

Last week we saw the eloquent ministry of a man by the name of Apollos, who had come to Ephesus and was there in the synagogue, teaching diligently the things of the Lord, but limited in his knowledge, only knowing the baptism of John. Paul's friends, Priscilla and Aquila, took him aside and explained to him more fully the Scriptures and what God had done through Jesus Christ. So Apollos left Ephesus and he was commended to the saints that were in Corinth because Aquila and Priscilla had been with Paul in Corinth, they knew the saints that were there and so Apollos was sent on. There in Corinth he mightily convinced the Jews publicly showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.

And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples ²he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." We don't know what you are talking about. We haven't heard of the Holy Spirit. Now there are some who prefer the translation, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" Paul asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit since (in the old King James translation) they believed. The Greek language will support either translation. Now on the King James translators they had the best Greek scholars in the world at that time who were translating. They choose the translation, "since you believed." There are those who deny the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a separate experience from salvation. And so to support that position it is necessary that they translate, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" Basically that is the reason why they have chosen that particular translation because it then is in keeping with their theological position. However, the Scripture does teach that there is an experience of empowering by the Holy Spirit that is separate from conversion and subsequent to conversion.

In the promise of the Holy Spirit in Acts chapter one (Acts 1:4) you will remember that Jesus said to his disciples, now you wait in Jerusalem until you receive the promise of the Father, which you have heard from me. For John indeed did baptize you with water unto repentance but you are going to be baptized in the Holy Spirit in a few days. Now this is after Jesus had breathed on them in John 20:22, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Now they could not receive the Holy Spirit, this gift of the Holy Spirit, until He had ascended into heaven. But the Holy Spirit had always been operating from the beginning. We find in the beginning of Genesis the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. And throughout the Old Testament we find those that were filled with the Spirit and exercised the gifts of prophecy and other gifts of the Spirit in the Old Testament times. But there was the promise that the day would come when God would pour out His Spirit on all flesh. This is the promise that Jesus had been talking to the disciples about. And He said it is about time that God is going to fulfill that promise so you wait in Jerusalem until you receive this promise. For John indeed baptized you with water, you are going to be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days. So in the early part of the book of Acts, we find as they were there in Jerusalem waiting, the Holy Spirit came upon them and the church began its ministry of witnessing for Christ in Jerusalem. We saw how it spread then into Judea as a result of persecution and how then that Philip went to Samaria and preached Christ unto them. Now when Philip went to Samaria and preached Christ, many of the Samaritans believed and were baptized. They saw the miracles that Philip did. They were convinced of the message of Philip that Jesus was the Messiah and Mark's gospel tells us, they went everywhere preaching the word. The Holy Spirit working with them with signs following. Confirming the word that they spoke. So with Philip in Samaria, as he preached Christ unto them there were many miracles that were wrought by God through Philip and thus many of the Samaritans believed and were baptized. Now if a person believes and is baptized the Holy Spirit comes into their lives.

You cannot call Christ, Lord, except by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3). So Paul said to the Corinthians don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit that is in you? Paul said to the Ephesians, be filled with the Spirit. So there is the work of the Holy Spirit prior to our conversion. He is with us, convicting us of our sins, drawing us to Jesus Christ. When we obey the wooing of the Spirit and we receive Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit begins to indwell us. And He is there within us, giving us, really, that transforming power as He conforms us into the image of Jesus. But here Jesus says you are going to receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you to be witnesses unto me. And the witnesses are to go out through the whole world. Now Paul is in the uttermost parts of the earth as far as Jerusalem is concerned. He is there in Ephesus as a witness for Jesus Christ. And as he comes to the believers that are there, there seems to be a lack in their experience.

Now getting back though to Samaria (Acts 8:5-25), when Philip preached in Samaria, they believed and were baptized. Which means that that the Spirit was dwelling in them. But when the church in Jerusalem had heard that the Samaritans had also received the gospel, they sent unto them Peter and John for as yet the Spirit had not come upon them. And when Peter and John came they laid hands on them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. That was when Simon the sorcerer saw that through the laying on of their hands, the Spirit was imparted, he wanted to buy that power so that he could duplicate what they were doing. You remember that Peter rebuked him and said, your money perish with you because you think that the gifts of God can be bought. But their receiving of the Holy Spirit was a separate experience to their conversion. They believed and were baptized but then they were not or they did not receive this coming upon, this *apee* experience, until Peter and John came down.

