

The sermon

Intro

There's this thing that Christians talk about called revival.

I must confess, after some conversations, I wasn't fond of the thing.

In the most erroneous circles, revival was people barking like dogs, holy laughter, rolling on the floor, Holy Ghost glue (glued to the floor by the Spirit), reports of God visiting people with gold and silver tooth fillings, and people being slain in the Spirit. Benny Hinn stuff. A "Spirit-filled" individual puts their hand on your head and the Spirit flows knocking you to the floor.

That's the crazy stuff. But I had concerns that spiritual laziness came with revival talk. People wanted God to work powerfully and quick and fix everything in an instant.

They didn't want Bible intake, persevering prayer, fasting, learning and acquiring wisdom, wrestling with sin, confession of sin, repentance, trusting God in trial, personal evangelism and rejection. They wanted a quick fix. They wanted hype. They didn't want the hard work, the struggle, the trials, the perseverance, the growth that comes over time.

They didn't want biblical Christianity. They wanted no effort revival.

Acts reveals genuine revival.

Body

Point 1: Paul's plans (19:21-22)

READ 19:21-22

"these events" = Acts 19:11-20.

Miracle handkerchiefs and failed Jewish exorcists.

"resolved in the Spirit" = influenced by the Holy Spirit, Paul plans to visit Jerusalem. Before he gets there, he wants to visit the churches already established in Macedonia (e.g., Thessalonica) and Achaia (e.g., Corinth). After Jerusalem, he **must** get to Rome = divine necessity.

Because he cares about the health of the churches, Paul sends trusted workers ahead of him: Timothy and Erastus.

Application

Planning is good and godly. Church health is worth our planning.

Point 2: A dangerous gospel (19:23-27)

READ 19:23-27

Paul's gospel proclamation produced abundant, positive fruit (repentant converts). But the same gospel that bore fruit bore opposition.

"there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way" is illustrated by with Demetrius.

Demetrius the man (19:24)

Demetrius made “*silver shrines of Artemis.*” Small replicas of the actual shrine in the temple. For home worship.

And “*be brought no little business to the craftsmen.*” He helped other silver workers make a profit. Demetrius took orders to make silver shrines. The orders were so many that he couldn’t do the work himself. So he hired out other craftsmen to fulfill the orders. He provided work for other craftsmen.

Demetrius’ speech (19:25-27)

Paul’s going around town “*saying that gods made with hands are not gods.*” Demetrius and his business associates were making gods with their hands. **He’s talking about us!**

There’s two main consequences:

1. “*this trade of ours may come into disrepute*”

Some people are believing the things Paul is saying! No orders means no livelihood.

When a good number of the population becomes converted, there will be economic repercussions for certain industries. In certain pockets of Maine, if there were a substantial number of genuine conversions, strip clubs and casinos and cannabis shops and bars would suffer.

The gospel endangers immoral money makers.

The gospel, if believed by a large enough group of people, affects the local economy.

2. “*the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing...she may even be deposed from her magnificence*”

Personal livelihood concerns remain. If Artemis suffers, we suffer. But personal loss isn’t the only concern.

If Artemis suffers, the whole city suffers. The temple of Artemis in Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. People traveled to Ephesus to see the majestic temple. This brought money into the city. **The gospel endangered tourism!**

Artemis was believed to be the daughter of Zeus and Leto. The goddess of fertility in man, beast, and nature. The goddess of death. She ruled over supernatural powers. As such, she was associated with safety and good health. She helped women in childbirth.

The Ephesians actually believed these things. To insult Artemis was to insult the goddess they treasured and trusted.

Point 3: An enraged crowd (19:28-34)

READ 19:28-34

“*Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!*” She’s our goddess. We’re her city.

“*enraged and were crying out*” = they’re fuming and screaming. Demetrius’ speech hit a nerve.

“*So the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed together into the theater.*” – 19:29

We don't know the size of the Demetrius' audience. But their rage spread.. Archeological data suggests the theater held up to 25,000 people. They needed a 25,000 person venue! The speech of one man to a group of craftsmen set the whole city on fire.

