

The Lecture Hall of Tyrannus

Text:

Acts 19: 1 – 10 (ESV)

And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland¹ country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. ² And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." ³ And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism." ⁴ And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." ⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized in¹ the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. ⁷ There were about twelve men in all. ⁸ And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. ⁹ But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus.¹ ¹⁰ This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

Introduction:

The passage we have just read summarizes Paul's third missionary journey. I want to begin with the conclusion of the passage. Verse 10 says that the result of Paul's activities in Ephesus, which lasted about 2 ½ years from (from the fall of 52 A. D. to the Spring of 55 A. D.), was that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. First, let me remind you that Asia here is not what we know as Asia, but rather the Roman province of Asia which corresponds approximately to the western 1/3 of present-day Turkey, the westernmost part of

what we call Asia Minor. This in no way diminishes the importance of what was accomplished in a relatively short period of time. Not just the city of Ephesus, which was the third most important city of the Roman Empire after Rome and Syrian Antioch, but the entire province of Asia was evangelized. In the end Luke's account is very brief giving of only a few vignettes of Paul's activities during this time period. There is sufficient evidence, however, in Acts and elsewhere to confirm what he says in verse ten.

A first indication of the success of the mission is found in the account of the uprising caused by the silversmiths at the end of the chapter. We will deal with this incident later, but for the moment listen to what Demetrius, the head of the silversmith's guild, says in verses 26 and 27: "And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship." There had been enough converts to Christ by this time that it was making an impact on the general culture of the entire province. Everyone is aware of what is going on. Demetrius' words prove to be prophetic. Ephesus and the province of Asia had become a great Christian center by the end of the 1st century and would continue as such for centuries. Many important people and events of early Christianity would be associated with the cities of Asia. Much more could be said, but this is enough to establish the overwhelming success of this mission. What primarily interests me in studying this text is this question: What did Paul do during these 2 1/2 years to bring about such a result?

Of course if he were here and we could ask him, I am sure the first thing he would say is that it wasn't really about what he did, that what happened was a work of God; that he was only the instrument through whom God worked to bring about this mighty movement of God's Spirit. He would certainly be right. Revival is always a work of God, nevertheless, it is worth our effort to observe the kind of effort that God blessed in such an extraordinary way. The text is sparse in details,

but combined with information from other texts in Acts and in Paul's Letters, I think we can discover something that will be instructive.

I. Paul's Daily Routine

Notice first of all something essential to what happens that we might pass over without noticing. After giving a brief description of a group of twelve men already present in the city when Paul arrived, who were followers of Jesus, but ignorant of the Holy Spirit, whom Paul rebaptized, and then telling how Paul spent three months reasoning with the Jews in the synagogue until as usual the leaders became contentious, Luke states in verse 9 that "he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus." Verse 10 then tells us that this continued for two years. What Paul did seems simple. It is something thousands of missionaries have done since. You go to a place; bear witness to Christ; when people begin to believe you then find a place to meet with them and instruct them.

Notice a couple more details. We are told that Paul did this daily. This is more than a weekly church service. Every day Paul is there teaching and instructing. There is another interesting detail that is not in our translation, but that has been preserved in some manuscripts of Acts that is most likely true. It says that Paul did this from 11 a. m. to 4 p. m. That may not seem unusual to us, but it was. The daily routine at the time was to begin the day early, at least by 6 A. M. and work till 11 A. M. Work then stopped for the noon meal. During the heat of the day people rested. Someone has said that it was more likely that a person would be asleep at 1 P. M. than at 1 A. M. Then by late afternoon shops would reopen and life would resume. Since Paul has a rented hall, it is available to him during the time when no one else would be using it, during the noon break and siesta time. Further, we know that while all this is going on Paul is still working at tent making. He has most likely rejoined Aquilla and Priscilla. In Acts 20: 33 -35 in his farewell speech to the Ephesian Elders He states: "I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and

to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" This is confirmed by what he says in I Thessalonians 2:9 "For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God." Paul worked while others were working, and taught while others were sleeping.

We should also point out that there were people for Paul to teach during this five hour period each day. People, who like Paul, had gotten up early and done a good part of a day's work, and who would return to work again after the teaching had ended. This is an amazing thing when you think about it, something which can only be attributed to a movement of God's Spirit. For two years people were willing to come in the heat of the day, at a time they would normally be eating and resting, to be instructed in the ways of Christ.

II. Paul's Course of Instruction

What was Paul teaching them that made them give up food and rest to listen to him. Again his farewell address to them in chapter 20 helps us answer the question. Here are some quotes. The address begins with these words: " And when they came to him, he said to them: "You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰ how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:18-21). These words indicate that the first thing he did was to ground them in the Gospel. He testified to both Jew and Greek of "repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." Everything begins there. Nothing can be done until people are truly saved until they repent and believe the good news about Jesus Christ.

Secondly, he says that he did not “shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable”, or as he says later in this same address: “I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.” Paul did not lead them to the knowledge of God in Christ and then abandon them. He taught them everything they needed to know to be good and faithful followers of Jesus Christ. We have a good indication of what he might have taught them in his Epistle to the Ephesians. This is a letter he sent to all of the churches of Asia a few years later during his first Roman imprisonment. We could almost see it as a summary of the teaching that he had given them while he was with them.

In doing what he did Paul was being a faithful servant of Jesus Christ who instructed his disciples and who instructs us to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt. 28: 19-20). There is no better illustration of the fulfillment of this command than in Paul’s work in Ephesus.

One final thing must be added about what Paul did in Tyrannus’ Lecture Hall. He taught them by his own living example. Paul never said “do as I say, not as I do”, rather on numerous occasions in his letters he reminded believers not of what he had said, but of what he had done. We have a prime example in II Thessalonians 3: 6 -9 where he writes: “Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate.” Facing death and wanting to encourage Timothy to continue the good work that he had begun he wrote to him: “But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions” (II Timothy 3: 10, 11a).

III. Paul's Method of Evangelism

The final thing I want us to see in this passage is Paul's method of evangelism. We have already seen that by the end of his time in Ephesus, not only Ephesus, but all of the province of Asia had been evangelized. Churches were planted not just in Ephesus, but in the major cities of the province. How did this come about? We have an indication in Paul's letter to the Colossians. Colossae was a city of Asia a good distance from Ephesus. Paul writes a letter to the church there while he is in prison in Rome approximately three years after leaving Ephesus. He writes the letter to warn them not to follow false teachers who were troubling them and to encourage them in the true faith in Christ. What is interesting for us is that he tells them that he had never seen them that he had never been to Colossae, yet he has been aware of them, as they are very much aware of him and of his work. Beyond this he mentions churches in the two cities nearest them, Laodicea and Hierapolis. The link between Paul and these churches is Epaphras who was the leader of the work in that region and whom Paul describes as a "dear fellow worker". Perhaps Epaphras had been among the first converts in Ephesus. He had no doubt been taught and trained by Paul in the lecture hall of Tyrannus and then sent to the far end of the Meander valley to evangelize the cities of that region. In reality Tyrannus' Lecture Hall became a missionary training center. How many others like Epaphras were trained there during those two years we don't know, but we do know that there were enough that by the time Paul left Ephesus Luke could say that all the residents of Asia had heard the Word of the Lord.