

**Preaching Christ....  
...by the power of the Holy Spirit  
...and the authority of the Word of God**

**Date:** 11 June 2023  
**Services:** *Across the Diocese*  
**Series:** Saved by grace (Acts 10-28)  
**Passage:** Acts 19  
**Title:** Paul in Ephesus  
**Outline:**

1. The Gospel unfolds
2. The Gospel divides
3. The Gospel demonstrated
4. The Gospel transforms lives
5. The Gospel topples idols

- Now, today finds us with Paul in **Ephesus**... he visited there briefly at the end of Ch 18 and promised to be back...
- And we see the same pattern as we saw last week in Corinth... do you recall?
  - Paul starts with the Jews
  - Goes to the Gentiles
  - People hear and believe
  - Paul is assured; AND
  - Opposition halted by secular authorities
- Exactly what we see in Acts 19 – though that won't be my outline again today
- Rather – as Paul shares Jesus for life – what I want us to see here is that:
  1. The Gospel is understood over time
  2. The Gospel divides
  3. The Gospel demonstrated
  4. The Gospel transforms lives
  5. The Gospel topples idols
- First

**1. THE GOSPEL IS UNDERSTOOD OVER TIME**

- What did you make of the opening verses of this chapter...?
- Some people – described clearly as 'disciples' are asked by Paul whether they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed and they respond saying that they had not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit!
- This was very similar to Apollos at the end of Ch 18, though I didn't have time to comment on that last week. In Acts 18:25, Luke tells us that Apollos initially knew only of the baptism of John... and in that case, Priscilla and Aquilla filled him in... and *explained to him the way of God more adequately*.
- Here in Ch **19**, Paul explains that John's baptism was one of **repentance**... and that since the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost... disciples are baptised with – immersed with – the **Holy Spirit** – when they **believe**.

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- So these disciples were baptised then and there and some of the same manifestations of the coming of the Spirit which we recall occurred at **Pentecost**, are repeated here. This is like a **mini-Pentecost** for these **believers**.
- What we see here and with Apollos – is that the gospel unfolds **over time**... As the message of Jesus and the Holy Spirit reached different regions and groups of people, there were obviously instances where individuals had only received **partial** or **incomplete information**. Paul and other apostles, fill in the gaps, teaching the fullness of the Gospel...
- I think this still happens today... some people today – in your **life** – in your **town** – even in your **church** – have only a **partial** understanding of the **Gospel**...
- They haven't got the full **picture**...
- There's some parts of the gospel they've actually never **heard** – or never heard with **clarity**... Other parts about which they're **confused**... and some others – well - they are just plain **wrong!**
- And that is why the Bible must be clearly and systematically taught in our churches – AND why the **gospel** must be **regularly explained** – because **some** people will only understand over **time**...! //
- Perhaps you're here today – and are only now just coming to see and grapple with the full picture of the **gospel**.... You're **beginning** to understand that it's about **Jesus** and not about **you**... you're delighting to learn about the richness of **God's** grace... that's **brilliant**... keep **probing, exploring, asking questions**...
- Because the gospel is understood **over time**...
- But I also want you to note, that:

## 2. THE GOSPEL DIVIDES

- Now that Paul has returned to Ephesus... he does exactly the same as he did when in Corinth – and precisely the same as when he *briefly* visited Ephesus at the end of Ch 18 – // he went to the **synagogue**.
- v8 – have a look – he *entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God*.
- Notice that sharing Jesus here for Paul, means **arguing** and **persuading**.
- Those are strong words.
- And you may not feel gifted in either **arguing** OR **persuading**... but there are certainly some among us that are ready for an argument about anything at any time and are ready to persuade us about **left** or **right** in **politics**, about **climate change** or **no climate change**... persuading us to vote **FOR** the **voice** or **AGAINST** the **voice**... for one brand of **car** or **mobile phone** over **another**...
- ...many of us are **arguing** and **persuading** about something or other every **day**...
- **EXCEPT** about **Jesus** – when we're strangely **silent**...!
- We're not prepared to **argue** or **persuade** on **Jesus**! //
- Now, what happens when Paul **argues** and **persuades**?
- v9 – *some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way*. And then we read... then note: **So Paul left them**
- Yes, there will come a time that we **stop**. And at least for a **time**, leave people in their **unbelief**.