The craftsmen began to scream. Others overhear. Others scream. Snowball effect.

Because of the rage, Paul's known companions (Gaius and Aristarchus) are dragged into the theater by the mob. Paul was known. Paul's co-workers were known.

Dragged from the street or their workplace or their home? Luke doesn't say what the crowd wanted to do to them.

“But when Paul wished to go in among the crowd, the disciples would not let him.” – 19:30

Paul and the church were quickly aware. Paul was restrained.

“And even some of the Asiarchs, who were friends of his, sent to him and were urging him not to venture into the theater.” – 19:31

Asiarchs = leading men in Ephesus from the upper class. They proposed motions and carried out the administrative duties for the city like dedicating buildings and organizing festivals.

It doesn't say the Asiarchs believed. It just says they were friends of Paul and wanted to protect him from harm. Some were probably converted. The point is Paul was a known public figure. And he'd won the affection of leading town officials.

Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. – 19:32

People were rioting. Most had no clue why. No careful reflection here.

Some of the crowd prompted Alexander, whom the Jews had put forward. And Alexander, motioning with his hand, wanted to make a defense to the crowd. ³⁴ But when they recognized that he was a Jew, for about two hours they all cried out with one voice, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" – 19:33-34

The Jews (remember the synagogue!) were lumped in with Paul. Jews also believe that “*gods made with hands are not gods.*” So they need a defense. Alexander's chosen, but he's drowned out by the shouting crowd. The Jews are in deep water too.

Illustration

Imagine a scenario where someone moved to town and promoted burning the U.S. flag. They gain a number of followers. A movement's formed. Law enforcement doesn't step in. Public flag burnings every day. Imagine also that Palermo's the epicenter of flag manufacturing.

That's what's going on in Ephesus. Paul is preaching against what they love. Paul is preaching a message that will devastate the economy. Imagine the crowd that would gather here if flag burning was gaining momentum and public. Imagine the emotional response of patriotic citizens. It could get ugly.

Point 4: A clerk's caution (19:35-41)

READ 19:35-41

The clerk wants to defuse the riot.

Clerk = elected official, like a town manager. The town's contact with the Roman Empire.

He makes several arguments:

1. *"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?"* – 19:35

The sacred stone that fell was likely a meteorite interpreted as a sign from the gods.

2. *Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash.* – 19:36

This is common knowledge. No intelligible person thinks otherwise. Kind of like man evolving from lower life forms is presented as unquestionable fact.

He's dismissive. We're on unshakeable ground. There's no threat.

3. *For you have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess.* – 19:37

The clerk's half right. Sacrilegious = temple robber or destruction of temple objects. Paul's companions didn't rob temples. But Paul's message encouraged blasphemy. Paul implies Artemis is a goddess made by human hands.

4. *If therefore Demetrius and the craftsmen with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. ³⁹ But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly.* – 19:38-39

Use the legal system. Use the Palermo Select Board Meeting.

5. *For we really are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion.*" – 19:40

Paul's no threat. The real threat is Rome. If we don't disperse, Rome will take actions against us for this riot.

If Rome caught wind, freedoms could be lost, city officials (like the clerk) could be punished, and the craftsmen could be punished for instigating.

The clerk is naïve and dismissive. He wants to protect himself and the city from Rome. He ignores the people's concerns.

Point 5: Ephesus experienced revival

RECAP

Let me recap again what's happened.

Paul spoke in synagogues. He reasoned with Jews that Jesus was their promised Messiah. Some Jews believed. Others became hostile. So Paul set up shop in the hall of Tyrannus where for two years he reasoned daily for the gospel. There was also the fact that people were healed and demons were cast out simply because handkerchiefs touched Paul's skin.

Because so many believed, magic books worth an estimated 137 years wages were burned up. Great value = lots of converts.

Massive numbers were believing. Paul was known. Paul's message was known. The local economy was in danger.

