

**Paul – A Legal Case Study**  
**Chapter 8**  
**Paul and Ephesus**

One of the most famous trials of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was in Nuremberg, Germany after the end of World War II. The international community convened a trial of Nazi war criminals. Prosecuting the Nazis were representatives of four countries: The United States, Great Britain, France, and the U.S.S.R.

The United States prosecutor was Justice Robert Jackson, a Supreme Court Justice who took a leave of absence from the court to spend several years prosecuting at Nuremberg. Before the actual trials began, the four prosecutors met in England to plan their strategy. Jackson was concerned about a core issue. What precisely would be the charges brought against the German prisoners? After all, the German actions were legal in Germany. Most everything that had been done was first passed as a law. So arguably the Germans were simply following orders and obeying the German law.

The U.S.S.R. official thought such a question was a waste of time. He explained Soviet jurisprudence would call in the prisoners one at a time, ask them how they pleaded, then find them guilty, take them out and execute them. He seemed to think the whole process shouldn't take more than a few days.

Jackson explained that would not satisfy justice in the eyes of Americans or most anyone else with a sophisticated legal system built around proof and justice. So, Jackson and others spent the better part of six months working toward a charge sheet that charged the various prisoners with crimes against humanity as well as other assembled "wrongs."

In a legal system built around fair trials and justice for the accused, it is critical that the accused knows for what crimes he or she is being tried. Only then can an adequate defense be prepared and delivered.

If we go back 2,000 years to the days of Paul, we have left our modern legal system, but we haven't left the concept of justice. The Romans actually cared about justice. Certainly there were bribes, situations of who knew whom, politics, and many other intrusions into justice, but at their core, the Romans honored and wanted a system of justice.

In many areas, the Romans followed the Greeks. In language, philosophy, morality, and religion, we see a lot of Rome adopting Greek ways. Not so in law. The Romans were the legal specialists, not the Greeks. The Romans treasured their law and developed a sophisticated legal system.

One of the most important parts of any trial was the time spent drawing up a written document that defined issues for trial. Called “the formula,” the instrument set up what charges would need to be proven for one side or another to win. The trial of evidence then focused on proving or disproving the language in the formula.

My major concern in Paul’s case would be, “What exactly is he charged with?” That will help me construct the best defense I could offer.

### **The Accusations**

In Acts 24, Luke details the first encounter Paul had with the charges brought by the Jews. Roman law required that the accusers come in person to present the charges, but they were allowed to have a professional lawyer do the actual presentation and legal work.

Unlike America today (and most other countries), there were not official prosecutors of the state. In other words, there was no “District Attorney” or “U.S. Attorney” like in America where these people are paid to prosecute crimes against the state. Instead, the parties hired their own lawyers, and the complainants who believed Paul broke the law came in with their hired lawyer to conduct the prosecution. Luke gives the core facts in verses 1-9.

And after five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a spokesman, one Tertullus. They laid before the governor their case against Paul. And when he had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying:

“Since through you we enjoy much peace, and since by your foresight, most excellent Felix, reforms are being made for this nation, in every way and everywhere we accept this with all gratitude. But, to detain you no further, I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly. For we have found this man a plague, one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world and is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him. By examining him yourself you will be able to find out from him about everything of which we accuse him.”

The Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that all these things were so.

Tertullus was the hired gun. His name was Roman, and there is no indication he was a Jew. Tertullus as the hired gun began his presentation by trying to endear himself to the judge and jury, the provincial governor Felix.

Under Roman law, Felix had full “*imperium*,” or ability to conduct the trial determining what behavior was acceptable or what was a violation of Roman decorum and law. His decision against Paul would not be final since Paul was a Roman citizen, but it would be important nonetheless. Ultimately, as a citizen of Rome, Paul had the right to have Rome’s first citizen and supreme judge rule on his case. That, of course, was Caesar.

