

CHAPTER 19

We left Paul in his circuit visiting the churches (~~4823~~ Acts 18:23), but we have not forgotten, nor has he, the promise he made to his friends at Ephesus, to return to them, and make some stay there; now this chapter shows us his performance of that promise, his coming to Ephesus, and his continuance there two years; we are here told,

I. How he laboured there in the word and doctrine, how he taught some weak believers that had gone no further than John's baptism (v. 1-7), how he taught three months in the synagogue of the Jews (v. 8), and, when he was driven thence, how he taught the Gentiles a long time in a public school (v. 9, 10), and how he confirmed his doctrine by miracles (v. 11, 12).

II. What was the fruit of his labour, particularly among the conjurers, the worst of sinners: some were confounded, that did but make use of his name (v. 13-17), but others were converted, that received and embraced his doctrine (v. 18-20).

III. What projects he had of further usefulness (v. 21, 22), and what trouble at length he met with at Ephesus from the silversmiths, which forced him thence to pursue the measures he had laid; how a mob was raised by Demetrius to cry up Diana (v. 23-34), and how it was suppressed and dispersed by the town-clerk (v. 35-41).

~~4823~~ ACTS 19:1-7

PAUL AT EPHEBUS

Ephesus was a city of great note in Asia, famous for a temple built there to Diana, which was one of the wonders of the world: thither *Paul came to preach the gospel while Apollos was at Corinth* (v. 1); while he was watering there, Paul was planting here, and grudged not that Apollos entered into his labours and was building upon his foundation, but rejoiced in it, and went on in the new work that was cut out for him at Ephesus with the more cheerfulness and satisfaction, because he knew that such an able minister of the New Testament as Apollos was now at Corinth,

carrying on the good work there. Though there were those that made him the head of a party against Paul (⁴⁰¹²1 Corinthians 1:12), yet Paul had no jealousy of him, nor any way disliked the affection the people had for him. Paul having gone through the country of Galatia and Phrygia, having *passed through the upper coasts*, Pontus and Bithynia, that lay north, at length *came to Ephesus*, where he had left Aquila and Priscilla, and there found them. At his first coming, he met with some disciples there, who professed faith in Christ as the true Messiah, but were as yet in the first and lowest form in the school of Christ, under his usher John the Baptist. They were in number *about twelve* (v. 7); they were much of the standing that Apollos was of when he came to Ephesus (for he *knew only the baptism of John*, ⁴⁰⁸⁵Acts 18:25), but they had not opportunity of being acquainted with Aquila and Priscilla, or had not been so long in Ephesus or were not so willing to receive instruction as Apollos was, otherwise they might have had the way of God expounded to them more perfectly, as Apollos had. Observe here,

I. How Paul catechised them. He was told, probably by Aquila and Priscilla, that they were believers, that they did own Christ, and had given up their names to him; now Paul hereupon takes them under examination.

1. They did believe in the Son of God; but Paul enquires whether they had *received the Holy Ghost*, — whether they believed in the spirit, whose operations on the minds of men, for conviction, conversion, and comfort, were revealed some time after the doctrine of Jesus being the Christ, — whether they had been acquainted with, and had admitted, this revelation? This was not all; extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were conferred upon the apostles and other disciples presently after Christ's ascension, which was frequently repeated upon occasion; had they participated in these gifts? “*Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed? Have you had that seal of the truth of Christ's doctrine in yourselves?*” We are not now to expect any such extraordinary gifts as they had then. The canon of the New Testament being long since completed and ratified, we depend upon that as the most sure word of prophecy. But there are graces of the Spirit given to all believers, which are as earnest to them, ⁴⁰¹²2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; ⁴⁰¹³Ephesians 1:13, 14. Now it concerns us all who profess the Christian faith seriously to enquire whether we have received the Holy Ghost or not. The Holy Ghost is promised to all believers, to all petitioners (⁴⁰¹³Luke 11:13); but many are deceived in this matter, thinking they have received the Holy Ghost when really they have not. As there are

pretenders to the gifts of the Holy Ghost, so there are to his graces and comforts; we should therefore strictly examine ourselves, Have we received the Holy Ghost since we believed? The tree will be known by its fruits. Do we bring forth the fruits of the Spirit? Are we led by the Spirit? Do we walk in the Spirit? Are we under the government of the Spirit?

2. They owned their ignorance in this matter: “*Whether there be a Holy Ghost* is more than we know. That there is a promise of the Holy Ghost we know from the scriptures of the Old Testament, and that this promise will be fulfilled in its season we doubt not; but so much have we been out of the way of intelligence in this matter that we have not so much as heard whether the Holy Ghost be indeed yet given as a spirit of prophecy.” They knew (as Dr. Lightfoot observes) that, according to the tradition of their nation, after the death of Ezra, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, *the Holy Ghost departed from Israel, and went up*; and they professed that they had never heard of his return. They spoke as if they expected it, and wondered they did not hear of it, and were ready to welcome the notice of it. The gospel light, like that of the morning, shone more and more, gradually; not only clearer and clearer, in the discovery of truths not before heard of, but further and further, in the discovery of them to persons that had not before heard of them.

3. Paul enquired how they came to be baptized, if they knew nothing of the Holy Ghost; for, if they were baptized by any of Christ's ministers, they were instructed concerning the Holy Ghost, and were baptized in his name. “Know you not that Jesus being glorified, consequently the Holy Ghost is given? *unto what then were you baptized?* This is strange and unaccountable. What! baptized, and yet know nothing of the Holy Ghost? Surely your baptism was a nullity, if you know nothing of the Holy Ghost; for it is the receiving of the Holy Ghost that is signified and sealed by that washing of regeneration. Ignorance of the Holy Ghost is as inconsistent with a sincere profession of Christianity as ignorance of Christ is.” Applying it to ourselves, it intimates that those are baptized to no purpose, and have received the grace of God therein in vain, that do not receive and submit to the Holy Ghost. It is also an enquiry we should often make, not only to whose honour we were born, but into whose service we were baptized, that we may study to answer the ends both of our birth and of our baptism. Let us often consider unto what we were baptized, that we may live up to our baptism.

4. They own that they were baptized *unto John's baptism* — *eis to Ioannou baptisma* that is, as I take it, they were baptized in the name of John, not by John himself (he was far enough from any such thought), but by some weak, well-meaning disciple of his, that ignorantly kept up his name as the head of a party, retaining the spirit and notion of those disciples of his that were jealous of the growth of Christ's interest, and complained to him of it, ^{4:18} John 3:26. Some one or more of these, that found themselves much edified by John's baptism of *repentance for the remission of sins*, not thinking that the kingdom of heaven, which he spoke of as at hand, was so very near as it proved, ran away with that notion, rested in what they had, and thought they could not do better than to persuade others to do so too; and so, ignorantly, in a blind zeal for John's doctrine, they baptized here and there one in John's name, or, as it is here expressed, *unto John's baptism*, looking no further themselves, nor directing those that they baptized any further.