When Paul was then converted on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-22), he said what would you have me to do, Lord, in responding to Jesus who had said, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? Who are You Lord? I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads. What would you have me to do, Lord? Now the Scripture tells us that you can't call Lord except by the Holy Spirit. You can't call Jesus, Lord, except by the Holy Spirit. So there was that conversion that moment he acknowledges the Lordship of Jesus Christ. There is that conversion. And yet when Paul came to Damascus, blinded as the result of his experience, there on the Damascus road. God spoke to a certain disciple named Ananias and told him to go to the street, Straight and inquire for Saul, because he is praying. And Ananias objected, saying Lord, I've heard about this guy. He is wrecking havoc to the church. He has come here to arrest those that are calling upon your name. And he is more or less saying, Lord, are you sure? And the Lord said, he is a chosen vessel unto me. I am going to show him the things that he is going to have to suffer for My sake. So he came to Paul and he said brother Saul, the Lord has sent me to you that I might pray for you that you might receive your sight and the Holy Spirit. So he prayed for Paul and Paul received his sight. And he received the gift of the Holy Spirit. And he began his ministry right there in Damascus. So it was separate to and subsequent to his conversion.

Now here in Acts when Paul said to the Ephesians, did you receive the Holy Spirit since you believed or when you believed, (it really makes no difference.) Because Paul is acknowledging that there is a relationship with the Holy Spirit that when they believed, did you not receive him? Or since you believed have you received Him? Paul is intimating that you can believe and yet not receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Or by the other translation, you can receive even as he did, Jesus as your Lord, but be filled with the Holy Spirit at a later time. So why Paul asked the question is probably an observation of a lack of fervency. A lack of love. A lack of passion. A lack of fire. There are many Christians who are lacking the real dynamic of the Spirit in their lives. They are sort of ho-hum Christians. There is no real fire. There is no real dynamic. Yes, I'm a Christian. Of course, I believe in Jesus, but it doesn't go beyond that. There is no real enthusiasm for the things of the Spirit, for the things of the Lord. And perhaps Paul observed that there was sort of a spiritual deadness. So his question, have you received the Holy Spirit? Because the Holy Spirit is a dynamic! It's a power! It's something that makes us alive to the things of the Spirit! It brings in us a fire and an enthusiasm. So did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? And they said we haven't even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.

³*And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?"* Jesus said to His disciples that they were to go and to teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. So we haven't heard of the Holy Spirit. Well then, how were you baptized? Didn't they baptize you in the name of Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit? How were you baptized?

There is a group that are known as the "Jesus Only" people. They say that you have to be baptized in the name of Jesus only. And that if you were baptized in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, it isn't really a valid baptism. That you have to be baptized in the name of Jesus only. For they say that Jesus is the Father. Jesus is the son. Jesus is the Holy Spirit. It's only Jesus. And so they are called the "Jesus only" sect. They have difficulty if you talk with them and ask them who was Jesus addressing when on the cross, He said, My God, My God, why have You forsaken me? And at the baptism of Jesus who was it that said this is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye Him! Was He a ventriloquist, you know? And they have difficulty with some of those things. But evidently, the question of Paul would indicate that it was the common practice to obey the commandment of Jesus in baptizing people to baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. So how were you baptized?

So they said, "Into John's baptism." And of course Apollos was the one who brought the Word of God to them and he knew only John's baptism until Priscilla and Aquila had instructed him more fully.

⁴*Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."* Or the Messiah, Jesus.

⁵*When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.* ⁶*And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon (apee) them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.*

⁷*Now the men were about twelve in all.* So when the Holy Spirit was originally poured out upon the church, in Acts chapter two, they spoke in tongues and there were cloven tongues like fire upon each of them. There was a sound like a mighty rushing wind.

When Peter came to Caesarea (Acts 10:23-48) to bring the gospel to the Gentiles and as he was speaking, the Holy Spirit came upon them again those in Caesarea spoke in tongues.

When Philip went to Samaria and Peter and John came and laid hands on them that they might receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, there is no mention of their speaking in tongues. However there must have been some kind of indication that they were receiving something special, otherwise Simon would not have desired to buy the power, unless he had seen some kind of supernatural evidence indicating that they had received the Holy Spirit.

