

Saturday, March 18, 2023 ▫ Read Acts 19:21–41

Questions from the Scripture text: Where did Paul now purpose to pass through (v21)? Before going to where? And where later? Whom did he send ahead of him (v22)? Where did he remain? But what happened in Ephesus when they were gone (v23)? Whom does v24 now mention? What was his trade? What did he make? With what results? What did he do to the silversmiths (v25)? And whom else? What did he point out to them? But what does he say Paul has done and where (v26)? With what result (v27)? Who does he say worships Diana? How do they respond to Demetrius's speech—what are they full of, and what do they do (v28)? What does this response do to the whole city (v29)? Where do they go? Whom do they seize? Who wants to go in (v30)? Why can't he? Who are among his friends now (v31)? What do they plead with him? What is the "assembly" like (v32)? What do most of them not even know? Whom did they put forward (v33)? Which believers selected him? What was he going to do? But what do the people find out (v34)? And now what do they do? For how long? Who answers this (v35)? What is his viewpoint (at least enough that he's willing to say it, v35–36a)? What instruction does he give them (v36b)? What does he assert in v37? What does he suggest that they do, even if the assertion isn't true (v38)? Under what conditions (v39)? But of what are they in danger of being charged (v40)? What does he then do (v41)?

How does the church spread and survive? Acts 19:21–41 looks forward to the morning sermon on the coming Lord's Day. In these twenty-one verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **the church spreads and survives by the Spirit's sovereign providence.**

The work of the Spirit. Many have noted about the book of Esther that its demonstration of the sovereign providence of God is all the more poignant for not mentioning His Name at all. v23–41 have a similar dynamic. Here is the apostle, willing (v30–31) to defend himself (v26), but the Spirit has appointed to use a pagan city clerk to protect him instead.

This is because the Spirit rules and overrules all things. Since it is He who governs the apostle's purposing in v21, Paul is sure that his desire from the Spirit to go to Rome represents an absolute necessity (as indicated by the word translated "must"). It is the same word as translated "needed" in Jn 4:4. Jesus could have gone around Samaria, like most Jews did, but it was necessary by divine appointment that He go meet the woman at the well and evangelize her town.

Here, centers of Christianity have been established in Antioch in Syria, Corinth in Achaia, and now Ephesus in Asia. And the Spirit was determined to take Paul to do similarly at Rome in Achaia. But must get there by way of Jerusalem (southeast), where he would go by way of Macedonia and Achaia (northwest). The geography is all about the work that the Spirit plans to do and how He plans to do it.

The attacks of the wicked. It is significant that the episode in v23–41 comes on the heels of such an introduction. Thus, the Spirit reminds us that the attacks of the wicked are not only accounted for in His plan, but literally planned upon in His plan.

Gospel change hits people where it hurts. The purveyors of magic books have taken a huge financial hit, as those who had previously spent 50,000 pieces would no longer be laying out silver for them (v19). And now silversmith Demetrius is worried about the little silver temple replicas that he sells (v24). Evil is big business, and repentance is bad for that business.

People are sensitive in the pocketbook, and they are sensitive to cultural pride. Evil always demands to be celebrated (v17, cf. Rom 1:32), perhaps precisely because the guilty conscience before God cannot abide knowing that there are righteous ones around them (cf. Jn 3:19).

They are especially sensitive to being exposed as meaningless and foolish. Paul's great message has been that there is a true and living God Who has made us all, Who has come in the person of Jesus Christ, and Who is about to judge the whole world by Christ. Thus, "they are not gods which are made with hands" (v26, cf. 17:24–31). Now, all of Asia has heard this message (v10, 20), and the exaggerated accusation in 17:6 is much closer to being true. The wicked will always hate and attack the righteous. In this world, believers will have trouble (cf. Jn 16:33). The world hates Christ, hates God, and will hate you too, if you're a true enough Christian (cf. Jn 15:18–25). Even from within the church, sometimes (cf. 1Cor 11:18–19; 1Jn 2:18–19).