Tertullus’s efforts to endear himself to the court are found in his opening, “Since through you we enjoy much peace, and since by your foresight, most excellent Felix, reforms are being made for this nation, in every way and everywhere we accept this with all gratitude.” Tertullus then transitioned into what he wanted. “But, to detain you no further, I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly.” He then set out Paul’s “criminal” behavior:

1. “For we have found this man a plague, one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world.”
2. “And is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes”
3. “He even tried to profane the temple.”

These are interesting charges. In a later lesson, as we detail the actual defense I would offer on Paul’s behalf, I will detail with greater precision how these actions might be interpreted by the judge. Before the trial, however, knowing the charges, I would set to develop the facts I reasonably anticipate being relevant at the trial.

This requires me to research the actions of Paul, especially at Ephesus, where I believe the prosecutor will try to make his case. I choose the Ephesus angle because when Paul was originally accosted in the Temple leading up to his arrest, the events were instigated by “Jews from Asia,” where Ephesus was the key city (Acts 21:27). Further, these “Jews from Asia” knew Paul’s associate from Ephesus, assuming that Paul had taken him into the temple.

Moreover, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.” For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple (Acts 21:28-29).

A final piece of the puzzle that would lead me to believe that the Ephesian story would be played out to the judge is my knowledge of the riot that did occur in Ephesus involving Paul. This is the story I need to research and have at my fingertips for trial.

## Paul in Ephesus

Paul's first encounter with Ephesus came at the end of his second missionary journey. In a previous chapter, I discussed Paul's first missionary journey with Barnabas and others. I also set out Paul beginning a second journey where he wanted to visit the churches started on the first journey. Paul did so, but went further, crossing over from modern Turkey into modern Greece, working his way down to Athens and then Corinth.

Paul spent 18 months (a long time for Paul) in Corinth. That time gave Paul opportunity to make lasting friendships with co-workers like Priscilla and Aquila. Paul also got to know the Corinthian church intimately, something I would note in case it became important later. For example, if the accusation was levied that Paul simply went into towns, disrupted those towns, then moved on, I would have ready that he made lasting friendships, worked well with others in a concerted effort at a common goal, and enjoyed a long stay in one community.

Corinth was unusual in having a port on the west facing Italy and a port on the west facing Turkey. Luke reported that Paul left Corinth from Cenchrae, which was the eastern port facing modern Turkey. Luke added that at Cenchrae, Paul cut his hair as part of a vow before sailing.<sup>1</sup> Paul's companions on this journey were his friends he had made at Corinth, Priscilla and Aquila. Paul was headed back to Syria, but the boat made port first at Ephesus, a journey of two to three days by sea.



---

<sup>1</sup> Most scholars believe that Paul was fulfilling a vow he had made that as God protected him in Corinth, he would cut his hair. See, F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Eerdmans 1990) at 398. McRay suggests that Paul had taken a "private" Nazarite vow of thanksgiving for the fulfillment of the promised protection that had come to Paul in a vision. Paul would then offer his cut hair under the Nazarite vow at the temple in Jerusalem. John McRay, *Paul: His Life and Teaching* (Baker Academic 2003) at 174-6. Ramsay suggests the vow was connected "with safe embarkation from Corinth." William Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* (Baker 1949) at 263.

Something very rare happened while Paul was in Ephesus. Paul left the boat long enough to go into the city and attend synagogue services. Paul took that opportunity to reason with the Jews. Those Jews asked Paul to stay longer to discuss things with them more. Paul actually said, “No,” adding that he would return to them if God so willed (Acts 18:20-21). This was rare, and also important. For Paul to turn away an opportunity to stay and teach about Jesus, one must ask, “What was driving Paul to leave so quickly?”

