

When Things go Sideways

Acts 19:23-41

August 9, 2020



Coffee/Question:

How do you make **sense** of unexpected trouble?

Sooke Baptist Church

7110 West Coast Road

Sunday, August 9, 2020

9am and 11am

Acts 19:23-41

Acts 19:23

...there arose **a great disturbance** about the Way.

The same term is used in Acts 12:18:

Acts 12:18

In the morning, there was **no small commotion** among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter.

“A great disturbance” and “no small commotion” are phrases that describe emotionally charged events... that typically result in harm to someone.

How did this disturbance start?

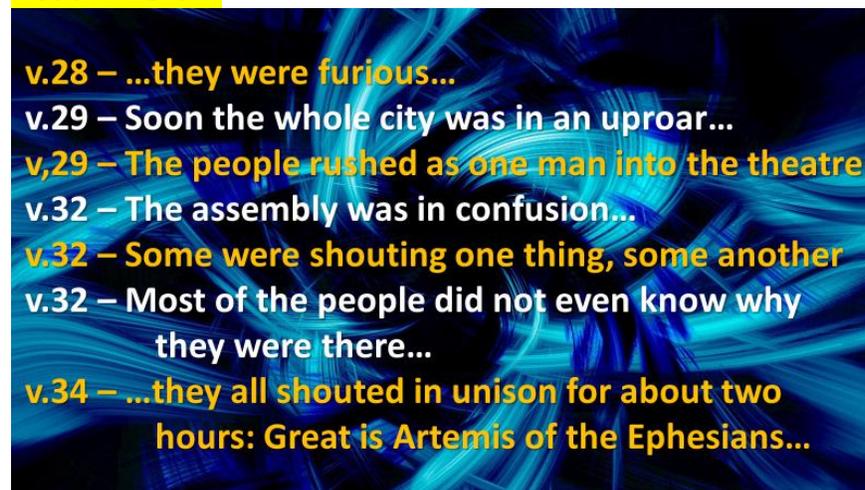
Read v.24-27.



Demetrius knew which buttons to press.

He provoked an emotional explosion of rage, which I think he hoped would restore in Ephesus... the business and spiritual... status quo.

Read v.28-34.



After hours of sheer chaos order was restored by the city clerk.

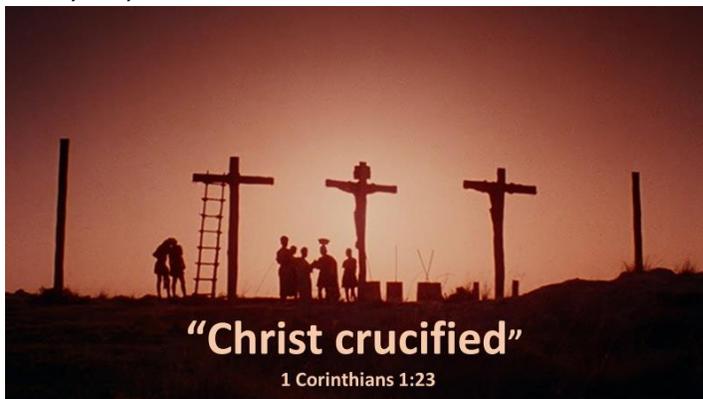
Read v.35-36.

Listen to what the city clerk said about Paul and his team – **v.37.**

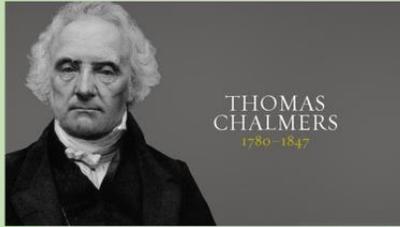


The city clerk then gave clear direction to Demetrius and the other craftsmen.
Read v.38-41.

While in Ephesus, Paul had not focused his energies on discrediting Artemis. As he would later write to the church at Corinth, the focus of his ministry wherever he went was always ...the message of the cross – see also 1 Corinthians 1:17, 18, 24.