When Paul received the Holy Spirit there is no mention of Paul speaking in tongues.

On the day of Pentecost it was as they were praying, that the Spirit came upon them.

In the case of Samaria, the apostles laid hands on them.

In the case of those in Caesarea, Peter didn't lay hands on them. While he was just speaking, the Holy Spirit sovereignly came upon them.

With Paul, Ananias laid his hands on him.

What I am seeking to point out is what Paul declares in I Corinthians 12 that there are diversities of gifts and there are diversities of operation. How the gift operates. In other words, God doesn't confine Himself to one particular pattern! We are so often trying to put God in our little groove and put restrictions on God. This is the way God does it and this is the way God did it for me. Thus, if it didn't happen to you like this, then, you know. We are always trying to put God in little neat boxes. But He refuses to be confined to one particular method. There are diversities of operation of the gifts of the Spirit. Which means that it may operate in my life in one way and in your life in another way. God isn't confined to a particular pattern always. When Jesus healed the blind, with some He just spoke and they were healed. With others He touched their eyes and they were healed. With another He spit on the ground, made mud, put it in the guy's eye and told him to go down and wash in the Pool of Siloam and when he did he was able to see. So He did it in diverse ways!

One of the problems is because God does it in diverse ways, we usually then sort of gather in our little groups. This is the way He did it for us. And we form another denomination in order that we might

emphasize our particular way. And I sort of identify that this is the way He does it. So we have the Methodists. And this is the method. And we have the Presbyterians, who follow the presbyteros form of church government. And the Episcopalians who follow the Episcopal form of church government with the bishops and all. But you see we gather around our distinctives and we start building up our walls. And if He didn't spit and make mud in your eye, then you don't belong to us, because we are the "mud in the eye" group, you know. And we are the "He touched me" group. And we are the "He touched me not" group. But the Lord isn't confined and I thank God He isn't to one particular method or way of doing things. Diversities of operation with the gifts of the Spirit.

So Paul laid hands on them. And again they spoke in tongues, but some of them also prophesied. Now in the New Testament, oftentimes with the receiving of the Holy Spirit there was the accompanying of this gift of speaking in other tongues, the *glossa*. In the Old Testament, it is interesting that the sign of their receiving the Holy Spirit was the gift of prophesy. Here in Ephesus there was the gift of both, speaking in tongues and the gift of prophesy.

⁸*And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.* Paul's custom was to the Jew first. Going into the synagogue and there discussing their preaching, their disputing, their persuading, the people concerning the kingdom of God. ⁹*But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way* (That Way of life that Paul was espousing.) *before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.* Now Tyrannus was a philosopher. He had a school there in Ephesus. According to one record Paul was there from eleven o'clock in the morning until three o'clock in the afternoon. Up until eleven, Tyrannus was there in his school, the philosopher, teaching. Paul took over at eleven o'clock and continued until three.

Now in that part of the world even to the present day, they have the afternoon siestas. It's so hot in the summer that the businesses close down, usually around noon time. And they don't open up until about four o'clock in the afternoon again. And then they stay open a little later in the evening. It's just a part of the culture there, during the heat of the day. They used to say, in Ephesus that there were many more people asleep at one in the afternoon than there were at one in the morning because of the heat, you know, it was easier to sort of do your socializing and all, in the evening or in the afternoon when it cooled down, but during the heat of the day, they took their siestas. They sort of napped. Now Paul, while he was there in Ephesus was making his living as a tentmaker. In the next chapter as we get into chapter twenty, as Paul is meeting with the elders of Ephesus. He reminds them how he was not chargeable to any of them but he labored working with his own hands while he was there so they wouldn't have to support him. He supported himself and he makes note of that in the next chapter. So he would work as a tentmaker up until eleven o'clock. Then when everybody was going home to take their siestas, the disciples of Paul or the believers would gather and he would teach them from eleven until three in the afternoon. Then he would probably go back and make tents again as he was supporting himself in the ministry.