William Ramsay provides a good explanation for the timing of Paul’s trip. Ramsay explains that Paul was hustling back to Jerusalem for the Passover feast in 53AD. If we accept Ramsey’s analysis, then we should note the Passover was March 22 that year. Since navigation in the Mediterranean began as a general rule on March 5 each year (winter weather made such travel unusually dangerous), every day would count as Paul strove to return.<sup>2</sup>

Acts 18:22 recounted that Paul sailed from Ephesus to Caesarea, a journey of about seven days by sea. From the port, Paul, “went up and greeted the church” (which is language used for going “up” to Jerusalem since it is on a mountain/hill), then “went down” to his home church back at Antioch. After spending some time in Antioch, Paul left on his third missionary journey.

Paul’s third journey took him back through the Galatian churches for a fourth visit. While Luke gives us no details, it is clear Paul had a pastor’s heart toward those Christians he had seen come into the church. This is important to me because it was in some of those towns that people had gathered as a group at Paul’s first visit, seeking to stone him. This was not going to be successfully asserted as a place where Paul was inciting riots, however, since he was safely able to go back time and time again. Paul spent that time “strengthening all the disciples” (Acts 18:23).

### *Ephesus*

Paul’s third journey into modern Turkey gave Paul a chance to return to Ephesus as promised. To understand Paul’s arrival, it helps to consider what had happened since Paul had left his brief stopover there.

Earlier I referenced Paul leaving the Ephesians, in spite of the Ephesian’s wanting him to stay. Importantly, Paul did not leave them high and dry. Although Paul ventured on, he left Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus to preach and teach the people there. This was a marvelous move because, while Paul was absent, a man from Alexandria came into Ephesus teaching about Jesus. The man was named Apollos.

---

<sup>2</sup> Ramsay at 263-264.

Apollos is not mentioned extensively in the New Testament, but there are several very notable things about him worthy of study, especially in light of the opinion of Luther and many others that Apollos was the likely author of the Book of Hebrews.

Luke said Apollos was:

- “a native of Alexandria” (Acts 18:24)
- “an eloquent man” (Acts 18:25)
- “competent in the Scriptures” (Acts 18:25)
- one who “had been instructed in the way of the Lord” (Acts 18:25)
- “fervent in spirit” (Acts 18:25)
- one who “spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus” (Acts 18:25)
- and one who “knew only the baptism of John” (Acts 18:25).

While Apollos was in Ephesus, he was speaking boldly in the synagogue. Evidently it was apparent to at least Priscilla and Aquila that his learning had notable holes because Luke explained that they pulled Apollos quietly aside, “and explained to him the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:26).

From there, the more learned Apollos left Ephesus and went to the church in Corinth to minister there. We know his influence was significant in Corinth because Paul would later write to the Corinthians trying to mend schisms in the church between those who claimed to be “of Apollos” and those “of Paul.” In 1 Cor. 3:5, Paul used the image of Paul having planted and Apollos watering while “God gave the growth.”

Apollos knew about Jesus, but in a rudimentary way. For example, Apollos understood the baptism taught by John the Baptist, but never had been taught about the Christian baptism into the death and resurrection of Christ. It is as if Apollos had gained knowledge of Jesus from the early ministry years, but no more. One can easily imagine Apollos making a trek from Alexandria to Jerusalem. Apollos could have then come under the teaching of John the Baptist, receiving his baptism. Apollos also understood that John the Baptist had directed his followers to follow Jesus. Again, the contact between Alexandria and Jerusalem was close enough that Apollos could have easily kept up with the teachings of Jesus. But somehow, Apollos failed to grasp the full import of the death and resurrection, at least as far as baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit were concerned.

When Apollos first arrived in Ephesus, his teaching about Jesus was quite limited. In light of those developments, it is not surprising that as Paul was heading into Ephesus, he found some disciples that, while following Jesus, understood only the baptism of John. These were folks who had not even heard of the Holy Spirit, much less received it! Paul explained that John’s baptism was one that prophesied the coming of Jesus, but the

believer's baptism was one that was into Christ himself. Hearing this message, these people were baptized into Jesus' name, Paul laid hands on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying as the Spirit came on them.

