

CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Acts Chapter 19 — Revival and Uproar in Ephesus

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Acts Chapter 19 records one of the most powerful periods of gospel advance in the entire book of Acts.

The setting is:

Ephesus.

This city was:

Commercially important.

Religiously influential.

Deeply associated with idolatry.

Known for occult practices.

Connected with the great temple of Artemis, also known as Diana.

Into this environment comes:

The gospel of Jesus Christ.

The chapter begins with Paul meeting about twelve men whose spiritual understanding is incomplete.

They know:

John's baptism.

But they need fuller understanding concerning:

Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit.

When they hear the truth, they are baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

The Holy Spirit comes upon them.

They speak in tongues and prophesy.

Then Paul begins an extended ministry in Ephesus.

For three months:

He reasons boldly in the synagogue.

When opposition hardens, he moves the disciples into the lecture hall of Tyrannus.

There:

He teaches daily.

For two years.

The result is enormous:

“Everyone living in Asia—both Jews and Greeks—heard the word of the Lord.”

Then God performs:

Extraordinary miracles through Paul.

But immediately Scripture gives a warning.

Some traveling exorcists try to use Jesus’ name as though it were:

A formula.

A magical phrase.

A technique.

They say:

“I command you by Jesus whom Paul preaches.”

The evil spirit answers:

“Jesus I know, and Paul I know about—but who are you?”

The men are violently overpowered.

The result is not admiration for counterfeit spiritual power.

Instead:

The name of Jesus is held in high honor.

Believers confess their sins.

Those involved in sorcery publicly destroy their occult books.

The value is enormous.

They do not sell the material to someone else.

They destroy it.

Why?

Because genuine repentance does not look for a way to profit from the sinful life it is leaving behind.

Then Luke summarizes:

“The word of the Lord spread powerfully and prevailed.”

But revival produces economic consequences.

A silversmith named Demetrius becomes alarmed.

Why?

Because people are abandoning idols.

That threatens:

His business.

His profits.

His trade.

The worship of Diana.

Demetrius gathers the craftsmen and stirs up outrage.

The whole city becomes confused.

A mob rushes into the theater.

Some people do not even know why they are there.

For about two hours the crowd cries:

“Great is Diana of the Ephesians!”

Finally the city clerk calms the crowd and warns them that the riot itself could bring legal trouble.

Acts 19 therefore shows two kingdoms colliding.

On one side:

Idolatry.

Sorcery.

Economic exploitation.

Cultural pride.

Mob emotion.

On the other:

Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit.

Repentance.

Truth.

Scripture.

The gospel.

And the conclusion is unmistakable:

The Word of the Lord prevails.

The central truth of Acts 19 is:

When the gospel of Jesus Christ enters a city with power, it exposes incomplete faith, defeats counterfeit spirituality, produces genuine repentance, threatens profitable idolatry, and continues advancing despite cultural, economic, and public opposition.

I. PAUL ARRIVES IN EPHESUS

Acts 19:1

“While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the inland regions and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples.”

The story connects directly with Acts 18.

Apollos is in Corinth.

Paul arrives in Ephesus.

Cross References

Acts 18:24

Apollos had come to Ephesus as an eloquent man who was powerful in the Scriptures.

Acts 18:27

After receiving fuller instruction, Apollos traveled to Achaia and greatly helped the believers there.

1 Corinthians 3:6

Paul later said, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.”

Spiritual Principle

God uses different servants in different places while remaining the One who produces spiritual growth.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The mission does not depend upon one personality; God moves His servants according to His larger purpose.

II. “DID YOU RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT?”

Acts 19:2

“He asked them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ They answered, ‘We haven’t even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.’”

Their answer reveals incomplete understanding.

Cross References

Acts 8:16

The Samaritan believers had been baptized in the name of Jesus but had not yet experienced the coming of the Holy Spirit in that transitional setting.

Acts 10:44

The Holy Spirit came upon Cornelius and the Gentiles while they were hearing the gospel.

Ephesians 1:13

Those who hear the gospel and believe in Christ are sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

Important Truth

These men appear to be disciples of John’s preparatory message rather than Christians who fully understood the completed gospel.

Their problem is not that mature believers simply forgot a doctrine.

They are standing at an incomplete point in redemptive understanding.

Spiritual Principle

Religious sincerity is not a substitute for knowing the full truth about Jesus Christ.

III. JOHN’S BAPTISM

Acts 19:3

“Paul asked, ‘Then what baptism did you receive?’ They replied, ‘John’s baptism.’”

Now the problem becomes clear.

They know:

John.

But not the completed message about Christ.

Cross References

Matthew 3:11

John said he baptized with water for repentance, but the One coming after him would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

Mark 1:4

John appeared preaching a baptism of repentance in preparation for the coming Messiah.

Luke 3:3

John called people to repentance as he prepared the way for the Lord.

Spiritual Principle

John's ministry was preparatory; it was never intended to become the final destination.

IV. JOHN POINTED TO JESUS

Acts 19:4

“Paul said, ‘John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling people to believe in the one coming after him—that is, in Jesus.’”

Paul explains John correctly.

John did not build a movement around himself.

John pointed forward.