¹⁰*And this continued for two years* (So he continued there in Ephesus for the space of two years after he had left the synagogue. Actually his total ministry in Ephesus was closer to three years.) *, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.* So Ephesus was a center of that area. From Ephesus there was all of the trade up toward Smyrna, Pergamos, on over to Thyatira, Laodicea and all. It was sort of the hub of that area. So Paul, while in Ephesus, there established then churches throughout all of that area of Asia. Interestingly enough in Paul's second missionary journey, he wanted to go to Asia but the Lord forbid him. But now he has come to Asia and the Lord is blessing him. The gospel is being spread through Hierapolis and throughout all of this area of Asia. And so we are told here as he was there for two years, all of those who dwelled in Asia heard the word of the Lord. A little later on in this chapter, Demetrius the silver smith, is going to say that he is persuading all of the people around here to believe in a God that isn't made with hands. Our trade is in jeopardy because of this fellow, because we make these little silver gods and goddesses and so forth. So the Word of God was spreading.

It's interesting and I've observed as God has been using Calvary Chapel in such a glorious way as Jesus said, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be witnesses unto me

both in Jerusalem and in Judea and in Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth. What is fascinating to me is that we began here in our Jerusalem. And God blessed. And the Holy Spirit was moving in our Jerusalem. But it soon spread into our Judea as Jeff Johnson went to Downey. As Mike McIntosh went to San Diego, as Greg Laurie went to Riverside. As these fellows began to go out into our surrounding communities which would be our Judeas. And then it began to spread into Samaria. Bil Gallatin went back to New York. Joe Foch went back to Philadelphia. And we began to spread. Skip Heitzek went to Albuquerque. Jon Courson went to Applegate, Oregon. Wayne Taylor, to Seattle, Washington. And then we began to send missionaries abroad. And we have, tonight, well over a hundred missionaries from Calvary Chapel who are carrying the gospel around the world. On every continent. And thus we saw the progression which started here in Jerusalem. It went to Judea, to Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth.

It's interesting in the Book of Acts, they began in Jerusalem. They filled the city with the doctrine of Jesus. Through persecution they were spread out into Judea. Philip went to Samaria. Now Paul is carrying the gospel to Europe. Thomas carried the gospel to India. And they began to spread the gospel into all the world. So when Paul wrote Colossians he said the word of the gospel as it has come to you as it is in all the world.

Now the interesting thing is that though say, Mike McIntosh went to San Diego and that was his Jerusalem. (It's our Judea, but it's his Jerusalem.) And he started to reach his Judea, other cities in San Diego. And Mike has started over twenty one churches in San Diego county. And as he reached his Judea then he began to reach into his Samaria. Now Mike has his international ministry and missionaries all over the world, especially though, concentrating in Mexico.

Joe Foch went back to Philadelphia. That was our Samaria, but it was Joe's Jerusalem. And he began to reach Philadelphia. And then other Calvary Chapels began to spring out of his church as they began to reach their Judea. And then they began to reach into their Samaria. And Joe has a missionary ministry that touches many parts of the world.

Our kids who went Subotica. Mike Harris, our junior high leader who went to Subotica for a couple of years to establish that mission work there. That was our uttermost parts of the earth, but for Mike that his Jerusalem. And he began to reach Subotica. It wasn't long before they began to open works in Baja, Hungary as they began to reach their Samaria. They opened in several little villages around Subotica, but then they began to reach over into Hungary which was their Samaria. We now have young men from Subotica who are heading up the high school department in Redlands as that church is reaching the uttermost parts of the earth. These two fellows from Subotica Calvary Chapel are doing a fantastic job there with the young people there in Redlands. And so it goes out. I was in Jerusalem, speaking in a Messianic fellowship on Saturday. There was a girl in the balcony that was smiling. After service she came up and she said, Chuck, I'm Henri. I'm from the Calvary Chapel in Baja, which was an offshoot of the Calvary Chapel of Subotica, which you know. She said the Lord has sent me here to Jerusalem as a missionary. And she is there in Jerusalem working as a missionary. So you see everywhere it lands it's like a virus. It begins to spread. That was God's intention that this is the way the church would spread. That the message of the gospel throughout the world, that every place it lands that becomes the center for world evangelism. Because it goes from there to the Judeas, to the Samarias, to the uttermost parts of the earth. So that's how the church can reach the whole world in one generation because of this exponential kind of growth that develops when each church becomes a Jerusalem and begins to reach its Judeas and its Samarias and the uttermost parts. So that every place it hits, that becomes Jerusalem to reach that Judea and thus we have watched the progress. And it's an exciting to see how God does work that way.

