

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 61

I. Exposition of Chapter Nineteen (Continued).

A. Verses 21-41 - The Riot in Ephesus.

1. **Verses 33-34** – In these verses, we have an effort by the Jews to squash the riot and assure the pagan Ephesians that the Jews were not, in any way associated with Paul. Dr. Thomas Constable writes:

“The crowd's reaction to ‘Alexander’ showed distinct hostility toward him. Apparently Alexander was a leading unbelieving Jew, who wanted the crowd to understand that even though Paul was a Jew, the local Jewish community did not approve of him (cf. 18:12-17). However, like Gallio in Corinth, this crowd did not distinguish between Christianity and Judaism. Both faiths stood against idolatry. Perhaps the crowd assumed that Alexander wanted to defend Paul as a fellow Jew. This Alexander may be the one Paul warned Timothy about (1 Tim. 1:19-20; 2 Tim. 4:14), but he may have been someone different, since ‘Alexander’ was a common name among both Jews and Gentiles.”¹

2. **Verses 35-36** – In these verses we see the **“city clerk”** now come to try to quiet the people and stop any violence from happening. The people had been worked up into a frenzy and, no doubt, were not thinking rationally about anything at this point. Grant Osborne states:

“Finally, the one person they would listen to stepped forward, the city clerk (something like the chair of the city council or mayor today). He was the arbitrator between the civil authorities and the Roman imperial rule and spoke for both sides.”²

a. **Verse 35** – **“Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Zeus?”** – This man began by reminding the people of what they believed. Basically, if the original image of Diana fell from heaven from Zeus, making their city the **“guardian of the great goddess...”**, then certainly it was not made with hands (**verse 26**) as Paul was preaching. Regarding **“Zeus”**, the **Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary** states:

“Greek god of the sky and chief of the pantheon; ruler over all the gods. His devotees believed all the elements of weather were under his control. The worship of Zeus was very prevalent throughout the Roman Empire during the first century. Barnabas was mistaken for Zeus (equivalent of the Roman god, Jupiter) by the people of Lystra after Paul healed a cripple (Acts 14:8-12).”³

b. **Verse 36** – **“Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly.”** – The **“city clerk”** basically states that if they really believed what they claim to believe, then why be so angry and fearful. In other words, if Diana is the goddess they believed she was then there is nothing that can destroy her. When a person is truly convinced their convictions are true, no opposition should cause them to be shaken.

3. **Verses 37-41** – **The City Clerk intervenes for Gaius and Aristarchus (cf. verse 29)**. The man diffuses the situation and points out that Gaius and Aristarchus are not **“...robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess”**. He warned them that if there really has been a crime committed, need to proceed legally in court. In **verse 40** he makes what appears to be a very sobering statement to the crowd. He states: **“For we are in danger of being called in question for today’s uproar, there being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering.”** Osborne writes concerning this:

“The *peroratio*, or conclusion, attempts to instill fear by warning the crowd about the danger of ‘being charged with rioting’ (19:40) and thus causing Roman military intervention. In that case, everyone would suffer. There is no [logical] reason’ that could explain satisfactorily what they have done, and they had better disband immediately or face the consequences, not only Roman military action but also the loss of privileges the Romans had extended to Ephesus.”⁴

¹Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Acts* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2019), 398-399.

²Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 353.

³Chad Brand et al., eds., “Zeus,” *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1709.

⁴Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, 355.

II. Exposition of Chapter Twenty.

A. **Verses 1-4 - Paul finally goes onto Macedonia and Achaia.** – Now that the “uproar had ceased”, Paul felt at liberty to go onto Macedonia and Achaia as he had previously planned. Back in **19:22**, it stated that Paul had already sent Timothy and Erastus on ahead to Macedonia. **Verse 2** states: “...when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece.” Dr. Bob Utley states concerning what the “region” was:

“This possibly refers (1) to Illyricum (cf. Rom. 15:19) or (2) to the Macedonian cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea.”⁵

1. **Verse 2** - Paul “...encouraged them with many words.” We see again from this that Paul’s concern was not just evangelism but also teaching (making strong disciples out of those believers.)
2. Macedonia is referring to what is now parts of the Northern most province of Greece. “Greece” in this verse is the same as Achaia (**18:12; 19:21**) as is referring to what is the more Southern part of Greece today. This would have consisted of cities like Corinth and Athens.
3. **Verse 3** – “...stayed three months. And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.” - Stanley Toussaint gives some interesting insight:

“During the apostle’s three-month stay in Achaia he wrote Romans (cf. Rom. 15:23–16:2) from Corinth. The plot by the Jews ... against Paul was evidently to assassinate him on board ship and dispose of his body at sea. Somehow the insidious plan became known to Paul and he decided not to go directly to the eastern Mediterranean but to go back through Macedonia. Possibly he had wanted to be in Jerusalem for Passover; now the best he could hope for would be Pentecost (Acts 20:16).”⁶

4. **Verse 4** – Paul has a relatively large team of men who were traveling with him at this time. Utley gives us insight about these men:

“These are probably men from various churches sent to accompany Paul’s special monetary gift to the church in Jerusalem (cf. 1 Cor. 16:1–3; 2 Cor. 8–9). Sopater is possibly the Sosipater of Rom. 16:21. Aristarchus is mentioned in Acts 19:29; 27:2 and Col. 4:10. Tychicus is mentioned in Eph. 6:21–22; Col. 4:7–8; 2 Tim. 4:12 and Titus 3:12. Gaius is mentioned in Acts 19:29. Trophimus is mentioned in Acts 21:29 and 2 Tim. 4:20.”⁷

B. Verses 5-12 – The Journey and Ministry at Troas.

1. **Verses 5-6** – The other men went on ahead to Troas but it seems Paul stayed in Macedonia (Philippi) and probably celebrated Passover there. The “Days of Unleavened Bread” was a seven-day feast combined with one day Passover feast.
2. **Verse 7** – “Now on the first day of the week...” – I became common for the Church to gather together on the first day of the week which would be our Sunday. The Jews met on the Sabbath (Saturday). Jesus rose again on the first day of the week (**Mark 16:9**) Also see **I Corinthians 16:2**.
3. **Verses 8-12** – **Paul raises a young man from the dead.** – The group gathered together to share a meal and then Paul stood up to preach. According to Stanley Horton, this place with a third story was probably the home of a wealthy person and could have possibly seated 200-300 people.⁸ This was probably a regular church service for them. Grant Osborne writes:

“The group assembled and shared a fellowship meal (breaking bread, Acts 2:42, 46; 1 Cor 10:16). Paul preached a sermon and taught for some time, then likely also began filling them in on his ministry and with news from the other churches. He had so much to say that he went on from early evening until midnight, with the room lit by many lamps (20:7b–8)... He was still going strong at midnight (probably after five or six straight hours of speaking) when tragedy struck. A young man (perhaps fourteen to eighteen years old) named Eutychus”⁹

⁵Robert James Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, vol. Volume 3B, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2003), 230.

⁶Stanley D. Toussaint, “Acts,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 412.

⁷Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, 230.

⁸Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 335.

⁹Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 362-363.