Cross References

Matthew 3:11

John said the One coming after him was greater and would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

John 1:26

John said that someone far greater was already standing among the people.

Mark 1:7

John declared that the One coming after him was so great that John was not worthy to untie His sandals.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Every faithful messenger eventually points away from himself and toward Jesus Christ.

V. THEY ARE BAPTIZED IN JESUS' NAME

Acts 19:5

“When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

Their understanding changes.

Their baptism now reflects identification with:

Jesus Christ.

Cross References

Acts 2:38

Peter called hearers to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

Acts 8:16

Samaritan believers had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Romans 6:3

Christian baptism identifies believers with Jesus Christ and His saving work.

Spiritual Principle

Greater understanding of Jesus should produce obedient response.

VI. THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES UPON THEM

Acts 19:6

“Paul placed his hands on them, and the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.”

This event resembles earlier transitional moments in Acts.

Cross References

Acts 2:4

At Pentecost the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in other languages as the Spirit enabled them.

Acts 8:17

Peter and John laid hands upon Samaritan believers, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Acts 10:46

Gentile believers in Cornelius' household spoke in tongues and praised God when the Holy Spirit came upon them.

Important Doctrinal Note

Acts records several unusual transitional events as the gospel moves through:

Jews.

Samaritans.

Gentiles.

And now people connected primarily with John's baptism.

We should be careful about turning every historical sequence in Acts into a rigid formula that every believer must reproduce in exactly the same order.

Spiritual Principle

The Holy Spirit confirms that those who belong to Christ belong fully to the people of God.

VII. ABOUT TWELVE MEN

Acts 19:7

“There were about twelve men in all.”

Luke provides a simple numerical detail.

Cross References

Acts 2:41

About three thousand people were added to the church at Pentecost.

Acts 4:4

The number of believing men later grew to about five thousand.

Acts 8:17

The Samaritan believers also received the Holy Spirit through apostolic ministry.

Spiritual Principle

God cares about both great crowds and small groups.

Twelve men mattered.

VIII. THREE MONTHS IN THE SYNAGOGUE

Acts 19:8

“Paul went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, arguing and persuading about the kingdom of God.”

Paul remains patient.

Three months.

Cross References

Acts 17:2

Paul regularly reasoned from Scripture in synagogues.

Acts 18:4

He reasoned every Sabbath with Jews and Greeks.

Acts 28:23

Paul later continued explaining and persuading people concerning the kingdom of God.

Spiritual Principle

Biblical evangelism may involve patient, extended reasoning rather than one brief conversation.

IX. SOME BECOME STUBBORN

Acts 19:9

“But some became stubborn, rejecting the message and publicly insulting ‘the Way.’ So Paul left them and took the disciples with him. He held daily discussions in the lecture hall of Tyrannus.”

There comes a point when Paul changes strategy.

Cross References

Acts 9:2

Early Christianity was sometimes called “the Way.”

Acts 24:14

Paul later openly identified himself as a follower of “the Way.”

2 Timothy 1:15

Paul knew the pain of people turning away from his ministry.

Spiritual Principle

Persistent public hostility may require moving the teaching ministry to a more fruitful setting.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Do not abandon the mission just because one venue becomes hostile; change the venue and continue the mission.

X. ALL ASIA HEARS THE WORD

Acts 19:10

“This went on for two years, so that everyone living in Asia—both Jews and Greeks—heard the word of the Lord.”

This is extraordinary influence.

Paul teaches daily.

Others apparently carry the message outward.

Cross References

Acts 19:26

Demetrius later admits that Paul’s influence had spread throughout much of Asia.

1 Corinthians 16:9

Paul described Ephesus as a place where a great door of effective ministry had opened despite many opponents.

Revelation 1:11

Several churches later existed throughout the region of Asia.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Deep local teaching can produce wide regional impact.

XI. EXTRAORDINARY MIRACLES

Acts 19:11

“God did extraordinary miracles through Paul.”

Notice the subject:

God.

Cross References

Hebrews 2:4

God confirmed the gospel through signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 14:3

The Lord confirmed the message of grace through signs and wonders.

Mark 16:20

The Lord worked through the early proclamation and confirmed the Word.

Spiritual Principle

The miracle belongs to God even when He works through a human servant.

XII. HANDKERCHIEFS AND APRONS

Acts 19:12

“Even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses and evil spirits left them.”

This was unusual.

Luke already called these:

“Extraordinary miracles.”

Cross References

Acts 5:15

People once carried the sick where Peter’s shadow might pass over them.

Mark 5:27

A suffering woman touched Jesus’ garment in faith and received healing.

Matthew 9:20

The woman reached out and touched the edge of Jesus’ garment.

Important Truth

The objects themselves were not magical.

The power was not:

In cloth.

In aprons.

In Paul's body.

Luke says:

God did the miracles.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Never turn an extraordinary act of God into a commercial formula for spiritual power.

XIII. COUNTERFEIT EXORCISTS USE JESUS' NAME

Acts 19:13

“Some traveling Jewish exorcists tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those possessed by evil spirits, saying, ‘I command you by Jesus whom Paul preaches.’”

They attempt borrowed authority.

Cross References

Mark 9:38

The disciples once encountered someone using Jesus' name in casting out demons.