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- But we don't stop **sharing Jesus**... note that Paul keeps to his strategy – he leaves the **synagogue** – and with this disciples had daily discussions in the lecture hall of **Tyrannus**.
- For a couple of **days**? No. Try a couple of **years**...!
- ...so that we read in v10 – *so that **all the Jews and Greeks** who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord*
- **Staggering!** //
- Yes, the gospel divides... **Some** who hear it will become **obstinate**. They'll push **back**.
- **And yet some** who hear it – as we've seen throughout the **series** – will want to hear **more!**
- This is **assuring** when we share Jesus won't it?
- Don't **stop** altogether when people come **obstinate!** That is what we should expect!
- Leave the obstinate ones... and start again with people **keen** and willing to **hear!** //
- Have you thought through a strategy of sharing **Jesus** in your **town**?
- Do you **have** people who *can argue* and **persuade**?
- Others... who can **enter** into **discussions**?
- Others... who will say something very **simple** about their **love** for **Jesus**?
- Have you planned a **parish dinner** and invited a **speaker** to share about **Jesus**?
- Have you tried a **men's breakfast** or **women's morning tea** and invited someone to **speak** so you can ask **others**?
- Have you planned a simple series of **sermons** to which those outside the church can **easily** be **invited**?
- Wouldn't it be **brilliant** if we all got thinking and **strategizing** and **planning**... and worked our plan such that after a couple of **years**, we could **say** – 'all of **Gilgandra**...' "all of **Coonamble**..." "all of **Rylstone-Kandos**" – **heard** the **word** of the **Lord!** //
- It doesn't say they all became **Christians**... but somehow over the course of **two years** – they had all heard **SOMETHING** of the **good news**....
- And if **that** happened – you can **guarantee** – some would become **obstinate**... and others – want to **hear more!** //
- Third, we see that the gospel is **demonstrated** here...

**3. THE GOSPEL IS DEMONSTRATED**

- V11 – *God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.*
- Why did I say that this is the gospel **demonstrated**?
- Because the gospel **restores people**.
- In the **new creation**, **everything** will be **perfected**... no **sickness**, **tears**, **death** or **dying**.
- No **evil one**... no **evil!**
- So here we are given a **glimpse**... an **insight** in to God's working of **healing**, of **mending** and the way he will **banish evil!**

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- What we see here... will be what will happen utterly and completely when Jesus **returns** and **ushers** in his new **Kingdom**.
- For the **assurance** of Paul, for the **convincing** of **sceptics** and to very great **blessing** of all **involved** – the **sick** are **healed** and people **delivered** from **evil!** // The Gospel – not only **proclaimed** – but **demonstrated**.
- Sometimes we think we don't see this stuff today.
- And we may not see it as **dramatic** ways, but even yesterday, someone shared with me an **extraordinary** answer to prayer in their family over the weekend... when one of their family members, following intense prayer over the **weekend**, woke up feeling way better than they had! **Look** for these **answers** and **rejoice!**
- So – the gospel **unfolds**, the gospel **divides**, the gospel **demonstrated** and fourth:

