

“Strategic”

November 12, 2017

Acts 19:1-20

NOTE: Paul left **Corinth** (*a significant port city that had become a “revival center” in Asia Minor*) for **Ephesus** (*a strategic city of influence—the capital of Asia Minor*) it was a (1) **government** center (2) **cultural/arts** center (3) **spiritual** center—though influenced by witchcraft & occult mysticism)—a city **READY FOR THE GOSPEL**.

CORE: These 1st generation believers were called “**those who have turned the world upside down**” (Acts 17:6). Here’s **HOW** they accomplished it:

1. They MADE CONNECTIONS (v. 1-7)

- **Discovered** “12 men” who were “disciples of John (the Baptist)”
- Paul **connected** with them where they were at—touched by Jesus, yet lacking further revelation of all that was available
- Paul **discerned** what they were ready for
- Then he **encouraged** them to go further—bringing them into MORE (i.e., Priscilla & Aquila did the same with Apollos)

2. They were RESILIENT (v. 8-10)

- “For 3 months” Paul persevered—even when his opponents were “obstinate” and “publicly maligned” him (v. 8-9).
- Result: “**All**, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord” (v. 10)
- NOTE: They began with 12 men; the Kingdom is like a “mustard seed” (Matthew 13:31); “the day of small beginnings” (Zechariah 4:10)
- “**ALL** things” are used by God for His “good” (Romans 8:28)—even setbacks, disappointments, and outright opposition, and...
- ...if it’s not “good”—He’s not finished.

3. They established a FAITH CULTURE (v. 11-12)

- Not **just** Paul’s faith—the “community of faith” expected God to move!
- Paul was a **CATALYST** for miracles—**INFUSING** the climate with **EXPECTANCY!**
- “**Extraordinary** miracles”—**not** rare; rather, **beyond** what they had experienced up to this point; Lit.- “setting a new norm”
- Paul encourages ongoing miracles in the church (1 Cor. 1:22; 12:10)
- Paul never intimated a “leveling off,” a “decreasing,” or even a “ceasing” of miracles as a part of our ministry together. (*Increasing thru “Acts”*)
- “Such miracles were welcomed in Ephesus where the death rate exceeded the birth rate.” (Keener, Craig, *Acts: A Commentary*, 2840)

4. They EXPOSED the ARTIFICIAL (v. 13-20)

- These “7 sons of Sceva” thought they could use Jesus’ name—w/o honoring (“*hallowing*”) His name. (Magic is inferior to miracles)
- i.e., Reducing His name to a formula—contrasted with v. 17- “the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor”
- His “power is made perfect in weakness”—not in performance, self-righteousness, and pride
 - This type of deception happens subtly—when the desire for results replaces reverence
 - When “art” replaces “heart” in worship
 - When entertainment replaces engaging God
 - Isa. 29:13- “Hearts are far from Me...traditions...learned by rote.” (“*ROTE*”- *mechanical; w/o meaning; heartless*)

(NOTE: Much of spiritual warfare does not involve dramatic “**showdowns**” with demons—rather, when we simply “**show up**” believing, receiving, & being who He’s made us to be!) *“The lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.” (2 Thess. 2:8) (i.e., simply by showing up)*

When the POWER of God “shows up”—things CHANGE!

1. Open confessions—love-motivated desire for freedom
2. Costly, radical sacrifices (i.e., *books worth “3 years wages”*)
3. His Word is received—He is trusted & His truth is embraced (“*logos*”- God’s logic)
4. His Word spreads—“*widely & powerfully!*”
 - i. Widely—touching every facet of life
 - ii. Powerfully—w/o limits