So Paul was in Ephesus but it spread from Ephesus into Laodicea, up into Pergamos, over into Smyrna, and Hierapolis and Laodicea and the areas around there, Sardis and all as Paul was ministering in Ephesus. It began to reach their Judea from that point. So all of Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

11 Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, Notice it was God that worked the miracles, not Paul. It was the hands of Paul. God uses human instruments to accomplish His work. What a thrill

and what a blessing it is to be an instrument in God's hands! That God would do His work through me, through my hands. I become the instrument that God has used. But it is God's work! But He works through human instruments. God wants to work through you! And how wonderful and what a thrill it is when God works through us, His wonderful works.

¹²*so that even handkerchiefs* (Now, that word handkerchiefs is of course an English translation of the Greek word. The Greek word is sweatband. Now you remember that Paul was a tentmaker and it was hot. He would sweat. And he would wear this sweatband around his head. So when Paul would get off work, he would take off the sweatband and throw it down. Someone would grab it, rip it off and take it and run to a sick person and lay it on the sick person.) *or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them* (as Paul's sweatbands and aprons were laid on people they were healed. Special miracles, and surely it is. So they brought to the sick handkerchiefs or sweatbands and aprons) *and the evil spirits went out of them*. How do you explain that? God is working. But I do believe that there is a value in what we might refer to as points of contact for the releasing of faith. So often we say, well yes, I believe that God can do it. Oh, I'm sure that God can do it. And I believe that God is going to do it, one day. But there is a difference between that and saying I believe that God is going to do it the moment the elders lay hands on me. Or I believe that God is going to do it the moment I can touch the hem of His garment. I'll be healed! Where there is that place where I release the faith. It's no longer passive. I believe He is going to do it now. I believe that with the shadow of Peter falling on people they were healed because their faith was triggered to be activated when his shadow fell on them. Even at the pool of Bethesda when the water was stirred. The first one in could be healed. And I believe that again it was a point of contact where if I can be the first one in I know I'm going to be healed. And faith is activated. God honors active faith! So with Paul's sweatbands and apron, when a person was sick. They would say, oh, we brought this from Paul, you know, and they laid it on them. The people would believe. Oh, I know that if they can just bring me one of Paul's sweatbands, I know that I am going to be healed. So when the sweatband was laid them, their faith was activated and they were healed. There is a lot of potential in believing God to do something now! When faith is activated, it is triggered into an active faith!

Years ago when I was in Bible college, there was a man by the name of Dr. Kelso Glover. He was an interesting man. I was attracted to him because of his interesting idiosyncrasies but he was a man of prayer and a man who loved God and thus I wanted to be sort of close to him to learn the life of prayer and commitment. He had a radio broadcast. He had a practice of sending out little anointed cloths. And people would write into the broadcast to get these anointed cloths. So he would have a stack of little four by four pieces of cloth and we would be with him. He would pour oil on them and we would lay our hands on them and ask God to bless these cloths wherever they went. People would write and get them. They would put them on them for healing and all. And they sent them all over. It was a very interesting thing. I read a lot of the letters from the people who would received these cloths. He would read some of the letters over the radio of people who received these cloths. And they healed of many different ailments. But one letter was of particular interest. This lady wrote, I remember so clearly, she said that she had received an anointed cloth. Her son with his family had come by after dinner on their way to the theater. And he was not a believer, but he saw the cloth on the table. He said what's this, mom? She said that is an anointed cloth, you know. He just sort of jokingly said, well I'll take it. He put it in his pocket and went to the theater. And while they were sitting in the theater, he turned to his wife and he said, I smell smoke. She said, you're crazy! You can't smell anything. You don't have olfactory senses. You can't smell. He said I smell smoke. She said you're crazy, you can't smell! He went down to the front of the theater, got up on the stage. He ordered the people out of the theater. And as soon as they all got out the theater burst into flames. She said would please send me another cloth. He won't give me that one back. You can't explain God. the works of God. But here from Paul, they sent out these sweatbands and aprons and laid them on the sick, special miracles. And evil spirits were cast out.