Some might wonder how these people had not already been taught more accurately; after all, Priscilla and Aquila were there. The answer lies in part in understanding Ephesus a bit more fully. Unlike many places Paul had been as he went through Galatia, Ephesus was not a small town. Scholars place the population of Ephesus at this time between 200,000 and 250,000.<sup>3</sup> Strabo (c.64BC – c.25AD) called it, “the largest emporium in Asia this side of the Taurus [mountains].”<sup>4</sup> Having people with various stages of understanding makes complete sense, especially with Apollos having taught John's baptism for some time.

Paul then fulfilled his promise returning to the synagogue in Ephesus. Paul spoke boldly about Jesus, persuading and explaining about God's kingdom. After three months of teaching, some were stubbornly refusing to put their faith and belief in Jesus as Messiah, so Paul left the synagogue and moved his teaching to the “hall of Tyrannus.”

One of the ancient texts of this, called “the Western text” adds some information to increase the insight into Paul's teaching at Tyrannus's hall. The Western text says Paul argued/taught there “from the fifth hour to the tenth.” For clock purposes, the day began at 6 a.m., so the “fifth to the tenth” hours would mean roughly from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. This was the time when businesses (including the school of Tyrannus) would be shut down for lunch and afternoon rest. Following this schedule gave Paul a chance to work during normal working hours. Then when folks were eating and resting, Paul could take that time to teach.

For two solid years, Paul used this time and place to teach of Jesus. Ephesus made a splendid location for Paul to do so. Ephesus was not only an important seaport, but it was also strategically located for trade and travel by land. Trebilco explains that Ephesus had roads heading north and south as well as two major highways heading east.<sup>5</sup> The port was to the west, and had direct shipping routes from Greece, Macedonia, Syria,

---

<sup>3</sup> *The Book of Acts in its Graeco-Roman Setting*, editors David Gill and Conrad Gempf, chapter by Paul Trebilco, “Asia” (Wipf and Stock Publishers 2000) at 307.

<sup>4</sup> Strabo, *Geography* 14.1.24, Loeb Classical Library, translation by Horace Jones.

<sup>5</sup> In the book of Revelation, we read Jesus instructing John to write to seven churches of Asia. The first letter is to the church at Ephesus, the center of communication. From there, the churches are listed as Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. These churches follow the order of the road starting in Ephesus and winding in a “geographical semicircle...on what must have functioned as an ancient postal route.” John McRay, *Archaeology and the New Testament* (Baker 1991) at 243.

Palestine, and even Egypt. Travelers from all over the Mediterranean world would make their way to Ephesus.

In addition to standard travelers, Ephesus was home to a “courier school.” This was a school that taught and trained people how to be messengers or couriers. These people were trained to take letters and messages and deliver them where sent.<sup>6</sup> There is no way to know how this worked to spread the message and insights of Paul. We do know that as a result of Paul’s time in Ephesus, “all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks” (Acts 19:10).<sup>7</sup>

### *Ephesus and Magic*

Ephesus was a magical place, in more ways than one! Magic itself had a home in Ephesus. There was a term used in that day, Ἐφέσια γράμματα (*Ephesia grammata*) meaning, “letters or writings of Ephesus.”<sup>8</sup> These were words, spells, and incantations of Ephesus that allegedly contained powers over the spiritual realm. In addition to magical spells, there are many inscriptions showing that the Ephesians sought out healing for medical maladies from various gods worshipped there.<sup>9</sup>

Paul came into the Ephesian magic scene bringing not only the truth of God, but the power of God as well. God worked “extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul” (Acts 19:11). In fact, not only through Paul, but also through Paul’s face, cloths, and aprons, the sick were healed and demons exorcised.