The easily manipulated multitudes. The "workers of similar occupation" (v25) seem rather easily manipulated. The response in v28 is a bit over the top. But if we think that was bad, what is to be said about a city that responds to "confusion" by running with one accord into the theater (v29)? Or, once there, respond to a man's *ethnicity* by chanting one sentence together *for two hours* (v34). Truly, God has given those who refuse to worship Him over to futile thoughts, foolish hearts, and a debased mind (cf. Rom 1:21, 28). We should not be surprised when the masses are easily manipulated and irrational.

The useful, common-grace civil magistrate. The thoughtful, responsible city scribe produces a clear contrast to the raging masses, but he is still an instrument in the Lord's hands. From where does his use of reason come (v35–36)? From where his commitment to law and order (v37–39)? From where his level-headedness (v40–41)? It is all from the Lord that he still denies. He has been shown mercy, and if he does not repent, it will stand against him all the more on the last day.

But it is plain, here, that he has been shown that mercy for the good of the church. The Lord works *all* things together for the good of His elect. The Lord has freely given believers *all things* together with Christ Jesus. And that includes even the actions of their persecutors. It may not always work out as pleasantly or comfortably in the short term, but we can read passages like this and know that He is employing them for His glory and our good.

When have you been attacked for the truth about Jesus? Which truth was it about Him, specifically? Who was ruling and overruling those attacks? What is He bringing about through them?

Sample prayer: Lord, thank You for reminding us that You are in sovereign control over all that occurs—even the irrational hatred of those who oppose us for Your sake. Grant that we would trust You and serve You with all our heart and all our life, until our work on earth is done, we ask through Christ, AMEN!!

For more Hopewell @Home devotionals, please visit hpwl.org/hah

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Acts 19 versus 21 through 41. These are God's words. When these things were accomplished, fall-purposed in the spirit, when he had passed three methodonia decaya to go to jerusalem, saying, after i've been there, I must also see Rome. So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him.

Timothy and erastis, but he himself stayed in asia for a time. About that time.

And about that time, there are rows of great commotion about the way. For a certain man named Demetrius a silversmith. Who made silver, shrines of diana. Brought no small profit to the craftsman. He called them together with the workers of similar, occupation and said men, you know, that we have our prosperity by this trade Moreover, you see and hear that not only at Ephesus but throughout almost all asia.

This paul has persuaded and turned away. Many people saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. So not only is this trade of ours, endanger a falling into distribute but also the temple of the great goddess. Diana. May be despised under a magnificence destroyed. Him all Asia and the world worship.

Now, when they heard this, they were full of roth and cried out saying, great is diana of the Ephesians So the whole city was filled with confusion and rushed into the theater with one, a quart. Having seized guys or starcus? Macedonians pulls travel companions. And when paul wanted to go into the people, the disciples would not allow him.

Then some of the officials of asia who were his friend sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater. Some therefore cried at one thing and some another. For the assembly was confused. Most of them did not know why they had come together. And the dual Alexander out of the multitude, the jews putting him forward.

An alexander motioned with his hand and wanted to make his defense to the people. But when they found out that he was a Jew, All with one voice cried out for about two hours. Great is diana of the ephesians. And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, men of Ephesus.

What man is there? Who does not know? That the city of the ephesians is temple, guardian. Of the gray-H goddess. They are diana and of the image which fell down from zeus. Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing. Gradually For you have brought these men here.

Who are neither robbers of temples, nor blasphemism your goddess. Therefore, if demetrius and his fellow craftsman, have a case against anyone. The courts are open and there are pro consoles. Let them bring charges against one another. But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly.

We are in danger of being called and questioned for today's uproar. They're being no reason, which we may give to account. For this disorderly gathering. And when he had said these things, He dismissed the assembly. So far the reading of god's inspired and inherent worked. So the first thing we see is that the holy spirit is lord over everything that happens.

It was in the spirit that paul purposed to go to jerusalem, passing through Macedonia, and Akaya along the way. The holy spirit, who was overseeing, the The gospel spreading from jerusalem to judea to Samaria and to all the earth is still carrying out that mission for which the Lord jesus poured him out from heaven.