If Paul had not been active to criticize Artemis how had she been displaced?
A quote by Thomas Chalmer explains.



**The only way
to dispossess the heart of an old affection
is by the expulsive power of a new one.**

What did Chalmers mean by that?



Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, a former professor of English and women's studies at Syracuse University, converted to Christ in 1999 in what she describes as a train wreck.

Listen to her explanation of how her old affections were displaced by the love of God revealed which was revealed to her in Jesus Christ.

When the Lord entered my world, I experienced that gospel-ignited "expulsive power of a new affection" to quote the title of Thomas Chalmer's famous sermon.

That new affection was not heterosexuality, but Jesus, my Jesus, my friend and Savior.

I was not converted out of homosexuality. I was converted out of unbelief.

Rosario Champagne Butterfield

When the extravagant love of God is received it awakens in the believer... a love for Jesus that is greater than all other loves.

It was love for Jesus, not fear, that had compelled the believers in Ephesus to radically sever ties with their practice of sorcery by burning six million dollars' worth of magic scrolls.

The exuberant joy of the followers of Jesus in the face of such great financial loss fuelled questions in the people of Ephesus as to the kind of God who would inspire such devotion and commitment.

The power of the gospel to transform a life is always amazing to behold. And as increasing numbers of people in Ephesus were...



... the accumulative affect of so many changed lives... was incredible... astonishing...and culture-changing.

Do you remember the parable told by Jesus?

Matthew 13:33

"The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."



This is what happened in Ephesus.

The gospel worked its way...all through that city and region...displacing old affections by the power of a new love for God.

Our first takeaway from today's passage is this: as followers of Jesus our task is not to pour our energies into diminishing other gods.

Rather we are to lift Jesus up... to speak of his cross; of his beauty and goodness...to boast of his sovereign power and his lavish love; to witness to his saving grace.

To proclaim with our lives and our mouths that...



There is a second emphasis we must consider from this passage.

When the gospel is proclaimed, and an awakening occurs, Satan-inspired opposition will often manifest.

How are we to understand this opposition, particularly in light of how the Scripture speaks of the victory of the cross and the empty tomb?

It is of the utmost importance that the Scripture inform our understanding.

Before he died, Jesus had said in John 12:31

John 12

³¹ Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.

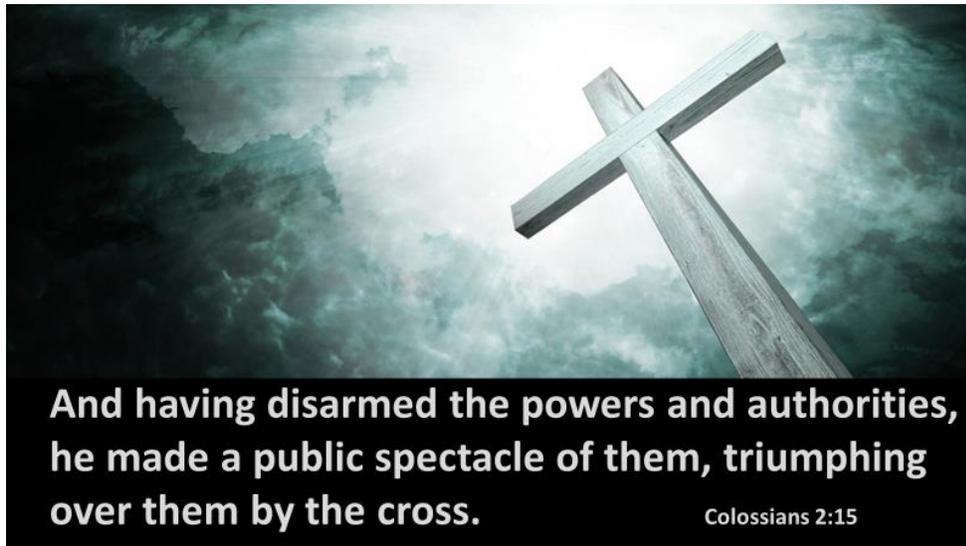
³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

Don't miss the connection between the promise made by Jesus in v.32 and the declaration of v.31.