Luke 9:49

John reported a similar situation to Jesus.

Matthew 12:27

Jesus acknowledged that exorcistic claims existed within the broader religious culture.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus' name is not a magical formula that can be detached from faith in Jesus Himself.

XIV. THE SEVEN SONS OF SCEVA

Acts 19:14

“Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this.”

They appear to have built a spiritual practice around exorcism.

Cross References

Acts 19:13

These men attempted to invoke Jesus' name secondhand.

Mark 9:38

Others also attempted spiritual acts connected with Jesus' name.

Matthew 12:27

Exorcistic practices were known beyond Jesus' own disciples.

Spiritual Principle

Religious position does not automatically equal spiritual authority.

XV. “JESUS I KNOW”

Acts 19:15

“One evil spirit answered them, ‘Jesus I know, and Paul I know about—but who are you?’”

This is one of the most striking statements in Acts.

The demon recognizes:

Jesus.

Paul.

But not their borrowed authority.

Cross References

Mark 1:24

An unclean spirit correctly recognized Jesus as the Holy One of God.

Mark 5:7

A demonized man identified Jesus as Son of the Most High God.

James 2:19

Even demons believe that God exists and tremble.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Knowing Jesus' name is not the same as knowing Jesus.

XVI. THE EXORCISTS ARE OVERPOWERED

Acts 19:16

“Then the man with the evil spirit jumped on them, overpowered them, and beat them so badly that they ran out of the house naked and wounded.”

Their counterfeit ministry collapses.

Cross References

Mark 5:4

The demonized man among the tombs possessed extraordinary physical strength.

Luke 8:29

Demonic oppression could produce violent manifestations.

Mark 9:26

An evil spirit violently convulsed a boy before leaving him.

Spiritual Principle

Spiritual warfare is not entertainment, performance, or experimentation.

XVII. JESUS’ NAME IS HONORED

Acts 19:17

“This became known to everyone in Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. Fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor.”

The counterfeit fails.

Jesus is honored.

Cross References

Acts 5:5

Fear fell upon people after God’s holiness was revealed in the early church.

Acts 5:11

Great fear came upon the church and those who heard about God’s judgment.

Luke 1:65

Awe spread throughout a region when people witnessed God’s unusual activity.

Spiritual Principle

God can use the exposure of counterfeit spirituality to magnify the true authority of Jesus Christ.

XVIII. BELIEVERS CONFESS THEIR SINS

Acts 19:18

“Many who believed came and openly confessed their sins.”

Revival becomes personal.

Cross References

James 5:16

Believers are told to confess sins appropriately and pray for one another.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, God is faithful and righteous to forgive and cleanse us.

Proverbs 28:13

Those who hide sin do not prosper, but those who confess and forsake it find mercy.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Revival that produces excitement without confession is incomplete revival.

XIX. THE MAGIC BOOKS ARE BURNED

Acts 19:19

“A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them in public. The value of the books totaled about fifty thousand silver coins.”

This is costly repentance.

Cross References

Deuteronomy 18:10

God strictly forbade sorcery, divination, and occult practices.

Leviticus 20:6

God warned against turning to mediums and spiritists.

Galatians 5:20

Sorcery is included among works of the sinful nature that are contrary to life in God's kingdom.

Important Truth

They do not sell the books.

They burn them.

Why?

Because selling them would:

Pass the spiritual poison to someone else.

And profit from what they now know is wrong.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

“True Repentance Is Willing to Lose Money Rather Than Keep Profiting From Sin.”

XX. THE WORD PREVAILS

Acts 19:20

“In this way, the word of the Lord spread powerfully and prevailed.”

This is the theological summary.

Not:

Paul prevailed.

Not:

The miracles prevailed.

Not:

The crowd prevailed.

The Word prevailed.

Cross References

Acts 6:7

The Word of God spread, and the number of disciples multiplied.

Acts 12:24

The Word of God continued growing and spreading despite persecution.

Colossians 1:6

The gospel bears fruit and grows wherever it is received.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

“When the Word Prevails, Idols Fall, Sin Is Confessed, and Lives Change.”

XXI. PAUL LOOKS TOWARD ROME

Acts 19:21

“After these events, Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia, then go to Jerusalem. He said, ‘After I have been there, I must also see Rome.’”

Paul’s vision expands.

Cross References

Romans 15:25

Paul later explained his intention to travel to Jerusalem.

Romans 15:28

Paul also planned to travel farther west after completing his ministry responsibilities.

Acts 23:11

The Lord later confirmed that Paul would testify in Rome.

Spiritual Principle

God often gives His servants a burden for the next mission before the present assignment is fully complete.

XXII. TIMOTHY AND ERASTUS ARE SENT AHEAD

Acts 19:22

“He sent Timothy and Erastus ahead to Macedonia, but he stayed in Asia for a while.”

Again:

Mission is teamwork.

Cross References

Romans 16:23

Erastus later appears as a city official associated with Paul's ministry network.

2 Timothy 4:20

Paul later mentions Erastus remaining in Corinth.

1 Corinthians 4:17

Timothy frequently served as Paul's trusted representative to churches.

Spiritual Principle

Effective ministry multiplies responsibility through trusted coworkers.