Some itinerant Jewish exorcists thought they had found some new magic words that would give them a similar power! Thinking Jesus was nothing more than magic, they sought to exorcise some evil spirits. These men (they were “seven sons of a Jewish priest named Sceva”) tried to control a spirit demonizing a man saying, “I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims.” The spirit answered, “Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?” The spirit then used the man to overpower the exorcists, leaving them naked and wounded as they fled the house!

---

<sup>6</sup> Trebilco at 310-311.

<sup>7</sup> Trebilco writes, “Paul’s message would quickly be spread through the province, through the agency of people who had come to Ephesus for any number of reasons, had become Christians, and then returned to their homes, but also because *people would be used to hearing news from Ephesus.*” (Emphasis added.) *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> See Plutarch, *Quaest. Conv.* 7.5.

<sup>9</sup> Trebilco at 312-313.

When word of this got out, those who heard the news held the name of Jesus in greater awe and fear than before. Jesus was praised, and those believers that had kept books of magic brought those out and burned them publicly.

Paul spent over two years in Ephesus teaching daily and seeing the church grow. Somewhere during that time, Paul decided he should go back through Macedonia (Philippi and Thessalonica) and Achaia (Greece) visiting the churches. He then decided to go to Jerusalem followed by Rome. In anticipation of this, Paul sent Timothy and Erastus ahead while he finished up in Ephesus.

### *Ephesus and Albuquerque*

During Paul's last few days in Ephesus, "there arose no little disturbance" (Acts 19:23) concerning the Way (an early term for the church). The disturbance was instigated by a silversmith named Demetrius. Demetrius made his living forming shrines to Artemis out of silver. The Ephesian worship of Artemis was well known and tied to a rock.

And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, "Men of Ephesus, who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great Artemis, and of the sacred stone that fell from the sky? (Acts 19:35).

If you find yourself in Albuquerque, New Mexico with an hour to kill, you might want to go to Northrop Hall on the University of New Mexico campus. Inside you will find the Meteorite Museum with its extensive collection of meteorites (rocks) that have fallen from outer space. The highlight of the collection is a 2,000-pound rock that fell in Kansas in 1948.

Most everyone today knows what a meteorite is. We live in a day when people have traversed space, walked on the moon, and scanned with telescopes deep into the heavens. Consider, however, what a primitive people might think if they saw a rock come hurtling out of the sky, especially if these eye witnesses believed that the gods actually inhabited the sky.

For insight, consider the famous Greek playwright Euripides (ca. 480BC – 406BC) who wrote a tragedy entitled *Iphigenia Among the Taurians*. In the play the goddess Artemis rescued Iphigenia from a sacrificial death by substituting a deer on the altar and whisking the girl to Tauris (a Greek colony along the northern coast of the Black Sea). Iphigenia worked as a priestess at the temple of Artemis where there was a "statue" which "they

say fell from the sky.” Later in the play, the “thing that fell from the sky” was stolen by Iphigenia’s brother and taken to Athens.<sup>10</sup>

While today that may seem absurd, to the mindset of ancient Greeks, it seemed quite sensible. Of course, to Paul and those of Judaic Christian understanding, the idea was as absurd as it is to us. The Jews understood God from the revelation of Scripture, and they would never have thought that God chunked rocks at the earth to be idols for worship. Christians knew the same, but they also understood that God’s real descent to earth was not as a rock, but as a man, Jesus Christ.

With this background, one can more readily follow what happened to Paul in Ephesus. The Ephesians had built, almost 600 years earlier, a massive temple to Artemis.<sup>11</sup> Like the temple at Tauris, the one in Ephesus was built around a meteor that had fallen to earth. This explains the reference from the town clerk to the “sacred stone that fell from the sky” (Acts 19:35).