When did this judgement upon Satan happen?

It happened when Jesus hung on a Roman cross; when he became sin for us; when he willingly gave up his life in sacrifice.

It was then and there that Jesus...



Vine's Expository Dictionary says:

Vine's Expository Dictionary

There is no doubt Satan and his hosts gathered together to attack the soul of Christ, while he endured, in propitiatory sacrifice, the judgment due to our sins...

There is an intimation of this in Psalm 22:21, "Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of wild oxen."

Vine's Expository Dictionary

The powers of darkness gathered against the Lord Jesus at that time, fiercely assaulted him. Jesus knowing this would happen had said, “But this is your hour – when darkness reigns.” Luke 22:53

The metaphor of “disarming” is a vivid description of Jesus’ repulsion of their attack, and of the power by which he completely overthrew them. p.596

The terms used in Colossians 2:15 were military terms and would have been familiar to Paul’s original audience.

If they had not seen, they would have at least heard of the things that happened when a triumphant Roman general returned home leading his stripped and defeated foes behind his chariot in a victory procession.

This is the sense of the victory realized by Jesus. But there is also an important difference that we must grasp or we risk over-exaggerating the power of the fallen angels and diminishing the victory of Jesus.

We know from Psalm 110 that Jesus.... in this present time... rules from heaven over all of creation...and he does so....



... in the midst of his enemies.

Hebrews 2:8 reminds us...in this present time...



... even though it is.

The message of the Bible is clear - upon his return to heaven Jesus was crowned with glory and honor (Hebrews 2:9) and was exalted to the highest place and was given the name that is above every name. (Philippians 2:9).

This happened forty days after his resurrection.

Jesus appeared to the apostle John on the island of Patmos and said to him....

Revelation 1

“Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸ I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

Look at who Jesus stated he is...

Look at the authority which Jesus said he has: he holds the keys of death and Hades.

According to Hebrews 2:14 – the fear of death had been the means by which the devil had enslaved humanity.

Hebrews 2:14-15

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

The fact that Jesus hold the keys of death and Hades means he defeated the devil.

Revelation 1

“Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸ I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

Follower of Jesus you and I live our daily lives in the context of Jesus victory...we are free of the fear of death... because Jesus overcame.

Our former enemy has no power over us.

Look at the magnitude of the promise of Romans 16.



Through the lives of his people, the victory of Christ is demonstrated over and over and over and over... in every generation.

This is not just the experience of just some...but of us all.

So, we are back to our question: why is it that a defeated foe is able to continue to harass and cause trouble?

What does Acts 19 teach us?

If and when disturbances happen...and they will...as they did in Ephesus... God permits them.... for the achieving of his purposes here on the earth.

But why?

The Father does not live reacting to the schemes of the fallen angels; it is the Father who is moving history forward to realize his determined purpose and plan.

He loves the world; and the desire of his heart is to save the fallen sons and daughters of Adam and Eve.

How then does permitting his defeated foes to continue to harass achieve the purposes of God?

Because it seems every generation is unconvinced of their desperate spiritual need of Jesus the Savior.

As Romans 1:25 says – we have exchanged the truth about God for a lie.

