

## Acts 19 - John Karmelich

I'd like to begin with a tough topic, we all face at times: Dealing with those who are opposing what we are trying to accomplish! I'm referring to those who don't want to help us, outright oppose us or simply don't grasp what we're trying to get done. The main character in this part of the book, (Paul) dealt with that issue here. This chapter of Acts is essentially about how he deals with those who oppose what God called him to accomplish. The lesson here isn't to learn more details of Paul's life, but it teaches us how to go through life as God calls us to be a witness for Him.

With that said, let me summarize this chapter. Again the goal is not to be an expert on Paul's life, but to learn lessons on how to deal with opposition. Paul is now on his third missionary journey. (There was a fourth journey but it was outside the book's time frame.) This chapter took place at Ephesus. It was the 3rd largest city in the Roman Empire, after Rome and Alexandria, Egypt. He never visited that city on either of his previous trips and now is "making up for it". Paul spent about two years there to spread the word about Jesus. The city had hot weather. Therefore, they worked in the morning, took a break in the heat of the day and worked in the evening. During "siesta" time, Paul rented a hall and he preached Jesus daily there. Realize Paul worked as a tentmaker all day. He preached at siesta time for two years! That's a good summary of Paul's two year story in Ephesus summarized in this chapter.

Let me back up and tell the story from where we left off: The last we read of Paul he was preaching in a city called Corinth. Chapter 19 opens with Paul traveling from Corinth to Ephesus. (From Greece to Turkey.) The last part of the previous chapter told the story of a man named Apollos who had a gift as an excellent speaker. He preached Jesus based on John the Baptist. As of this chapter, Apollos did not know the whole resurrection story. The reason that's told is many believed in Jesus through what he did preach. Therefore Paul's job was to lead the people Apollos preached, to the whole story about Jesus. As most of you know, my favorite bible study question is, "Now what?" As in "I believe Jesus is Lord and died for my sins, now what"? I'd argue Paul also was obsessed with "Now what". He led those who heard of Jesus through John the Baptist, closer to God with additional facts. That is what He calls us to do: preach the truth of why He exists, what's our role in life and how to draw closer to Him. I'm saying Paul and Apollos worked to draw people closer to God as we should as well!

Meanwhile I'm just warming up describing the events of this chapter. Essentially, the men Paul spoke to, never heard of the Holy Spirit. These men were called disciples at this point, because they became Christians or simply because the word disciple refers to "students". Paul explained the whole Gospel story to them and they got the whole "Pentecost" experience. What I mean is back in Chapter 2, there was the story of when the disciples first believed, proof of the Gospel being true, is those there started speaking in foreign languages they didn't know praising God. The men Paul just led to Jesus also did the same thing. It does not mean one has to have that spiritual gift to be saved! Paul himself said that he'd rather speak a few words that people understood about God, than to speak thousands of words that only God understood what was said (See 1st Corinthians 14:19.) I'd argue the reason for this sign here is to show the importance of understanding the complete Gospel message (that Jesus died for every sin we'd ever commit, past, present or future, He's God and in charge of our lives). Anyway at this point in the story not only had these men got the full message, but Apollos himself got the full Gospel message in the last part of the previous chapter and preached it as such!

Next, remember Paul was in a big city. There was at least one synagogue there. As was his custom, he spoke there probably after the normal services ended. The text said he did that for three months. Some believed and some didn't. Let me pause for a second to explain why some refuse to accept the Gospel

message. The main reason is people don't want to change their lifestyle or want to prove their worth to God via their works. That's why most people aren't saved is they simply refuse to accept the Gospel is the only way to heaven. Anyway, Paul preached regularly in spite of the opposition.

As I mentioned, Paul rented a hall every day during "siesta time". Imagine having a job and during the nonworking hours you spend your time preaching Jesus. That's what Paul did. No it doesn't mean we have to do likewise. It does mean we're to use the gifts God gave us to make a difference for Him, but I'm getting off script preaching that fact. Realize Paul did this for a period of two years. Let's just say word of Jesus spread all over the region because of that.

As I said in the introduction, with life, comes problems. Since there was no bible to validate the Word of God, there were miracles there. Even the clothing associated with Paul was used for miracles. No, I am not saying we can do likewise. It's just a sign that God used to lead people closer to Jesus. That will lead us to one of the many interesting stories in this chapter. Seven sons of a local Jewish priest wanted to profit from what Paul's doing. They tried to exorcise demons out of people by invoking Paul's name. Luke records what the demons said. In effect, "Yes we know Jesus is God even though we choose not to obey Him. We also know Paul leads people to the Gospel truth although we're not obeying what he's preaching! We (demons) know that you guys (the seven) aren't the "real deal" so you can't cast us out!" The demons then beat up the seven brothers. Why? Because the job of demons is to get us focused on anything else but God! If they can't take the salvation away of those trusting in Jesus (but they will try to get us to sin to make us a bad witness for Him), they try to turn others away from God. They beat up the seven in hopes it would draw people away from Paul.

The positive news about all of this is it ended up drawing people closer to God as word spread about it. The text tells of a big bon fire where millions of dollars' worth of sorcery books were burned so no one would ever use them again! Bottom line is Satan failed in another attempt to stop/slow down what God called us to do, spread the word about Him. Many came to Jesus because of this and it caused many of the locals to turn from "black magic" due to this.

If you think this chapter is strange so far, realize I'm in effect only half way through it. Don't worry I'm going to describe the last story a bit faster.

Remember that the whole chapter takes place in the city of Ephesus. It was famous for being the place of one of the seven wonders of the ancient world: A huge temple to a false goddess named Diana as to keep it simple. Let's just say prostitution was involved in the worship and many people got rich as they sold silver Diana statues to the tourists! This is what Paul had in the background as he preached Jesus!

As most of us know, when you really want to hurt someone, you hit them in the pocketbook! Let's just say that the people who made a living selling the statues said in effect we must stop this Christian stuff as it's bad for business! All of that led to a big meeting in the temple and for two hours the people there yelled out how great the fake goddess Diana is! God worked a miracle through the "mayor" to calm the crowd down, not blame the Christians and announce in effect, "If you want to file charges against them go do so, but this riot isn't going to solve that problem and keep the Romans "at bay"."

That's how the chapter ends. Paul's at another place in the next chapter. The moral of all this is we use our lives as a witness for Jesus and stuff will happen we got to deal with, but God will win in the end!

With that said, on the same page where you downloaded this summary is a more detailed lesson on this chapter. That one is on a verse-by-verse basis. To read that, click on one of the other two links on this chapter. If you want, you are always welcome to e-mail me and I hope you like this. Thanks, John