The Ephesian temple of Artemis was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Antipater of Sidon, writing in the first century BC spoke of the temple compared to the other wonders of the ancient world:

I have set eyes on the wall of lofty Babylon on which is a road for chariots, and the statue of Zeus by the Alpheus, and the hanging gardens, and the colossus of the Sun, and the huge labour of the high pyramids, and the vast tomb of Mausolus; *but when I saw the house of Artemis that mounted to the clouds, those other marvels lost their brilliancy, and I said, ‘Lo, apart from Olympus, the Sun never looked on aught so grand.’*<sup>12</sup>

The temple was huge; four times the size of the Parthenon in Athens.<sup>13</sup> It was also a huge economic driver for Ephesus. It served as a tourist destination, a site of religious pilgrimage, and even a bank. People from throughout Asia Minor would use the temple as a place to keep their money and treasures. Dio Chrysostom (c.40–120), a young man in nearby Bithynia at the time, would later write,

---

<sup>10</sup> *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, Loeb Classical Library (1999), translation by David Kovacs, at lines 86 and 1384.

<sup>11</sup> The original temple was built around 550 BC. It was subsequently rebuilt several times including by Alexander the Great.

<sup>12</sup> Loeb Classical Library, *The Greek Anthology Book IX* (Harvard University Press 1919) translated by W. R. Paton at 58 (pg 31).

<sup>13</sup> Paul Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* (Eerdmans 2004) at 20.

About the Ephesians ... that large sums of money ... belonging to private citizens and deposited in the temple of Artemis, not alone money of the Ephesians but also of aliens and of persons from all parts of the world, and in some cases of commonwealths and kings, money which all deposit there in order that it might be safe, since no one has dared to violate that place.<sup>14</sup>

Apart from its tourist pull, its religious draw, and its banking position, the temple also served as a source of income to those like Demetrius who would fashion replicas of the goddess Artemis or shrines in her honor.

It comes as no surprise that Demetrius was able to stir up quite a commotion when he accused Paul by reporting,

Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods (Acts 19:26).

A number rallied around Demetrius, for as he pointed out,

from this business we have our wealth (Acts 19:25).

A final pointed message was his declaration that,

there is a danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited, and the goddess herself, who is worshipped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty (Acts 19:27).

When one considers the extra-biblical insight into Ephesus and the cult of Artemis, it comes as no surprise that when Demetrius issued his fear-inducing indictment, the people,

were furious and began shouting: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" (Acts 19:28).

In fact, Luke adds that soon the whole city was in an uproar.

Paul had two companions with him from Macedonia, Gaius and Aristarchus, who were grabbed and hauled into the theater. Today a theater is considered a place for drama or an occasional concert. While the theater held such events in Paul's day, it was used in many more ways. The Ephesian theater would seat 20,000 people and was used for large

---

<sup>14</sup> Dio Chrysostom, Discourse 31.54, Loeb Classical Library (Harvard University Press 1940) translated by J. W. Cohoon, H. Lamar Crosby.

meetings, public events, meetings of governmental assemblies, holiday festivities, etc. It was a logical place to haul Paul's co-workers.



In this picture of the Ephesian theater, taken by James Hoffmeier, we can still see today the location of the dispute with Gaius and Aristarchus

Paul sought to intervene and appear before the crowd, but his friends, including some provincial officials, begged Paul not to go into the theater. So Gaius and Aristarchus stood in the theater without Paul, but with God! Jews were involved in the ruckus and grabbed one of Paul's other companions caught up in the riot and shoved him (Alexander) to the front of the theater. Alexander tried to quiet the crowd and present a defense, but the crowd soon recognized him as a Jew and began shouting, Great is Artemis of the Ephesians! (Acts 19:34).

The Greek being chanted by the people is an actual slogan in use at the time. The Greek phrase begins with *megale* (μεγάλη) translated "Great." The phrase is found in inscriptions in ancient Ephesus as well as in a number of classical writers of the day.<sup>15</sup> This chanting continued for about two hours! At that point, the city clerk managed to get the crowd quiet by using a good bit of logic! Here is where the clerk acknowledged that everyone knows Ephesus is the home of the temple and guardian of the image "which fell from heaven" (Acts 19:35). The clerk then said that everyone should just "be quiet and not do anything rash" (Acts 19:36). In fact, the Christians had not stolen anything or done anything illegal. So the proper action by Demetrius and others was not to riot and potentially get into trouble with the Roman authorities. Instead, the clerk stated, they should take any of their grievances to court.