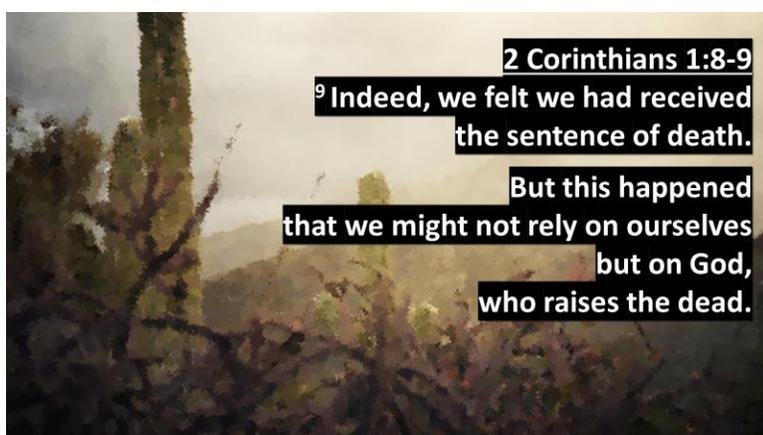
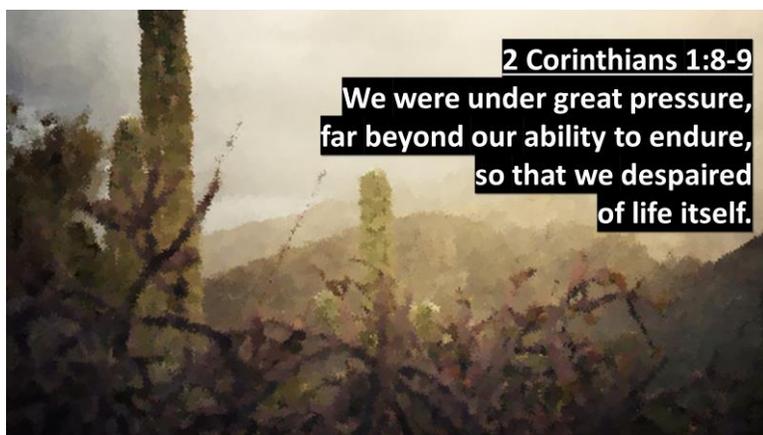
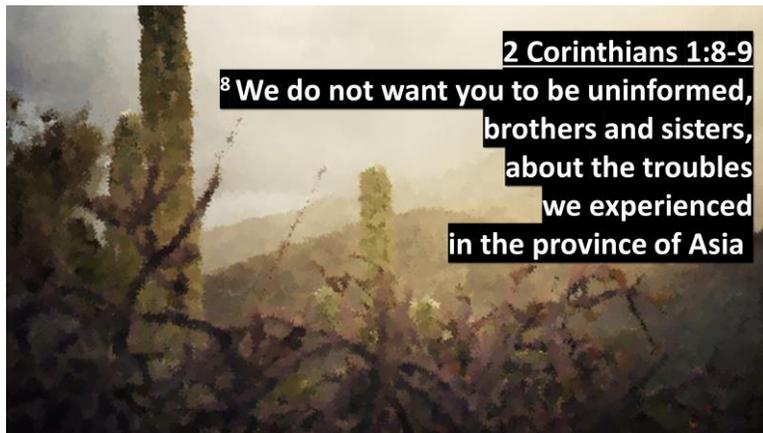
All humans see themselves and human culture through rose-tinted glasses.



God permitted the darkness to fully express itself in Ephesus on that long ago day in order to reveal the true nature of sin.

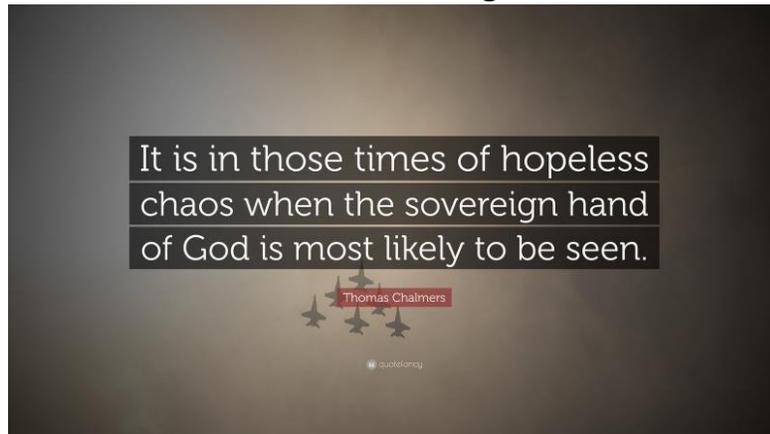
- v.26-27 – **lies and insinuations, under which hid greed and malice**
- v.29, 32 – **confusion and disorder, agitation and provoking**
- v.34 – the folly of **mindless** adoration of false gods

