

WARFARE

Acts 19:8-22

We can be sure that anytime we take ground for the Kingdom of God, there will be warfare. And in the beginning days of the church at Ephesus there was no exception. Our study this morning should serve to encourage those of us who desire to see God bring an old-fashioned, Holy Spirit led, Heaven-sent awakening and revival to our church, community and land. When the Devil tries to defy the advances of the Church, rest assured, this is proof positive that we are going in the right direction.

1. THE SATANIC TACTIC OF HARDENING

Acts 19:8, 9

II Corinthians 2:11: "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices." More than ever, we need to be equipped with the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:11-18).

Acts 19:9a: "...But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude...."

Research reveals the seriousness of becoming hardened (hardened is translated from the Greek word *skleruno* whose root is *skleros*, meaning dry, hard, rough), in turn, meaning to make dry, stiff then hard. In passive voice, as in this passage, *skleruno* is defined as one who has become hardened or grown calloused, and has reached a point when one stubbornly refuses to change their attitude, in this case their attitude toward the Messiah! These Jewish unbelievers were becoming unyielding, obstinate and stubborn. *Skleruno* was a medical technical term Hippocrates used in his Greek writings describing something becoming hardened. Our English word for hardening of the arteries is related to this Greek word and is called arteriosclerosis, which is serious, potentially fatal, especially when it affects the coronary arteries, including the left anterior descending which is nicknamed the "artery of sudden death!" Yet another nickname is "the widow maker." Literal hardening leads only to temporal physical death, but spiritual hardening leads to eternal spiritual death and damnation of one's soul! This is why Hebrews 3:15 says: "While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation." This thought is taken from Psalm 95:7-11 when the children of Israel hardened their hearts against God, releasing the wrath of God.

II Corinthians 2:15, 16: "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?" Vance Havner said, "The same sun that melts ice also hardens clay and the Gospel either humbles or hardens the human heart; so a preacher should be prepared to expect both."

2. THE MANEUVER OF MOVING

Acts 19:9: "But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus." When the people in the synagogue were so hardened as to show signs of not changing, Paul brought the Gospel to the school of

Tyrannus. Not much is known about this man. This school is believed to be a lecture hall designated for arguments and speeches. Some believe Tyrannus was a Gentile who was known for elocution and this hall was named in his honor. Others believe he was a Jewish Rabbi who was more open to thought and dedicated his house to this special venue. It appears Paul may have been following the counsel of our Lord to leave the synagogue and record in Luke 9:5: "And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them."

3. A SPECIAL OPERATIONS STRATEGY

Acts 19:11, 12

The Bible defines this most unusual ministry as "special miracles." To the dedicated Christian of the first century, miracles were almost commonplace, but this group of miracles was most unusual in that they were done remotely. It does place us in mind of Matthew 8:8: "The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." We observe that Jesus did speak the word and the servant was healed. But in these special miracles, it appears Paul's bands that were placed around his arms and aprons used in his tent making days were incorporated in healing diseases and driving demonic influences out of people.

Comparing the cloths to Moses' rod, Ray Stedman says "There was nothing magic about the rod itself; it was the symbol of something about Moses which God honored. So, these sweatbands and trade aprons were symbols of the honest, dignified labor of the apostle, his labor of love and humility of heart, his servant-character, which manifested and released the power of God. God means to teach by this that it is through a man whose heart is so utterly committed that he is ready to invest hard, diligent labor in making the gospel available, willing to stoop to a lowly trade, that the power of God is released." The word "special" is associated here with miracles, which is taken from the Greek word *tugchano* or *tynchano* which is a verb (used in this passage as an adjective) which means to hit as a target, especially with an arrow and so to reach or attain a mark or object. Normally, *tugchano* means to happen anywhere and at any time and thus common. In our passage it is modified by the Greek negative (*ou*) and means uncommon, special. The full phrase is *dunameis te ou tas tuchousas*, literally miracles not the common, thus extraordinary miracles.

