on the way the lives of those who burned them were changed.** However, that is not the manner of the Spirit, or of those who are being directed by Him. Instead,

the effect of the action upon the surrounding people is reported. First, the word of God "grew mightily and prevailed," while the recorded words pertaining to "curious arts" waned and dissipated. Now, we will find that there was also an impact upon the society that had capitalized on the requirements of idolatry. This will be revealed in the midst of a holy resolution made by Paul.

AFTER THESE THINGS WERE ENDED

"After these things were ended . . ." Other versions read, "were accomplished,"^{NKJV} "were finished,"^{NASB} "had happened,"^{NIV} "after these events,"^{RSV} "were over,"^{CSB} "were fulfilled,"^{DARBY} "was concluded,"^{NAB} "had taken place,"^{NET} "When matters had reached this point,"^{WEYMOUTH} and "had been brought to a close."^{WILLIAMS}

Do not forget what has just been reported. They were of an epochal nature.

- ⇨ Paul had been teaching daily in the school of Tyrannus for two years (19:9-10a).
- ⇨ All that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks (19:10b).
- ⇨ Special miracles were wrought by the hands of Paul (19:11).
- ⇨ Handkerchiefs and aprons were brought from Paul's body, diseases departed, and evil spirits went out of those possessed by them (19:12).
- ⇨ Certain vagabond Jewish exorcists had been exposed when they attempted an exorcism by using the name of "Jesus whom Paul

preached.” The possessed man leaped on the seven men making the attempt, forcing them to leave the house naked and bleeding (19:13-16).

- ⇒ This was known to all the Jews and Greeks in Ephesus, fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified (19:17).
- ⇒ Many that believed came and confessed and showed their deeds (19:18).
- ⇒ Many also who had used “curious arts” brought their books together and burned them publicly (19:19).
- ⇒ Thus, the Word of God grew mightily and prevailed” (19:20).

Concerning this series of events, the Spirit moves Luke to refer to them as “these things.” Most men would not have referred to them in such a manner, but would have accented how unusual and remarkable they were. However, this is not how a spiritual man assesses such things. Even when referring to the most unusual phenomenon of handkerchiefs and aprons being brought from Paul’s body, which were apparently significant in the working of several miracles, care was taken to state it in a God-glorifying way: “And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul” (Acts 19:11). “Special” and startling and not the same thing. “Special” is something God does, while startling or arresting is the impact it has upon men. **In other words, the unusualness of the miracles was not from a human point of view, for any miracle would fall into that category.** This report, however, accents that God worked in a manner that was not common for Him to work. This does not accent the miracles, but the One who did them, working without any kind of restraint or inability. These were not works that were difficult for God, but were rather not ordinary among men.

This may appear to be an insignificant distinction, but that is not at all the case. **The extraordinary nature of miracles is not the thing that is to capture our attention, but the One who works them.** To approach the event of reference in any other way would have drawn undue attention to Paul, and caused men to marvel without fearing

God. This is a trap into which miracle-mongers fall – those who have an inordinate appetite for miracles. Such people are not noted for their fear of God, for they assess miracles from a human point of view, not making an association with the God of heaven, whose will and purpose are absolutely superior. **The thought that God Almighty can work in such a way confirms that His wrath is to be feared, and His will obeyed without delay.** Blessed is the society who perceives these things to be so.

Therefore, the expression “these things” highlights a God that works without restraint, even in a realm that has been dominated by the wicked one. It also accents the necessity of being joined to Christ Himself, for **God will not honor the words of those who simulate identity with Christ,** as confirmed in the seven sons of Sceva.

PAUL PURPOSED IN THE SPIRIT

“Paul purposed in the spirit . . .” Other versions read, “decided,” NIV “resolved in the Spirit,” NRSV “came to a decision,” BBE “decided by the Spirit,” CJB “purposed in his spirit,” DAREY “purposed in his mind,” MRD “made up his mind,” NJB “felt compelled by the Spirit,” NLT “made plans,” IE “decided in his own mind,”

WEYMOUTH “under the guidance of the Spirit,” WILLIAMS “determined in the [Holy] Spirit,” AMPLIFIED and “set his heart.” PHILLIPS

The various translations present two distinct views of this text – and they are contrary to each other.

- ⇒ That the “spirit” of reference is Paul’s own spirit, accenting that this was a decision he made on his own. (New International Version, Basic Bible English, Darby, God’s Word, James Murdock Translation, New American Bible, New Jerusalem Bible, International English, Weymouth, Montgomery, Phillips).
- ⇒ That this decision was made through the influence of the Holy Spirit, to which Paul submitted Himself. (KJV, New King James, New American Standard, Revised Standard, New Revised Standard, American Standard, Complete Jewish Bible, Christian Standard Bible, Douay, English Revised, Geneva, NET Bible, New Living Translation Webster, Revised Webster, Bishop’s New Testament, Tyndale, Young’s Literal Translation, Living Bible, Williams, Amplified).

The precise Greek phrase used in this text is ἐν τῷ πνεύματι. This is consistent in the Greek texts, and is properly translated “in” (ἐν) “the” (τῷ)

MINISTERING TO THE SAINTS

TAKING COLLECTION TO THE POOR SAINTS IN JERUSALEM

ACTS 20:16; 24:17; ROM 15:15-16; 1 COR 16:1-3

ROMAN EPISTLE WRITTEN FROM CORINTH ABOUT 58 A.D.

WHEN HE WAS IN CORINTH FOR THREE MONTHS: ACTS 20:1-22

DETERMINED TO MINISTER TO THE SAINTS IN ROME

ROM 1:10-13

“spirit” (πνεύματι). If it is true, as Paul himself confessed, that Christ was living in Paul, and that the life he lived was not his own (Gal 2:20), then it is inconceivable that he was directed by his own independent thinking. Consider also that Jesus considered Paul “faithful,” putting him into the ministry (1 Tim 1:12). Paul was a man who was easily directed by Jesus, as various reports confirm (Acts 9:6; 16:9-10; 18:10; 23:11; 26:16; 27:22-25).

(Eph 4:11-16; Col 1:9-17; 4:12; Heb 6:1-8; 1 Pet 5:10). Jesus taught this as well (John 21:15-17; Matt 25:32-46). The Lord taught that the distinguishing trait of the saints was their love for one another (John 13:35). John taught the same (1 John 5:10; 3:10-14; 4:20-21). Yet, with alarming consistency, this has been glossed by the modern church, which has **emphasized** a love for those who are of the world.

productive spread of the Word of God.

My point is that Paul ministered with the saints and their preparation for glory as his primary motivation. This is why he made a practice of revisiting believers to see how they were doing, and then establish them in the faith.

In this text we see the resoluteness of Paul to visit and strengthen the churches. This was his constant manner (Acts 14:21; 15:36; 16:6; 1Thessalonians 3:1-5). The church at Philippi was in Macedonia, and Corinth was in Achaia. Rather than seeking his own interests, he deferred to give himself for the strengthening of the churches, that he might present them to Christ as chaste and mature (2 Cor 11:2; Col 1:28). **There is a vast difference between that noble motive and giving oneself to the resolution of earthly difficulties and challenges.** Those who make their primary aim the easing of the saints lives in this world, are coming short of the revealed purpose of God. To begin with, God has nowhere promised that life in this world will be easy. In fact, in this very book believers were told “*that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*” (Acts 14:22).

The whole of redemption, every whit of it, is to ready people for passing from this world to stand before the Judge of all the earth. If that objective is not met, it really makes no difference what else may appear to have been accomplished. **If, in the end, the individual is not suited to joyfully dwell forever with the Lord, whatever he has done in this world has been meaningless.** It is my persuasion that it will not go well on the day of judgment for those pretentious church leaders who have conducted their ministry in stark contradiction of this revealed preference. Perpetual spiritual immaturity is evidence of wrong teaching.

The priority of the sons of God has been largely hidden from the consideration of believers by the current emphasis on evangelism.

Therefore, I see no reason to conclude anything other than this: that the Holy Spirit was directing Paul in this decision, just as He did on other occasions.

JERUSALEM, THEN ROME

“ . . . when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.” Other versions read, “I must visit Rome also,” NIV “I have a desire to see Rome,” BBE “I must see Rome as well,” CSB “I must go on to see Rome as well,” NJB and “it behoveth me to also to see Rome.” YLT

The aim of passing through Macedonia and Achaia was to visit the brethren, confirming them in the faith and strengthening their hands in the Lord. The immediate purpose for going to Jerusalem, was to deliver the collection that was being gathered for the poor saints there – their poverty being the result of a great dearth that had been prophesied earlier (Acts 11:28-29).

It has been revealed that this is a Kingdom priority – the establishment and care of the saints

The priority of the sons of God has been largely hidden from the consideration of believers by the current emphasis on evangelism. It is thought that, what is referred to as “the winning of souls,” is the primary function of the church. This emphasis has been adopted, even though there is not a single word addressed to the churches that suggests this is their primary work. The Scriptures contain letters to seven specific churches: Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Philippi, Ephesus, Colossae, and Thessalonica. There are letters written to collective groups of brethren: Hebrews, James, First and Second Peter, First John, and Jude. The book of the Revelation was written to a collection of churches: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. There are letters of instruction to individual believers who were generally leaders: Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Gaius, and the elect lady. **Yet, none of these inspired words mention the priority of winning souls.** All of them emphasize the necessity of being established in the faith – i.e. that this is what salvation is calculated to do. On a practical level, this is what guarantees the insightful and

HE SENT THOSE WHO MINISTERED TOO HIM

“ ²² So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season.”

We are being exposed to the manner of a person who lives by faith. The absence of ungodly haste is very apparent. As it is written, *“he that believeth shall not make haste”* (Isa 28:16) – making haste denotes an impulsiveness that is produced by a lack of confidence and assurance. In other words, getting the work done is not the compelling nature of spiritual life. It is rather doing the will of the Lord, which will includes the completion of the work. **There is a fellowship with the Lord that is involved in His work that produces a godly deliberation and alertness.** It is apparent to me that the details of serving God are not always apparent. Rather, in the process of working out one’s own salvation, and pursuing his calling Divine direction is realized. This has already been made clear in the calling and direction of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:2-14:28), as well as Paul and Silas (Acts 15:40-18:5).

