



First Baptist Church Selmer

THE ROAD TO ROMANS • PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY •
ACTS 19:21-41; 20:17-38 • 2/8/2026

MAIN POINT

We can be an effective witness for Christ in our world and a godly example in the lives of other believers.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Take a few minutes to discuss childhood heroes. Discuss who your most memorable ones were, why they were, and how you imitated them.

Think about the person whose positive example has influenced you the most. In what area of your life did this person's positive example most affect you? How are you different as a result of that example?

As you look back over the course of your life, you can point to specific people who shaped you into the person you are today. These influences can either be positive or negative. As Christians, we have a responsibility to recognize the influence we have over other people. Because of the gospel, we can be an effective witness for Christ in our world and a godly example in the lives of other believers. We see Paul back on mission again, starting in Acts 18:23, in what is considered Paul's 3rd Missionary Journey (Acts 18:23 - Acts 21). **See also Appendix D.**

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 19:21-41.

21 "Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, 'After I have been there, I must also see Rome.' 22 And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

23 About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way. 24 For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. 25 These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, 'Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. 26 And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. 27 And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship.'

28 When they heard this they were enraged and were crying out, 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!' 29 So the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's companions in travel. 30 But when Paul wished to go in among the crowd, the disciples would not let him. 31 And even some of the Asiarchs, who were friends of his, sent to him and were urging him not to venture into the theater. 32 Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. 33 Some of the crowd prompted Alexander, whom the Jews had put forward. And Alexander, motioning with his hand, wanted to make a defense to the crowd. 34 But when they recognized that he was a Jew, for about two hours they all cried out with one voice, 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!'

35 And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, 'Men of Ephesus, who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great Artemis, and of the sacred stone that fell from the sky? 36 Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. 37 For you have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess. 38 If therefore Demetrius and the craftsmen with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. 39 But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly. 40 For we really are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion.' 41 And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly." (ESV)

What are Demetrius's main concerns in verse 27? How does he get the attention and support of his peers?

The commotion arose when Demetrius, a silversmith, complained that Paul was hurting his and the other silversmiths' businesses. They made shrines of the goddess Artemis's temple, which people purchased and used in their own home altars and as offerings in the temple itself. Demetrius complained to an assembled group of craftsmen that their prosperity was derived from this business, but Paul was undermining it. Demetrius declared Paul had persuaded and misled the people when he taught them that gods made by hand are not gods.

How can unhealthy devotions to career and possessions cause individuals to prioritize them over the gospel?

In what ways can we best prepare for possible adversity in our Christian lives? In what ways can we draw strength from Paul's example?

When we proclaim the gospel today, we can expect opposition from those who love worldly things more than eternal ones. Paul didn't arouse opposition by staging sit-ins or by picketing the temple of Artemis. He simply and courageously presented Christ in the power of the Spirit. When the gospel message would limit profit for Demetrius and others that day, they would stop at nothing to silence the messengers.

But the messengers would not be silenced. Paul addresses his time in Ephesus in Acts 20, in which he boldly testifies again to the Ephesian elders his willingness to boldly and unapologetically testify to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, despite the consequences that he may endure.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 20:17-38.

17 "Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. 18 And when they came to him, he said to them:

'You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, 19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; 20 how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, 21 testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. 22 And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, 23 except

that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. 24 But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. 25 And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. 26 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, 27 for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. 28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. 29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. 32 And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 33 I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. 34 You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. 35 In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

36 And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. 37 And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, 38 being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship." (ESV)

What character traits did Paul indicate he had modeled for the Ephesians (vv. 18-19)? Why do you think those two traits were important to Paul's ministry?

Paul specifically mentioned his humility and perseverance. He had served God with great humility, but he hadn't always found his ministry among them to be easy. He particularly focused on the opposition of the Jews. Such experiences reminded the elders that Christian servants often encounter opposition and hardship.

How can humility and perseverance be helpful to believers today? What are some other character traits seen in someone who is a good Christian example for others?

In what ways did Paul say he was an exemplary witness for the gospel (vv. 20-21)? What are some other traits of an exemplary witness?

Effective Christian witness is always open and honest. It reaches out to all, to people of every background, race, and class. It includes not just those who are like us, but those quite different from us. It acknowledges that all of us are sinners and in need of the salvation that is to be found in Jesus Christ alone (Acts 4:12).