In his second letter to the church at Corinth Paul identified a second reason why God permits Satan to harass within the parameters set by God – this is how God grows up his children – this is how he teaches us to rely on him and the powerful provision he has given to us – his armor, the sword of the Spirit and prayer in the Spirit.



In Ephesus Paul experienced hopelessness.

But this was also the very moment when Paul experienced what Thomas Chalmers wrote of...the sovereign hand of God being revealed to him.



It matters to God that you and I learn to rely upon him...conscious that he is the God of resurrection.

This is the magnitude of God power – he can do anything; there is nothing he can't do.

Paul later wrote to the Ephesian church...

Ephesians 6:10-14

¹⁰ Finally, **be strong** in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ **Put on** the full armor of God, so that you can **take your stand** against the devil's schemes.

¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Our Lord Jesus is the Victor; he is the Overcomer; he is the Champion. And it is his mighty power that is given to us.

What Paul stated in verse 11, he again restated in verse 13.

Ephesians 6:10-14

¹³ Therefore **put on** the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able **to stand** your ground, and after you have done everything, **to stand**. ¹⁴ **Stand firm** then...

The fact that the verb – “put on” is used twice in these four verses.... is meant to impress upon the follower of Jesus that it is our responsibility – to access and use the mighty power that God has made available to us.

It is also significant that having put on the armor of God... that four times in these four verses the believer is told “to stand.”

Ephesians 6:10-14

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¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able **to stand** your ground, and after you have done everything, **to stand**. ¹⁴ **Stand firm** then...

This is how we overcome.

We stand in the victory of Jesus.

We never step back from the cross and the empty tomb.

Those were the decisive moments of all history.

Nothing and no one can ever undo what Jesus accomplished.

Paul also learned in this time the importance and the power of prayer.

2 Corinthians 1:10-11

**He had delivered us from such a deadly peril,
and he will deliver us again.
On him we have set our hope
that he will continue to deliver us,
as you help us by your prayers.
Then many will give thanks on our behalf
for the gracious favor granted us
in answer to the prayers of many.**

Prayer matters; it makes a difference.

Things happen when the people of God pray that wouldn't have happened if they hadn't prayed.

We pray because God is always in charge; because he is bringing about his good purposes in this world.

In this present time...and until the return of Jesus...Acts 19 impresses upon us that God-orchestrated opportunity is often accompanied by opposition.

1 Corinthians 16:8-9

**...I will stay on at Ephesus until
Pentecost, because a great door for
effective work has opened to me, and
there are many who oppose me.**

But the outcome is never in doubt.



This is why we do not fear...when we encounter troubles.
Jesus has overcome...and his victory is ours.

Revelation 12:11

**They triumphed over him
by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word
of their testimony...**

Before the good news of the gospel of Jesus can be heard and understood, one must hear the bad news.

Evil spirit beings have enveloped the world in a spiritual darkness
In addition to revealing the horror of the darkness that has enveloped this world and has blinded the minds of all for the purpose of enslavement, God also shows a person the hideousness of their own sin, their own culpability.
There is an aspect of the gospel of Jesus that is bad news.

We often speak of the gospel as being good news, which it is.
But there is an element of the gospel that is bad news.

he reveals the beauty and glory of Jesus, and the

But he also reveals

God portrays to us the ways things truly are.