+ Those who are not living by faith have no idea of how to proceed in such a manner. Among those who lack assurance, the very idea of Divine direction is associated exclusively with commandments and, what is conceived to be, complete step-by-step plans. But this is **not** the manner of the Kingdom, nor has it ever been. **Those who walk with God** and labor together with Him will be required to employ their perception and

wisdom as they proceed along the path of service. This is the kind of thing to which we are now being exposed.

TWO OF THEM THAT MINISTERED UNTO HIM

“So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus . . .”

Now Paul sends two brethren into Macedonia. That is the region to which Paul had been called earlier, when the Spirit had forbidden them to preach in Asia (Acts 16:9-10). That was 3-5 years earlier, prior to the three years he had spent in Ephesus (Acts 20:31). At that time, Timothy had already joined his party (Acts 16:1-3). Some time during the intervening period, Erastus had also joined him, and, together with Timothy were among those who ministered to Paul. If this is the same Erastus mentioned in Romans 16:23, he was the chamberlain of the city of Corinth, from which the Roman letter was written. In the place of *“chamberlain,”* other versions read *“treasurer,”* ^{NKJV} and *“director of public works.”* ^{NIV} This being the case, he and Timothy had possibly accompanied Paul to Galatia, Phrygia, Macedonia, Corinth, and Ephesus (16:6-12; 18:1; 19:1). This was sufficient time to confirm his character and faithfulness in matters pertaining to the Kingdom.

We know that Paul was

intolerant of vacillating disciples who abandoned the work, as confirmed in his reluctance to take John Mark, who had departed from the work in Pamphylia, when Paul had determined to visit the churches (Acts 15:36-38). Although some have taken it upon themselves to criticize Paul for this action, it proved to be a wise move, as confirmed by the ministry of himself and Silas, joined by the likes of Timothy.

It ought to be noted that those who serve the Lord must *“first be proved”* or *“tested”* ^{NKJV} (1 Tim 3:10). Spiritual responsibilities are not to be assigned to people who have not demonstrated unquestionable faithfulness in their commitment to the Lord. That, of course, is the express requirement of the Lord, and no person should balk at it. If a person has a desire to serve the Lord in some responsible capacity, they must take seriously the matter of faithfulness and dependability.

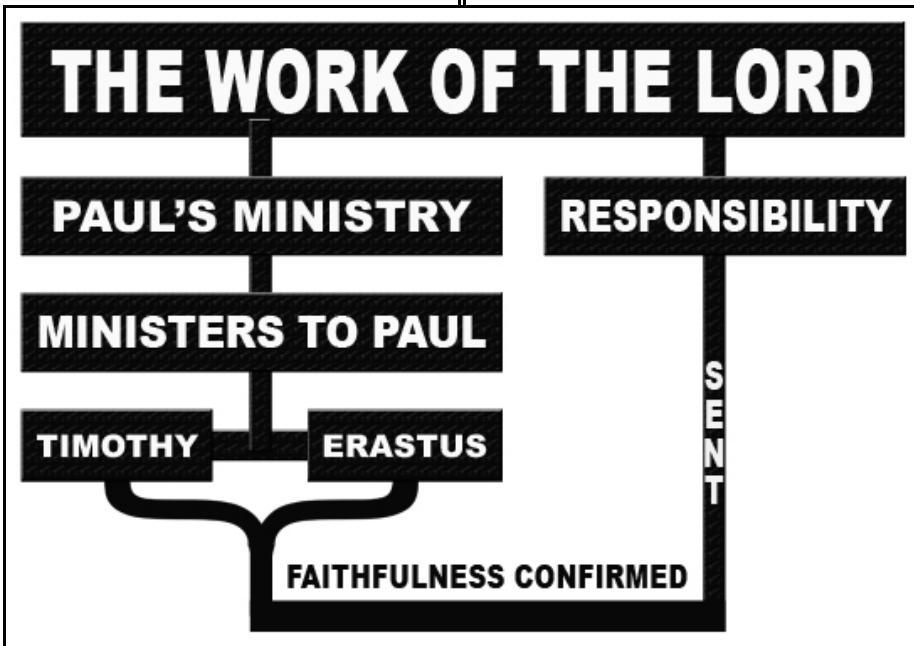
It is generally understood that these two brethren were dispatched to assist in gathering the offerings for poor saints in Jerusalem, confirm the state of the churches, and to report Paul’s activities for the Lord (Phil 2:19; 1 Cor 4:17; 16:10). Once again, the priority of Paul’s concern for the churches is clear. Of course, this reflects the concern of the Good Shepherd Himself who cares for His flock, cherishing and nourishing them.

HE HIMSELF STAYED IN ASIA FOR A SEASON

“ . . . but he himself stayed in Asia for a season.” Other versions read, *“for a time,”* ^{NKJV} *“for a while,”* ^{NASB} *“a little longer,”* ^{NIV} and *“went on living in Asia for a time.”* ^{BBE}

We do not know how long Paul remained in Asia, no doubt in Ephesus, as the text that follows substantiates. Once again, this confirms the nature of laboring together with the Lord. Matters are not always spelled out in detail. Sometimes, perhaps even the majority of the time, the laborer must be sensitive to the Lord, remaining faithful and focused in his labors, and alert to opportunities and needs that require attention.

Insensitive and fluctuating



souls cannot operate in such a manner, and therefore will not be directed into profitable labors for the Lord. It has been my observation over the years that those who choose to labor in an institutionalized environment are rarely qualified to be called to specific

duties, as were Timothy and Erastus. Such a surrounding has a dulling effect upon the soul, destroying spiritual sensitivity. That is because Christ is never the heart of a human institution or organization. When it comes to a body of people, the Lord Jesus confines the

distribution of His glory, and the allocation of meaningful work, to the church, "*Which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all*" (Eph 1:23). This is mode of the Kingdom, and the Lord never departs from it. Only honorable vessels are used for honorable purposes.

THE WAY THAT TROUBLED THE UNGODLY

"²³ And the same time there arose no small stir about that way."

Meanwhile, while Paul remained in Ephesus, some trouble broke out. It did not occur, however, until **after** the Word of God had grown mightily and prevailed, with all of Asia hearing the Gospel. The powers of darkness were held at bay until a decisive blow was dealt to the occultist community. With all of his power and host of workers, the devil was unable to stop the invasion of that dark community. Now that those accomplishments have taken place, it is as though a small window of opportunity is afforded the enemy, and the wicked one at once goes to work.

NO SMALL STIR

"And the same time there arose no small stir . . ." Other versions read, "*a great commotion,*" ^{NKJV} "*no small disturbance,*" ^{NASB} "*A great disturbance,*" ^{NIV} "*no little disturbance broke out,*" ^{NRSV} "*no little stir,*" ^{RSV} "*a great outcry,*" ^{BBE} "*a major furor,*" ^{CJB} "*no small trouble,*" ^{GENEVA} "*a serious disturbance,*" ^{GWN} "*no little ado,*" ^{TNT} "*a big blowup developed,*" ^{LIVING} and "*some bad trouble.*" ^{IE}

There is not only a difference between the kingdom of light and that of darkness, there is a certain hostility that exists between them. There is a mutual hatred they have toward each other, and a discontent in one, at the presence of the other. **Where there is moral and spiritual disparity, there is absolutely no neutrality or tolerance.** Neither side allows for the presence of the other, just as surely as there is no accord between Christ and Belial (2 Cor 6:14-16). Wherever there are professing Christians who are indifferent to the encroachments of evil, false claims

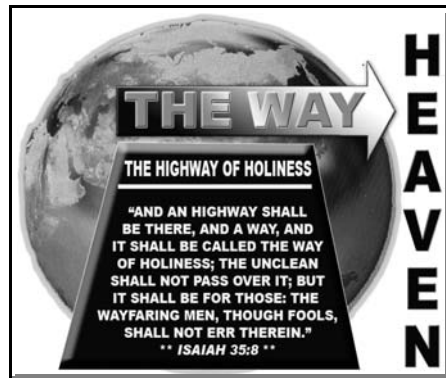
are being made about being identified with Christ Jesus.

Now, in the midst of a rapidly spreading spiritual awakening, the definitive line between good and evil is suddenly made very apparent. This is because the spread of light penetrates and neutralizes darkness. There is a resistance of the truth in moral "*miry places*" where individuals refuse to come to the light, lest their deeds be even further exposed (Ezek 47:11; John 3:19-20).

Now tumult arises, which is the work of the wicked one, "*For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work*" (James 3:16). The renewal that is taking place has introduced certain restrictions among the wicked, and they will oppose what is taking place.

ABOUT THAT WAY

" . . . about that way." Other versions read, "*the Way,*" ^{NKJV} "*the way of the Lord,*" ^{DOUAY} "*the way of Christ,*" ^{GWN} "*the way of God,*" ^{MRD} "*concerning the Christians,*" ^{LIVING} "*the new faith,*" ^{WEYMOUTH} and "*the way [of the Lord].*" ^{AMPLIFIED}



This is "*the way of salvation,*"

of which the powers of darkness are keenly aware (Acts 16:17). It is also referred to as "*the way of the Lord*" (Acts 18:25), and "*the way of God*" (Acts 18:26). Earlier, in the synagogue of Ephesus, there were those who "*spake evil of that way*" (Acts 19:9). The unbelieving Jews referred to it as "*heresy*" (Acts 24:14). The Psalmist referred to "*the way of the righteous*" (Psa 1:6). David said that God was good, and "*therefore He will teach sinners in the way*" (Psa 25:8). Isaiah prophesied of "*The way of holiness*" that would be raised up for "*wayfaring men*" who were traveling through this world (Isa 35:8). New Covenant language refers to "*the new and living way*" that has been "*consecrated for us*" by the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb 10:20).

This is not a "way of life" in which living is addressed by a set of rules or procedures. It is more related to a highway, or road, on which men travel to glory, as indicated by Isaiah. In fact, Jesus referred to Himself as "*the Way*" (John 14:6). This all assumes that men are journeying to a certain destination that is external to this world. It also assumes that it is not only distinct, but is at variance with the way, or manner, in which those who are not in Jesus live. Such benighted men live for this world, just as though they would never leave it. On the other hand, those pilgrims who are walking on the highway of holiness are en route to another world, and are readying themselves to occupy a better city, and inhabit a better country (Heb 11:10,16).