5. Paul explains to them the true intent and meaning of John's baptism, as principally referring to Jesus Christ, and so rectifies the mistake of those who had baptized them into the baptism of John, and had not directed them to look any further, but to rest in that. Those that have been left in ignorance, or led into error, by any infelicities of their education, should not therefore be despised nor rejected by those who are more knowing and orthodox, but should be compassionately instructed, and better taught, as these disciples were by Paul.

(1.) He owns that John's baptism was a very good thing, as far as it went: *John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance*. By this baptism he required people to be sorry for their sins, and to confess them and turn from them; and to bring any to this is a great point gained. But,

(2.) He shows them that John's baptism had a further reference, and he never designed that those he baptized should rest there, but told them that they should believe on him who should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus, — that his baptism of repentance was designed only to prepare the way of the Lord, and to dispose them to receive and entertain Christ, whom he left them big with expectations of; nay, whom he directed them to: *Behold the Lamb of God*. “John was a great and good man; but he was only the harbinger, — Christ is the Prince. His baptism was the porch which you were to pass through, not the house you were to rest in; and therefore it was all wrong for you to be baptized into the baptism of John.”

6. When they were thus shown the error they were led into, they thankfully accepted the discovery, and *were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*, v. 5. As for Apollos, of whom it was said (~~485~~ Acts 18:25) that he *knew the baptism of John* — that he rightly understood the meaning of it when he was baptized with it, though he knew that *only* — yet, when he understood the way of God more perfectly, he was no again baptized, any more than Christ's first disciples that had been baptized with John's baptism and knew it referred to the Messiah at the door (and, with an eye to this, submitted to it), were baptized again. But to these disciples, who received it only with an eye to John and looked no further, as if he were their saviour, it was such a fundamental error as was as fatal to it as it would have been for any to be baptized in the name of Paul (~~413~~ 1 Corinthians 1:13); and therefore, when they came to understand things better, they desired to be *baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*, and were so: not by Paul himself, as we have reason to think, but by some of those who attended him. It does not therefore follow hence that there was not an agreement between John's baptism and Christ's, or that they were not for substance the same; much less does it follow that those who have been once baptized *in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost* (which is the appointed form of Christ's baptism), may be again baptized in the same name; for those that were baptized *in the name of the Lord Jesus* had never been so baptized before.

II. How Paul conferred the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost upon them, v. 6.

1. Paul solemnly *prayed to God* to give them those gifts, signified by his *laying his hands on them*, which was a gesture used in blessing by the patriarchs, especially in conveying the great trust of the promise, as ~~484~~ Genesis 48:14. The Spirit being the great promise of the New Testament, the apostles conveyed it by the imposition of hands: “The Lord bless thee with that blessing, that blessing of blessings,” ~~343~~ Isaiah 44:3.

2. God granted the thing he prayed for: *The Holy Ghost came upon them* in a surprising overpowering manner, and *they spoke with tongues and prophesied*, as the apostles did and the first Gentile converts, ~~410~~ Acts 10:44. This was intended to introduce the gospel at Ephesus, and to awaken in the minds of men an expectation of some great things from it; and some think that it was further designed to qualify these twelve men for the work of the ministry, and that these twelve were the elders of Ephesus,

to whom Paul committed the care and government of that church. They had the Spirit of prophesy, that they might understand the mysteries of the kingdom of God themselves, and the gift of tongues, that they might preach them to every nation and language. Oh, what a wonderful change was here made on a sudden in these men! those that but just now had *not so much as heard that there was any Holy Ghost* are now themselves filled with the Holy Ghost; for the Spirit, like the wind, blows where and when he listeth.

~~488~~ ACTS 19:8-12

PAUL AT EPHESUS

Paul is here very busy at Ephesus to do good.

I. He begins, as usual, in the Jews' synagogue, and makes the first offer of the gospel to them, that he might gather in the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*, who were now scattered upon the mountains. Observe,

1. Where he preached to them: in their synagogue (v. 8), as Christ used to do. He went and joined them in their synagogue-worship, to take off their prejudices against him, and to ingratiate himself with them, while there was any hope of winning upon them. Thus he would bear his testimony to public worship on sabbath days. Where there were no Christian assemblies yet formed, he frequented the Jewish assemblies, while the Jews were not as yet wholly cast off. Paul went into the synagogue, because there he had them together, and had them, it might be hoped, in a good frame.

2. What he preached to them: *The things concerning the kingdom of God* among men, the great things which concerned God's dominion over all men and favour to them, and men's subjection to God and happiness in God. He showed them their obligations to God and interest in him, as the Creator, by which the kingdom of God was set up, — the violation of those obligations, and the forfeiture of that interest, by sin, by which the kingdom of God was pulled down, — and the renewing of those obligations and the restoration of man to that interest again, by the Redeemer, whereby the kingdom of God was again set up. Or, more particularly, *the things concerning the kingdom of the Messiah*, which the Jews were in expectation of, and promised themselves great matters from;

he opened the scriptures which spoke concerning this, gave them a right notion of this kingdom, and showeth them their mistakes about it.

3. How he preached to them.

(1.) He preached argumentatively: he disputed; gave reasons, scripture-reasons, for what he preached, and answered objections, for the convincing of men's judgments and consciences, that they might not only believe, but might see cause to believe. He preached *dialegomenos* — *dialogue-wise*; he put questions to them and received their answers, gave them leave to put questions to him and answered them.

(2.) He preached affectionately: he persuaded; he used not only logical arguments, to enforce what he said upon their understandings, but rhetorical motives, to impress what he said upon their affections, showing them that the things he preached concerning the kingdom of God were things concerning themselves, which they were nearly concerned in, and therefore ought to concern themselves about, ^{<481>}2 Corinthians 5:11, *We persuade men*. Paul was a moving preacher, and was a master of the art of persuasion.

(3.) He preached undauntedly, and with a holy resolution: he spoke boldly, as one that had not the least doubt of the things he spoke of, nor the least distrust of him he spoke from, nor the least dread of those he spoke to.

4. How long he preached to them: *For the space of three months*, which was a competent time allowed them to consider of it; in that time among them that belonged to the election of grace were called in, and the rest were left inexcusable. Thus long Paul preached the gospel *with much contention* (^{<512>}1 Thessalonians 2:2), yet he *did not fail, nor was discouraged*.

