

01-01-07 Acts: 19-21

Rick Miller: Acts chapter 19 verse 21. **Let's open in prayer.**

Lord, we thank you for your word. We're just excited. What you speak to us in your word, gives us a love for your word more and more, and we just pray this morning that as we consider these great men in the Book of Acts that you would give us vision, give us boldness for what you've called us to do in our generation.

We commit this time to you in Jesus name, Amen.

Okay, Acts chapter 19. We're going to pick up in verse 21.

And when these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the spirit when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia to go to Jerusalem saying, after I have been there, I must also see Rome. So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time.

So this is really kind of a transitional verse here. Verse 21. It is a verse that really sets the tone for the remainder of the book of Acts, that it's Paul now setting his sights on Rome, via Jerusalem. And ultimately his goal was to reach Spain. But Luke really makes no reference to Paul's desire to go to Spain.

The purpose of Luke's writings in the Book of Acts is really to trace the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome through Paul, Rome being really the center of the Roman world at that time. So this, like I said, is just kind of a transitional verse and shows us what's now going to happen for the rest of the Book of Acts.

Notice in verse 21, this phrase "*Paul purposed in the spirit*". Now, if you have an NIV, it doesn't say that. It just says Paul decided to go, which kind of concerned me. I was looking at this verse in a lot of different versions, I can do that in a computer. And I was surprised that most of the versions did not phrase this verse that Paul purposed in the spirit.

Although in the Greek it does say the spirit. And it makes you wonder sometimes about these translations. I mean, I would really encourage you to use

a King James or the New King James Version because the manuscript that's translated from is really more reliable. What these other translations use **manuscripts of the other translations use. (?)**

I'm not saying don't read the NIV. Be aware that there are some issues where certain things are excluded and dropped out and things like this, that kind of concern me because I think that's an important verse there that Paul purposed in this spirit. Now it's not exactly clear that this is the Holy Spirit he was purposing in, but I personally believe he was.

One reason is if you go over to Second Corinthians 1:15 Paul makes a statement there that I think really ties into this

Second Corinthians 1:15.

15And in this confidence I intended to come to you before, that you might have a second benefit— 16to pass by way of you to Macedonia, to come again from Macedonia to you, and be helped by you on my way to Judea. 17Therefore, when I was planning this, did I do it lightly? Or the things I plan, do I plan according to the flesh, that with me there should be Yes, Yes, and No, No?

So Paul's, "No", making the point there with the Corinthians, when I plan, I don't just plan it lightly or I don't plan it according to the flesh. He plans according to the spirit and that's really what you see here. Paul, going back in Acts, he purposed in the spirit. He made his plans in the spirit.

I think that's an important balance for our lives, that when we make plans we don't just really sort of make up our own plans and then ask God to bless them. That's really not the best way. The other extreme is don't make plans at all and just say, well, the Lord's just going to lead me. I'm not going to make any plans.

Well, I think this is a good, healthy balance that you can purpose things, you can plan things, but you're doing it in the spirit. You're truly asking the Lord for his guidance and his insight and his revelation as to what his plan is. And it's interesting, as we get further on in Acts, we see where the spirit was definitely speaking to Paul through individuals as he was trying to go to Jerusalem and people kept telling him, don't go because chains and suffering await you.

Paul's like, I don't care. I'm going, and there's a controversy as to whether, was that God trying to tell him not to go, or was Paul just plowing ahead and kind of ignoring the Lord's voice. But my point is you pray, you ask the spirit to lead you, and you go forward and trust God that he's going to continue to lead you

and speak to you. So we really see the spirit of God speaking to Paul through other people. The Lord speaking to him internally. I was just listening this morning to some of the later chapters in Acts where Paul said, yeah, the spirit spoke to me in every city that chains and suffering await me in Jerusalem. So see, this should be the normal path of ministry for us. That we're hearing the voice of the Lord, we're hearing the spirit again. We're not just making up ministry goals or life goals and saying, well, God just bless what I plan to do. No we don't want to do that.

I was talking earlier about the outreach that God would have us to do as a church. I'm not just going to pick something and say, well, God, you bless it. No, I want the spirit of God to speak to me, to the leadership. We're going to the deacons to meet today, we're going to talk. I expect the Lord is going to bring to our minds unity and a purpose as to what we're to do; maybe not today, but I believe over the weeks and months.

So that's just a beautiful way to live that we're purposing in the spirit. And here now looking at a New Year, many times we'll set goals, right? New Year's resolutions, and I don't know, I think the older you get the less excited you get about that, right?

You've kind of learned through experience. Lord, just change me in areas that need to be changed, and I'm just trusting in you and looking to you and walking in your grace. It's okay to set goals but really ask the Lord to guide you in that goal. Don't set some unrealistic goal and then when you fail, you get all discouraged.

