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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Acts 19:21-40

“Great Lion of God – Paul’s Third Missionary Journey - III” TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we turn to Thee with anticipation, with thanksgiving, with appreciation for the ministry of the word of God to us. We thank Thee for the way in which that word was preached to us. And we thank Thee for the work of the Holy Spirit in enlightening us and delivering us from our sin and guilt and condemnation, bringing us to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ that means eternal life. We thank Thee too for the continuing ministry of the word and sanctification building us up in our faith, establishing us in the promises of God and in the power of God. And we thank Thee for those marvelous assurances of the divine presence with us through the spirit throughout our present life and on into eternity. We thank Thee for the great men whom Thou hast called to minister and who in their lives glorify the name of the triune God. We especially thank Thee for Paul. And we thank Thee for these experiences which his companion and historian has recorded for us, Luke, the beloved physician. And we thank Thee for this particular section of Paul’s life that we are looking at, his ministry on his missionary journeys, and especially his third missionary journey. And we pray, Lord, that as we look again at his ministry in the great city of Ephesus that the lessons that may be learned may be learned by us in 1983. We commit our time of study to Thee with anticipation and requesting of Thee Lord Thy blessing upon us. For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Message] We’re looking at Acts chapter 19 and looking specifically at the ministry of the Apostle Paul in the city of Ephesus. The passage that we’re looking at today, Acts chapter 19, verse 21 through verse 40, is a very strange and intriguing one because it almost entirely concerns an ancient public uproar that took place in the city of Ephesus when Paul was ministering there.

Some years ago when I gave a series of messages through the Book of Acts I made the comment that the message that morning would be a riot, but a literal one. Well, that’s what we do have here in the apostle’s experience, a riot. And the apostle is a part of it. There are things that he says in his ministry that really should be looked at when we study the Book of Acts. For example, in 2 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 26 as the apostle details the many experiences that he had seeking to show his sufferings. He says in 2 Corinthians 11 and verse 26, “In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city.” I like that little expression “perils in the city” because he wrote this probably just after he had spent his time in Ephesus. He had left Ephesus and he had gone up to the North and there he had met Titus and Macedonia returning from Corinth. And in this particular epistle, 2 Corinthians, he describes his sense of joy at finding that the Corinthians had responded to some of his letters because they had not responded in the previous months. And so that statement “in perils in the city” is written in the context of his experience at Ephesus. And so it likely is a reference to that.

And then in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 31 and verse 32, which he wrote in Ephesus, he says, “I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. 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.” So the apostle had some rather strange and difficult and actually very serious and dangerous experiences in the city of Ephesus. It seems odd even though we say this, however, that Luke would

devote so much space to this event and so little to the actual preaching that the apostle carried on there. One might ask that question. We have here a description of some tumult in the city, but very little description of the apostle’s preaching and the ministry that was carried on there. Why? Well, let us remember that the apostle says in this context that his goal is Rome. And we have, in a sense, a step along the way to the accomplishment of his goal, which was ultimately to come to the city of Rome.

And this riot is the occasion of the apostle’s departure from a settled ministry which he was carrying on in Ephesus. He was there for almost three years. And so it probably is given by Luke in order for us to see the occasion that caused him to leave the settled ministry in Ephesus and move on so that he ultimately comes to the city of Rome. There are things, of course, that happen rather strangely and our experiences reflect them. And one wonders if this was not something that was one of those things that the apostle did not anticipate, but which he later on recognized as being part of the word of God and the providence of God for him.

There’s an old story about a lone survivor of a shipwreck who was marooned on an uninhabited island. And he managed to build a hut in which he placed everything that he had saved from the shipwreck. And he prayed to God for rescue and anxiously scanned the horizon every day to signal any passing ship. And he was on the island for some time. But one day on returning from a hunt for food he was horror stricken to find that his hut was in flames and all his possessions were consumed. What a tragedy it seemed. But shortly afterwards a ship arrived. And when he came into contact with the people from the ship the first thing they said to him was, “We saw your smoke signal and we hastened here in order to help you.” So it illustrates that there are things that happen to us that are not necessarily things that we would have anticipated to be within the will of God, but which do turn out to be. He had planned, he says, to remain in Ephesus until Pentecost. But God had other arrangements for him. And the apostle, just like every

one of us, is really to some extent a prisoner of the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

Well, there are some lessons that we can learn from this incident. And one of them is the fact that God’s victories are accomplished through the preaching of the word. While Luke doesn’t stress that, he does say in verse 26,

“Moreover ye see and hear (Now the apostle is not speaking here, but Demetrius is speaking here. And he says), 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.”