¹³*Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists* (There in Ephesus, it was an interesting place. It was a place that had a lot of cultish and occultish worship. A place where they had all kinds of magical things. They made up all kinds of little parchments that they were made of for different ailments that people would

take. They were into the magical kind of stuff. So these little parchments were taken by people as sort of good luck charms to ward off evil spirits and things of that nature. So there were these vagabond Jews who were exorcists.) So they took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." ¹⁴Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. ¹⁵And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" Second hand relationships don't work. It takes a first hand relationship. Rather comical really.

¹⁶Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. ¹⁷This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear (an awe) fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. ¹⁸And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. ¹⁹Also, many of those who had practiced magic (magical arts or curious arts) brought their books (on magic) together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver (a great amount). ²⁰So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

²¹When 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." Paul had a desire to go to the heart of the world. Rome, the capital of the world at the time. To bring the gospel to the Romans. He wrote to the Romans and said that he longed to come to them that he might impart to them some spiritual gift that there might be a mutual benefit by his visiting to them. So here he expresses his desire. When I pass through Macedonia and Achaia, I've got to go to Jerusalem. I want to be there for the feast of Pentecost, but then I want to see Rome. Paul's desire was fulfilled but not exactly as he was planning. He got to Rome in a far different way that he was anticipating, as we will get in the next few chapters.

²²So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus (the fellows who were ministering with him), but he himself stayed in Asia for a time (He stayed there for a little time longer. As I said, he stayed there for about three years.)

²³And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way. As we mentioned last week, the early Christian were known more as the people of the Way than they were Christian. Their own sort of reference to themselves was the Way. And so there arose no small stir about that Way. It's a way of life. A way that is different from the world as you walk after the Spirit.

²⁴For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. I mean they were getting wealthy over the making of these little idols of Diana. Now Ephesus was the center of the worship of Diana. Diana is the Latin name. The Greek name is Artemis. Artemis was an equivalent of the Babylonian Ashtoreth, or the female goddess of sex and sexual reproduction, represented by an image or an idol of a multibreasted woman. Because the breast is the source of life for the child. For the first few months the child is sustained by the mother's milk. They began to worship the female breast as the source of life. And so this idol of Diana that was put there in the temple was black. And it was carved into this multibreasted goddess. The story was that it came down from Jupiter. It perhaps was a meteor that someone picked up and carved into this multibreasted little idol. And thus it came as a fire from heaven. And so they said it was sent from Jupiter.

Down in South America they have the black Madonna. It's a whole cultish worship. And again it goes way, way back and it's a black meteorite that in the olden times when it came there was all this superstition and thus they thought it was something like a god that came from heaven or fell from heaven. And that was the case of Diana of the Ephesians.

The temple that they built for Diana was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was over four hundred feet long, two hundred twenty feet wide and sixty feet high. The roof was held by one hundred thirty five beautiful marble columns. And even today the ruins of that temple are extremely impressive. Now the worship of Diana or Artemis centered there in Ephesus. The worship of Diana as with Ashtoreth

an aphrodite was a worship that was accompanied by all kinds of sexual ritual. The priestesses were prostitutes. And the act of sexual relations was a part of the whole worship system of Diana. The area around the temple of Diana was a refuge. If you were being pursued by the law, if you could get into the precincts of the temple of Diana, they would not arrest you. It was a refuge. And thus it became, really around the temple, a place for all of the criminal and crooks. They were hanging out there because they could live there in safety and not be arrested. So this fellow Demetrius and other silver smiths were making a comfortable living by making little goddesses. Little silver images of Diana. And here was Paul affecting their business because he was preaching Jesus Christ. So Demetrius saw that this could be a real problem to their trade.

So ²⁵*He 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. Paul of course was teaching that gods are not made by man or by man's hands. The true and the living God is the Creator of all things. He is not created by man but is the Creator of all things!*

²⁷*So 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."*

²⁸*Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" ²⁹So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater (which seats some twenty thousand people. The theater is still there today in Ephesus. Magnificent!) with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, (Men who had been with Paul, his traveling companions) Paul's travel companions. ³⁰And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him. Now Paul is ready to face anything. He was going to go in and face the crowd. He probably figured, hey, twenty thousand was a good number to preach to, you know. So he was ready to go in, but the other disciples said no, no. ³¹Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater. (They knew that it would be death. That they would riot and tear him apart.)*