**4. THE GOSPEL TRANSFORMS LIVES**

- We don't have time today to explore the detail, but in vv13-16, some Jews who wanted to misuse the name of Jesus in driving out evil spirits, were beaten **up** by an evil **spirit**....
- And the upshot of that in v17, was that people were seized with **fear** and the name of Jesus held in high **esteem**....
- Even more **wonderfully**... many who had believed kind of on the **quiet**.... Now came and **openly confessed** that they had become **believers**...
- ...and so **powerful** is the gospel to **transform lives**, that those who practiced **sorcery** brought their **scrolls** and **burned** them!
- **Burned** them!
- Do you know the worth of **50,000 drachmas**?
- A drachma was a **day's wage**.
- Let's say the average daily wage today is **\$300**.
- In today's Australian dollars = **\$15,000,000!!**
- Why did they **burn** them and not just **sell** them?
- These scrolls likely contained **spells, incantations, and rituals** that were used in **magical practices**.
- Burning the scrolls was a symbolic act of **renouncing** their former ways and embracing their **new trust in Jesus**. By **destroying** the scrolls, they were publicly demonstrating their commitment to **following Jesus** and turning away from the use of **magic!**
- It was **decisive**. It was **dramatic**. It was **radical**. It was **costly!**
- Can you **imagine!**?
- Imagine in your town... people had a growing **reverence** for Jesus... and that gave some people who had been **shy** about their faith, a growing **confidence** to **stand** and **declare** it...
- Now imagine that some people had been into – I don't know – some sort of **satan worship** - but because of the **transforming work** of the **gospel** – they held a big **bonfire** and threw all their valuable satan worshipping **symbols** and **emblems** on it...
- Let's say these were worth **millions of dollars** – going up in **smoke!**

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- That would have some **marked impact** in the **community**, wouldn't it??
- Well it certainly did right there in Ephesus – look at v20 - *in this way the word of the Lord spread **widely** and grew in power.*
- Two things to **say**
- (1) The gospel **radically transforms lives.**
- **Greedy** people become **generous**
- **Rude, arrogant** people become **gentle**
- **Thieves** start giving their money **away**
- **Adulterers** become **faithful**
- **Thugs** become **angels**
- And **people** held captive by **all kinds** of **idols**... take decisive **actions** to leave them **behind**...
- (2) second is a question... is the gospel **transforming your life**?
- Are you open to God's **transforming power**?
- Don't set **limits**. Don't keep God out of any area of **your** life that needs the **changing work** of God's **Spirit!**
- **Finally....,**

**5. THE GOSPEL TOPPLES IDOLS**

- We don't have time to explore **all** of the final **account** in this **chapter**... so let me **summarise**...
- The apostle Paul was teaching that gods made by human **hands** were **not gods** at **all!**
- The problem was that **Ephesus** was the home to the great **temple of Artemis**, and many craftsmen made a lot of **money** from making **shrines** of **Artemis**.
- The workers feared for their **livelihood** and also claimed to fear for the **reputation** of their goddess **Artemis**.
- A famous **riot ensued**.
- Two of Paul's travelling companions were **arrested**.
- Paul wanted to speak for them but was talked out of doing so... There was great **confusion**... and like modern riots today – we read *most of the people didn't even know why they were there.*
- Eventually the city clerk calmed the crowd, stating that those arrested had not actually broken any law, and there was a danger they could all be charged with rioting. At that, the crowd dispersed.
- What does all this mean for us?
- The reminder that the gospel **topples idols**.
- Friends – here we are 2,000 years later... and then great temple of **Artemis** lies in **ruins**.
- Today, only a few scattered **columns** and **fragments** remain at the original site near **Selçuk, Turkey**
- But the **gospel of Jesus Christ** – continues to make **advances** across the **world!**
- Let's be **clear**... gods made by human hands are **no gods at all**.

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- Today's **gods**... which captivate and control people today – sport, gambling, power, success, your business, holiday travel... cars, even family...
  - ...gods which **keep** people from **Jesus**...
  - In the end – like the great temple of **Artemis**... there will be nothing to **show** – they will all **lie** in **ruins**...
  - And must make sure we are not sucked back into being controlled by any of those **gods**... and help people find their way to **Jesus**... who **alone** can **release** them from their god's **power** and **control**...
1. The Gospel unfolds – may for you, it's all falling into place
  2. The Gospel divides – some will become obstinate – some – want to hear more
  3. The Gospel demonstrated – as we see a glimpse of the end time reality of no more sickness or death or evil
  4. The Gospel transforms lives – so radically that millions of dollars of trinkets associated with idol worship – go up in smoke
  5. The Gospel topples idols – because man made gods are no gods at all, but the one true God – the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ – will see to it that the gospel continues to advance as we share Jesus for life!