So, one can see that as far as Demetrius was concerned, it was the things that Paul was saying, his message that was the cause of the difficulty as far as he was concerned. He was upsetting Demetrius’ method of making a living. Another thing that you learn is that often the opposition to the gospel rests in vested interests that human beings have, which are upset and disturbed by the things that happen when the gospel is received. And so the silversmiths and all of the people who made money out of the trade and the idol worship of Artemis, well they were very disturbed. And the gospel struck right at their vested interests. That’s the reason a lot of people are angry with the gospel. And sooner or later it often is traceable to economic interests that are affected by the change in life of the individuals.

We are living in a society, which it seems from reading the newspapers – I don’t consider myself to be any authority on this, but a society that seems to become more and more enslaved to the drug culture. And one can easily see how influences from those who profit from the drug culture might be opposed to the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The same thing is true of alcohol or any of the other things that Scripture might be thought to be an enemy of. Vested interests frequently become the enemies of

the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And even religion, when it turns away from the things of the Lord, finds the gospel a threat. That’s why so many religious leaders find the gospel as it is set forth in the New Testament a threat to them because it affects their position. And this pertains even to Evangelicals because there are many things that the Bible says that we Evangelicals have not followed too closely. And when someone begins to follow them closely and certain changes are required in our way of living then we tend to react negatively to it. Christians, I think, always have to be on guard against the reaction negatively to things that are strange to them because they haven’t themselves practiced them.

There is one other thing that I think this incident indicates and that is the peril of patronage because later on in the account here the town clerk gives something of a defense of Christianity. And one might think that that would be very good if we could, for example, have the President of the United States supporting Christianity and a few of the senators, and if the Governor of the state of Texas were a Christian and if certain influences of important people were brought to bear then the tendencies to think that Christianity will get on much better if that is true. But the patronage of the world often leads to paralysis in the Christian church. When Christianity, as well all know, when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire its influence began to wane. Always Christians are opposed to the world, their principles. And consequently, they can never have the patronage of the world and get along. That’s human thinking, but not divine thinking. It’s when Christianity is the most fervent object of the world’s hatred that it is most succeeding, most successful because then the issues are very plain and clear. And people see it is this or this. And one notices this in this account it seems to me.

Well, I guess you noticed as you look over this chapter, if you have read it before, that the events of the chapter gather, or the section that we’re looking at, gather around three men. There is Demetrius, who is the silversmith. And then there is Alexander, the Jewish man, verse 33 and verse 34, and then the town clerk. The first section of this

section has to do with the activities of Demetrius, verse 21 through verse 32 and then the apology of Alexander in verse 33 and 34. And finally the action of the town clerk in verse 35 through verse 40.

Now we read in verse 21, and I’m not going to read through the whole section, but look at certain parts of it reading as we go along tonight. In verse 21, Luke writes as he describes Paul’s ministry there is Ephesus,

“After those things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia (Incidentally, he did pass through Macedonia. He came to Macedonia. That’s where he met Titus. And from there wrote 2 Corinthians. So he says), when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.”

So after these things were ended Paul purposed in the spirit. And he purposed in the spirit to go to Jerusalem. And then after that he determined that he would go on to Rome. So there is formed in the apostle’s mind and heart at this moment, a very far reaching purpose encouraged by God. Because in chapter 23, verse 11 when the apostle is in Jerusalem we read, “And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness of me also in Rome.” And then later on in chapter 28 and verse 16 the apostle finally does come to Rome and this purpose that was formed according to Luke here in chapter 19 is consummated. We read in verse 16 of chapter 28, “And when we came to Rome.” So Paul here now is in Ephesus and he has come to this conviction that he wants to go to Jerusalem and then he must see Rome. One notices that expression that Luke uses to describe Paul’s purpose. It is, “I must also see Rome.”