Now a commotion is raised "*about that way*" – a manner and direction of life that significantly impacts upon the way men live. In this case, the lives of the people were so altered that it

impinged upon the business community. Men stopped buying certain articles, and certain retail merchants were no longer able to make an adequate living.

There are conscientious Christians who long for such an impact in our time – when certain goods can no longer be sold, and wickedness cannot be marketed with any measure of success. Historically, wherever real spiritual renewal takes place, this kind of effect has been wrought. Liquor stores, night clubs, and other businesses that are uncomely have been closed. Some places had no further need for jails, and the need for law enforcement was greatly reduced.

Today religious sophists refer to the church as a hospital for the morally sick. I suppose they speak in such a foolish manner because there are so many people among them that fall into this category. However, neither the prophets nor Jesus said that redemption would provide a place for the morally and spiritually infirm. The Prophets affirmed that in redemption *“the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes”* (Isa 35:5-7). Jesus boldly announced that He had been sent to *“heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised”* (Luke 4:18).

The church is not a place like the pool of Bethesda, where *“a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water”* (John 5:3). Rather it is the residence of those who have been healed by the great Physician, and are no longer in the category of sick and infirm – what they once **“were”** (Rom 6:17,20; 1 Cor 6:9-10; 12:2; Eph 2:12; 5:8’ 1 Pet 2:25). **When people are “added” to the body of Christ, they are removed from the unacceptable category in which they were once confined.**

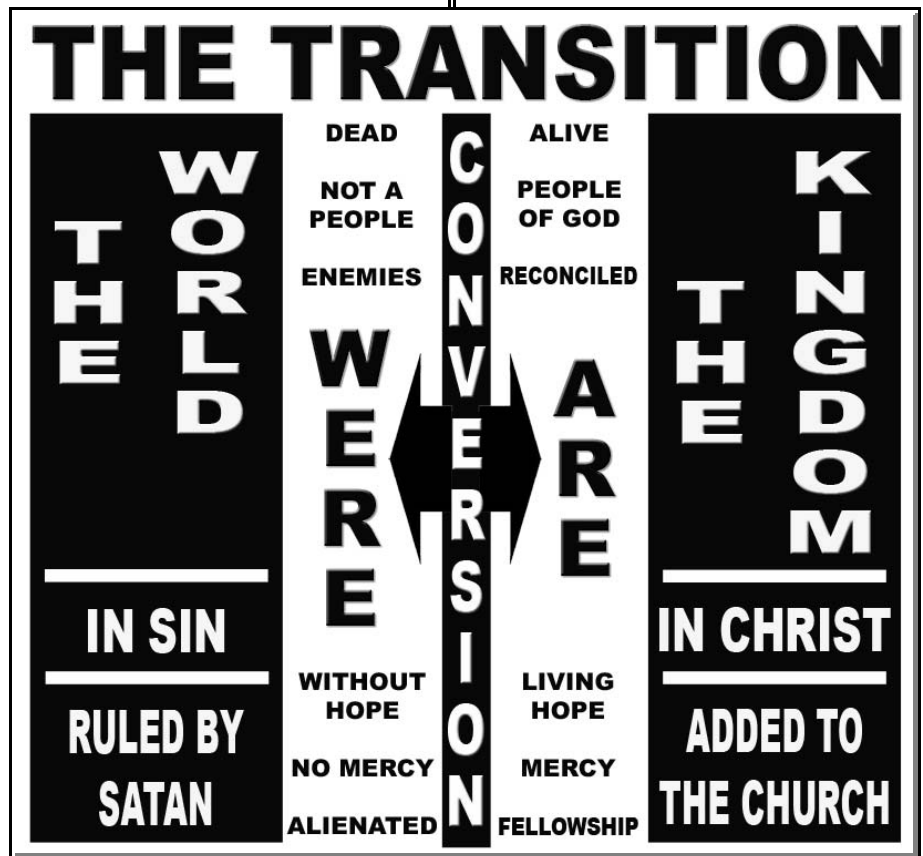
There is no such thing as a

salvation in which there is no fundamental moral and spiritual change. In conversion the individual passes from death unto life, from not being a people to being the people of God, and from being an enemy to being reconciled. There is a very real transition from being without hope to having a living hope, from having no mercy to obtaining mercy, and from being alienated to being called into the fellowship of Christ. One cannot enter the kingdom of God without being delivered from the world. It is not possible to be in Christ and still be dominated by sin and ruled by the devil. You cannot be added to the church without being subtracted from the roster of the condemned of this world.

To postulate that all of this

means to be born again.

The fact of the matter is that “the unclean” are not allowed on the “way” that leads to glory. That is precisely what Isaiah said: *“And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein”* (Isa 35:8). Should there be among believers those whose lives are characterized by moral or spiritual sickness, they are admonished, *“Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless”* (2 Pet 3:14).



could take place without any firm evidence borders on blasphemy, and is a sure sign of unbelief. Such a condition would presume a Savior who really did not save, and a new creation that was not different from what men are in Adam. Men are not free to philosophize about salvation, or speculate about what it

THE POINT OF THIS

The point of this is that those who turned to the Lord in Ephesus ceased their identification with their former lives. That is what it means to be *“dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God”* (Rom 6:11). It even affected what they purchased in the marketplace, and the buildings they

once frequented. They were different – “created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Eph 2:10).

When it comes to moral blemishes like fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness, we are told, “let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints” (Eph 5:3). The church is not a place where such people are housed, but where they lose that kind of identity! I do not how that truth can be contravened.

In this text, the change wrought in those who believed was so marked that it impacted on the business affairs of the city of Ephesus. The salvation of God is still marked by that kind of effect. This is because it ushers men into a spiritual realm called “the heavenly places” (Eph 2:6). This new domain is at variance with the world, being of a higher and superior order. It is not possible to avoid the resultant conflict. In order to occupy that

heavenly realm, you must refuse to be of the world, and travel through it as a pilgrim and a stranger. Even during the times prior of the New Covenant, this was the posture of those who believed in the Lord. It is said of them, they “confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country” (Heb 11:13-14). It is this circumstance that created the conflict that is now reported to have taken place in Ephesus.

THE CONCERNS OF THE IDOL WORSHIPERS

“²⁴ For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; ²⁵ Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.”

The wicked are forward to register their objection to “the way” that leads to glory, and to the teaching that attends it. This is because the variance of that “way” to the world is revealed in very practical ways. **Christian influence is not theoretical, even though, judging from the manners of the modern church, one would think that is the case.** An astounding percentage of professed Christian teaching and living is on a theoretical or philosophical basis, having no genuine impact on society. For example, it has become very fashionable to say, “God has called us to be salt and light,” or “We are to be salt and light in the world.” It all sounds very Scriptural, and all of the church members acquiesce with a nod of agreement, admitting that is certainly the way it ought to be. However, that is not what the Savior said. He said, “Ye ARE the salt of the earth,” and “Ye ARE the light of the world” (Matt 5:13-14). That is not theoretical, but factual!

Our text certainly reveals that Christian influence was not theoretical or philosophical in the city of Ephesus. There, the real power of God was being

made known through the teaching of Paul and those who received his word.

A CERTAIN MAN NAMED DEMETRIUS

“For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana . . .” Other versions read, “made silver shrines of Artimas,”^{NASB} “silver boxes for the images of Diana,”^{BBE} “objects connected with the worship of the goddess Artemis,”^{CJB} “making silver temples of Artemis,”^{DARBY} “silver temples of Diana,”^{GENEVA} “silver models of the temple of Artemis,”^{GWN} “silver shrines for Artemis,”^{NAB} “making silver sanctuaries of Artemis.”^{YLT} “little silver models which looked like the temple of the goddess Artemis,”^{IE} “miniature silver sanctuaries of Diana,”^{WEYMOUTH} and “silver shrines of [the goddess] Artemis [Diana].”^{AMPLIFIED}

Several of the later versions read “Artemis” instead of Diana. This is

THE GODDESS DIANA

The Artemis of the Greeks (Αρτεμις Acts 19:24), and Diana of the Romans, is a goddess known under various modifications and with almost incompatible attributes. According to the Homeric accounts and Hesiod, she was the daughter of Jupiter and Latona, born at the same time with Apollo at Delos. As the tutelary divinity of Ephesus, in which character alone she concerns us here, she was undoubtedly a representative of the same power presiding over conception and birth which was adored in Palestine under the name of ASHTORETH. – MCLINTOK & STRONG'S

transliteration of the Greek word used

The Temple of Artemis (Greek: ἄρτεμισιον Artemision), also known less precisely as Temple of Diana, was a Greek temple dedicated to Artemis completed— in its most famous phase— around 550 BC at Ephesus (in present-day Turkey). Though the monument was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, only foundations and sculptural fragments of the temple remain. There were previous temples on its site, where evidence of a sanctuary dates as early as the Bronze Age. The new temple antedated the Ionic immigration by many years. Callimachus, in his Hymn to Artemis, attributed the origin of the temenos at Ephesus to the Amazons, whose worship he imagines already centered upon an image (bretas). In the seventh century the old temple was destroyed by a flood. The construction of the “new” temple, which was to become known as one of the wonders of the ancient world, began around 550 BC. It was a 120-year project, initially designed and built by the Cretan architect Chersiphron and his son Metagenes, at the expense of Croesus of Lydia. It was described by Antipater of Sidon, who compiled the list of the Seven Wonders: “I have set eyes on the wall of lofty Babylon on which is a road for chariots, and the statue of Zeus by the Alpheus, and the hanging gardens, and the colossus of the Sun, and the huge labour of the high pyramids, and the vast tomb of Mausolus; but when I saw the house of Artemis that mounted to the clouds, those other marvels lost their brilliancy, and I said, “Lo, apart from Olympus, the Sun never looked on aught so grand.” – WIKIPEDIA, Encyclopedia

here. This goddess “was worshiped as the goddess of fertility.” ROBERTSON'S WORD PICTURES

The “shrines” of reference were miniature temples, made of silver, in which an image of Diana was placed. These were often kept in the homes of the worshipers, and even worn by them.

The temple of Diana, or Artemis, which was modeled in these small “shrines,” was one of the seven wonders of the world, impressive in appearance. Parts of this temple remain to this very day.

The point of mentioning all of this is to emphasize the commitment of these people to the false goddess Diana. There was no tolerance for those who chose to ignore this god, or who said or insinuated in any way that she was not a god. Further, the lives of these idol-worshippers depended upon prevalence of the god they worshiped. Their’s was not a casual religion, to say the least.