5. What success his preaching had among them.

(1.) There were some that were persuaded to believe in Christ; some think this is intimated in the word *persuading* — he prevailed with them. But,

(2.) Many continued in their infidelity, and were confirmed in their prejudices against Christianity. When Paul called on them before, and preached only some general things to them, they courted his stay among them (^{<481>}Acts 18:20); but now that he settled among them, and his word came more closely to their consciences, they were soon weary of him.

[1.] They had an invincible aversion to the gospel of Christ themselves: they were *hardened, and believed not*; they were resolved they would not believe, though the truth shone in their faces with ever such a convincing light and evidence. Therefore they believed not, because they were hardened.

[2.] They did their utmost to raise and keep up in others an aversion to the gospel; they not only entered not into the kingdom of God themselves, but neither did they suffer those that were entering to go in; for *they spoke evil of that way before the multitude*, to prejudice them against it. Though they could not show any manner of evil in it, yet they said all manner of evil concerning it. These sinners, like the angels that sinned, became Satans, adversaries and devils, false accusers.

II. When he had carried the matter as far as it would go in the synagogue of the Jews, and found that their opposition grew more obstinate, he left the synagogue, because he could not safely, or rather because he could not comfortably and successfully, continue in communion with them. Though their worship was such as he could join in, and they had not silenced him, nor forbidden him to preach among them, yet they drove him from them by their railing at those things which he spoke *concerning the kingdom of God*: they hated to be reformed, hated to be instructed, and therefore *he departed from them*. Here we are sure there was a separation and no schism; for there was a just cause for it and a clear call to it. Now observe,

1. When Paul departed from the Jews he took the disciples with him, and *separated them, to save them from that untoward generation* (according to the charge Peter gave to his new converts, ~~Acts~~ Acts 2:40); lest they should be infected with the poisonous tongues of those blasphemers, he separated those who believed, to be the foundation of a Christian church, now that they were a competent number to be incorporated, that others might attend with them upon the preaching of the gospel, and might, upon their believing, be added to them. When Paul departed there needed no more to separate the disciples; let him go where he will, they will follow him.

2. When Paul separated from the synagogue he set up a meeting of his own, he *disputed daily in the school of one Tyrannus*. He left the synagogue of the Jews, that he might go on with the more freedom in his work; still he disputed for Christ and Christianity, and was ready to answer

all opponents whatsoever in defence of them; and he had by this separation a double advantage.

(1.) That now his opportunities were more frequent. In the synagogue he could only preach every sabbath day (~~443B~~ Acts 13:42), but now he disputed daily, he set up a lecture every day, and thus redeemed time: those whose business would not permit them to come one day might come another day; and those were welcome who *watched daily at these gates of wisdom, and waited daily at the posts of her doors.*

(2.) That now they were more open. To the synagogue of the Jews none might come, nor could come, but Jews or proselytes; Gentiles were excluded; but, when he set up a meeting in the school of Tyrannus, both Jews and Greeks attended his ministry, v. 10. Thus, as he describes this gate of opportunity at Ephesus (~~443B~~ 1 Corinthians 16:8, 9), *a wide door and an effectual was opened to him, though there were many adversaries.* Some think this school of Tyrannus was a divinity-school of the Jews, and such a one they commonly had in their great cities besides their synagogue; they called it *Bethmidrash, the house of enquiry, or of repetition*; and they went to that on the sabbath day, after they had been in the synagogue. They go *from strength to strength, from the house of the sanctuary to the house of doctrine.* If this was such a school, it shows that though Paul left the synagogue he left it gradually, and still kept as near it as he could, as he had done, ~~443E~~ Acts 18:7. But others think it was a philosophy-school of the Gentiles, belonging to one Tyrannus, or a retiring place (for so the word *shole* sometimes signifies) belonging to a principal man or governor of the city; some convenient place it was, which Paul and the disciples had the use of, either for love or money.

3. Here he continued his labours for *two years*, read his lectures and disputed daily. These two years commence from the end of the *three months* which he spent in the synagogue (v. 8); after they were ended, he continued for some time in the country about, preaching; therefore he might justly reckon it in all three years, as he does, ~~443E~~ Acts 20:31.

4. The gospel hereby spread far and near (v. 10): *All those that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus*; not only all that dwelt in Ephesus, but all that dwelt in that large province called *Asia*, of which Ephesus was the head city — *Asia the Less* it was called. There was great resort to Ephesus from all parts of the country, for law, traffic, religion, and education, which gave Paul an opportunity of sending the report of the

gospel to all the towns and villages of that country. They all heard the *word of the Lord Jesus*. The gospel is Christ's word, it is a word concerning Christ. This they heard, or at least heard of it. Some of all sects, some out of all parts both in city and country, embraced this gospel, and entertained it, and by them it was communicated to others; and so they all *heard the word of the Lord Jesus*, or might have heard it. Probably Paul sometimes made excursions himself into the country, to preach the gospel, or sent his missionaries or assistants that attended him, and thus the word of the Lord was *heard throughout that region*. Now *those that sat in darkness saw a great light*.

III. God confirmed Paul's doctrine by miracles, which awakened people's enquiries after it, fixed their affection to it, and engaged their belief of it, v. 11, 12. I wonder we have not read of any miracle wrought by Paul since the casting of the evil spirit out of the damsel at Philippi; why did he not work miracles at Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens? Or, if he did, why are they not recorded? Was the success of the gospel, without miracles in the kingdom of nature, itself such a miracle in the kingdom of grace, and the divine power which went along with it such a proof of its divine original, that there needed no other? It is certain that at Corinth he wrought many miracles, though Luke has recorded none, for he tells them (⁴⁷⁰²2 Corinthians 12:12) that the signs of his apostleship were among them, *in wonders and mighty deeds*. But here at Ephesus we have a general account of the proofs of this kind which he gave his divine mission.

1. They were *special miracles* — *Dynameis ou tychousas*. God exerted powers that were not according to the common course of nature: *Virtutes non vulgares*. Things were done which could by no means be ascribed either to chance or second causes. Or, they were not only (as all miracles are) *out of the common road*, but they were even uncommon miracles, such miracles as had not been wrought by the hands of any other of the apostles. The opposers of the gospel were so prejudiced that any miracles would not serve their turn; therefore God wrought *virtutes non quaslibet* (so they render it), *something above the common road of miracles*.

2. It was not Paul that wrought them (*What is Paul, and what is Apollos?*) but it was God that *wrought them by the hand of Paul*. He was but the instrument, God was the principal agent.