Just say, Lord, what do you want me to do? How do you want me to study through the Bible this year? What do you want me to do? Would you speak and guide me? And the Lord is anxious to speak to us. He really is. I really respect that about Paul and I pray our church would continue to be that way, and would grow to be that way more and more that we're just hearing this, what the spirit of the Lord is saying.

So, now we see Paul saying he's going to pass through Macedonia and going to Jerusalem. We know from reading in Romans and First Corinthians that actually Paul was collecting money in these different churches and was going to deliver this money to Jerusalem. The church of Jerusalem was really hurting.

If you remember back in chapter two, I think it was chapter two or three; we studied how everybody sold everything and had everything in common. It was really kind of like the first communism. I mean, that's what communism means,

everything in common. And it didn't work though. It really didn't work for the Church of Jerusalem.

Their hearts were in the right place but they ended up selling everything and then they had no means of income at all. So they really hit a place of poverty. Paul really wanted to reach out to the church of Jerusalem. I think Paul felt really bad for all the things he had done to the church there before he was converted, and he really wanted to reach out to them.

And yet we do kind of continue to see this sort of tension between the Church of Jerusalem and Paul's ministry.

The church in Jerusalem tending to be more, I guess, legalistic and all. But Paul still loved them and wanted to reach out to them. So then we see in verse 21 or verse 22, how he sent into Macedonia, Timothy and Erastus and I really like that phrase. It says he sent those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus.

So that's important to hear and understand that Paul had people ministering to him. Paul wasn't just a one man show. He had people coming up alongside of him and helping him, enabling him to be a success. And so maybe your calling isn't to be the person out in front, maybe your calling is to come alongside and hold up somebody's arms.

Remember that story of Moses, how Aaron and Hur held up his arms and when his arms were held up, the army would have victory and when his arms went down, they'd be defeated? So people of God need you to come alongside and minister to them, to hold their arms up. My wife and I feel so blessed how many of you have just ministered to us and shown your love to us.

It means a lot. It really does. I don't want to point anybody out because I'd probably exclude somebody. But so many of you, I do sense that just come alongside us and build us up and those that don't have that heart or don't have the vision for the ministry here, we just pray the Lord moves them on.

But I'm so thankful for those who do support what the Lord is doing here and are excited about it. And so, yeah, Timothy and Erastus, what an opportunity really to come alongside the Apostle Paul and to minister to him. So now let's jump into this story of the opposition Paul gets from Demetrius.

We'll read verse 23 through 28.

23And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way. 24For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. 25He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: "Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. 26Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. 27So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship." 28Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

So here these guys are concerned about their business being impacted by the ministry of Paul, that people wouldn't buy their little trinkets and their goddesses and silver shrines and things.

They were making a lot of money off of this and Paul's ministry was impacting him. This temple to Diana (her name was also Artemis) was one of the seven wonders of the world back in that time and this temple was just huge. There were 127 pillars, each of them 60 feet high and it was adorned with all these beautiful sculptures.

They say that this temple was really lost until 1869 when it was discovered. Then the main altar was unearthed in 1965. Apparently you can actually go and see it today and in the sacred enclosure stood the sacred image of Diana.

The story was that she had fallen from heaven down to this spot, some 400 years before this. The temple had been there 400 years. Diana was a goddess of fertility and she had multiple breasts and history says that perhaps it was a meteorite that fell, that had some sort of an appearance of a woman with multiple breasts.

They got all excited about this meteorite, and said, "Oh, this has fallen from heaven, this is a goddess." And it really became a sexual kind of worship. They had prostitution at the temple there, and there were hundreds of these priests that were giving themselves to prostitution.

So it was really an immoral situation there. It sort of reminds me of our country today, worshipping sex. So there are a lot of similarities there.

And so this is one of the seven wonders of the world. Ephesus was a port city, a lot of trade going on there. A lot of people were coming through from all around

the world and they'd always want to go visit this great temple, this wonder of the world. You had these guys selling little souvenirs basically and saying, well, you'll be blessed if you buy one of our trinkets.

Now people are getting saved and their hearts are changing and they're not buying this stuff anymore. It says Paul persuaded and turned away many, saying that they are not gods, which are made with hands. It's interesting that there are only two incidents in the Book of Acts where Gentiles persecute and oppose Paul.

Both of those involve money where it was affecting the Gentiles income. One, I remember, was the Philippian fortune teller, who when Paul cast out the demon he lost his source of income through this demon possessed fortune teller. And yet really, Demetrius is giving Paul a compliment here, isn't he; because he's speaking of the effectiveness of Paul's ministry.

I've heard of revivals where the Lord moves in such a powerful way that taverns get shut down. And it really impacts the businesses in the community. I pray that would happen in our city. It's interesting that although Paul had this impact, it wasn't his goal to shut down these businesses.