BROUGHT GAIN TO THE CRAFTSMEN

“... brought no small gain unto the craftsmen . . .” Other versions read, “no small profit,”^{NKJV} “no little business,”^{NASB} “no small amount of work,”^{CJB} “a great deal of business,”^{CSB} “brought great gains,”^{GENEVA} “afforded great profits,”^{MRD} “provided work for a large number of craftsmen,”^{NJB} “kept many craftsmen busy,”^{NLT} “not a little beneficial,”^{TNT} “the men who did the work made lots of money from it,”^{IE} “brought rich profit to his workmen,”^{MONTGOMERY} and “brought no small income to his craftsmen.”^{AMPLIFIED}

Here, then, was a lucrative business built upon the religion of the people. Their work consisted of making small silver replicas of the Temple of Diana. Several depictions of this temple are provided on this page, one of which is a replica of an ancient artist. It is apparent that much detailed work went into the making of these “shrines,” and thus much profit was realized. Further, the city was largely devoted to the worship of this false god.

Now, after at least two years of Paul’s teaching concerning the kingdom of God, this lucrative business had been seriously disrupted. The truth of God had an impact on the business world, particular the part of it that depended upon the worship of a false god.

Since the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil (1 Tim 6:10), anything that impacts on the amount of money that people have is subject to their condemnation – whether the matter is



**DIANA (Roman)
ARTEMIS (Greek)**

true or not. The true perspective of worldly wealth is clearly stated by the Lord Jesus Himself. “Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15).

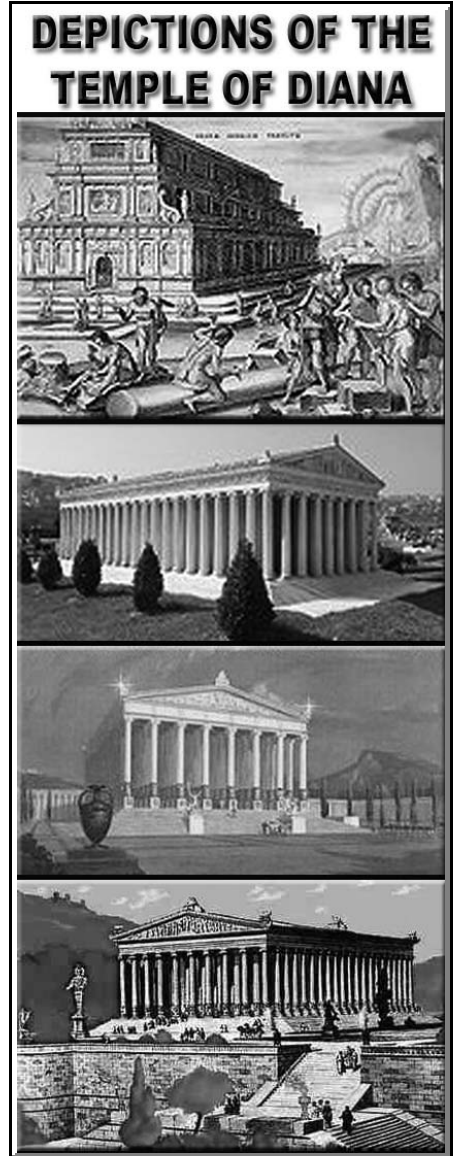
The action that is now described really had nothing to do with right and wrong, or truth and error. It was rather driven by a covetous spirit, and assumed that life **did** consist of how much of this world’s goods a person possessed.

HE CALLED THEM TOGETHER

“... Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said . . .” Other versions read, “similar occupation,”^{NKJV} “similar trades,”^{NASB} “related trades,”^{NIV} “same trade,”^{NRSV} “engaged in this kind of business,”^{CSB} “who wrought in such things,”^{DARBY} and “all the artisans of his trade, and those who labored with them.”^{MRD}

The idea here is that Demetrius called together all those who worked for himself, together with those engaged in businesses related to the making of shrines for the goddess Diana. This could include quite a panorama of business men. Here are some examples.

- ⇒ Those who purchased large quantities of silver for retailing.
- ⇒ Those who smelted silver, rendering it more pure.
- ⇒ Those developed equipment for the smelting of silver.
- ⇒ Those who sold smelting equipment.
- ⇒ Those who developed tools for working with silver.
- ⇒ Those who manufactured the tools.
- ⇒ Those who sold the tools.
- ⇒ Specialists who used the tools.



- ⇒ Those who made the forms into which the silver was poured.
- ⇒ Those who sold the forms.
- ⇒ Those who used the forms.
- ⇒ Retailers who sold the forms.
- ⇒ Those who made small images to be placed in the miniature shrines.
- ⇒ Those who sold the small idols.

That will suffice to show something of the involvements of making and selling shrines for the goddess Diana. It does not take into consideration the possible assembling of the shrines and images for sale. Now, Demetrius calls them all together, for what is taking place in their city has a direct bearing upon all of them.

BY THIS CRAFT WE HAVE OUR WEALTH

“... *Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.*” Other versions read, “*our prosperity by this trade,*”^{NKJV} “*our prosperity depends upon this business,*”^{NASB} “*we receive good income from this business,*”^{NIV} “*this line of business provides us our living,*”^{CJB} “*our well-living arises from this work,*”^{DARBY} “*Our gain is by this trade,*”^{DOUAY} “*by this craft we have our goods,*”^{GENEVA} “*we’re earning a good income from this business,*”^{GWN} “*our gains are all from this manufacture,*”^{MIRD} “*by this craft we have advantage,*”^{PNT} “*this business is our income,*”^{LIVING} and “*we make a lot of money from our business.*”^{IE}

Here is a significant part of the citizenry of Ephesus that has been impacted by what Paul has preached and taught over a period of two years. **Wherever his message was embraced, it directly effected these business men, significantly reducing the amount of their income.** This is confirmation of the power of the Gospel, as well as the change that takes place in the nature of those who believe and obey it.

Here was a system of false religion – specifically the worship of Diana – that had nurtured covetousness in the hearts of marketeers. It had promoted

wealth in this world – something that certain professing Christians are advocating this very day. How deluded a people must be to think that Deity – particularly the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ – would actually make it His aim to establish His subjects in this present evil world, which He has cursed. Yet, this is the postulate of nearly all religion that is not solidly based upon Jesus Christ.

THE SITUATION IN OUR DAY

Today we are faced with a type of Christianity that is actually impotent. **Not only does it fail to change the lives of those who embrace it, it has no illuminating influence in the cities that have an abundance of what they call “churches.”** It certainly has not impacted the income of uncomely businesses. There has not been a massive closing down of liquor stores, or

having played the harlot with the world.

She is also depicted as having a significant impact upon the commercial world. That is why, when she falls, the world will lament. This aspect of her being is encapsulated in the following description. “*And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: the merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine [fragrant] wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and odors [incense], and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil [fragrant oil], and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls*

This is the same spirit that was animating the silversmiths in Ephesus – a spirit of covetousness. Now, Satan has permeated professing Christendom with the same delusion, which is much worse.

pornography marketers, and stores that are purveyors in uncomely literature and entertainment media. The palm-readers and fortune-tellers of these cities have realized no significant reduction in marketing their works.

I am not naive. I do realize that God has not promised such effects will always take place. However, throughout history, there have been consistent results like this wherever the Gospel had been received.

Satan’s False Church

In the Revelation, John was shown the false church – a fabrication of the devil designed to be his repository for religious delusion. This church is referred to as a “*harlot,*” or “*the great whore*” (Rev 17:1.15.16; 19:2). She is noted for her fornication (Rev 14:8; 17:2,4; 18:3,9; 19:2). **That is, she is unfaithful to God,**

[bodies and souls] of *men*” (Rev 18:13). **This is the same spirit that was animating the silversmiths in Ephesus – a spirit of covetousness.** Now, Satan has permeated professing Christendom with the same delusion, which is much worse.

If you can bear to do so, contemplate the vast number of religious businesses that would become defunct were a spirit of revival and spiritual renewal to sweep across our nation. It is staggering to consider! Religious images, clothing manufacturers and retailers, the music industry, financial consultants, domestic consultants, building contractors, the educational world, religious jewelry, youth and other specialized ministries, popular religious books, professed Christian vacation resorts and theme parks, mass communication media, and scores of other

financial empires. Many ministers would have to retire, for the near-totality of their

ministry depends upon the existence of a weak and deficient church. **Only the**

devil capitalizes on a substandard church!

IDENTIFYING THE EFFECTS OF PAUL'S PREACHING

"²⁶ Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands . . ."

The objection that is raised concerns what Paul was preaching and teaching. It was the same with the Prophets, and the Lord Jesus Himself. **It is passingly strange that there are significant numbers of preachers and teachers these days that are not known for what they say.** In fact, I have often lamented that I do not have the faintest idea what many of these men teach the people. Unless one attends their gatherings, there is not much said about what they actually preach. However, this was not the case with the objectors in our text. I seriously doubt that they made a practice of going into the school of

away,"^{DOUAY} "has won over,"^{GWN} "persuaded and enticed,"^{MRD} "persuaded and converted,"^{NJB} "has influenced many people,"^{IE} "has led away a vast number of people by inducing them,"^{WEYMOUTH} and "has succeeded in changing the minds of a great number of people."^{PHILLIPS}

Nearly every version employs the word "persuaded." This word is translated from the Greek word *πειθω*, which is a form of the word *πειθω*. Here it is used in the aorist active tense, which means **Paul was not trying to persuade the people, but was actually doing it.** He was not merely using persuasive speech, but was effective in changing the minds of the people.

Observe that this places Paul's preaching and teaching in the category of **productive Kingdom thought.** While I do not doubt that his presentations were

invited to the feast refused to come, the master of the feast was angered and told his servants, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and **compel them to come in, that my house may be filled**" (Luke 14:23). Other versions read, "make them come in,"^{NIV} "constrain them,"^{ASV} "insistently persuade,"^{CJB} "urge,"^{GWN} "press people,"^{NLT} and "urge and constrain [them] to yield and come in."^{AMPLIFIED}

This is not the same as forceful coercion in which the will of the people is overridden and they are moved by fear. **The compelling of reference was an appeal to reason.** In the case of the Lord's parable, as well as in our text, the glory and truth of what was being told drew upon the hearts of the people. Their minds were captured, so to speak, with the marvelous nature of what was declared. They became aware of the sense of it, and their hearts yearned to possess what was affirmed.