Dr. W. A. Criswell said concerning these special miracles, "This most unusual vehicle of healing, blessed by God during Paul's ministry at Ephesus, does not seem to be characteristic of apostolic labor in other locales, even in the Book of Acts. By late in the first century such authentication of miracles was diminishing, if not absent altogether." F. F. Bruce reminds us "No intrinsic healing efficacy is ascribed to these things; the healing efficacy lay in the powerful name of Jesus." In another place we read, Acts 5:15:

"Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them." There were times and even to this day our Lord will use unusual means to accomplish His divine will, but we must always keep in mind Peter's understanding as spoken of in Acts 3:12: "And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our

own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" II Corinthians 4:15: "For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God."

4. A REVEALING SKIRMISH

Acts 19:13-20

The Jewish faith in Ephesus had become quite respected, but it had been poisoned by the local idolatrous and superstitious paganism. And now we see these seven sons of a certain man named Sceva, a rogue chief priest, enter the fray. They thought that merely lining themselves up with the name of Jesus would give them the same supernatural abilities as evidenced by Paul and the Gospel team.

Jack Arnold said, "The demon in the man spoke words of disdain, indignation and contempt to the seven exorcists. What happened is rather humorous. The demon answered, 'I instinctively and innately recognize Jesus, and I am acquainted with Paul, but who are you? You don't have any power over me!' The demons knew Paul. He was famous in the spiritual underworld and even in hell. Paul was much talked about in the pit. The demons trembled when they saw Paul preaching the gospel. He was a threat to the kingdom of darkness because he was armed with the power of Christ."

Pastor Frank Barker, comments on this verse by saying, "But, as Christians, are our names known in hell? As Christians, when we move about, does it cause reverberations in the kingdom of darkness? Do they say something to this effect, 'Oh, no! John Jones is working at that place of employment we've held captive for so long. His going there is a dangerous situation for us, because he verbalizes his faith boldly. He shares his faith in Jesus Christ. He prays. He seeks to win others to Jesus. He stands up for the Lord Jesus Christ.'"

In Leonard Ravenhill's famous book, *Why Revival Tarries*, he has a most interesting chapter entitled "Known in Hell." It is based on Acts 19:15: "And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" Ravenhill said, "His watchword was 'This one thing I do.' He had no side issues, no books to sell. He had no ambitions — and so had nothing to be jealous about. He had no reputation — and so had nothing to fight about. He had no possessions — and therefore nothing to worry about. He had no "rights" — so therefore he could not suffer wrong. He was already broken — so no one could break him. He was "dead" — so none could kill him. He was less than the least — so who could humble him? He had suffered the loss of all things — so none could defraud him. Does this throw any light on why the demon said, 'Paul I know?' Over this God-intoxicated man, hell suffered headaches." Ravenhill said it well when he wrote: "On the last lap of his earthly pilgrimage, he declared, 'I have fought a good fight.' Demons could have said amen to that statement, for they suffered more from Paul than Paul suffered from them. Yes, Paul was known in hell."

The result was glorious. When the people saw that Paul and the team were the propagators of the truth, and false teachers were exposed, an awakening took place! The people believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and responded most dramatically by burning their books of incantations. Those books were worth fifty thousand silver coins, probably drachmas, each one worth a day's wages! This was an outward manifestation of an inward change. Robertson commented about this result, "What a glorious

conflagration it would be if in every city all the salacious, blasphemous, degrading books, pamphlets, magazines, and papers could be piled together and burned."

Conclusion:

In Acts 19:21, 22, Paul realizes that one battle was won, but there were more battles to be fought. So, as the Holy Spirit deals with Paul's spirit, his burden to ultimately take the Gospel to the epicenter of civilization, i.e., Rome is disclosed. He also desires to go back to the mother Church in Jerusalem and wisely voice his burden. He sends Timothy and Erastus back into Europe, as he ties up the proverbial "loose ends" in Asia. Mission accomplished! Onward and upward to conquer more for our Commander and Captain of our faith, Jesus, our Lord! Romans 8:37: "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

-Pastor Pope-