XXIII. A MAJOR DISTURBANCE OVER “THE WAY”

Acts 19:23

“About that time, there was a major disturbance concerning ‘the Way.’”

The gospel has become impossible to ignore.

Cross References

Acts 9:2

The earliest Christians were known as followers of “the Way.”

2 Corinthians 1:8

Paul later described severe hardship experienced in the province of Asia.

Acts 19:9

Opponents had already publicly spoken against “the Way.”

Spiritual Principle

When the gospel begins changing deeply established practices, social resistance may intensify.

XXIV. DEMETRIUS MAKES SILVER SHRINES

Acts 19:24

“A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of the goddess Artemis, provided much work for the craftsmen.”

Idolatry has become an industry.

Cross References

Isaiah 44:10

Scripture asks what benefit comes from making a god or casting an idol that cannot truly help.

Isaiah 46:6

People pour out silver and gold so craftsmen can manufacture an object they later worship.

Acts 19:27

Demetrius will soon admit that the reputation and economic value of his trade are threatened.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

False worship often survives not only because people believe it, but because someone profits from it.

XXV. “OUR WEALTH COMES FROM THIS BUSINESS”

Acts 19:25

“He gathered them together with others in the trade and said, ‘Men, you know our wealth comes from this business.’”

Demetrius begins with:

Money.

Cross References

Revelation 18:17

Scripture warns how quickly great wealth connected with corrupt systems can collapse.

1 Timothy 6:10

The love of money becomes a root from which many kinds of evil grow.

Acts 16:19

The owners of the slave girl in Philippi also became angry when the gospel destroyed their profitable exploitation.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

When profit depends upon sin, repentance becomes an economic threat.

XXVI. THE GOSPEL IS CHANGING THE REGION

Acts 19:26

“You see and hear that Paul has persuaded and led astray a large number of people here in Ephesus and throughout Asia, saying that gods made by human hands are not gods at all.”

Demetrius unintentionally testifies to Paul’s effectiveness.

A large number of people have changed.

Cross References

Acts 17:29

Paul had already declared that God cannot be represented by gold, silver, or stone shaped by human skill.

Isaiah 44:9

Those who make idols are involved with objects that cannot truly see or save.

Psalms 115:4

Idols are made of silver and gold by human hands.

Spiritual Principle

The gospel does not merely add Jesus to a shelf of existing idols; it calls people to abandon false gods.

XXVII. MONEY, RELIGION, AND CULTURAL PRIDE

Acts 19:27

“Not only is our trade in danger of losing its good name, but the temple of the great goddess Diana will be discredited. Her majesty, worshiped all over Asia and the world, will be robbed of her glory.”

Demetrius appeals to three things.

Economic Interest

“Our trade.”

Religious Loyalty

“The temple.”

Cultural Pride

“Her majesty.”

Cross References

Acts 19:24

Demetrius himself profited from manufacturing religious objects.

1 Corinthians 8:4

Paul taught that idols have no true divine existence.

Isaiah 46:1

Isaiah mocked false gods that must themselves be carried rather than carrying their worshipers.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Error becomes especially difficult to challenge when money, religion, and cultural identity are all tied together.

XXVIII. “GREAT IS DIANA”

Acts 19:28

“When they heard this, they were furious and shouted, ‘Great is Diana of the Ephesians!’”

Emotion replaces reasoning.

Cross References

Acts 19:34

The crowd will continue the same chant for about two hours.

Acts 21:36

Another mob later shouted against Paul in Jerusalem.

Acts 22:22

Crowds later again responded emotionally and violently to Paul's testimony.

Spiritual Principle

A louder voice does not make a false belief true.

XXIX. THE WHOLE CITY IS IN UPROAR

Acts 19:29

"Soon the whole city was in an uproar. They seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia, and rushed as one into the theater."

Paul's coworkers become targets.

Cross References

Acts 20:4

Aristarchus later continued traveling with Paul.

Colossians 4:10

Paul later referred to Aristarchus as a fellow prisoner and ministry companion.

Philemon 1:24

Aristarchus remained counted among Paul's coworkers.

Spiritual Principle

Faithful partnership sometimes means sharing the danger as well as the ministry.

XXX. PAUL WANTS TO ADDRESS THE CROWD

Acts 19:30

“Paul wanted to go in and address the crowd, but the disciples would not let him.”

Paul is courageous.

But his friends restrain him.

Cross References

Acts 19:31

Even friendly regional officials urged Paul not to enter the theater.

2 Corinthians 1:8

Paul later described the severe pressure he endured in Asia.

Acts 14:5

Paul had previously faced violent plots requiring wise withdrawal.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Courage needs wisdom; bravery does not require unnecessary exposure to danger.

XXXI. OFFICIALS WARN PAUL

Acts 19:31

“Even some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent word urging him not to venture into the theater.”

Paul had developed relationships beyond the church.

Cross References

Acts 19:30

The disciples were already urging Paul not to enter.

Romans 16:23

Paul’s wider circle included people holding civic positions.

2 Corinthians 1:8

The danger in Asia had become severe.

Spiritual Principle

God may use believers and unbelievers alike to provide wise protection.

XXXII. THE CROWD DOES NOT KNOW WHY IT IS THERE

Acts 19:32

“The assembly was in confusion: some shouted one thing, some another. Most of the people didn’t even know why they were there.”