3. He not only cured the sick that were brought to him, or to whom he was brought, but *from his body were brought to the sick handkerchiefs or aprons*; they got Paul's handkerchiefs, or his aprons, that is, say some, the aprons he wore when he worked at his trade, and the application of them to the sick cured them immediately. Or, they brought the sick people's handkerchiefs, or their girdles, or caps, or head-dresses, and laid them for awhile to Paul's body, and then took them to the sick. The former is more probable. Now was fulfilled that word of Christ to his disciples, *Greater works than these shall you do*. We read of one that was cured by the touch of Christ's garment when it was upon him, and he perceived that *virtue went out of him*; but here were people cured by Paul's garments when they were taken from him. Christ gave his apostles power *against unclean spirits and against all manner of sickness* (~~ACTS~~ Matthew 10:1), and accordingly we find here that those to whom Paul sent relief had it in both those cases: *for the diseases departed from them* and *the evil spirits went out of them*, which were both significant of the great design and blessed effect of the gospel, and the healing of spiritual disease, and freeing the souls of men from the power and dominion of Satan.

~~ACTS~~ ACTS 19:13-20

THE DISGRACE OF THE EXORCISTS

The preachers of the gospel were sent forth to carry on a war against Satan, and therein Christ went forth *conquering and to conquer*. The casting of evil spirits out of those that were possessed was one instance of Christ's victory over Satan; but, to show in how many ways Christ triumphed over that great enemy, we have here in these verses two remarkable instances of the conquest of Satan, not only in those that were violently possessed by him, but in those that were voluntarily devoted to him.

I. Here is the confusion of some of Satan's servants, some *vagabond Jews*, that were *exorcists*, who made use of Christ's name profanely and wickedly in their diabolical enchantments, but were made to pay dearly for their presumption. Observe,

1. The general character of those who were guilty of this presumption. They were Jews, but *vagabond Jews*, were of the Jewish nation and

religion, but went about from town to town to get money by conjuring. They strolled about to tell people their fortunes, and pretended by spells and charms to cure diseases, and bring people to themselves that were melancholy or distracted. They called themselves exorcists, because in doing their tricks they used forms of adjuration, by such and such commanding names. The superstitious Jews, to put a reputation upon these magic arts, wickedly attributed the invention of them to Solomon. So Josephus (*Antiq.* 8. 45-46) says that Solomon composed charms by which diseases were cured, and devils driven out so as never to return; and that these operations continued common among the Jews to his time. And Christ seems to refer to this (^{<4027>}Matthew 12:27), *By whom do your children cast them out?*

2. A particular account of some at Ephesus that led this course of life and came thither in their travels; they were *seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests*, v. 14. It is sad to see the house of Jacob thus degenerated, much more the house of Aaron, the family that was in a peculiar manner consecrated to God; it is truly sad to see any of that race in league with Satan. Their father was a chief of the priests, head of one of the twenty-four courses of priests. One would think the temple would find both employment and encouragement enough for the sons of a chief priest, if they had been twice as many. But probably it was a vain, rambling, rakish humour that led them to turn mountebanks, and wander all the world over to cure mad folks.

3. The profaneness they were guilty of: *They took upon them to call over evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus*; not as those who had a veneration for Christ and a confidence in his name, as we read of some who cast out devils in Christ's name and yet did not follow with his disciples (^{<4049>}Luke 9:49), whom he would not have to be discouraged; but as those who were willing to try all methods to carry on their wicked trade, and, it should seem, had this design: — If the evil spirits should yield to an adjuration in the name of Jesus by those that did not believe in him, they would say it was no confirmation of his doctrine to those that did; for it was all one whether they believed it or no. If they should not yield to it, they would say the name of Christ was not so powerful as the other names they used, to which the devils had often by collusion yielded. They said, *We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches*; not, “whom we believe in, or depend upon, or have any authority from,” but *whom Paul preaches*; as if they had said, “We will try what that name will do.” The exorcists in the Romish

church, who pretend to cast the devil out of melancholy people by spells and charms which they understand not, and which, not having any divine warrant, cannot be used in faith, are the followers of these vagabond Jews.

4. The confusion they were put to in their impious operations. Let them not be deceived, God is not mocked, nor shall the glorious name of Jesus be prostituted to such a vile purpose as this; *what communion hath Christ with Belial?*

(1.) The evil spirit gave them a sharp reply (v. 15): “*Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?*” I know that Jesus has conquered principalities and powers, and that Paul has authority in his name to cast out devils; but what power have you to command us in his name, or who gave you any such power? What have you to do to declare the power of Jesus, or to take his covenant and commands into your mouths, seeing you hate his instructions?” ~~4816~~ Psalm 50:16, 17. This was extorted out of the mouth of the evil spirit by the power of God, to gain honour to the gospel, and to put those to shame that made a bad use of Christ's name.

Antichristian powers and factions pretend a mighty zeal for Jesus and Paul, and to have authority from them; but, when the matter comes to be looked into, it is a mere worldly secular interest that is to be thus supported; nay, it is an enmity to true religion: *Jesus we know, and Paul we know; but who are you?*

(2.) *The man in whom the evil spirit was* gave them a warm reception, fell foul upon them, *leaped upon them* in the height of his frenzy and rage, *overcame them* and all their enchantments, *prevailed against them*, and was every way too hard for them; so that *they fled out of the house*, not only *naked*, but *wounded*; their clothes pulled off their backs, and their heads broken. This is written for a warning to all those who name the name of Christ, but do not depart from iniquity. The same enemy that overcomes them with his temptations will overcome them with his terrors; and their adjuring him in Christ's name to let them alone will be no security to them. If we resist the devil by a true and lively faith in Christ, he will flee from us; but if we think to resist him by the bare using of Christ's name, or any part of his word, as a spell or charm, he will prevail against us.

5. The general notice that was taken of this, and the good impression it made upon many (v. 17): *This was known to all the Jews and Greeks also*

dwelling at Ephesus. It was the common talk of the town; and the effect of it was,

(1.) That men were terrified: *fear fell on them all*. In this instance they saw the malice of the devil whom they served, and the power of Christ whom they opposed; and both were awful considerations. They saw that the name of Christ was not to be trifled with, nor his religion compounded with pagan superstitions.

(2.) That God was glorified; *the name of the Lord Jesus*, by which his faithful servants cast out devils and cured diseases, without any resistance, *was the more magnified*; for now it appeared to be a name above every name.

II. Here is the conversion of others of Satan's servants, with the evidences of their conversion.

1. Those that had been guilty of wicked practices confessed them, v. 18. Many that had believed and were baptized, but had not then been so particular as they might have been in the confession of their sins, were so terrified with these instances of the magnifying of the name of Jesus Christ that they came to Paul, or some of the other ministers that were with him, and confessed what evil lives they had led, and what a great deal of secret wickedness their own consciences charged them with, which the world knew not of — secret frauds and secret filthiness; *they showed their deeds*, took shame to themselves and gave glory to God and warning to others. These confessions were not extorted from them, but were voluntary, for the ease of their consciences, upon which the late miracles had struck a terror. Note, Where there is true contrition for sin there will be an ingenuous confession of sin to God in every prayer, and to man whom we have offended when the case requires it.