It wasn't like he was calling for a boycott or things like that. Because it says in verse 37, where the city clerk acknowledges that Paul hadn't blasphemed the goddess Diana, he was just preaching Jesus. In general terms, Paul was saying that gods made by the hands of men, are not gods. You're to worship the creator of heaven and earth.

I think there's a message there that we're not so much to be anti-everything.

We're to be pro-Jesus and we can get off track by campaigning against all the evil, rather than focusing on proclaiming Jesus Christ, and people seeing the life of Christ in us and becoming attracted to it.

So I saw that was interesting. Well, let's read 29 through 34.

29So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul's travel companions. 30And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him. 31Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater. 32Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together. 33And they drew

Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand, and wanted to make his defense to the people. 34But when they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

So this was really something that the Romans did not like to see, a gathering like this of civil disorder.

And we will see, as we read on in the chapter that the mayor of the city was really concerned about this, that the Romans would come down upon them for having this kind of gathering. They say within this temple and this theater, it actually held over 25,000 people. We're not sure the number of people that were in there, but it, could have been that many people.

And can you imagine the chanting and noise and they say the acoustics of that theater are really good and that it must have been deafening. And I think, I don't know, I think that speaks of the enemy. When he gets frustrated, he has nothing else to throw at you.

They're getting loud and obnoxious and chanting something over and over. And it was interesting though that Paul was willing to go into the middle of this and to proclaim the word, kind of like my dream. You go in a place where most people wouldn't go, but you're driven by this inward love, and there's a disregard for your own safety and your own life.

That's where God really wants to bring us, where there's just a disregard. I know I hear stories of the GFA missionaries where they'll go into a village or a town and they're told you guys, you should dig your grave first before you go on and start preaching because there's probably a good chance you might lose your life.

I mean, that's the kind of commitment that these guys have and I really believe that's where the Lord wants to bring us, that our lives are not important to us. In our bulletin I've had this verse for several weeks here, Acts 20:24, Paul saying,

24But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

And so there was just something going on in Paul that he didn't count his life dear to himself, but wanted to just finish the race with joy. He had the vision of eternity that this life is short. I just want to take as many as I can with me, and

I'm not really concerned about my own life, but I want to testify to the good news of the grace of God.

And that's what I was feeling in this dream, that not only were we able to proclaim salvation to these down and outers, but proclaiming the grace of God for walking in victory, that your life can be transformed by just believing, yes, by just believing.

Here's Paul's heart going right and he wants to go right into the assembly and there are people trying to stop him saying, "No, man, you don't want to go in there, you're going to get killed". And Paul, he'd already written his life off, it wasn't dear to him. So we're going to go ahead and end there and we'll pick up in verse 35.

One thing I want to talk about next week is something I think is going on in our culture, that they're chanting about in our culture, in sort of a, well, I think in an unreasonable way. And that's the evolution. All the scientists chanting evolution is a fact. I have some things I want to read to you next week from a book one of you gave me, I think Don gave me a book; if it was Don, tell him thank you.

It's really a good book. But that's what's being chanted really by the scientists. They have no reason or intelligence really about what they're chanting, but they're all chanting at the same time. And that can be intimidating, right? 25,000 scientists telling us we're just dumb creationists. But I want to talk about that next week because I think that sort of fits in culturally to what's happening today.

I mean, here they were worshiping this God made with hands and denying the God of heaven. I believe it was so they could fulfill their lustful pleasure. And it's the same way with evolution. People want to deny God so they can just live any way they want, and there's no alternative. No. When you've rejected the God of creation and the clear evidence of God's creation, when you just rejected that as impossible, then you'll believe anything.

The most ridiculous theory of evolution; that's what's happening in our culture

So, we'll end here. Let's close in prayer. Lord, we thank you for the heart of Paul that you're showing us, Lord, a man who was willing to go into dangerous places. Who was driven by the power of your spirit in his life. He was driven by the grace of God, and Lord, as we go this week, we pray you set our hearts aflame and we know it's not something we can work up.

We look to you to do it within us, Lord, that we might run this race and finish it with joy, that we might proclaim the grace of God.

And so, Lord we're just looking for you to work that in us and that we would not be intimidated by this world's system, but we go even in the middle of it and proclaim Jesus Christ.

Lord, we pray that we wouldn't get caught up in the worship of our culture of sexual indulgence and immorality. But Lord, that we would keep our hearts pure before you and be so caught up with the beauty of Jesus Christ that these things, these temptations, would not consume our life, but we'd be gazing upon your beauty, Lord.

So, Lord, as we go, we do continue to pray for Tony Andress and ask for a mighty blessing upon them from your hand.