What metaphor did Paul use to describe the responsibility of the elders as spiritual leaders (vv. 25-31)? Why is the imagery of shepherd and sheep appropriate for godly leadership?

Paul used the language of shepherding to describe the responsibility of the leaders of the Ephesian church. Jesus set the ultimate example of a shepherd. We can trust Him to lead us faithfully, gently, and with perfect wisdom. We should be as selfless and trustworthy to the people God has entrusted us with.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How does Paul's missionary journey challenge you to be a more effective witness for the gospel?

Who is watching and learning about evangelism from you? How are you a godly example for them?

PRAYER

Ask God to root in you a desire to be an effective gospel witness and a godly example for others in the faith.

COMMENTARY

ACTS 19:21-41

19:21-25 Paul intended to return to the places he had evangelized earlier on his second missionary trip and then go to Jerusalem before traveling further west. As he stated in his letter to the Romans (Rm 15:23-29), he believed his missionary work in the east was finished. After taking the collection to Jerusalem, he planned to proceed to Rome and then further west to Spain. The cult of Artemis at Ephesus was part of a larger Greek cult of Artemis, the "Great Mother." As with many ancient cults, artisans like Demetrius made

their living by fashioning cultic items such as idols. Paul's preaching jeopardized this vocation. The temple generated so much economy that it became an important trade for the whole region. Paganism and idolatry were associated with worship at the temple of this mother goddess who supposedly gave fertility to humankind.

19:26-31 Paul's reputation had spread throughout Asia, making him a threat to the beliefs and lifestyle for a considerable number of people. The Ephesian temple of Artemis, whose foundations went back to the eighth century B.C., was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Demetrius foresaw that it would fall into disrepute and ruin if Paul persuaded enough people that gods made by hand are not gods. In fact, this is exactly what happened. The ruins of the temple were discovered in the nineteenth century, and the altar was uncovered in 1965. The Ephesian amphitheater seated 24,000 people and was thoroughly remodeled in the first century. The disciples wisely kept Paul from joining his traveling companions. It would have been a senseless self-sacrifice to enter into the clutches of such a hostile mob. That some of the provincial officials also pleaded with Paul to stay away shows that he had come to be well regarded by some leaders in the province.

19:33-34 The Jews of the city understandably wanted to distance themselves from the controversy caused by Paul and his followers. They shoved forward one of their own, Alexander, a Hellenistic Jew (as indicated by his name), to offer an apology on their behalf. Ironically, the Jews would have had the same view of the Artemis cult as Paul and his followers, but in this case they did not want to be lumped in with them. As for the Ephesian mob, they disallowed such a distinction. They knew that anyone whose religious roots were Jewish represented opposition to Artemis.

19:37-41 In their rush to condemn Jesus and the Christian movement, Jews and Gentiles alike often violated civil and judicial procedures (18:14-15; Mt 26:60). In this case, the city clerk made it clear that the actions of Demetrius were against the law and did not follow due process. Fear of Roman reprisal was a common motivator for clearing up civil unrest. There is no mention of further legal action taken. This shows that Paul and his followers had broken no laws. They were simply upsetting those who profited from the Artemis cult.

ACTS 20:17-38

Paul's Miletus address is the only major speech of Paul which Luke recorded for his third missionary period. It is the only speech in Acts addressed to a Christian audience and as

such is the most like Paul's epistles, which were also addressed to Christians. It can be outlined in four parts.

First, Paul pointed to his past example during his three-year ministry in Ephesus. He emphasized his witness to both Jews and Gentiles in the face of constant opposition. Second, he pointed to his own present prospects. He was on his way to Jerusalem, led by the Spirit, aware that he was facing real danger. He was saying his farewell to Ephesus; he would not be returning there. Third, Paul looked toward the more distant future of the Ephesian church. He warned the church that "*fierce wolves*" would come and ravage the flock. (His prediction did indeed come true, as false teachings constantly besieged Ephesus in later years [e.g., Rev. 2:6]). Finally, Paul offered a benediction for the church and a reminder of how he had always avoided greed in his ministry to them, urging them to follow his example. He concluded with Jesus' saying that it is more blessed to give than to receive. This saying is only found here.