Of course, all of this is owing to the power of the word of the Kingdom itself. The Holy Spirit is working through it, so that the person is impacted by what he hears. In the case of the Ephesians, it shed light on the depraved nature of idol-worship, confirming it to be folly. **It no longer made sense to purchase shrines for the Diana, goddess of the Ephesians.** The books they once valued were seen as nothing more than something to be burned,

In one of his salient statements, Solomon referred to the kind of wisdom that is required to convince people in this manner: "he that winneth souls is wise" (Prov 11:30). **The meaning is that true wisdom appeals to the disciplined mind and tender heart, so that reason triumphs over delusion.** Winning souls, in this case, is not increasing the tally of devotees. Rather, it involves people being convinced or persuaded. Our day could certainly use an increase of this kind of godly influence.

Solomon referred to the kind of wisdom that is required to convince people in this manner: "he that winneth souls is wise" (Prov 11:30). The meaning is that true wisdom appeals to the disciplined mind and tender heart, so that reason triumphs over delusion.

Tyrannus to hear Paul. However, word of his message had been carried throughout all of Asia. People knew what he was declaring.

THIS PAUL HAS PERSUADED

"Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people . . ." Other versions read, "has convinced and led astray,"^{NIV} "persuaded and drawn away,"^{NRSV} "teaching numbers of people and turning them away,"^{BBE} "persuaded and misled,"^{CSB} "by persuasion has drawn

emotional, they transcended mere emotion. **These were presentations that were related to understanding, comprehension, discernment, perception, and discretion.** They summoned judgment and decision to the environment, analysis and cogitation. The hearers were moved to make a comparison with what they had formerly embraced, and to make a deliberate choice concerning what they would follow.

Jesus spoke of this kind of presentation in his parable about the great supper. When those who were previously

NO GODS WHICH ARE MADE WITH HANDS

“ . . . saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands . . . ” Other versions read, “gods made with hands are no gods at all,”^{NASB} “man-made gods are no gods at all,”^{NIV} “gods made by humans are not gods,”^{GWN} “handmade gods are really not gods at all.”^{NLT}

This, they said, was not only taught in Ephesus, but “almost throughout all Asia.” This certainly is not all that Paul taught, but he did proclaim this. In Lystra, Paul admonished the people to “turn from these vanities unto the living God” (Acts 14:15). In Athens he proclaimed, “we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device” (Acts 17:29). The Psalmist accented the lifelessness and lack of productivity in all gods made with human hands (Psa 115:4-8; 135:15-18). Isaiah said such images are “profitable for nothing” (Isa 44:10-11). Jeremiah said of them, “for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good” (Jer 10:5). Paul affirmed to the Corinthians that “an idol is nothing in the world” (1 Cor 8:4).

The phrase “made with hands” refers to something man made. It is not limited to man’s hands. Prior to this occasion it is said that God wrought “special miracles by the hands of Paul” (19:11). Yet, some of those miracles were accomplished by means of handkerchiefs and aprons that were taken from the body of Paul. The expression means that God wrought unusual miracles through Paul.

So it is that god’s “which are made with hands” are gods of man’s own

creation. That certainly includes idols – even small boxes made for idols. But it is not limited to tangible gods that can be touched or seen with the human eye. **It also includes god’s created by the human imagination as it is influenced by the god of this world.** John alluded to this when proclaiming the real Christ. He affirmed that the “Son of God” is one who “is come, and hath given us an understanding; that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. **This is the true God, and eternal life**” (1 John 5:20). A God with whom a professed Christ does not acquaint us is not god at all, and the Christ who introduces such a god is a false Christ as well. There is such a thing as “another Jesus” who declares a fictitious

means be described as “eternal life.”

There are intellectual “shrines” that serve in the same capacity as the shrines the Ephesus silversmiths made. They are institutional shrines to house their false god. Some of them are even bold enough to say they are members of the only church in which God dwells. **What they really mean, it is the only place the god they have created dwells.** But God does not dwell “in temples made with hands” – even those institutions that men imagine hold the God of heaven.

When anyone dares to insinuate that these imaginary gods and Jesus’ are not real, the indignation of the

When anyone dares to insinuate that these imaginary gods and Jesus’ are not real, the indignation of the institutional slaves is aroused – just as surely as Demetrius excited the Ephesian merchants with his nonsense.

god (2 Cor 11:4)! Therefore, John concluded his remarks by saying, “Little children, **keep yourselves from idols.** Amen” (1 John 5:21).

Today there is a false god resident in professed Christendom. It is a god who has been declared by “another Jesus,” and promoted by false prophets. **There is a false Jesus who does not give the people an understanding – even though they may profess to have been in Him for decades.** The god this false Jesus promotes is not the true God, and knowing him can by no

institutional slaves is aroused – just as surely as Demetrius excited the Ephesian merchants with his nonsense. If all of this appears a bit strong, one must remember that the Head of the church told us that we know the validity of teachers and their adherents by their fruit (Matt 7:15-20). If the consistent fruit is deficient, then it is only because the tree is deficient. To put it another way, it is because God is not working there, both to will and to do of His own good pleasure (Phil 2:12-13). And, if God is not working there, it is only because He is not dwelling there. I realize the implications of this are rather strong, but they are true.

THE IMPACT OF THE GOSPEL ON FALSE RELIGION

“²⁷ So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at naught; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.”

Demetrius sees the message of

Paul, together with him persuading the people of its truth, as having a threefold effect upon their society – a society in which they were thriving financially. All of this sounds strange in our society, where Christianity is noted for its sterility, and many of its leaders for their lack of understanding and even immorality. However, as I have repeatedly

stated, **in the book of Acts, we are being exposed to a real message, godly messengers, and the effect faith has on those who possess it.**

No one is under any obligation to receive as true something that does not produce what is true. If a representation of Christianity produces effects that are at

variance with the what God has said about faith, then the claims of identity with Him are questionable, to say the least. Let the people examine themselves to determine whether they are in the faith (2 Cor 13:5). If that examination uncovers falsity, then let them repent of their sin, and turn to God with their whole heart. If they are unwilling to do this, then let the church reject them, and let them cease to wear the name "Christian." Be sure of this, whatever excludes a person from heaven on the day of judgment (Matt 7:22-23), excludes them from identity with the church while they are in this world.

The three conclusions Demetrius gives are as follows.

- ⇒ Our means of making a living is in danger of being eliminated.
- ⇒ The temple of Diana will be despoiled.
- ⇒ The magnificence of Diana will be destroyed.

OUR CRAFT IS IN DANGER

"So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought . . ." Other versions read, "this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute," ^{NKJV} "our trade will lose its good name," ^{NIV} "Our trade may be damaged in the opinion of men," ^{BBE} "the reputation of our trade will suffer," ^{CJB} "our business may be discredited," ^{CSB} "that this our portion may be reprov'd," ^{GENEVA} "this occupation

disregard," ^{YLT} "our loss of income," ^{LIVING} and "turn people against our work." ^{IE}

Precisely what was it that caused this dread of losing the means of gaining wealth – of their occupation suddenly becoming obsolete? **At the foundational level, it was Paul teaching things concerning the kingdom of God (19:8).** The detailed level of that teaching was the singularity of God: "God is One" (Deut 6:4; Gal 3:20) – and it was not Diana of the Ephesians! At the evidential level, it was that people were believing what he taught, and thus their lives were so restructured that they would no longer purchase what these men were making. **No person of sound mind will continue giving devotion to something he is convinced is false.**

There you have firm evidence that true conversion changes what people think and do. It is more than a trite saying that God works in those who are reconciled to Him "both to will and to do" (Phil 2:12). **The only people in whom God is not working are those in whom He is not dwelling, for the Lord never stays where He is not wanted.** This was actually lived out during Christ's ministry. He did not stay where He was not wanted. If people did not receive what He said, He removed Himself from them. This fact is stated in apostolic doctrine. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4).

heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error" (1 John 4:6). Even the heathen of our text knew that if people embraced what Paul was saying – and that is what was happening – they would be put out of business.

Speaking of our own generation, there are occupations that depend upon an unformed, weak, and faithless church. Demons have developed doctrines that are tailored for such people (1 Tim 4:1), and Satan's children perpetrate them. The current floodtide of religious fiction that contains false doctrinal innuendos is a case in point. These include the "Left Behind" series, all of the "How To" books, and a host of seminars and workshops that are of a problem-solving nature. Much, if not all, of the Christian counseling business would become obsolete if professing Christians actually lived by faith. The Christian music empire has flooded society with concepts that, at the least are unbecomingly juvenile, and at the worst, are totally devoid of the truth. All manner of teachings are resident in the professing church that leave people thinking sin is really not that bad. Iniquity is conveniently traced back to things that have nothing at all to do with the human will and preference: family genealogy, genetic make-up, psychological defects, the development of bad habits, and the likes. Solutions are provided in book form and the development of thoughtless routine. However, what would happen if people actually believed what is declared in apostolic doctrine? What if they availed themselves of the intercessory ministry of Jesus, and the powerful effects of the knowledge of God. **How would these businesses fare if people lived by faith (Heb 10:38-39), and were dominated by hope (1 John 3:3)?** What if professing Christians were busy working out their salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12), and cleansing themselves of all filthiness of flesh and spirit (2 Cor 7:1). I will tell you what would happen. **It would put all such businesses and occupations in jeopardy, for they all depend upon a weak and unformed church!**

There are those who will reply that this is a heartless view, and does not allow for godly concern. However, it is these, and similar, occupations that are

Precisely what was it that caused this dread of losing the means of gaining wealth – of their occupation suddenly becoming obsolete? At the foundational level, it was Paul teaching things concerning the kingdom of God. The detailed level of that teaching was the singularity of God: "God is One" – and it was not Diana of the Ephesians!

slandered ad impeded," ^{MRD} "Our trade will lose its good name," ^{NIB} "the loss of public respect for our business," ^{NLT} "this our craft cometh into peril to be set at nought," ^{PNT} "in danger for us coming into

"Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him" (1 John 3:6). And again, "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God

guilty of heartlessness. Those occupied in them wear the pious-looking robes of concern, and present themselves as possessing a deep and unconditional love for people. **But the way they are leaving the people believes all of their false claims.** Like the Ephesian silversmiths, they want to maintain their trade, even if it conflicts with the kingdom of God.