1. To expose the sinfulness of sin and unbelief.

The human default is to believe that human goodness is greater and human sinfulness is far less significant than it truly is.

But why have they not been banished to hell where they can no longer influence and cause trouble?

Because in his mercy God has purpose that these days of opportunity continue. Until the return of Jesus, men and women, teenagers and children can come to God, through faith in his Savior, Jesus Christ.

God permitted the disturbance to happen in order to expose the true nature of Demetrius and the other craftsmen.

Just as the true nature of sorcery had been earlier exposed by the burning of magic scrolls, so the true nature of Artemis worship was exposed.

It is subtle but it is there in the text.

For over two years the gospel had been proclaimed and it had grown.

Why now did God permit this to take place?

Was Satan free to harass when and where he chose?

Here's what the Scripture tells us of the victory of the cross of Jesus.

Colossians 2:15

The fallen angels have been disarmed.

Jesus has triumphed over them.

How are we then to understand this incident?

The scripture must inform us.

Psalms 110 – Jesus rules in the midst of his enemies

Hebrews 2:7-9

We don't see everything subject to Jesus.

But everything is under his feet.

He is crowned with glory and honor

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 – Satan blinds but God shines light into a darkened mind

2 Timothy 2:26 – Satan takes captive; Jesus opens prison doors

Revelation 12:17 – the devil wages war – but he cannot overcome

Why did God permit this to happen?

Before we answer that, you need to see that God did intervene in the events of that day.

v.29 – though Gaius and Aristarchus were seized, they were not killed.

v.30 – though Paul wanted to go to the theater and speak to the crowd, he was stopped by the disciples, and v.31, by friends who were provincial officials, who sent messages to him begging him not to go into the theater.

v.35 – God acted through the city clerk to quiet and then dismiss the crowd

While they were manhandled they were not killed.

Why didn't he squelch the efforts of Demetrius to cause harm?

That said...it is true that Jesus came to upend the status quo.
His message was...



The good news of the gospel of Jesus offends human pride.
As Timothy Keller writes, the gospel is this – we are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe.

To repent is to make an about face – it is to change one’s mind and agree with God’s assessment of who we are – a sinner.

But this is only half of the gospel news.

At the very same time.... we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared to hope.

This too requires a repentance – to believe and to receive God’s love and forgiveness expressed in the person of Jesus.

Jesus came to the earth to bring life from heaven into human existence.

Jesus was well aware that his insistence to be given first place in someone’s life... would cause pushback... not just in the person considering to follow him, but also, and particularly from family members and friends.

This is why he said what he did in Matthew 10:35-36:



Matthew 10:35-36

For I have come to turn “a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law – a man’s enemies will be his own household.”

What did Jesus say would be the cause of this turning?

Matthew 10:37-38

Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me;

anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;

and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

This was a theme which Jesus spoke of often.

We know this because Luke also recorded similar words spoken by Jesus.

Luke 14:26-27

If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother; his wife and children, his brothers and sisters - yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple.

And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

In love Jesus willingly gave up his life.

It was not taken from him.

Demetrius slandered Paul.

He said Paul had led astray large numbers of people in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia by saying man-made gods are no gods at all.

Paul would later write to the Ephesian church and remind them, 6:12, that...
“our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

But Paul’s ministry had not been focused on identifying and calling out these unseen adversaries, or of ridding Ephesus of the practice of sorcery.

Jesus is more than capable of holding his own.
He said that when he is lifted up he will draw all people to himself.

The indication from Acts 19 is that this was what Paul and the believers in Ephesus had done.

Other parables...

We could

These were the themes he had re-iterated and restated in his letter to them.

The focus of Christianity is not on helping people become morally educated

Nor had he gone around looking to fight

But what exactly had Paul done according to Demetrius?
He had said man-made gods are no gods at all.
Dr. Luke tells the reader