Now this is not the must of a tourist. We say, “Well, I must go to Europe,” or, “I must go to Scotland,” or, “I must go to the holy land.” Paul’s must is an entirely different

kind of must. It is the must of a missionary for the Lord Jesus Christ. So it’s the kind of must that our Lord used in John chapter 10:16 when he said, “Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring.” For with the Apostle Paul always the interests of God seem predominant. They are the things that concern him. And with our Lord, of course, we know that was always true. He was always about his father’s business and so his musts are divine musts, divine necessities. This one seems to be that too.

Well, he is in Ephesus now. And Ephesus is quite a city. As you know, Ephesus was near the mouth of the Cayster River, was the capital of the province of Asia. We said some of these things last time. There, there were several things that were very significant. There was the great theatre. And in the great theatre it’s possible that as many as fifty thousand people were able to be crowded into that theatre. In fact, some of the commentators and some of the students of Ephesus and its architectural history contend that it could seat fifty-six thousand. Most people today feel, in the light of what we know about that theatre, that it would probably seat about twenty-five thousand. You can see it today when you go to Ephesus. You can go into the theatre. It’s in a bit of ruins, of course. But the seats are there against the side of the hill. And it is a large theatre.

Now the great Temple of Diana was there as well. But the Diana of Ephesus was not the same Diana as the Diana of Roman mythology. The Ephesian goddess was Artemis. And when we read here for example in our text, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians,” it should be Artemis of the Ephesians. The Ephesian Artemis was an Asiatic deity. And the image of Artemis was swathed like a mummy. And she was a many breasted goddess suggestive of the things that she could do for those who worshiped her. Quite a bit different from the Diana that we read about when we studied Greek and Roman mythology because Diana was the queen and the huntress, chaste and fair. She was the goddess of the hunt, but that goddess is different from the goddess of Diana of the Ephesians or Artemis. Artemis was commonly known as Cybele.

So we should, if we are familiar with Greek mythology – I know I took a course in Greek mythology when I was majoring in the classics. That’s one of the things that you should get clear in your mind. This is not the same Diana that one studies in studying Roman mythology. Her temple at Ephesus was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. It was burned at one time and then it was rebuilt. And the image that was enshrined in the temple was believed to be of heavenly workmanship. It probably, this is all we can say, it probably was a meteorite that had fallen from heaven. And because it had fallen from heaven and because it had the general picture of a goddess with many breasts it was regarded as a heavenly object, and therefore regarded as the image of Artemis. It was the subject of worship. And the worship was marked by the traditional features of nature worship. It was presided over by eunuch priests and three grades of priestesses. They had a special festival for Artemis at the time of the spring equinox. In case you want to know about the equinox, Ray Covall in the audience here is the expert of the equinox. We have a little private joke among ourselves because it’s not easy to figure out really when the equinox comes and so we just refer to Ray, he’s the authority on the equinox.

But at any rate, now they had a special festival about the time of the spring equinox at the beginning of the month of May which was called the month of Artemision. So as a result of this great Temple of Artemis that was there and the fact that Ephesus was the capital of the province of Asia and a very large place, and also the fact that the river Cayster went right down to the Aegean Sea and there was a large harbor and Ephesus was one of the great commercial cities of ancient times. It’s not surprising for us to realize that this city played a large part in the ministry of the Apostle Paul. And one can see how these riots that occurred in this great city could be significant events. The theatre, as I mentioned, was a colossal theatre for the time and was evidently a place that was extremely well known for public meetings. In it there were many statues and inscriptions referring to the worship of Artemis.

So now let’s read on. And we read here after verse 21, verse 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. And the same time there arose no small stir about that way.”

It’s interesting, isn’t it, that Christianity is called “a way.” Perhaps because that’s the way the believers spoke of it. It is a way. It’s a way of life. And one thinks of the fact that the Lord Jesus called himself “the way.” And then earlier in the Book of Acts, it is called, “the way.” So the Christian is a person who is following the way. That’s a perfectly biblical expression. So “no small stir about that way,” is a reference to Christianity.