Baptizing his church and the believers in it with his holy spirit. And so, it's

And so, it is also in the holy spirit. That paul says, After i have been, there it is necessary that i would see Rome or as sneaking, James translates. It, i must also see Rome it's similar. In fact, it's the same word when it talks about jesus going down going up from Galilee to jerusalem and saying it was necessary that he passed through some area.

It actually isn't necessary. Many Jews went around Samaria at the time, but the lord jesus was to evangelize this woman. At the well and to evangelize her town. And so, the holy spirit carrying jesus along and jesus in his humanity living in complete dependence, upon And being full without measure of the holy spirit, it was necessary that he go through Samaria, it was part of the mission.

The evangelism, the preaching of the kingdom that the lord had said before him. Same with paul here, the gospel is still spreading, even when an entire city. Goes berserk against them, the gospel is still spreading. And when paul gets to jerusalem and is Is the rested and imprisoned, the gospel is still spreading.

And We see that that is the means by which the holy spirit ends up taking him to Rome and so there's an introduction here, that is helping us understand and put into proper perspective, the whole rest of the letter. And that helps put into proper perspective, our entire life, nothing happens to us.

That god, the holy spirit has not already planned for the application of christ's redemption to all of those for whom christ has accomplished his redemption. The plan from the beginning of the world, from before the beginning of the world, Was for this applied redemption to be seen in these adopted and glorified children in the last day and christ has accomplished it.

And the spirit is applying it and that's the great cause behind all of the lesser causes. For which things happen. And so we see that introduced to us even in the first sentence of this passage, and we see it gloriously in the rest of the passage. Even though after this god is not mentioned.

You know what other book of the bible? In what other book in the bible? God is not mentioned the book of Esther. And yet perhaps there is no other book of the bible. That that so powerfully and vividly displays the sovereignty of god over the attacks of his enemies and his people's enemies.

The whole thing is about how God sets, amen up to me destroyed and preserves his people so that the christ will yet come from them. And so that the christ will yet come for them. And that's the nature of this passage. We have at the beginning of the passage, the reminder that all the way up.

Until now in the book of Acts, it has been the spirit bringing the gospel from judea jerusalem to judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth and further the rest of the book of that, that's what's going to be. So when you get to, the end of the book of Acts and paul was in prison and Rome, we're not worrying.

That something might stop the gospel from spreading, but we with the apostle or saying he is chained, but the gospel is not bound and god is bringing to him in his imprisonment, many people who he is bringing to faith through hearing christ, preached and bringing to faith in christ.

Now, this is not so evident to the world at large, although it troubles. Those unbelievers with whom it comes into contact and that's one of the reasons why we get so much opposition because men love their sin and out of love for their sin. They become committed to false ideas.

So idolatry breed sin and sin breeds more idolatry. He sends Timothy. Um, And harassed us in the Macedonia, he himself stays In ephesus and asia. So, Timothy and arastos go. Um, Go west and he stays there in Ephesus about that time there, arises a great commotion about about the way.

There's a man made named Demetrius. He apparently is kind of the chief artisan. He does the the bulk of the crafting of these silver shrines, but there are a whole lot of other Artisans craftsman. Who are making a lot of money off of the diana worship. As we calls them together verse 25.

And, He says, we have. Our prosperity by this trade. Remember, all of the stuff that you enjoy all of your worldly. Pleasure is facilitated by the worship of diana. But not only here at ephesus but it almost all age up. This paul has persuaded and turned away many people Now.

Uh, he recognizes or asserts that all asia and the whole world worship. Diana in verse 27 and later the city clerk is going to say that the the worship of diana and the divinity of diana and zeus and the other gods In their pantheon is without question. Everybody knows it.

Okay, so Paul and the gospel. Have not at least to an external. Uh, overall. Viewpoint actually, transformed the world but enough individuals are being transformed. That those with whom the gospel comes into contact. Those with whom these particular individuals come come into contact. They are being affected. Now, this Shows us something that jesus tells us in a parable when he talks about the kingdom being like a mustard seed and then he talks about the kingdom being leaven.