³²*Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, (I mean it was just a big commotion. You know, what's going on? I don't know. But let's join. They were all confused as to just what the issue was.) and most of them did not know why they had come together. I mean, just we're here. There's a crowd you know. They really didn't even know why they were there. ³³And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. They pushed Alexander up there. Now when Paul wrote to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:14-15), he mentioned how that Alexander the coppersmith had been a real problem to him. This Alexander was a Jew and he was probably going to try to tell the people that we Jews are not responsible for Paul. He was going to try and defend the Jews in the community and they were pushing 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!" ³⁵And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd (Finally, he got order after two hours of this chanting), he said: "Men of Ephesus, This guy is a slick politician. I mean you have to hand it to him. He is a real diplomat. He settled things down. He said you men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Zeus? (Jupiter. So as I said probably a meteorite that came down from the sky which was carved into this little multibreasted idol.) ³⁶Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly. ³⁷For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess. They weren't going around condemning. They were going around proclaiming the positive gospel of Jesus Christ. I think that we make a mistake many times seeking to drive out the darkness. To fight the darkness. The best way to get*

rid of darkness is just to turn on the light! It's simple! We spend so much time trying to deal with darkness, trying to drive out darkness. But how much better? Just turn on the light! And the light dispels the darkness. So rather than fighting against all of the wrongs, how much better to just lead people into the right path? And when they are brought into the right path there is no more issue involved.

So these men have not been blaspheming your goddess. ³⁸*Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another.* ³⁹*But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly.* This is an unlawful gathering. This is close to a riot. And the courts are open. Let's do things in a lawful way. ⁴⁰*For we are in danger of being called in question for today's uproar,* (One thing the Roman government would not tolerate and that is riots. Ephesus was a free city, a free Roman city. And they could lose that status as a free Roman city if there was an uproar and a riot there. And so this town clerk is warning the people of their danger of losing so much by this unlawful assembly. For we are in danger of being called for today's uproar.) *there being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering."* ⁴¹*And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.* Now go home. And they were dismissed.

Where do you suppose the greatest danger lay in this story? From Demetrius the silversmith or from the protection by the government officials? It's interesting that the church has always prospered under persecution. Whenever the church is protected by the government it becomes weak. The early church suffering persecution from the Roman government grew and thrived. But once it was embraced by the government, it became weak. It's interesting the church of Ephesus, when Jesus addressed the church in the Book of Revelation. I have this against you. You have left your first love. Therefore repent. Remember from which you have fallen and go back and do your first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your candlestick out its place. Now in the vision that John had, Jesus was walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, which were representative of the church. The seven churches of Asia represented by the candlesticks. And where is Jesus? He is walking in the midst. As he said, where two or three or gathered together I'm there in the midst. Now the warning of Jesus to the church of Ephesus is if you don't repent and go back and do your first works, come back to that first love, then I will remove the candlestick from that place. I will remove my presence from the church.

You go to Ephesus today, you see the ruins of a once great city. Nearby there's a little Moslem village. But there is not one single Christian living in or around Ephesus, today. The candlestick has been removed from its place of the presence of Christ.

The Lord wants our love to be fervent. To continue to be fervent. He wants us to be filled with the Spirit. Their first love when Paul came and they laid hands and they received the Holy Spirit. That love, that fervency, that excitement, the gospel being spread! But gradually, even by the end of the first century, these other forces had crept in and the church had lost its vitality, its love, its power. Until finally there is no church there. A warning to us. The importance of maintaining that fervor and that love and that excitement for the things of Jesus! Don't let the fire wane! But let the fire of God's Spirit ever burn in our hearts and lives as we seek to reach our Jerusalem, our Judeas, our Samarias and the uttermost parts of the world for Jesus Christ!

Father, we thank You for the work of Your Holy Spirit in Your church, through Your church. Tonight Lord, we pray that Your Holy Spirit might come upon our lives in renewed power that we might become instruments that You can do Your work even as Paul was an instrument through which You worked miracles, Lord. May we be instruments to do Your work. Help us Lord. Guide us Lord. Bless us Lord. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

May the Lord be with you. May you have a beautiful week. May you be conscious of His presence. May He manifest Himself to you in many special ways. That you will know that the Lord is near. The Lord's

hand is on you, guiding you, strengthening you, blessing you. Thus may you experience God's work in your life and through your life as you become His instrument to touch someone else with His love.