This may be one of Scripture’s best descriptions of mob behavior.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 14:33

God is not the author of confusion but of peace.

Acts 21:34

Another mob later shouted conflicting accusations so authorities could not determine what had happened.

Acts 17:5

Mobs had previously been assembled through manipulation.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

“Never Let a Crowd Do Your Thinking for You.”

Most did not even know:

Why they were angry.

Why they were shouting.

Why they were there.

XXXIII. ALEXANDER ATTEMPTS A DEFENSE

Acts 19:33

“The Jews pushed Alexander forward, and he tried to make a defense before the crowd.”

Alexander attempts to separate the Jewish community from Paul's Christian mission.

Cross References

Acts 19:34

The crowd refuses to hear him once they recognize his Jewish identity.

1 Timothy 1:20

Paul later mentions a man named Alexander in another context.

2 Timothy 4:14

Paul later refers to Alexander the metalworker, though Scripture does not clearly establish that these are the same man.

Spiritual Principle

Crowd prejudice can prevent even reasonable explanation from being heard.

XXXIV. TWO HOURS OF CHANTING

Acts 19:34

“But when they realized he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours: ‘Great is Diana of the Ephesians!’”

Two hours.

One slogan.

Cross References

Acts 19:28

The chant had begun when Demetrius stirred the craftsmen.

1 Kings 18:26

The prophets of Baal once cried repeatedly to their false god for hours without receiving an answer.

Acts 21:36

Another emotionally charged crowd later shouted violently against Paul.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Repetition can intensify emotion, but it cannot create truth.

XXXV. THE CITY CLERK QUIETS THE CROWD

Acts 19:35

“Finally, the city clerk quieted the crowd and said: ‘People of Ephesus, everyone knows that this city is the guardian of the temple of the great Diana and of her image that fell from heaven.’”

The clerk does not share Paul’s theology.

But he brings order.

Cross References

Isaiah 44:9

Scripture declares that idols made by human hands are ultimately worthless.

Jeremiah 10:3

Pagan religious customs involving crafted idols are empty.

Acts 19:24

The temple and image of Diana were central to Ephesian economic and religious life.

Spiritual Principle

God can use a person who does not share Christian faith to restrain disorder.

XXXVI. “DO NOT DO ANYTHING RASH”

Acts 19:36

“Since these facts are undeniable, you must be calm and not do anything rash.”

The clerk appeals for calm.

Cross References

James 1:19

Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.

Proverbs 15:1

A gentle answer can turn away anger, while harsh words stir it up.

Ecclesiastes 5:2

People should not speak rashly or hastily.

Spiritual Principle

Wisdom slows down when emotion demands immediate reaction.

XXXVII. THE CHRISTIANS ARE NOT TEMPLE ROBBERS

Acts 19:37

“You have brought these men here who are neither temple robbers nor blasphemers of our goddess.”

This is important.

Paul preached against idols.

But his ministry was not based on:

Looting temples.

Vandalizing shrines.

Physical attacks.

Cross References

Romans 2:22

Paul condemned hypocrisy concerning idolatry and sacred objects.

Acts 18:14

Roman authorities had previously recognized that Paul was not being accused of ordinary criminal wrongdoing.

Acts 25:8

Paul later defended himself as having committed no crime against Jewish law, temple, or Caesar.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The Christian response to false religion is gospel truth, not mob violence.

XXXVIII. USE THE COURTS

Acts 19:38

“If Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a complaint, the courts are open and there are officials. They can press charges there.”

The clerk calls for lawful process.

Cross References

Acts 19:24

Demetrius was the craftsman who initiated the disturbance.

Acts 18:12

Paul had previously appeared in a legitimate Roman court.

Deuteronomy 19:15

Biblical justice requires proper evidence rather than accusation alone.

Spiritual Principle

Grievances should be handled through orderly justice rather than mob intimidation.

XXXIX. OTHER ISSUES REQUIRE A LEGAL ASSEMBLY

Acts 19:39

“If you want to bring up other issues, they must be settled in a legal assembly.”

Again:

Order.

Procedure.

Law.

Cross References

Acts 15:2

The church itself had previously addressed controversy through orderly discussion.

Exodus 18:22

Moses established an organized process for resolving disputes.

Deuteronomy 17:8

Difficult legal matters were to be handled through recognized judicial procedures.

Spiritual Principle

Orderly processes protect people from the injustice of raw emotion.

XL. THE CITY RISKS BEING CHARGED WITH RIOTING

Acts 19:40

“We are in danger of being charged with rioting because of today’s events. There is no reason for this uproar, and we cannot justify it.”

The crowd itself has become legally vulnerable.

Cross References

Acts 17:6

Christians had previously been accused of disturbing cities, even though their opponents often created the actual unrest.

Acts 21:31

Mob violence later again threatened public order.

Acts 24:5

Paul was repeatedly accused of creating trouble, though the evidence frequently pointed elsewhere.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Those who accuse Christians of causing disorder may themselves become the source of disorder.

XLI. THE ASSEMBLY IS DISMISSED

Acts 19:41

“After he said this, he dismissed the assembly.”

The riot ends.