THE TEMPLE OF THE GODDESS DIANA DESPISED

“ . . . but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised . . . ” Other versions read, *“regarded as worthless,”* ^{NASB} *“be discredited,”* ^{NIV} *“scorned,”* *“count for nothing,”* ^{RSV} *“made of no account,”* ^{ASV} *“no longer honored,”* ^{BBE} *“come to be taken lightly,”* ^{DARBY} *“begin to be destroyed,”* ^{DOUAY} *“be nothing esteemed,”* ^{GENEVA} *“regarded as worthless,”* ^{NAU} *“reduce the sanctuary of the great goddess Diana to unimportance,”* ^{NJB} *“will lose its influence,”* ^{NLT} *“be despised,”* ^{PNT} *“reckoned for nothing,”* ^{YLT} and *“brought into contempt.”* ^{WILLIAMS}

Demetrius knew that if the Goddess Diana was not respected, there would be no need for the temple erected to maintain her honor. **If men were not devoted to this idol, they would give no honor to anything associated with it.** Even though this temple was one of the seven wonders of the world, it would become worthless if the idol for whom it was built ceased to be viewed as a god.

There is a principle to be seen here that must be embraced. **If a person does not place value on something or someone, they will not have a high regard for things associated with that person or thing.** Bringing this down to its necessary implications, if an individual or group of individuals do not have a high regard for the Living God, they will not honor His commandments, His will, or His promises. It is their attitude toward God Himself that is reflected in their view of what He has said and done. If a person does not honor the Son, they certainly will not abandon all competing interests to follow Him. If they do not place a high value upon the Word of God, they will not expose themselves to it, or give themselves to shaping their lives by it. Where disinterest and

lukewarmness exist, the love of God is not found, and the heart is not pure. There really is no such thing as a person who loves God, yet disdains His Word. It is not possible to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet refuse to follow Him. One cannot have faith, and yet disregard what brings and sustains faith.

Even the heathen know this principle. It is uncomely beyond description for the professing church to be riddled with the problems that proceed from unbelief.

HER MAGNIFICENCE SHOULD BE DESTROYED

“ . . . and her magnificence should be destroyed . . . ” Other versions read, *“be dethroned from her magnificence,”* ^{NASB} *“be robbed of her divine majesty,”* ^{NIV} *“will be deprived of her majesty,”* ^{NRSV} *“put down from her high position,”* ^{BBE} *“being ignominiously brought down from her divine majesty,”* ^{CJB} *“her magnificence come to the verge of ruin,”* ^{CSB} *“her greatness should be destroyed,”* ^{DARBY} *“robbed of her glory,”* ^{GWN} *“the goddess herself . . . is condemned,”* ^{MRD} *“will be robbed of her great prestige,”* ^{NLT} and *“her glorious magnificence may be degraded and fall into contempt.”* ^{AMPLIFIED}



There is a logical progression in the effects of Paul’s teaching – and Demetrius saw it. If the goddess Diana was no longer honored, a temple erected for that honor would also be despised. If the temple was seen as worthless, then shrines that duplicated it would at once be rendered obsolete. It seems to be that this represents an inviolable principle. **When what is false is seen for what is**

really is, and is held in disdain, nothing will be honored that is associated with that falsity.

This is the means through which false religion is overthrown. It is how the kingdom of God, which started like a small stone, grows and rolls over all competing kingdoms (Dan 2:35-44). **Through the knowledge of God, and by faith, the delusions of the devil are exposed.** Once seen, allegiance is withdrawn from them and given to God. When this actually takes place, activities required by and related to that false idea are abandoned. When this happens, the businesses and occupations that were sustained by that false notion are at once rendered obsolete, for they are no longer seen as important.

The Kingdom of God is an economy of understanding. It is an environment in which discernment and comprehension thrive, and things are seen as they really are. Where that understanding is deficient, devotion to what is false will remain, and necessarily so, for no rational person will abandon something to which they have attached value. Jesus referred to this principle when He said, *“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”* (Mat 6:21).

Now, permit me to think in a backward mode. When God is ignored by the professing church, it is because the true message of God has not been believed, for it is the belief of the truth that sets all valid change in motion. The failure to believe that can be owing to the fact that the message has actually not been heard. However, when we consider that God positioned all men in both time and location in order that they might seek the Lord, this is not an adequate excuse (Acts 17:26-27). Too, the Gospel has been preached throughout the world – from the first century (Col 1:23). **Even now, enough is being said to induce earnest inquiry into the things concerning the Kingdom of God.** A remnant of believers is also present from whom truth can be made known. Under these circumstances, to be faced with an uninformed and worldly church cannot be justified under any circumstances. Further, the fact that false religion is

thriving is itself evidence that the truth is not prominent. The same condition exists in our day that was found during the time of Isaiah the prophet. *“And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no judgment”* (Isa 59:14-15). The lack of judgment, the presence of injustice, and the disdain of men and women of faith are evidences that truth has fallen. Further, the whole circumstance is seen by God, and He is displeased with it.

Even Demetrius the idolater and opportunist knew that when the things concerning the Kingdom of God are actually believed, competing interests are disdained. What can really be said of professed believers who do not see this?

ALL ASIA AND THE WORLD WORSHIPS

“ . . .whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.”

Diana was a popular goddess – not only in Asia, but in all the world. She had a good reputation, and was held in high regard. However, if the preaching of Paul was believed – and that is what was happening – all of that worship would be brought to a grinding halt. There would not have to be a deprogramming technique to uproot the people from the worship of Diana. A battery of psychiatrists would not have to be hired to deal with the trauma of sudden change. This would not require the development of a new profession that would ease the transition from idolatry to the worship of the true God. That erroneous approach reflects the kind of thinking that is extant in our time, and it is false to the core. It is even beneath the thinking of Demetrius. He had seen enough of the effects of Paul’s preaching to know that unless something was done to stop it, it would eventually spoil the kingdom of Diana. I must admit that it would be most refreshing to hear of such conclusions concerning the preaching of the truth in our time.

Daniel said of Kingdom of God, *“it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever”* (Dan 2:44). Even the heathen have a sense of this. That is why they oppose the preaching of the Gospel. Further, this kind of spread of the truth of the Gospel, and the consequent decimation of competing kingdoms, was the subject of several of Christ’s parables. This is what truth does when it is proclaimed and received.

⇨ *“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof”* (Mat 13:31-32).

“window” is described in this manner: “Of the 55 least evangelized countries, 97% of their population lives within the Ten Forty Window . . . Two-thirds of the world’s population -- more than 3.2 billion people -- live in the 10/40 Window.” Impressive statistics are as follows.

- ⇨ 865 million unreached Muslims or Islamic followers in 3330 cultural sub-groupings
- ⇨ 550 million unreached Hindus in 1660 cultural sub-groups
- ⇨ 150 million unreached Chinese in 830 groups
- ⇨ 275 million unreached Buddhists in 900 groups
- ⇨ 2550 unreached tribal groups (which are mainly animistic) with a total population of 140 million
- ⇨ Forming a smaller -- though important -- unreached group are the 17 million Jews scattered across 134 countries

The ongoing existence of this area is a kind of testimony to the sterility of modern Christianity. It is a living contradiction of the doctrine of Scripture, as well as the inspired history of the early church.

⇨ *“Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened”* (Mat 13:33).

Once this is perceived, it will bring to an end the vain imagined evangelistic strategies of men. For example, I have been hearing about the “10-40 window” of evangelistic opportunity for at least twenty years. The term “10-40 window” was coined by Christian Missionary strategist Luis Bush in 1990. It describes a geographical area 10-40 degrees north of the equator, and has become a standard phrase in the Christian missionary community. This

The ongoing existence of this area is a kind of testimony to the sterility of modern Christianity. It is a living contradiction of the doctrine of Scripture, as well as the inspired history of the early church. Truth will ultimately triumph **when it is faithfully proclaimed.** This is because Divine power is in it. There is also the determined purpose of God: *“for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea”* (Isa 11:9). And again, *“For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea”* (Hab 2:14). When it is believed and embraced, the power of God, coupled with the revealed purpose of God, settles the matter of the superiority of truth.

THE VALUES OF IDOLATERS EXPRESSED

“²⁸ *And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.*”

Sin always introduces a lack of true rationality. It takes from those who commit it the ability to think correctly. **This is because Satan never works within in context of truth.** The sphere of his influence is wrought within the perimeter of the lie, and the means through which he perpetrates his ways is delusion. In this text we have a sterling example of people who are deluded, and thus cannot reason upon the truth.

begins to heat up, being brought to a boil, then boiling over into sinful expression.

Here is an example of what James said in the third chapter of his epistle. *“And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell”* (James 3:6). Other versions read, *“sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell,”* ^{NASB} *“setting on fire the wheel of birth (the cycle of man’s nature), being itself ignited by hell (Gehenna),”* ^{AMPLIFIED} *“inflameth the wheel of our nativity,*

themselves deceived, they are unaware that their words have kindled a spiritual bonfire that will wreak havoc among the hearers, bringing destruction in its wake.

Another thing that is seen here is that those who think alike are, by virtue of their kindred thought, brought together, and united. The rationality, or lack thereof, of their thinking has no bearing on their unity. Neither is correctness the issue. That is something that is assumed. It is taken for granted that they are right because they all think the same. While imagining they are thinking accurately, they have actually been thrown into a form of insanity. They are completely oblivious to the fact that they have set themselves against the ultimate Person, with the ultimate mind, and the most precise and true purpose.

They are thinking of themselves being made to feel better if they can allow their hostilities to erupt through their mouths. Being themselves deceived, they are unaware that their words have kindled a spiritual bonfire that will wreak havoc among the hearers, bringing destruction in its wake.