For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana. Incidentally, these were small shrines of silver in which was the image of the goddess Diana. And these were dedicated in the great Temple of Artemis. When you are in Ephesus today you can see this vast place where the temple was, but there’re just a few columns and stones lying about now. But it was a vast temple. So once can see that the silver business was rather good in Ephesus.

“And they brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. 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.”

Now he says that it’s by this craft that they have their wealth. Evidently, Demetrius was responsible for the organizing and financing of the Ephesians silver makers association. But business, since the Apostle Paul and his friends that come, had become rather slack. Economic conditions were not good. There was a little bit of depression in the city. And the noise of the hammers working on the silver had been lost

in the songs of praise that were uttered by those who had responded to the gospel preached by Paul and Apollos and others. And continuing, Luke says in verse 27, “So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.”

Now you can see that what he has done is a very clever thing. He is relating his economic and business interests to religious things. And you don’t get any impression that he’s a great worshiper of Diana. What you get an impression of is that he was a man who was interested in making his money. And if he could use religion in order to satisfy his greed, then he would do it. And that, it seems to me, is what he does. In other words, what we have is self interest masquerading in the garb of piety. Piety for greenbacks, well I don’t know whether they had greenbacks or not, but piety for money rather than piety for God. You can find some indications of this in other places in the New Testament. And one, G. Campbell Morgan and his book on Acts points out, is found in the 8th chapter of the Book of Matthew. Remember when the Lord Jesus was in the area of the Gadarenes. In the authorized version, it is the Gergesenes. But Gadarenes is probably the reading of the text. In Matthew chapter 8, verse 28 we read,

“And when he was come to the other side of the country of the Gadarenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time? And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. (Here are economic interests). So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. (Now that’s a serious thing. And so

they report). And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing (Now notice what follows), and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils.”

Well now if they had told everything, they had evidently told about those possessed of the devils and what happened to the swine. But in the account, it’s “they told every thing and.” Now when you tell everything there’s no need to add any and. But you can tell by the “and” that follows what they were really interested in. They were really interested in what happened to those swine because that was their economic interest that was lost.

So Demetrius is very disturbed and he works up the silversmiths because they perceive that possibly this thing that Paul is saying is going to be the destruction of their livelihood. And so we read on. You see he has linked it with the fact that this is going to destroy the worship of Diana and all Asia and the world worships her. “And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Artemis of the Ephesians.”

Now this, of course, illustrates for us an important point. And it is something that we always need to bear in mind. The voice of the people is not always the voice of God. The voice of the people is not always the voice of God. In fact, in the United States we need to bear this principle in mind too. The voice of the people is not always the voice of God. Government of the people, by the people and for the people is not necessarily government as God would have it. Christians have a loyalty that is to God. And that loyalty to God is above the legitimate loyalty that we have to our government. We are to be loyal to our government. But when the government’s interests contradict the interests of God, we must be followers of God. And it’s helpful to remember that the voice of the people, the voice of the great majority is not necessarily the voice of what is right, nor is the voice of God.

So they shout,

“Great is Diana of the Ephesians.” And Luke continues, verse 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 theatre. (The theatre was right across the street from the temple. And it is the place in which we said about twenty-five thousand people could have come. So in verse 30), And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not.”

There was a rising uproar. You can see how everything is becoming confused. The people are milling about, some are shouting, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians.” And then there are believers in the city too. And Gaius and Aristarchus who were Macedonians have been taken now by the crowd and they are brought into the theatre. And Paul was urged by the believers not to go in there.

The worst thing about good people is often the fact that they are such cowards. You can see when issues arise you can see often good people who refuse to stand for what is right because they do not want to face the consequences of argument, division, disagreement and all that goes with standing for what is right. And many good people fail right at that point. They hold principles that are right. But when those who are holding opposite principles are seeking to control affairs, good people often say, “I don’t want to enter into conflict.” And so they leave the issue in the hands of those who stand for what is contrary to what is right. Well, I’m not suggesting that Paul did that here at all. But, at any rate, you can see Paul was ready to go right into the midst of the crowd and to stand up and stand up for what he believed was that which was true.

Now Luke continues, “And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theatre.” So not

only were some of the disciples anxious that Paul not enter in because they feared for his life. But evidently the apostle’s ministry had reached some of the Asiarchs.