2. Those that had conversed with wicked books burnt them (v. 19): *Many also of those who used curious arts, ta perierga — impertinent things; multa nihil ad se pertinentia satagentes — busy bodies* (so the word is used, ^{<STR1>}2 Thessalonians 3:11; <sup><SUB></sup>1 Timothy 5:13), that traded in the study of magic and divination, in books of judicial astrology, casting nativities, telling fortunes, raising and laying spirits, interpreting dreams, predicting future events, and the like, to which some think are to be added *plays, romances, love-books, and unchaste and immodest poems — histrionica, amatoria, saltatoria*. — Stres. These, having their consciences more

awakened than ever to see the evil of those practices in which these books instructed them, *brought their books together, and burnt them before all men*. Ephesus was notorious for the use of these curious arts; hence spells and charms were called *Literae Ephesiae*. Here people furnished themselves with all those sorts of books, and, probably, had tutors to instruct them in those *black* arts. It was therefore much for the honour of Christ and his gospel to have such a noble testimony borne against those *curious* arts, in a place where they were so much in vogue. It is taken for granted that they were convinced of the evil of these curious arts, and resolved to deal in them no longer; but they did not think this enough unless they burnt their books.

(1.) Thus they showed a holy indignation at the sins they had been guilty of; as the idolaters, when they were brought to repentance, said to their idols, *Get you hence* (^{230D}Isaiah 30:22), and cast even those of silver and gold *to the moles and to the bats*, ^{230D}Isaiah 2:20. They thus took a pious revenge on those things that had been the instruments of sin to them, and proclaimed the force of their convictions of the evil of it, and that those very things were now detectable to them, as much as ever they had been delectable.

(2.) Thus they showed their resolution never to return to the use of those arts, and the books which related to them, again. They were so fully convinced of the evil and danger of them that they would not throw the books by, within reach of a recall, upon supposition that it was possible they might change their mind; but, being stedfastly resolved never to make use of them, they burnt them.

(3.) Thus they put away a temptation to return to them again. Had they kept the books by them, there was danger lest, when the heat of the present conviction was over, they should have the curiosity to look into them, and so be in danger of liking them and loving them again, and therefore they burnt them. Note, Those that truly repent of sin will keep themselves as far as possible from the occasions of it.

(4.) Thus they prevented their doing mischief to others. If Judas had been by he would have said, “Sell them, and give the money to the poor;” or, “Buy Bibles and good books with it.” But then who could tell into whose hands these dangerous books might fall, and what mischief might be done by them? it was therefore the safest course to commit them all to the flames. Those that are recovered from sin themselves will do all they can

to keep others from falling into it, and will be much more afraid of laying an occasion of sin in the way of others.

(5.) Thus they showed a contempt of the wealth of this world; for the price of the books was cast up, probably by those that persuaded them not to burn them, and it was found to be *fifty thousand pieces of silver*, which some compute to be fifteen hundred pounds of our money. It is probable that the books were scarce, perhaps prohibited, and therefore dear. Probably they had cost them so much; yet, being the devil's books, though they had been so foolish as to buy them, they did not think this would justify them in being so wicked as to sell them again.

(6.) Thus they publicly testified their joy for their conversion from these wicked practices, as Matthew did by the great feast he made when Christ had called him from the receipt of custom. These converts joined together in making this bonfire, and made it before all men. They might have burnt the books privately, every one in his own house, but they chose to do it together, by consent, and to do it at the high cross (as we say), that Christ and his grace in them might be the more magnified, and all about them the more edified.

III. Here is a general account of the progress and success of the gospel in and about Ephesus (v. 20): *So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed*. It is a blessed sight to see the word of God growing and prevailing mightily, as it did here.

1. To see it grow extensively, by the addition of many to the church. When still more and more are wrought upon by the gospel, and wrought up into a conformity to it, then it grows; when those that were least likely to yield to it, and that had been most stiff in their opposition to it, are captivated and brought into obedience to it, then it may be said to *grow mightily*.

2. To see it prevail extensively, by the advancement in knowledge and grace of those that are added to the church; when strong corruptions are mortified, vicious habits changed, evil customs of long standing broken off, and pleasant, gainful, fashionable sins are abandoned, then it prevails mightily; and Christ in it goes on conquering and to conquer.

⌄ ACTS 19:21-41

THE TUMULT AT EPHEBUS

I. Paul is here brought into some trouble at Ephesus, just when he is forecasting to go thence, and to cut out work for himself elsewhere. See here,

1. How he laid his purpose of going to other places, v. 21, 22. He was a man of vast designs for God, and was for making his influences as widely diffusive as might be. Having spent above two years at Ephesus,

(1.) He designed a visit to the churches of Macedonia and Achaia, especially of Philippi and Corinth, the chief cities of those provinces, v. 21. There he had planted churches, and now is concerned to visit them. He *purposed in the spirit*, either in his own spirit, not communicating his purpose as yet, but keeping it to himself; or by the direction of the Holy Spirit, who was his guide in all his motions, and by whom he was led. He purposed to go and see how the work of God went on in those places, that he might rectify what was amiss and encourage what was good.

(2.) Thence he designed to go to Jerusalem, to visit the brethren there, and give an account to them of the prospering of the good pleasure of the Lord in his hand; and thence he intended to go to Rome, to go and *see Rome*; not as if he designed only the gratifying of his curiosity with the sight of that ancient famous city, but because it was an expression people commonly used, that they would go and see Rome, would look about them there, when that which he designed was to see the Christians there, and to do them some service, ⌄ Romans 1:11. The good people at Rome were the glory of the city which he longed for a sight of. Dr. Lightfoot supposes that it was upon the death of the emperor Claudius, who died the second year of Paul's being at Ephesus, that Paul thought of going to Rome, because while he lived the Jews were forbidden Rome, ⌄ Acts 18:2.

(3.) He sent Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia, to give them notice of the visit he intended them, and to get their collection ready for the poor saints at Jerusalem. Soon after he wrote *the first epistle to the Corinthians*, designing to follow it himself, as appears ⌄ 1 Corinthians 4:17, 19, *I have sent to you Timotheus; but I will myself come to you shortly, if the Lord*

will. For the present, he staid in Asia, in the country about Ephesus, founding churches.