WHEN THEY HEARD THESE THINGS

“And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath . . .” Other versions read, *“filled with rage,”* ^{NASB} *“were furious,”* ^{NIV} *“were enraged,”* ^{NRSV} *“were very angry,”* ^{BBE} *“filled with fury,”* ^{NAB} *“aroused them to fury,”* ^{NJB} *“their anger boiled,”* ^{LIVING} and *“became furiously angry.”* ^{WEYMOUTH}

The term *“wrath”* is translated from a word that means, “passion, angry heat . . . indignation which has arisen gradually and become more settled,” ^{THAYER} and “swelling up of anger, hot temper, angry outburst.” ^{FRIBERG} The idea is that as Demetrius continued speaking, the anger and hostility of those in the audience began to heat up and boil, filling all of their persons. Finally it boiled over, or erupted, in the expression that follows. James referred to this process as *“the superfluity[overflow^{NKJV}] of naughtiness”* (James 1:21) – a process in which anger

being set on fire by hell,” ^{DOUAY} and *“is set on fire by hell itself, and can turn our whole lives into a blazing flame of destruction and disaster.”* ^{LIVING} **The idea is that when men speak inappropriately, it awakens the whole of the fallen nature, and the individual begins to be consumed, with everything good being removed.** This kind of speaking is kindled by hell, being one of the means the devil uses to disseminate his damning venom.

Thus, the words of Demetrius have awakened every evil manner in the people, robbing them of the ability to think properly, and inciting them against Paul, who had spoken the truth of God. Those who feel it is best to vent their corrupt feelings are not thinking correctly., They are thinking of themselves being made to feel better if they can allow their hostilities to erupt through their mouths. **Being**

THEY CRIED OUT

“ . . . and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.” All versions read essentially the same, with the only difference being the use of the transliteration, *“Artemis”* for *“Diana.”*

The people began shouting *“Great is Diana of the Ephesians”* as though that expression would make it true – or at least more firm. **However, the repetition of a lie does not make it more sure, nor is it stabilized by the fact that many people have embraced it.** This is why polls and pollsters have no bearing whatsoever on reality.

One of the principles of false religion is that when a significant number of people prefer a certain thing, that makes it right. Thus Paul, when warning Timothy of a falling away, said, *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears”* (2 Tim 4:3). Other versions read, *“wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,”* ^{NASB} *“they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to*

hear," ^{NIV} and "they will gather to themselves one teacher after another to a considerable number, chosen to satisfy their own liking and to foster the errors they hold." ^{AMPLIFIED}

There are Christian sects that boast of their numbers as though that was proof they were being blessed by God. Others pursue numbers as though this was really so. However, this view of numbers is not an expression of the mind of the Lord. During Jesus' ministry vast multitudes followed Him, seeking Him out and apparently listening to Him intently (Matt 4:25; 8:1,18; 9:8,33,36; 11:7; 12:15; 13:2, 34,36; 14:14,19,22,23; 15:10,30,31. 32,33, 39; 17:14; 19:2; 20:29; 21:8; 22:33; 23:1). Yet, He frequently actually sent the multitudes away (Matt 13:36; 14:22-23; 15:39).

Other times Jesus upbraided the multitudes (John 6:26,64). Some multitudes were offended by Christ's

teaching, and finally left Him altogether (John 6:66). Further, **Jesus never delivered any substantive teaching to the masses.** This was so pronounced that His disciples said to Him, "Why speakest Thou unto them in parables?" Jesus answered them candidly, confirming that He did not speak in this manner to clarify the truth. "He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, **but to them it is not given.** For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: **because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.** And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: **For this people's**

heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (Matt13:11-15).

Finally, many of these very people were carried away by their leaders, and thus called for the crucifixion of Jesus (Mk 16:11-13). Vast numbers, then, are not an end of themselves. Of themselves, they are not a worthy goal, but fall short of nobility. If the Gospel produces a great influx of believers, we will rejoice. But we will not tailor our labors to manufacture such things after the flesh. Such labors are poison to the soul. They provide an environment in which the flesh is dominate, and the Holy Spirit retires, at the best, into the background.

THE PROMOTION OF CONFUSION

"²⁹ And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theater."

One of the evidences of the nature of incorrect thinking is the effect it has upon those subjected to it. This falls into the category of knowing a tree by its fruit. The impact of Demetrius' speech upon the Ephesian society confirms its source.

THE WHOLE CITY WAS FILLED WITH CONFUSION

"And the whole city was filled with confusion . . ." Other versions read, "was in an uproar," ^{NIV} "full of noise and trouble," ^{BBE} "was in commotion," ^{MRD} "was in a roar," ^{PNT} "became very upset," ^{IE} and "riot and uproar." ^{WEYMOUTH}

The word "confusion" is the translation of the Greek word *συγχύσεως*, which has the following lexical meaning: "confusion, disturbance: of riotous persons," ^{THAYER} "disorderly mob revolt, with special implications of uproar and disturbance - uproar, revolt," ^{LOW-NIDA} and

Viewing this as the work of the rulers of the darkness of the world, this was the devil confusing and disorienting the people. From the Divine point of view, the people were "turned back and brought to confusion." This is the kind of environment in which Divine benefits are not realized.

"tumult." ^{GINGRICH} In English the word means, "state of being confused mentally: lack of certainty, orderly thought, or power to distinguish, choose, or act decisively." ^{MERRIAM-WEBSTER}

As used here, confusion is the opposite of a "sound mind" (2 Tim 1:7), and the peace of God ruling in the heart (Col 3:15). **The preaching and teaching of Paul had brought clarity of thought to the city.** People were able to believe the Gospel, see their sins, confess them, and abandon them (19:18). Those who had been given to curious arts were enabled to think soundly about

them, which moved them to bring their books and burn them publically (19:19). This is the kind of orderliness that was produced by the belief of things concerning the Kingdom of God.

Now, a foe enters the stage on which the drama of redemption is being worked out. He does not agitate the believers, but those who are unbelievers. As is characteristic of the devil's wisdom, confusion and discord is produced in "the whole city." Confusion involves being confounded, bewildered, befuddled, and puzzled. It includes being nonplused, dumbfounded, and illogical. Those who

did not receive the message being delivered by Paul were thrown into a state of discombobulation – a condition in which they were confused, and unable to form a rational thought.

Viewing this as the work of the rulers of the darkness of the world, this was the devil confusing and disorienting the people. From the Divine point of view, the people were “turned back and brought to confusion” (Psa 35:4; 70:2). **This is the kind of environment in which Divine benefits are not realized.** It is also the domain in which the devil can work more freely. The more confused and lacking of spiritual understanding men are, the more freely the devil can work. This is the intellectual field where his seed grows.

PAUL’S COMPANIONS IN TRAVEL

“ . . . and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul’s companions in travel . . . ” Other versions read, “seized . . . Paul’s travel companions,”^{NKJV} “dragging along,”^{NASB} “having taken by force . . . who were journeying in company with Paul,”^{BBE} “seized and carried off . . . ”^{DARBY} and “ . . . men from Macedonia. (These men always traveled with Paul). ”^{IE}

Paul was apparently not accessible at the time, so the mob seized the men who had been traveling with him – Gaius and Aristarchus. We are told in Acts 20:4 that Aristarchus was “of the Thessalonians.” Acts 27:2 adds that this man was “a Macedonian of Thessalonica.” He left Ephesus with Paul (Acts 20:4), was later imprisoned (Philem 1:24), and is referred to as a “fellowlaborer” with Paul (Col 4:10).

In this text, Gaius is said to be a man “from Macedonia.” Acts 20:4 mentions a Gaius who was from Derbe – a place in which Paul and Barnabas had preached the Gospel some time earlier (Acts 14:6-7,20-21). There was also a brother named Gaius who was from Corinth (1 Cor 1:14), and yet another Gaius to whom John the apostle wrote (3 John 1:1). I take the Gaius of this text to be distinct from the ones from Derbe, Corinth, and the one to whom John addressed his third epistle. Some are of the opinion that they all were the same man. However, I do not see how that

conclusion can be substantiated.

It is apparent that throughout his labors there were converts that joined Paul, so that a company of men generally traveled with him. When Paul disembarked from Ephesus he was accompanied by Sopater

REMAINS OF EPHEBUS AMPHITHEATER



of Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius and Timotheus of Derbe, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia (Acts 20:4). Earlier, Aquila and Priscilla journeyed with him (Acts 18:18).

In this brief consideration we see something of the manner of early labors with Christ. **Laborers were not especially trained and sent out, but were reaped from the labors of Paul.** He gathered about him people who were noted for believing and fearlessly embracing the cause for which he labored. These were not religious professionals, but men whose hearts had been touched

by the truth of Christ. In our day, this is not a common practice. In my judgment, this is owing to a falling away that has resulted in the exaltation of an institution over the truth, and the admiration of a position, as compared with the truth of God. **The result of this falling away has been a division among the people that will not allow for the kind of unity evident in this text.**

Also, it is of interest to note that the alliance between Paul and these men was so evident that the howling mob recognized it. A unity of both mind and work existed between these men and Paul that could not be hidden. That kind of thing can only be apparent where there is deep devotion and consistency of life.

RUSHED TO THE THEATER

“ . . . they rushed with one accord into the theater.” Other versions read, “rushed as one man into the theater,”^{NIV} “they all came running into the theater,”^{BBE} “rushed all together into the amphitheater,”^{CSB} “rushed into the common place with one assent,”^{GENEVA} “rushed into the common hall with one assent,”^{PNT} and “ran together to the stadium with a single purpose.”^{IE}

The following is a general description of a “theater,” which was a structure in which spectacles and presentations took place. “Theater, among the ancients, is a public edifice for the exhibiting of scenic spectacles, or shows to the people – under the word theater was comprehended not only the eminence, whereon the actors appeared, and the action passed, but also the whole area, or extent of the place common to the actors and spectators: in this sense the theater was a building encompassed with porticos, and furnished with seats of stone, disposed in semicircles, and ascending gradually over one another, which encompassed a space called the “orchestra”; in the front whereof was the “proscenium” or “pulpitum”, whereon the actors performed the “scena”, a large front adorned with orders of architecture; behind which was “postscenium”, or the place where the actors made themselves ready, retired, etc. so that the “scena”, in its full extent, comprehended all the part belonging to the actors. In the Greek theatres, the “orchestra” made a part of the “scena”; but in the Roman theatres, none of the actors ever descended into the “orchestra”, which was taken up by the seats of the senators.”

Some have thought the intent of the mob was to throw these two men to the beasts, as the people watched them devoured. It might very well have been

similar to – perhaps even identical with – the occasion to which Paul alluded in First Corinthians: “*If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die*” (1 Cor 15:32).