The gospel remains.

Cross References

Acts 23:10

Roman intervention later rescued Paul from another violent crowd.

1 Corinthians 14:33

God values peace and order rather than confusion.

Acts 17:33

Paul had previously left another public gathering after faithfully delivering the message.

Spiritual Principle

Crowds disperse; God's Word continues.

XLII. THE HOLY SPIRIT AND COMPLETE CHRISTIAN FAITH

The opening verses deserve careful attention.

These men knew:

John's baptism.

But John himself taught that people must look beyond him toward Christ.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A faith that stops at preparation without arriving at Jesus remains incomplete.

The Christian gospel includes:

Jesus' identity.

Jesus' death.

Jesus' resurrection.

Faith in Jesus.

The Holy Spirit.

XLIII. WHAT ACTS 19 TEACHES ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Spirit is not merely:

An influence.

An emotion.

A spiritual atmosphere.

The Holy Spirit is involved personally in:

Calling.

Empowering.

Witness.

Prophecy.

Mission.

Spiritual Principle

Christian life and mission cannot be reduced to human religious effort; believers depend upon the Holy Spirit.

XLIV. THE POWER OF DAILY TEACHING

Paul taught:

Daily.

For two years.

The result:

An entire region heard the Word.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

“Consistent Teaching Can Produce Influence Far Beyond the Room Where It Begins.”

Do not underestimate:

One class.

One church.

One Bible study.

One daily teaching ministry.

God can multiply truth outward.

XLV. MIRACLES MUST REMAIN GOD-CENTERED

Luke says:

“God did extraordinary miracles through Paul.”

That wording protects the truth.

Not:

Paul possessed magical power.

But:

God acted through Paul.

Spiritual Principle

A true miracle should increase confidence in God, not create a cult around the human instrument.

XLVI. JESUS' NAME IS NOT A FORMULA

The sons of Sceva tried:

“Jesus whom Paul preaches.”

Their relationship was secondhand.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

“You Cannot Live on Someone Else's Relationship With Jesus.”

Not:

Your pastor's Jesus.

Your parents' Jesus.

Your church's Jesus.

Your favorite teacher's Jesus.

You must personally know Christ.

XLVII. SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY CANNOT BE IMITATED

The seven sons copied:

Words.

Technique.

Vocabulary.

But they lacked:

Relationship.

Calling.

Authority.

Spiritual Principle

External imitation cannot reproduce genuine spiritual authority.

XLVIII. FEAR AND HONOR FOLLOW

When counterfeit spirituality collapses:

People begin taking Jesus seriously.

Spiritual Principle

The holiness of God becomes clearer when people stop treating spiritual things casually.

XLIX. CONFESSION AND REVIVAL

Many believers confess their practices.

This shows revival entering hidden places.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

“Revival Becomes Real When Sin Stops Being Protected.”

People stop hiding.

Stop excusing.

Stop defending.

They confess.

L. BURNING THE BOOKS

The believers' repentance costs them financially.

Fifty thousand silver coins represented enormous value.

Spiritual Principle

What Christ becomes worth to us changes what we are willing to lose.

LI. WHY THEY DID NOT SELL THE OCCULT MATERIAL

Selling would have transferred the temptation.

Destroying it ended its usefulness.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Repentance should not turn yesterday's sin into tomorrow's business opportunity.

LII. THE WORD PREVAILS OVER MAGIC

Ephesus was known for occult practices.

Yet Luke says:

The Word prevailed.

Spiritual Principle

Dark spiritual systems may appear deeply rooted, but they are not stronger than the truth of Jesus Christ.

LIII. WHEN REVIVAL AFFECTS THE ECONOMY

Demetrius realizes:

People changing beliefs means people changing purchases.

Fewer idol worshipers.

Fewer silver shrines.

Less money.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Real revival eventually affects how people spend money because conversion changes what they value.

LIV. THE GOSPEL THREATENS PROFITABLE SIN

This happened in Acts 16.

It happens again in Acts 19.

Philippi

A slave girl's exploitation ends.

Ephesus

The idol industry is threatened.

Spiritual Principle

When sin becomes economically profitable, gospel transformation may face organized resistance.

LV. DEMETRIUS' TRUE CONCERN

He speaks about:

Diana's glory.

But begins with:

"Our wealth."

Crawford Bible Study Principle

People sometimes disguise economic self-interest in religious language.

LVI. THE CROWD DOES NOT KNOW WHY IT IS THERE

Acts 19:32 is a timeless warning.

Most people:

Did not know why they were there.

Yet they shouted.

Spiritual Principle

Never borrow your outrage from a crowd whose facts you have not examined.

LVII. TWO HOURS DOES NOT MAKE IT TRUE

The crowd shouts:

“Great is Diana.”

For two hours.

Yet:

Diana remains an idol.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Error repeated loudly and repeatedly remains error.

LVIII. PAUL’S COURAGE NEEDED RESTRAINT

Paul wanted to enter the theater.

Others stopped him.

Spiritual Principle

Not every dangerous opportunity is a divine assignment.

Courage asks:

What does God require?

Recklessness asks:

What can I prove?

LIX. THE CITY CLERK AND COMMON GRACE

The clerk does not preach Christ.