2. How he was seconded in his purpose, and obliged to pursue it by the troubles which at length he met with at Ephesus. It was strange that he had been quiet there so long; yet it should seem he had met with trouble there not recorded in this story, for in his epistle written at this time he speaks of his having *fought with beasts at Ephesus* (~~450~~1 Corinthians 15:32), which seems to be meant of his being put to fight with wild beasts in the theatre, according to the barbarous treatment they sometimes gave the Christians. And he speaks of the trouble which came to them in Asia, near Ephesus, when he *despaired of life, and received a sentence of death within himself*, ~~400~~2 Corinthians 1:8, 9.

II. But, in the trouble here related, he was worse frightened than hurt. In general, *there arose no small stir about that way*, v. 23. Some historians say that the famous impostor Apollonius Tyanaeus, who set up for a rival with Christ, and gave out himself, as Simon Magus, to be *some great one*, was at Ephesus about this time that Paul was there. But it seems the opposition he gave to the gospel was so insignificant that St. Luke did not think it worth taking notice of. The disturbance he gives an account of was of another nature: let us view the particulars of it. Here is,

1. A great complaint against Paul and the other preachers of the gospel for drawing people off from the worship of Diana, and so spoiling the trade of the silversmiths that worked for Diana's temple.

(1.) The complainant is Demetrius, a silversmith, a principal man, it is likely, of the trade, and one that would be thought to understand and consult the interests of it more than others of the company. Whether he worked in other sorts of plate or no we are not told; but the most advantageous branch of his trade was *making silver shrines for Diana*, v. 24. Some think these were medals stamped with the effigies of Diana, or her temple, or both; others think they were representations of the temple, with the image of Diana in it in miniature, all of silver, but so small that people might carry them about with them, as the papists do their crucifixes. Those that came from far to pay their devotions at the temple of Ephesus, when they went home bought these little temples or shrines, to carry home with them, for the gratifying of the curiosity of their friends, and to preserve in their own minds the idea of that stately edifice. See how

craftsmen, and crafty men too above the rank of silversmiths, make an advantage to themselves of people's superstition, and serve their worldly ends by it.

(2.) The persons he appeals to are not the magistrates, but the mob; he called the *craftsmen* together, *with the workmen of like occupation* (a company of mechanics, who had no sense of any thing but their worldly interest), and these he endeavoured to incense against Paul, who would be actuated as little by reason and as much by fury as he could desire.


(3.) His complaint and representation are very full.

[1.] He lays it down for a principle that the art and mystery of making silver shrines for the worshippers of Diana was very necessary to be supported and kept up (v. 25): “*You know that by this craft we have not only our subsistence, and our necessary food, but our wealth. We grow rich, and raise estates. We live great, and have wherewithal to maintain our pleasures; and therefore, whatever comes of it, we must not suffer this craft to grow into contempt.*” Note, It is natural for men to be jealous for that, whether right or wrong, by which they get their wealth; and many have, for this reason alone, set themselves against the gospel of Christ, because it calls men off from those crafts which are unlawful, how much wealth soever is to be obtained by them.

[2.] He charges it upon Paul that he had dissuaded men from worshipping idols. The words, as they are laid in the indictment, are, that he had asserted, *Those are no gods which are made with hands*, v. 26. Could any truth be more plain and self-evident than this, or any reasoning more cogent and convincing than that of the prophets, *The workman made it, therefore it is not God?* The first and most genuine notion we have of God is, that he had his being of himself, and depends upon none; but that all things have their being from him, and their dependence on him: and then it must follow that those are no gods which are the creatures of men's fancy and the work of men's hands. Yet this must be looked upon as an heretical and atheistical notion, and Paul as a criminal for maintaining it; not that they could advance any thing against this doctrine itself, but that the consequence of it was that not only at Ephesus, the chief city, but almost throughout all Asia, among the country people, who were their best customers, and whom they thought they were surest of, he had *persuaded and turned away much people* from the worship of Diana; so that there was not now such a demand for the silver shrines as had been, nor were

such good rates given for them. There are those who will stickle for that which is most grossly absurd and unreasonable, and which carries along with it its own conviction of falsehood, as this does, *that those are gods which are made with hands*, if it have but human laws, and worldly interest and prescription, on its side.

[3.] He reminds them of the danger which their trade was in of going to decay. Whatever touches this touches them in a sensible tender part: “If this doctrine gains credit, we are all undone, and may even shut up shop; *this our craft will be set at nought*, will be convicted, and put into an ill name as superstition, and a cheat upon the world, and every body will run it down. *This our part*” (so the word is), “our interest or share of trade and commerce,” *kindyneuei hemin to meros*, “will not only come into danger of being lost, but it will bring us into danger, and we shall become not only beggars, but malefactors.”

[4.] He pretends a mighty zeal for Diana, and a jealousy for her honour: *Not only this our craft is in danger*; if that were all, he would not have you think that he would have spoken with so much warmth, but all his care is lest *the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed*; and he would not, for all the world, see the diminution of the honour of that goddess, *whom all Asia and the world worship*. See what the worship of Diana had to plead for itself, and what was the utmost which the most zealous bigots for it had to say in its behalf. *First*, That it had pomp on its side; the magnificence of the temple was the thing that charmed them, the thing that chained them; they could not bear the thoughts of any thing that tended to the diminution, much less to the destruction, of that. *Secondly*, That it had numbers on its side; *All Asia and the world worship* it; and therefore it must needs be the right way of worship, let Paul say what he will to the contrary. Thus, because *all the world wonders after the beast*, therefore *the dragon, the devil, the god of this world, gives him his power, and his seat, and great authority*,  Revelation 13:2, 3.

2. The popular resentment of this complaint. The charge was managed by a craftsman, and was framed to incense the common people, and it had the desired effect; for on this occasion they showed,

(1.) A great displeasure against the gospel and the preachers of it. *They were full of wrath* (v. 28), *full of fury and indignation*, so the word

signifies. The craftsmen went stark mad when they were told that their trade and their idol were both in danger.

(2.) A great jealousy for the honour of their goddess: *They cried out, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians; and we are resolved to stand by her, and live and die in the defence of her. Are there any that expose her to contempt, or threaten her destruction? Let us alone to deal with them. Let Paul say ever so much to prove that those are no gods which are made with hands, we will abide by it that, whatever becomes of other gods and goddesses, Great is Diana of the Ephesians. We must and will stand up for the religion of our country, which we have received by tradition from our fathers."* Thus all people *walked every one in the name of his god*, and all thought well of their own; much more should the servants of the true God do so, who can say, *This God is our God for ever and ever.*

(3.) A great disorder among themselves (v. 29): *The whole city was full of confusion* — the common and natural effect of intemperate zeal for a false religion; it throws all into confusion, dethrones reason, and enthrones passion; and men run together, not only not knowing one another's minds, but not knowing their own.