Albert Barnes says of this occasion, “The theaters of the Greeks were not only places for public exhibitions, but also for holding assemblies, and often for courts, elections, etc. The people, therefore, naturally rushed there, as being a suitable place to decide this matter.”

Adam Clarke notes, “The theatres, being very spacious and convenient places, were often used for popular assemblies and public deliberation, especially in matters which regarded the safety of the state. There are several proofs of this in ancient authors. So Tacitus, Hist. ii. 80, speaking concerning Vespasian, says: ‘Having entered into the theater of the Antiochians, where it was the custom to hold consultations, the people running together, and being profuse in flattery, he addressed them.’ Frontinus, in Stratagem lib. iii. cap. 2, speaking of a public meeting at the theater at Agrigentum, observes, *ubi ex more Graecorum locus consultationi praebebatur*; which, according to the custom of the Greeks, is the place for public deliberation.”

Although this was a howling mob, driven by corrupt passions and delusion, they thought they were coming together to reason. In their minds, they were seeking the interest of the Ephesians, particularly the craftsmen and merchants whose living had been jeopardized by the conversion of multitudes. They did not perceive Paul to be a harmless religious fanatic, but someone who threatened the social fabric of their community.

There is a mitigating factor to all of this. Satan cannot simply carry out his will. He functions under the authority of the King of kings, to whom he and all of his cohorts are subject. If he desires to sift a believer, he must be granted the right to do so.

WHY DID THIS OCCUR?

What could drive this mob to act in such an irrational and inconsiderate manner. What could move them to drag men into an area whose only crime was traveling and laboring with Paul. They were not guilty of civil disobedience, or speaking against the government, or inciting a rebellion against the authorities. This is not what those who labor together with Christ are noted for! Yet, judging from the action of these people, an onlooker would judge that some great injustice had been done.

This is how people who are under the control of the devil conduct themselves. They are taken captive by him at his will (2 Tim 2:26), and always align themselves against the Lord, His purpose, and His people. Their’s is a mentality dictated by the evil one, and there is nothing truly rational about it, even though they think what they are doing is perfectly reasonable. Satan can fill a person’s heart (Acts 5:3), put into the heart of a person thoughts and intentions (John 13:2), and enter into them to dominate and control them (John 13:27).

When people are deceived, they

see it as true understanding, being convinced that what they do is right, and the ones they oppose are wrong. It is not that they simply do not want to see or understand, **they cannot do so.** Deluded people are captivated people, not simply individuals who have a differing opinion.

THE MITIGATING FACTOR

There is a mitigating factor to all of this. Satan cannot simply carry out his will. He functions under the authority of the King of kings, to whom he and all of his cohorts are subject. If he desires to sift a believer, he must be granted the right to do so (Lk 22:31). Even if he is given the right to carry out such sifting, the Intercessor’s petition that the faith of the one being sifted will not fail is honored above Satan’s his own (Lk 22:32). The Kingdom of God is the superior kingdom, and will totally and violently destroy all competing kingdoms (Dan 2:44).

Any success realized by Satan is only temporary, and his work will finally be totally and apparently overthrown. Even in the midst of what appears to be success, God’s will is being brought to its intended culmination. Once that completion is reached, Satan’s work will be terminated,

CONCLUSION

The passage we have just reviewed confirms that laboring for the Lord is not a simplistic thing. Neither, indeed, are Kingdom labors to be approached as though there is constant and unwavering triumph in every circumstance. Paul recounts to the Corinthians the phenomenal opposition that he faced nearly everywhere he went (2 Cor 11:23-33). He received at least

eight severe beatings, experienced three shipwrecks prior to writing the Second letter to the Corinthians. At least one more is recorded in the twenty-seventh chapter of Acts. He spent a day and a night in the “*open sea.*”^{NIV} In his travels he encountered “*perils,*” or dangers at sea, on rivers, at the hands of robbers, among his own brethren the Jews,, as well as among the heathen. He faced dangers in

the city, in the wilderness, on the sea, and among false brethren. As he went about doing the work of the Lord he experienced weariness, painfulness, often going without sleep and without food.

In Christ, triumph does not always mean the immediate overthrow of the enemy. Sometimes it means outlasting the enemy, or even

delivering a message that hounds the enemy as Stephen's defense must have lingered in the mind of Saul of Tarsus. People of God should expect opposition and trouble, not marvel when it comes to pass. When professing Christians go out of their way to avoid trouble, even to the compromising of the truth, or even a refusal to declare it, a sin of unspeakable enormity has been committed. Ponder what has been revealed on this subject.

- ⇨ **THE WORLD HATES BELIEVERS.** *"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you"* (John 15:19).
- ⇨ **YOU WILL HAVE TRIBULATION.** *"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33).
- ⇨ **WE MUST ENTER THE KINGDOM THROUGH MUCH TRIBULATION.** *"Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God"* (Acts 14:22).
- ⇨ **THOSE WHO ARE BORN AFTER THE FLESH PERSECUTE THOSE BORN AFTER THE SPIRIT.** *"But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now"* (Gal 4:29).
- ⇨ **WE ARE APPOINTED TO AFFLICTIONS.** *"That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto"* (1 Thess 3:3).
- ⇨ **WE SHOULD SUFFER TRIBULATION.** *"For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know"* (1 Thess 3:4).
- ⇨ **THE GODLY WILL SUFFER PERSECUTION.** *"Yea, and all that will*

live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim 3:12).;

- ⇨ **DO NOT MARVEL WHEN THE WORLD HATES YOU.** *"Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you"* (1 John 3:13).

What can really be said in favor of those who modify their behavior and tone down their words in order not to offend the ungodly? **Jesus Himself, together with His disciples, were persecuted because of what they said. This was also true of the Prophets that were before them** (Matt 5:12; Acts 7:52). That confirms the fundamental enmity that exists between the regenerate and the unregenerate, the spiritual and the carnal, and those born of the Spirit and those born of the flesh. Ponder the record of opposition found in this book up to the text just reviewed.

- ⇨ The apostles were arrested and confined following the healing of the impotent man (Acts 4:3-7).
- ⇨ Upon finding the apostles preaching in the Temple, after they were commanded not to do so, the religious leaders laid hold of them and put them in the common prison (Acts 5:18).
- ⇨ The apostles were beaten following their defense of preaching in the Temple (Acts 5:40).
- ⇨ Stephen is hailed before the Jewish council after the leaders were unable to resist the wisdom with which he spoke (Acts 6:10-15).
- ⇨ Stephen is stoned to death after exposing the falsity of the Jewish council (Acts 7:51-60).
- ⇨ A great persecution is unleashed against the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1-4; 11:19).
- ⇨ Saul of Tarsus initiates a fierce persecution against the church (Acts 9:1-2).
- ⇨ The Jews seek to kill Paul (Acts 9:23-24).

- ⇨ Herod kills James the apostle, and incarcerates Peter, thinking to have him killed also (Acts 12:1-5).
- ⇨ Paul and Barnabas are persecuted in Antioch (Acts 13:50-51).
- ⇨ Paul is stoned at Lystra (Acts 14:19).
- ⇨ Paul and Silas are beaten and imprisoned in Philippi (Acts 16:19-34).
- ⇨ Paul is threatened at Thessalonica, and forced to leave (Acts 17:10-12).
- ⇨ The Jews from Thessalonica come to Berea and stir up trouble against Paul (Acts 17:13-15).
- ⇨ Paul is persecuted at Corinth (Acts 18:12-18).
- ⇨ Paul is jeopardized in Ephesus, and his companions in travel are hauled into the local amphitheater (Acts 19:23-30).

What kind of spirit would seek to assuage the world by neglecting to declare the whole counsel of God? What would lead any person of sound mind to seek to avoid the indignation of the world by seeking to win them by friendship, instead of through the preaching of the Gospel? The examples of Moses and the Prophets, the teaching of John the Baptist, the entire ministry of Jesus, and the record of the spread of the Gospel under the leadership of the apostles confirm that such an approach is nothing more than the imagination of men – and they are not godly men!

It is time for the church to rid itself of charlatans who seek their own interests rather than those of the Lord. Such men are not to be afforded a place of prominence within the body of Christ – none at all. God has made no place for them, and neither should we. They are an affront to Christ Jesus the Lord, and have borrowed their wisdom from the world. The teachers to whom they have subjected themselves are not the ones the Lord has placed within the church.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 8/14/09. We will continue our current series of lessons on the book of Acts. The Eighty-first lesson will cover verses 30 through 41 of the nineteenth chapter: "A TUMULTUOUS ASSEMBLY." A meeting convened in Ephesus to address the disruption of the shrine-making business for the goddess Diana. Once again, the Lord so worked as to break up the assembly as He did in Corinth (Acts 18:14-18).. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

OUR TEXT FROM THE AMPLIFIED BIBLE

21 Now after these events Paul determined in the [Holy] Spirit that he would travel through Macedonia and Achaia (most of Greece) and go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must visit Rome also.

22 And having sent two of his assistants, Timothy and Erastus, into Macedonia, he himself stayed on in [the province of] Asia for a while.

23 But as time went on, there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way [of the Lord].

24 For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of [the goddess] Artemis [Diana], brought no small income to his craftsmen.

25 These he called together, along with the workmen of similar trades, and said, Men, you are acquainted with the facts and understand that from this business we derive our wealth and livelihood.

26 Now you notice and hear that not only at Ephesus but almost all over [the province of] Asia this Paul has persuaded and induced people to believe his teaching and has alienated a considerable company of them, saying that gods that are made with human hands are not really gods at all.

27 Now there is danger not merely that this trade of ours may be discredited, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may come into disrepute and count for nothing, and that her glorious magnificence may be degraded and fall into contempt—she whom all [the province of Asia] and the wide world worship.

28 As they listened to this, they were filled with rage and they continued to shout, Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!

29 Then the city was filled with confusion; and they rushed together into the amphitheater, dragging along with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were fellow travelers with Paul.

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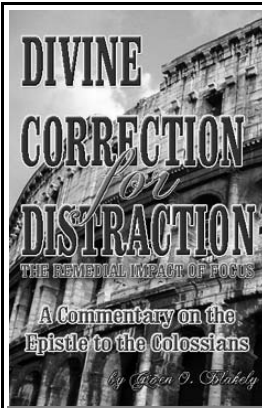
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