Yet he:

Calms the mob.

Calls for legal process.

Stops violence.

Spiritual Principle

God can preserve order through civil institutions even when their leaders do not share Christian faith.

LX. WHAT ACTS 19 TEACHES ABOUT CHRISTIAN PUBLIC WITNESS

The clerk says the Christians were not:

Temple robbers.

Blasphemous criminals.

Their influence came through:

Teaching.

Persuasion.

Conversion.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The church changes culture most faithfully by changing hearts through truth rather than forcing change through violence.

LXI. THE GREAT CONTRAST OF ACTS 19

Look at the competing powers.

Magic Books

Burned.

False Exorcists

Humiliated.

Idols

Threatened.

Business Interests

Alarmed.

The Crowd

Confused.

The Word of the Lord

Prevails.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

“Everything Built Against Truth Eventually Meets Something Stronger Than Itself—the Word of God.”

LXII. SEVEN GREAT LESSONS FROM ACTS 19

1. Incomplete Understanding Needs Fuller Truth

Principle:

Sincerity must keep moving toward complete understanding of Jesus Christ.

2. The Holy Spirit Empowers God’s People

Principle:

Christian witness depends upon divine power rather than human ability alone.

3. God Performs Miracles

Principle:

Spiritual power belongs to God, not magical objects or human personalities.

4. Jesus' Name Must Never Be Used Casually

Principle:

The name of Christ is authority, not superstition.

5. Genuine Repentance Produces Separation From Sin

Principle:

Believers burned what belonged to their former occult life.

6. Gospel Transformation May Threaten Profitable Systems

Principle:

When people stop worshiping idols, industries built on idolatry begin to suffer.

7. God's Word Prevails

Principle:

Neither occult power, economic opposition, cultural pride, nor public chaos can stop the Word of the Lord.

LXIII. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Who did Paul meet when he arrived in Ephesus?

He met about twelve disciples whose understanding was incomplete because they knew only John's baptism.

Question 2

What did Paul explain to them about John's baptism?

John's baptism was connected with repentance and preparation.

John pointed people toward the One coming after him:

Jesus Christ.

Question 3

What happened after they heard the fuller message?

They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Paul laid hands on them.

The Holy Spirit came upon them.

They spoke in tongues and prophesied.

Question 4

How long did Paul teach in the lecture hall of Tyrannus?

He taught there daily for two years.

Through that ministry, the Word spread throughout the region of Asia.

Question 5

Who performed the extraordinary miracles?

God did.

Paul was the servant through whom God chose to work.

Question 6

What mistake did the sons of Sceva make?

They attempted to use Jesus' name as a spiritual formula without possessing genuine relationship and authority in Christ.

Question 7

What happened after the sons of Sceva were defeated?

Fear spread throughout Ephesus.

The name of Jesus was honored.

Believers confessed their sins.

People involved in sorcery destroyed their occult materials.

Question 8

Why did believers burn their sorcery books instead of selling them?

Their repentance was genuine.

They did not want to continue spreading or profiting from practices they now understood were sinful.

Question 9

What was the result of this repentance?

“The word of the Lord spread powerfully and prevailed.”

Question 10

Why did Demetrius oppose Paul?

Paul’s preaching was persuading people that handmade idols were not real gods.

This threatened Demetrius’ profitable silver-shrine business.

Question 11

What happened during the riot?

A huge confused crowd entered the theater.

Many people did not even know why they were there.

For about two hours they shouted:

“Great is Diana of the Ephesians!”

Question 12

What is the central lesson of Acts 19?

The gospel of Jesus Christ has power to expose incomplete faith, overcome counterfeit spirituality, produce costly repentance, transform culture, and continue prevailing despite organized opposition.

LXIV. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Acts 19 asks several serious questions.

Is My Understanding of Christ Complete?

The twelve men needed fuller truth.

Am I Depending Upon the Holy Spirit?

Christian ministry cannot rest only on human effort.

Do I Treat Jesus' Name Reverently?

The sons of Sceva did not.

Do I Have a Personal Relationship With Christ?

Borrowed religion is insufficient.

Is There Anything From My Old Life I Need to Abandon Completely?

The Ephesian believers burned their occult books.

Am I Protecting Sin Because It Has Financial Value?

Demetrius did.

Does My Faith Affect How I Spend Money?

Real repentance does.

Do I Think for Myself Biblically When Crowds Become Emotional?

Many Ephesians did not even know why they were gathered.

Am I Courageous Without Becoming Reckless?

Paul needed others to restrain him.

Do I Believe God's Word Can Prevail Where Darkness Looks deeply established?

Acts 19 says:

Yes.

LXV. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“You Cannot Borrow Someone Else's Jesus”

The sons of Sceva said:

“Jesus whom Paul preaches.”

They knew the name.

But they did not know the Lord.

Principle

Christianity is not secondhand spirituality. Every person must personally respond to Jesus Christ.

LXVI. ANOTHER CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“True Repentance Burns the Bridge Back to the Old Life”

The believers could have:

Stored the books.

Hidden the books.

Sold the books.

But they burned them.

Principle

When something belongs to a life of rebellion against God, genuine repentance stops making provision for returning to it.