3. The proceedings of the mob under the power of these resentments, and how far they were carried.

(1.) They laid hands on some of Paul's companions, and hurried them into the theatre (v. 29), some think with design there to make them *fight with beasts*, as Paul had sometimes done; or perhaps they intended only to abuse them, and to make them a spectacle to the crowd. Those whom they seized were *Gaius and Aristarchus*, of both of whom we read elsewhere. *Gaius was of Derbe*, ~~Acts~~ Acts 20:4. *Aristarchus* is also there spoken of, and ~~Colossians~~ Colossians 4:10. They came with Paul *from Macedonia*, and this was their only crime, that they were Paul's companions in travel, both in services and sufferings.

(2.) *Paul*, who had escaped being seized by them, when he perceived his friends in distress for his sake, *would have entered in unto the people*, to sacrifice himself, if there were no other remedy, rather than his friends should suffer upon his account; and it was an evidence of a generous spirit, and that he loved his neighbour as himself.

(3.) He was persuaded from it by the kindness of his friends, who overruled him.

[1.] *The disciples suffered him not*, for it better became him to offer it than it would have become them to suffer it. They had reason to say to Paul, as David's servants did to him, when he was for exposing himself in a piece of public service, *Thou art worth ten thousand of us*, ~~1RB~~ 2 Samuel 18:3.

[2.] Others of his friends interposed, to prevent his throwing himself thus into the mouth of danger. They would treat him much worse than Gaius and Aristarchus, looking upon him as the ringleader of the party; and therefore better let them bear the brunt of the storm than that he should venture into it, v. 31. They were *certain of the chief of Asia, the princes of Asia — Asiarchai*. The critics tell us they were the chief of their priests; or, as others, the chief of their players. Whether they were converts to the Christian faith (and some such there were even of their priests and governors), or whether they were only well-wishers to Paul, as an ingenuous good man, we are not told, only that they were *Paul's friends*. Dr. Lightfoot suggests that they kept up a respect and kindness for him ever since he fought with beasts in their theatre, and were afraid he should be abused so again. Note, It is a friendly part to take more care of the lives and comforts of good men than they do themselves. It would be a very hazardous adventure for Paul to go into the theatre; it was a thousand to one that it would cost him his life; and therefore Paul was overruled by his friends to obey the law of self-preservation, and has taught us to keep out of the way of danger as long as we can without going out of the way of duty. We may be called to lay down our lives, but not to throw away our lives. It would better become Paul to venture into a synagogue than into a theatre.

(4.) The mob was in a perfect confusion (v. 32): *Some cried one thing and some another*, according as their fancies and passions, and perhaps the reports they received, led them. Some cried, Down with the Jews; others, Down with Paul; but *the assembly was confused*, as not understanding one another's minds. They contradicted one another, and were ready to fly in one another's faces for it, but they did not understand their own; for the truth was *the greater part knew not wherefore they had come together*. They knew not what began the riot, nor who, much less what business they had there; but, upon such occasions, the greatest part come only to enquire

what the matter is: they follow the cry, follow the crowd, increase like a snow-ball, and where there are many there will be more.

(5.) The Jews would have interested themselves in this tumult (in other places they had been the first movers of such riots) but now at Ephesus they had not interest enough to raise the mob, and yet, when it was raised, they had ill-will enough to set in with it (v. 35): *They drew Alexander out of the multitude*, called him out to speak on the behalf of the Jews against Paul and his companions: “You have heard what Demetrius and the silversmiths have to say against them, as enemies to their religion; give us leave now to tell you what we have to say against him as an enemy to our religion.” *The Jews put him forward* to do this, encouraged him, and told him they would stand by him and second him; and this they looked upon as necessary in their own defence, and therefore what he designed to say is called his apologizing to the people, not for himself in particular, but for the Jews in general, whom the worshippers of Diana looked upon to be as much their enemies as Paul was. Now they would have them know that they were as much Paul's enemies as they were; and those who are thus careful to distinguish themselves from the servants of Christ now, and are afraid of being taken for them, shall have their doom accordingly in the great day. *Alexander beckoned with the hand*, desiring to be heard against Paul; for it had been strange if a persecution had been carried on against the Christians and there were not Jews at one end or the other of it: if they could not begin the mischief, they would help it forward, and so make themselves partakers of other men's sins. Some think this Alexander had been a Christian, but had apostatized to Judaism, and therefore was drawn out as a proper person to accuse Paul; and that he was the *Alexander the coppersmith* that did Paul so much evil (~~504~~ 2 Timothy 4:14), and whom he had *delivered unto Satan*, ~~500~~ 1 Timothy 1:20.

(6.) This occasioned the prosecutors to drop the prosecution of Paul's friends, and to turn it into acclamations in honour of their goddess (v. 34): *When they knew that he was a Jew*, and, as such, an enemy to the worship of Diana (for the Jews had now an implacable hatred to idols and idolatry), whatever he had to say for Paul or against him, they were resolved not to hear him, and therefore set the mob a shouting, “*Great is Diana of the Ephesians*; whoever runs her down, be he Jew or Christian, we are resolved to cry her up. *She is Diana of the Ephesians*, our Diana; and it is our honour and happiness to have her temple with us; and she is great, a famous goddess, and universally adored. There are other Dianas, but

Diana of the Ephesians is beyond them all, because her temple is more rich and magnificent than any of theirs.” This was all the cry for *two hours* together; and it was thought a sufficient confutation of Paul's doctrine, *that those are not gods which are made with hands*. Thus the most sacred truths are often run down with nothing else but noise and clamour and popular fury. It was said of old concerning idolaters that they were *mad upon their idols*; and here is an instance of it. Diana made the Ephesians great, for the town was enriched by the vast concourse of people from all parts to Diana's temple there, and therefore they are concerned by all means possible to keep up her sinking reputation with, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*.

4. The suppressing and dispersing of these rioters, by the prudence and vigilance of *the town-clerk*; he is called, *grammateus* — *the scribe*, or *secretary*, or *recorder*; “the register of their games,” the Olympic games (so others), whose business it was to preserve the names of the victors and the prizes they won. With much ado he, at length, stilled the noise, so as to be heard, and then made a pacific speech to them, and gave us an instance of that of Solomon, *The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that rules among fools*, as Demetrius did. ~~2007~~ Ecclesiastes 9:17.