That the lemon goes through the whole thing. While. On the surface, it still looks. Like it is. Just a container of wheat. It still looks the same. On the surface, to a great extent. And yet, so many of the internal components have been changed, that there is 11 all the way throughout jesus says, that's what the kingdom is going to be like.

And now here in act 19, we see that what christ has prophesied is actually true. That's what the kingdom is actually like and that's how the kingdom has continued to be until this day. So that a great multitude of those for whom jesus have has accomplished redemption. Have also had that redemption applied to them and our having that redemption being applied to them and it is disruptive of course it's entirely completely disruptive in the life of the one who is converted which makes it disruptive to those who interact with him.

And if 50 thousand book, uh coins, the silver coins worth of magic books have been burned and if there's a downtick in the sale of of silver shrines and related crafts in the city of Ephesus, you know, the makers of magic books and the makers of silver shrine for the makers of those grafts.

They're affected and rightly so But, On the whole. They're still able to say, All Asia and the world worship diana. And the clerk is able to say that as far as the general public is concerned. The. The divinity of diana and zeus. And so forth is without question. Now there may be times and praise god.

There have been In which such revival comes and such reformation comes, which always come together because both of the work of the holy spirit. The holy spirit does not, you know, bring thousands and millions of new people to faith and leave the church in the midst of papist idolatry.

No, and he's bringing. A sudden multitude to faith in jesus christ. She also reforms the worship of the church of the preaching of the church. There are times when so many get converted, the the effect is more palpable. On the surface, but that is not the ordinary way. In which the kingdom grew in acts.

On which the kingdom has grown. Throughout history. And so dimitrius raises this problem, their life and their trade, their ability to facilitate their prosperity has been disrupted. And if they had been committed to diana before, they made a lot of money off of Diana worship. How much more committed they are now.

When people are enjoying worldly pleasure and especially when people are enjoying sinful pleasure, they become more internally, and firmly committed to the idolatry that goes along with their sin. Many people in the church even fall into theological error, that permits them to satisfy the flesh. Mostly most obvious examples are in worship.

That aims that satisfying the flesh. And we heard about that on the lord's day an exodus. 32, the worship at the bottom of the mountain, which was worship of Yahweh and worship of Uh, Yahweh with reference to a great act of his redemption. And yet it went aimed at satisfying, the flesh.

And the other great place we see, it is the lord's day where people do not want to. Delight themselves in the lord but want to delight themselves and created things on creator day. Uh they wanted to like themselves in the lord's gifts, instead of the lord himself. On on the lord's day.

And when people Uh, fall in love with their self-indulgence, their theology usually follows. This is why the theology of the second commandment rightly, understood what we have come to call the regulative principle, but of course it was, it was true and right before it ever got that name. Uh, that's why there's been so much theology built up even in the reformed churches against Right, understanding the second commandment.

That's why so many have built up. A theology of the fourth commandment that says, what do you mean? We count the commandments. One, two, three, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10. There's no four. Jesus is our seventh wealth is jesus not. They're keeping of the first and second, third, and fifth, and success date night tent as As well.

And as they're not as habit, keeping that still remains and is it not the day in which heaven and earth now come together because the one who leads the worship of the lord's day on earth is actually seated on the throne of heaven. And is it not the fourth commandment more than ever?

No, they come up with not the theology of the bible that i've just been giving about the fourth commandment, but an entire new theology of why we shouldn't have to keep the fourth commandment. And just feeling good about jesus is Uh, you know, throughout your life that somehow the keep why.

Because people's philosophy and theology follows their desires. Bad theology gave birth to bad desires and bad desires, confirm and expand and entrench. The

bad theology. Then this of course, they are super committed to diana in part because The diana worship is what has made them? Uh, wealthy and gotten them what they want.

So they hear this. They're full of wrath and they cry out. Great is diana of the Ephesians. Okay. This is just the tradesman, but they're so vigorous in their recommitment Renewal of their commitment to diana. That the whole city is filled with confusion. And at this point, the disciples prevent paul from going in, They pick someone else instead to go in the whole city rushes together.