LXVII. ANOTHER CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“When Jesus Changes Hearts, He Changes Markets”

Demetrius understood something many churches forget.

If enough people truly follow Jesus:

Their habits change.

Their spending changes.

Their entertainment changes.

Their worship changes.

Their values change.

Principle

A transformed heart eventually produces transformed choices.

LXVIII. ANOTHER CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Do Not Let the Crowd Do Your Thinking”

Most of the people in the theater:

Did not know why they were there.

Yet:

They shouted.

Principle

Biblical discernment requires facts, truth, and wisdom before outrage.

LXIX. ANOTHER CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“The Word of the Lord Is Stronger Than the Culture Surrounding It”

Ephesus had:

Occultism.

Idolatry.

Economic power.

Religious tradition.

Public enthusiasm.

Yet:

The Word prevailed.

Principle

Never measure the power of the gospel by the strength of the culture opposing it.

LXX. FINAL APPLICATION

Acts Chapter 19 begins with twelve men who need fuller understanding.

It ends with an entire city shaken by the impact of the gospel.

Between those two points:

The Holy Spirit comes.

Paul teaches.

The Word spreads.

Miracles occur.

Counterfeit spirituality is exposed.

Jesus' name is honored.

Sin is confessed.

Magic books burn.

Profits are threatened.

Idol makers panic.

A city riots.

And through everything:

The Word of the Lord prevails.

That is the great message of Acts 19.

The gospel does not merely produce religious feelings.

It produces:

Changed beliefs.

Changed practices.

Changed spending.

Changed loyalties.

Changed worship.

Changed lives.

The believers in Ephesus did not say:

We will follow Jesus and keep our occult practices privately.

Instead:

They confessed.

They burned the books.

They accepted the financial loss.

That is repentance.

The sons of Sceva teach the opposite lesson.

They wanted:

Jesus' authority.

Without:

Jesus Himself.

They wanted:

The power.

Without:

The relationship.

They wanted:

The name.

Without:

The Lord.

And it failed catastrophically.

Christianity cannot be reduced to:

Religious vocabulary.

Techniques.

Formulas.

Objects.

Celebrity preachers.

Borrowed spirituality.

We must know:

Jesus Christ.

Acts 19 also exposes the power of financial interest.

Demetrius does not primarily begin by saying:

We love Diana.

He says:

Our wealth comes from this business.

The gospel threatened his wallet.

Then suddenly:

Religious outrage.

Cultural outrage.

Public outrage.

A mob forms.

Many people join without knowing why.

This is a warning.

Crowds can be manipulated.

Religious language can hide financial motives.

Cultural pride can disguise personal interest.

But none of it defeats the gospel.

The chapter does not end:

Great is Diana.

It has already given the true verdict:

“The word of the Lord spread powerfully and prevailed.”

Therefore:

Know Jesus personally.

Depend upon the Holy Spirit.

Study and teach the Word consistently.

Do not imitate spiritual power.

Reject occult practices.

Confess sin.

Destroy what continually pulls you back toward rebellion.

Do not profit from what dishonors God.

Think carefully when crowds become emotional.

Use courage with wisdom.

Trust God when culture resists.

And remember:

Idols rise.

Industries change.

Crowds shout.

Riots end.

But:

The Word of the Lord prevails.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for Acts Chapter 19.

Thank You for the power of Your Word.

Give us complete understanding of Jesus Christ.

Keep us from incomplete religion that stops short of Him.

Fill us with Your Holy Spirit.

Give us courage to speak Your truth.

Give us endurance to teach Your Word faithfully.

Thank You that miracles and spiritual power belong to You.

Keep us from turning spiritual things into formulas, merchandise, superstition, or human glory.

Teach us to honor the name of Jesus.

Protect us from counterfeit spirituality.

Keep us far from occult practices.

If there is anything in our lives that belongs to darkness, give us courage to remove it completely.

Teach us genuine repentance.

Help us confess sin rather than hide it.

Help us forsake what dishonors You.

Give us willingness to accept financial loss rather than profit from sin.

Protect our hearts from loving money more than truth.

Give us discernment when public outrage rises.
Help us think biblically rather than follow crowds blindly.
Give us courage like Paul.
But also give us wisdom to know when not to step into unnecessary danger.
Thank You that no idol is stronger than You.
No false religion is stronger than You.
No occult power is stronger than You.
No business interest is stronger than You.
No crowd is stronger than You.
No city is beyond Your reach.
Let Your Word spread.
Let Your Word grow.
Let Your Word prevail.
And let the name of the Lord Jesus be honored.
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“In this way, the word of the Lord spread powerfully and prevailed.” — Acts 19:20

Central Truth

The gospel of Jesus Christ exposes incomplete and counterfeit spirituality, brings the Holy Spirit's transforming work, produces genuine repentance that abandons sin, challenges profitable idolatry, and continues prevailing despite cultural, economic, and public opposition.

Acts 19 in One Sentence

Paul's extended ministry in Ephesus brings fuller understanding of Christ, the powerful work of the Holy Spirit, extraordinary miracles, the exposure of counterfeit exorcists, costly repentance from sorcery, and such widespread transformation that the idolatrous economy reacts with a riot—yet through it all the Word of the Lord spreads powerfully and prevails.