Now the Asiarchs were the rulers who ruled under the Roman Empire, under the Roman government, under the consul specifically. And so the gospel has penetrated some of the chief of Asia. So Paul’s ministry has had a significant effect on the city of Ephesus. And they desired that he would not adventure himself into the theatre. And Luke says in verse 32, “Some therefore cried the one thing, some another: for the assembly was confused: and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.”

Now that’s a touch of Luken humor. So here they were. They were crying and shouting. You could hear the shouts of “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians.” And you could hear all of the angry shouts and the other kinds of shouts that take place when an incident like this occurs. And Luke says, “The assembly was confused: the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.” I sometimes think that’s a pretty good description of church meetings on Sunday. “The more part knew not wherefore they were come together.” So they didn’t really have any idea of what was going on, many of them. But others, like Demetrius and those who were concerned, they knew precisely why they were there.

Now at this point we read about the apology of Alexander. Now remember the Jews were not idolaters. The Jews had been idolaters, but they had gone into captivity because of their idolatry. And when the Jews came back from their captivity they did not as a nation fall into the idolatry. In fact, you do not as a rule find Jewish people idolatress today. Or, of course, Paul talks about covetousness being idolatry, but so far as images they learn their lesson in the captivity. So naturally they were thrown into this too since they were Jewish people and they didn’t like the idols and didn’t believe in the idols, the images of Artemis. So in verse 33 we read,

“And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. (He was evidently going to give an explanation. And they were worried because they sensed that they might turn on them. And so they put forward Alex in order to clarify their position). And Alec beckoned with the hand (that’s incidently the variant reading in my text, Alec instead of Alexander), and beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people. But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out,” (Reagan resign, Reagan resign, [Laughter] Reagan don’t run again, Regan resign, and so on).

Well, you can see it is just a riot. That’s what it is. That’s all it is. And incidently in connection with this you can see that in those days there was also anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism has been with us ever since the day that God put his hand upon Abraham and called him out and gave him certain unconditional promises.

But thinking a great deal about this a few years back, one of the Jewish men wrote a very scholarly book on anti-Semitism. And it was called *The Destruction of the European Jews*. And the thesis of the book was something like this. That anti-Semitism, as represented in Hitler’s Germany, was the natural result of the flow of history and could be traced back to the time of Constantine when Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire. That originally the Christians had said, “We will not allow the Jews to live with us.” And then later on the Germans finally said in the days of Hitler, “We will not allow the Jews to live.” And so the thesis of the book is that essentially anti-Semitism is the reaction of Christianity to Jewish people and expresses itself in social and economic ostracism. Of course, the book says nothing about the anti-Semitism of the nation of Israel on the earth at the time of the Lord Jesus Christ. The anti-Semitism expressed toward our Lord Jesus Christ as the seed of Abraham and against the apostles who were Jewish men and against the early church which was largely a Jewish church. And the

anti-Semitism of the synagogue which said, “We will not permit you to preach your gospel in the midst of the assembly of the Jewish people.”

Actually, anti-Semitism goes back, in my mind, to the distinguishing grace of God manifested toward Abraham. And sooner or later all men are affected by that. Well, it’s not specifically Jewish. It’s not specifically gentile. It’s human. It’s human objection to the activities of the Lord God arising out of the fact that we are sinners. And, by the way, we learn one other thing here too. To put it in a different way, that one lie multiplied by ten thousand voices never becomes the truth. So as they keep saying, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians. Great is Diana of the Ephesians,” it doesn’t mean that Diana of the Ephesians is great. But one can repeat these things over and over again and it’s a far cry from being truth.

Well, now in the latter part of the chapter the town clerk acts in order to quell the disturbance. He was something of the secretary of the consul. He was the chief magistrate of the free society. He drafted the decrees. He controlled the money and the assembly under the proconsul. So he was one of the leading political figures. And he gives a very candid and a very judicious speech. Listen to what he says. “And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and the image which fell down from Jupiter?” That was the myth that stood at the heart of the worship of Artemis. “What man is there that knoweth not?” In other words, he soothes their vanity with an appeal to the fame of Diana and the legend that Diana was a goddess who was given from heaven. Today one might say, “What man knoweth that the city of Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess?” He thought that that was universal knowledge. It’s certainly not universal knowledge now. Everybody knows about Paul, but nobody knows about Artemis of the Ephesians.

“Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly. For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess. (Now that’s interesting, isn’t it? He says that they are not blasphemers of the goddess Artemis. Further, he says), “Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another (that is accuse one another). But if ye enquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly. (“So let us take our complaints to the courts. New laws may be made by a lawful assembly. No lynch law. Let’s work within the system,” to put it in the language of today). And he says, “For we are in danger to be called in question for this day’s uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this tumult. And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.”

Now notice that Demetrius has gained nothing but a bit of chagrin by objecting to the preaching of the Apostle Paul.

Well, let me close with just a few comments. We have a striking testimony here to the power of God. We know from Paul’s preaching, found both in this chapter and later on when he speaks to the Ephesian elders and tells them what he preached there, that he preached the sin of man. He preached repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. He preached the preeminence of the Lord Jesus Christ. He spoke of the Kingdom of God. He spoke also of the truth of God in Christ. He will say to the Ephesian elders, as he describes his ministry to them, “I preach to you the whole council of God.” Goethe said, “Jesus is the saint, the type and model of all men.” But Paul preached him as the Son of God. “He stood.” said Renan, “in the first rank of the grand family of the true sons of God.” No, he was not in the family of the true sons of God. He was the Lord of the sons of God. And the apostle preached that. He preached redemption through the Lord Jesus Christ.

When one turns to Acts chapter 20, the very next chapter, and reads verse 28 you can see that. “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” So Paul preached redemption through Christ. This is what he was talking about. He was not speaking incidentally against Artemis; he was speaking for Christ and for the gospel. But those men, as they saw what was happening, men believing and becoming new creatures in Christ, they saw that they were giving up their idol worship. And they saw the implications of the new life. It’s a singular illustration then of the method of the apostolic ministry. The town clerk says they’re not blasphemers. They didn’t denounce Artemis. They introduced them to what Thomas Chalmers called in that great expression, “The expulsive power of a new affection.” They came into relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. And coming in relationship to him the things of the old life fell away naturally.

In Texas we have scrub oaks, or red oaks. And probably most of you have them in your yard. There’s an interesting thing about the oaks around Dallas and in Texas. When fall comes and the leaves turn a very dark red you expect them to fall off the trees. And some of the leaves do fall off, sometimes half the leaves, sometimes two-thirds of the leaves, sometimes only a third of the leaves. And then all through the winter, in the midst of the storms, in the midst of the high winds, in the midst of the snowstorm, those leaves are still on the tree. Other leaves are gone from other trees. But in that tree, they are still there. But in the spring when things become warm again and the life of the tree from the trunk and the roots, the sap begins to flow. Then the leaves fall off. That’s the natural effect of the reception spiritually of the life of God in Christ. The things that characterize the old life fall away. And that was what was happening in Ephesus so far as we know. Paul didn’t attack negatively, Artemis and the worship. He simply preached the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And anybody who had half a mind made the application.

Some years ago I remember a lady who was a lawyer who was converted. She lived in Irving. She still does, I think. Or may be she’s moved to Dallas now. She’s a member of Grace Bible Church. And she was living just the ordinary kind of life and she was finally brought to a Bible class that I was teaching many years ago. And she came and found the Lord Jesus as her personal savior. She told me afterwards, she said, “You know going home from work (she worked in Dallas), she said I used to stop by the liquor store often to purchase Bourbon and scotch. But after I found the Lord, well things changed.” She said she had learned from her experience of finding the Lord that “The price of a fifth of Bourbon (I’m reading exactly what she told me. I wrote it down), the price of a fifth of Bourbon purchased two Bibles and a fifth of scotch purchased three.” So the money that she was spending for her whiskey came to be spent on Scofield Bibles which she was giving to people in order to bring them to Christ. That’s the expulsive power of a new affection. That was what was happening in Ephesus. Well, our time is up. We’re going to have to stop. Let’s close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these passages from the history that Luke gave us of the life and ministry of Paul. We thank Thee for the faithfulness of this man and of the others who ministered with him, Gaius and Aristarchus and Titus and Timothy and various of the early church for their faithfulness and their courage...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]