

Title: Acts 18-20

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Session 20

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Abstract

This lecture covers Acts chapter 18, verse 24 through chapter 20, verse 38, detailing Paul's missionary activities in Ephesus and his emotional farewell to the Ephesian elders. Dr. Craig Keener analyzes key events, including Gallio's crucial legal ruling in Corinth, the ministry of Apollos, the school of Tyrannus, and the power encounter with the sons of Sceva that led to the burning of magic books. He also describes the economic and patriotic riot sparked by Demetrius the silversmith over the worship of Artemis of Ephesus, the miraculous raising of Eutychus in Troas, and Paul's moving pastoral discourse to the elders in Miletus. Ultimately, the lecture highlights how early Christian leaders integrated with the culture while demonstrating spiritual authority and deep mutual love.

Outline

I. Gallio's Ruling in Corinth (Acts 18:12-17)

- A. The legal charge brought against Paul: contrary to the Jewish law.
 - 1. Jewish accusers frame the charge ambiguously to sound like a violation of Roman law.
 - 2. Dissociating Christianity from Judaism aimed to strip it of Roman legal protections.
- B. Gallio's decision: an internal Jewish religious dispute.
 - 1. Refuses to act as a judge in theological disputes, following strict Roman justice rather than political pressure.
 - 2. Recognizes Jewish local autonomy to judge their own community affairs.
- C. Significant legal precedent: established the highest provincial precedent protecting Christianity as a Jewish sect until Nero.
- D. Beating of Sosthenes.
 - 1. Sosthenes (synagogue leader) is beaten either by an angry Greek mob or as synagogue discipline.
 - 2. Sosthenes' later mention in 1 Corinthians indicates his subsequent conversion.

II. Apollos and the Disciples of John (Acts 18:24 - 19:7)

- A. Apollos of Alexandria.

1. Highly eloquent public speaker and powerful scriptural debater.
2. Instructed in the way of Jesus but knew only the baptism of John.
3. Instructed more accurately by Priscilla and Aquila.

B. The Holy Spirit distinction: Apollos already had received the Holy Spirit.

1. Being "enthusiastic in the Spirit" (enthusiastic in the Holy Spirit), John's baptism counted retroactively for him.
2. He did not require rebaptism before entering the mission in Corinth.

C. Other disciples of John in Ephesus.

1. Had received John's baptism but had not received the Spirit or heard of its active availability.
2. Rebaptized into Christian baptism by Paul, followed by laying on of hands.
3. Filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues and prophesying.

III. Paul's Teaching Ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19:8-10)

A. The School of Tyrannus.

1. Likely a lecture hall named for Tyrannus (a landlord, owner, or lecturer whose name was a nickname meaning "tyrant").
2. Scheduling: likely rented in the afternoon (after 11 a.m.) when public life and lectures typically ended in Ionian cities.
3. Paul's labor pattern: manual leatherworking until 11 a.m., followed by afternoon lectures.

B. Impact on the Province of Asia.

1. Paul functions as a Christian philosopher-lecturer, gathering disciples and visitors.
2. The word spreads throughout Asia, one of the wealthiest Roman provinces.

IV. Miracles and Magic in Ephesus (Acts 19:11-20)

A. Extraordinary healings and exorcisms through Paul (sweatbands/aprons).

B. The Seven Sons of Sceva.

1. Jewish exorcists using name-invocation magic, claiming high-priestly lineage.
2. Unauthorized use of Jesus' name: attempting to use the name as a magical formula.
3. The power encounter: demon rejects their authority ("I know Jesus, I've heard of Paul, but who are you?").
4. Exorcists beaten, stripped naked, and chased out of the house.

C. Repudiation of the Occult.

1. Word spread, and Jesus' name was glorified as a true authorization, not a magical tool.
2. Public burning of magic books worth 50,000 drachmas (50,000 days' wages).
3. Action represents Ephesia Gramata (spells) being divulged and burned, permanently destroying their power.

V. Artemis of Ephesus and the Silversmiths' Riot (Acts 19:21-41)

A. Artemis of Ephesus.

1. Greek virgin huntress, not an interior Anatolian fertility goddess.
2. Her temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world (420 ft by 230 ft, four times larger than the Parthenon).

B. Demetrius and the Economics of Pagan Religion.

1. Silversmiths' business of making prestigious silver souvenir shrines is severely impacted by Paul's monotheism.
2. Demetrius acts as a populist demagogue, stirring up civic patriotism and economic fear.

C. The Riot in the Ephesus Theater.

1. Seating capacity of over 20,000, located adjacent to the crowded marketplace.
2. A chaotic mob chanting "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians" for two hours, with most participants unaware of the actual issue.

D. Paul's Patrons: The Asiarchs.

1. High-status priests of the imperial cult who were Paul's friends and patrons.
2. Asiarchs warn Paul not to enter the theater to prevent public scandal and protect their own social standing.

E. The City Clerk's Resolution.

1. Scribe/Grammateus (Ephesus' chief official) calms the crowd and defends the rule of law.
2. Condemns Demetrius's demagoguery and directs him to the courts and lawful assemblies to avoid losing Rome's political privileges.

VI. Raising Eutychus in Troas (Acts 20:1-12)

A. Rejoining the "We" narratives in Philippi and sailing to Troas.

B. The All-Night Sunday Meeting.

1. Held because of Paul's departure the following day.
2. Eutychus falls asleep in a large, glassless window during the long discourse and falls three stories to his death.
3. Paul embraces and raises him (evoking Elijah/Elisha), and the meeting continues until dawn.

VII. Farewell to the Ephesian Elders at Miletus (Acts 20:13-38)

A. Circumventing Ephesus to save time and avoid hospitality obligations or local political complications.

B. The Character of Church Leaders: Elders as Overseers (Episkopoi) and Shepherds (Pastors).

C. Paul's Pastoral Example and Warning.

1. Innocency of blood (Ezekiel 33) and preaching the whole counsel of God from house to house with tears.

2. Warning against "fierce wolves" arising from within to exploit the flock.

3. Paul's self-support and rejection of greed as a moral example for leaders.

D. Deep Pathos and Affection: Weeping and kissing Paul on the lips (ancient Mediterranean family/disciple greeting) upon hearing they would never see him again.