(1.) He humours them with an acknowledgment that Diana was the celebrated goddess of the Ephesians, v. 35. They needed not to be so loud and strenuous in asserting a truth which nobody denied, or could be ignorant of: Every one *knows that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana*; is *neokoros*; not only that the inhabitants were worshippers of this goddess, but the city, as a corporation, was, by its charter, entrusted with the worship of Diana, to take care of her temple, and to accommodate those who came thither to do her homage. Ephesus is *the aeditua* (they say that is the most proper word), or *the sacrist*, of the great goddess Diana. The city was more the patroness and protectress of Diana than Diana was of the city. Such great care did idolaters take for the keeping up of the worship of gods made with hands, while the worship of the true and living God is neglected, and few nations or cities glory in patronizing and protecting that. The temple of Diana at Ephesus was a very rich and sumptuous structure, but, it should seem, the *image* of Diana in the temple, because they thought it sanctified the temple, was had in greater veneration than the temple, for they persuaded the people that it *fell down from Jupiter*, and therefore was

none of the gods that were made with men's hands. See how easily the credulity of superstitious people is imposed upon by the fraud of designing men. Because this image of Diana had been set up time out of mind, and nobody could tell who made it, they made the people believe it fell down from Jupiter. "Now *these things*," says the town-clerk very gravely (but whether seriously or no, and as one that did himself believe them, may be questioned), "*cannot be spoken against*; they have obtained such universal credit that you need not fear contradiction, it can do you no prejudice." Some take it thus: "Seeing the image of Diana fell down from Jupiter, as we all believe, then what is said against gods made with hands does not at all affect us."

(2.) He cautions them against all violent and tumultuous proceedings, which their religion did not need, nor could receive any real advantage from (v. 36): *You ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly*. A very good rule this is to be observed at all times, both in private and public affairs; not to be hasty and precipitate in our motions, but to deliberate and take time to consider: not to put ourselves or others into a heat, but to be calm and composed, and always keep reason in the throne and passion under check. This word should be ready to us, to command the peace with, when we ourselves or those about us are growing disorderly: *We ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly*; to do nothing in haste, which we may repent of at leisure.

(3.) He wipes off the odium that had been cast upon Paul and his associates, and tells them, they were not the men that they were represented to them to be (v. 37): "*You have brought hither these men*, and are ready to pull them to pieces; but have you considered what is their transgression and what is their offence? What can you prove upon them? They are not robbers of churches, you cannot charge them with sacrilege, or the taking away of any dedicated thing. They have offered no violence to Diana's temple or the treasures of it; nor are they *blasphemers of your goddess*; they have not given any opprobrious language to the worshippers of Diana, nor spoken scurrilously of her or her temple. Why should you prosecute those *with all this violence* who, though they are not of your mind, yet do not inveigh with any bitterness against you? Since they are calm, why should you be hot?" It was the idol in the heart that they levelled all their force against, by reason and argument; if they can but get that down, the idol in the temple will fall of course. Those that preach against idolatrous churches have truth on their side, and ought vigorously

to maintain it and press it on men's consciences; but let them not be robbers of those churches (*on the prey laid they not their hand*, Est. 9:15, 16), nor blasphemers of those worships; with meekness instructing, not with passion and foul language reproaching, those that oppose themselves; for God's truth, as it needs not man's lie, so it needs not man's intemperate heat. *The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.*

(4.) He turns them over to the regular methods of the law, which ought always to supersede popular tumults, and in civilized well-governed nations will do so. A great mercy it is to live in a country where provision is made for the keeping of the peace, and the administration of public justice, and the appointing of a remedy for every wrong; and herein we of this nation are as happy as any people.

[1.] If the complaint be of a private injury, let them have recourse to the judges and courts of justice, which are kept publicly at stated times. If Demetrius and the company of the silversmiths, that have made all this rout, find themselves aggrieved, or any privilege they are legally entitled to infringed or entrenched upon, let them bring their action, take out a process, and the matter shall be fairly tried, and justice done: *The law is open, and there are deputies*; there is a proconsul and his delegate, whose business it is to hear both sides, and to determine according to equity; and in their determination all parties must acquiesce, and not be their own judges, nor appeal to the people. Note, *The law is good if a man use it lawfully*, as the last remedy both for the discovery of a right disputed and the recovery of a right denied.

[2.] If the complaint be of a public grievance, relating to the constitution, it must be redressed, not by a confused rabble, but by a convention of the states (v. 39): *If you enquire any thing concerning other matters*, that are of common concern, *it shall be determined in a lawful assembly* of the aldermen and common-council, called together in a regular way by those in authority. Note, Private persons should not intermeddle in public matters, so as to anticipate the counsels of those whose business it is to take cognizance of them; we have enough to do to mind our own business.

(5.) He makes them sensible of the danger they are in, and of the premunire they have run themselves into by this riot (v. 40): "It is well if we be not *called in question for this day's uproar*, if we be not complained of at the emperor's court, as a factious and seditious city, and if a *quo warranto* be not brought against us and our charter taken away; for *there is*

no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse, we have nothing to say in excuse of it. We cannot justify ourselves in breaking the peace by saying that others broke it first, and we only acted defensively; we have no colour for any such plea, and therefore let the matter go no further, for it has gone too far already.” Note, Most people stand in awe of men's judgment more than of the judgment of God. How well were it if we would thus still the tumult of our disorderly appetites and passions, and check the violence of them, with the consideration of the account we must shortly give to the Judge of heaven and earth for all these disorders! *We are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar* in our hearts, in our houses; and how shall we answer it, there being no cause, no just cause, or no proportionable one, whereby we may give an account of this concourse, and of this heat and violence? As we must repress the inordinacy of our appetites, so also of our passions, with this, that *for all these things God will bring us unto judgment* (²¹¹⁹ Ecclesiastes 11:9), and we are concerned to manage ourselves *as those that must give account.*

(6.) When he has thus shown them the absurdity of their riotous meeting, and the bad consequences that might follow from it, he advises them to separate with all speed (v. 41): he *dismissed the assembly*, ordered the crier perhaps to give notice that all manner of persons should peaceably depart and go about their own business, and they did so. See here,

[1.] How the overruling providence of God preserves the public peace, by an unaccountable power over the spirits of men. Thus the world is kept in some order, and men are restrained from being as the fishes of the sea, where the greater devour the less. Considering what an impetuous furious thing, what an ungovernable untameable wild beast the mob is, when it is up, we shall see reason to acknowledge God's goodness that we are not always under the tyranny of it. *He stills the noise of the sea, noise of her waves, and* (which is no less an instance of his almighty power) *the tumult of the people,* ²¹²⁰ Psalm 65:7.

[2.] See how many ways God has of protecting his people. Perhaps this town-clerk was no friend at all to Paul, nor to the gospel he preached, yet his human prudence is made to serve the divine purpose. *Many are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of them all.*