People should know us. People should know our message!

Revival

What's happening in Ephesus is revival. The word revival isn't used but the concept's here. Revival is an attempt to capture events like Acts 19 and the Great Awakening (1726-1756) where 30,000-40,000 people were converted in New England in a population of 300,000 people. 150 churches were added too.

Tim Keller describes revival this way:

“Real revival is the intensification of the ordinary operations of the Holy Spirit.”

Revival is ordinary in that what happens in revival is the normal product of the Spirit: evangelism, conversion, repentance, holiness. Revival is extraordinary in that when revival happens the work of the Spirit is accelerated and abundant. Mass conversions such that society is affected.

Spirit effected revival has several characteristics:

1. A large number of people are converted.
2. The church evangelizes.

Jews and magicians believed. Were they telling their friends?

3. Christians take sin seriously.

Former magicians were publicly divulging their sins.

4. Society is impacted.

Because of the massive number of converts, town life is affected.

5. Expectant prayer

People see their need for God to do what they cannot do themselves and beg God to move in power.

6. Opposition

Not everyone is happy when revival comes. The Jews in the synagogue don't like their best friend turning to Jesus. The magician doesn't like their best friend burning their magic books. The silversmith doesn't like the lack of shrine orders. The person you got drunk with doesn't like you sober. The person who respected your tolerant and easy going mindset doesn't like your newfound certainty Jesus and the Bible.

What I'm saying is opposition isn't odd. It's normal. It's the sign of a faithful life.

If people are angry with you because you graciously attempted to reason with them, you're living like a New Testament Christian. You shouldn't feel bad about it.

Not to excuse self-righteous pride and arrogance and unrelenting gospel harassment and hypocritical lives. But if we've ruffled some feathers for being faithful, we're living the New Testament experience.

A work of God

Note revival is a sovereign work of God. It's not something we can plan. It's not something we can advertise. We can't put a sign on the church lawn advertising revival. We can pray for revival. We can't manipulate revival.

Us

So I didn't desire to be barking like a dog or have weird men with bad theology push me to the floor. And I didn't want an environment where Christians neglect basic spiritual disciplines.

But I should want the church engaging in evangelism. I should want people converted. I should want Christians taking sin seriously, fighting sin. I should want the values of Palermo shaken up by mass conversions. I should want people praying for conversions and the church's holiness. I should be okay with the opposition revival creates. I don't want weirdness and laziness, but I do want to see the Holy Spirit do great things.

What should we be praying for? For God to do a work in our hearts. What work?

1. Confidence in the gospel that inspires proclamation.
2. A love for lost people.
3. For God to convert sinners and add them to the church.
4. A hunger and thirst for righteousness.
5. A hatred for sin.
6. Humility before God and men.
7. Empowering grace to endure opposition.

Revival snowballs with new converts. New converts have more non-Christian contacts. When you're a new convert, you have a stream of non-Christian friends that see you change before their eyes. They ask questions. You have a door for evangelism.

If we want new converts, we need to pray and open our mouths. Living a humble, obedient life will give credibility to our words.

Gospel

So what's this gospel that provoked riots in Ephesus? In Athens, Paul said this:

The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." – **Acts 17:30-31**

Paul preached repentance. Paul preached the day of judgment. Paul preached Christ crucified. Paul preached Christ resurrected.

There's one God who eternally exists and created our world. We were created to know and love and serve him.

But we fail to thank God and we chose to do life our own way. The Bible calls this sin.

In his great love, God sent his Son Jesus to die on the cross as a substitute. That whoever believes in Jesus would not face judgment but rather experience forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

How can we be right with God and spared judgment on that future day? What the Bible calls faith and repentance. Turning from sin to faith in Jesus. His person, his deity, his cross, and his resurrection.

Jesus came to set us free from ourselves and our sin. Trust and follow him.

Conclusion

Christian, desire real revival. Pray for real revival. Act for real revival. Submit to God's wise will. There's no formula. It's a sovereign act of God's free will.