This is possible, of course, because they have that middle time of the day where other things Our set aside. And they all, The whole city rushes into the theater in verse 29. And, The disciples, keep Paul from going in, Alexander goes in instead and he raises his hand, and he starts to make an introduction, but he never gets passed as introduction, because he identifies himself as a Jew, and the jews were the only tolerated other religion, The that were permitted not to not worship.

The gods of the roman pantheon, the gods of the greek pantheon as well. Um, And so, when they hear that he's a Jew. They cry out for two hours. Great. As Diana of the ephesians. Notice how irrational? Uh, idolatry makes you. That they would spend two hours of their lunchtime.

Screening at the top of their lungs. Not even knowing why They have been brought together. And the city clerk, then is used Uh, by the the holy spirit, the Um, Notice that? The followers of the way, the christians. Have been. Private enough. And their christianity, not trying to take over the seats of government, not trying to transform the culture, but culture is an aggregate of people and they themselves are transformed and many of those to whom they talk are transformed but they haven't done anything.

To actually attack the cultural institutions, And he says you have brought men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess. But these people have not committed any public crimes. They're not trying to take down diana worship. I mean, there's a sense in which they are but they haven't, they haven't done so beyond each one's.

Individual personal sphere. And so the, the clerk, Uh, points out that As far as you could tell. You know, they're not trying to take why? Because the kingdom spreads like leaven

And without paul being able to make a defense without Alexander, even getting to make a defense, the holy spirit. Defeats. Dimitrius and the rest of the craftsman. And he does it through self-interest on their part. Because the clerk says, We don't have a case, we don't have a legal case.

And we are in danger of being called to account. Rome does not like uprisings and since we can't present Something that these men have done to try to take down. The order here. Than Rome is going to come and our Prosperous. Self-indulgent lifestyle is going to be disrupted. And when it hits their self-interest, they all of a sudden, the decide that This wasn't as important as they thought it was.

And they all, They all go home and work the second half of the day. The same as. The ordinarily would have. When he said these things. He dismissed the assembly. And so you see how Uh, completely the holy spirit disrupts, the life of a believer and how that's disruptive to the lives of those who are in contact with and around those believers.

And how the holy spirit rules and overrules. Everything that happens for the application of christ's redemption. To those for whom christ has accomplished. That, that redemption. We must not live in fear. We must live in confidence and joy. Knowing that this plan that god has from before the world began.

To have at the end, these adopted glorified children. Is being carried out. And even when you are under attack, even when you are silenced and unable to speak in your own defense. The lord is still carrying out that plan and almighty power and perfect wisdom, and the same love in which he sent christ the same.

Love in which he has caused the gospel to spread and be preserved until you came into the world, the same love and which he ordered your life. So that you would be born where you were born. And when you were born and the The ins and outs of wherever your life has gone whenever has gone.

So that you would hear the gospel so that you'd be brought to faith in christ because he's loved you from before the world began. And those who are around you. Or to find their lives disrupted by that. Let's pray. Our gracious. God and our heavenly father, we thank you for Helping us right here, as we come now to the last third of the book of Acts, By showing us that your spirit is controlling all of this.

For the same purposes. On the same mission as we have seen, Through the first two thirds of the book and we thank you even more That our own life, the story of your mercy to us. Is. Happens on the same principles. As we see in this passage, we pray that you would give us hope in christ.

You would so thoroughly, transform each of our lives. That we are disruptive. To. Those who come in contact with us and we do, pray that Enough would be converted in our time. This would be one of those seasons of Reformation and revival. When? Um, Those who Who have been in control and to Have.

Benefited, much from the wickedness around us would be alarmed. Because of how many you are saving and the transformation that you work, when you do save them. And so we pray that you would bring the season of revival and the season. Of reformation. Into your church. The word help us to trust you.

No matter who is against us, or how violently, or how many They can stir up to be with them. Or how little we are able or have opportunity. To defend ourselves. Help us to trust you o god. Who are the one who defends us from everlasting to everlasting? We asked us in jesus name.

Amen.