This fact related by Luke also comports well with current knowledge of Ephesus. Ephesus was a center for the Roman courts in the region. The proconsuls would hear grievances and make decisions on matters relevant to the city and its administration. The clerk effectively ended the riot, dismissing the crowd.

---

<sup>15</sup> Trebilco, at 318-319.

Importantly, there was no trial. No accusations were made in any formal form. No one took Paul to court or prosecuted him for any wrongdoing. These were eyewitnesses and people with a grievance, yet they never saw fit to make a case out of Paul's actions.

With this, Paul's time at Ephesus drew to a close. I will feel fairly comfortable defending Paul against the accusation of being "one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world."

## POINTS FOR HOME

1. *"When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined"* (Acts 18:20).

It is still incredible to think about. Paul declined to stay on and teach about Jesus to those who needed and wanted to hear! What do we do with this? First, we should be impressed that Paul was so closely tuned into the work God had for him. Those people left behind in Ephesus were not left without adequate help. Priscilla and Aquila were there, and Apollos was coming shortly. God worked his will in Ephesus while still working his will for Paul. Paul's concern was God's will for his time, his influence,<sup>16</sup> and his ministry. That is what Paul was about.

We live caught between two problems. First, we never want to say "no" to an opportunity God gives us for his good works. Yet, we also never want to miss God sending us one direction for his good works simply because we perceive a more personally preferable direction where we believe he could also use us. How do we decide what to do? How do we make sure we follow God and never wrongfully say "No"? This whole question ties into how we discern God's will for our life.

We begin by acknowledging that 90 percent of the time, God's will is plainly found in the teachings and mandates of Scripture: love your neighbor, love God, be honest, have the heart of a servant, tithe, be fiscally responsible, *etc.* What about the other 10 percent of the time? The solution there lies in closeness with God. The more we walk faithfully in the 90 percent, the more we spend time in prayer and worship, *etc.*, then the closer we grow to God. We begin to understand his heart and hear his voice. We get fuller understanding of his will for our lives. In this, we find our direction.

---

<sup>16</sup> Stephen Trammell is currently writing an article for a monthly publication on the stewardship of one's influence. Stephen also writes daily devotionals that are wonderful (and free!) available for download at [www.cfbc.org](http://www.cfbc.org).

2. *“When Priscilla and Aquila heard him [Apollos], they took him and explained to him the way of God more accurately”* (Acts 18:26).

Which is more impressive here, that Priscilla and Aquila had the manner that allowed them to pull Apollos aside and teach the teacher or that Apollos had the humility to learn? We take lessons from both! Both modeled the approach Paul would later urge to the Philippians, “Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves” (Phil. 2:3).

3. *“There is danger the great temple of Artemis may be counted as nothing”* (Acts 19:27).

In a strange way, Demetrius was right. Ultimately Ephesus became a principal and leading Christian city. Once Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, Ephesus became home to at least one major church council. Even the temple to Artemis was ultimately destroyed, and in the 530’s the huge columns were used by Justinian to build the Hagia Sophia church in Constantinople, the largest and most spectacular church for 1,000 years of church history.

Let us remember that our faith in a risen Savior, in a God who created the world and is beyond any idol we might create on our own, is a faith that is in conflict with the values of the world. The world stands opposed to true biblical faith. While the temptation might be to compromise what we believe, or even mesh it into the world’s systems and beliefs, we should never be so foolish. We are to be “the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste ... it is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet” (Mt. 5:13). Rather than lose our saltiness, let us be a “light of the world ... on a stand ... [that] gives light to all in the house” (Mt. 5:14-15).