

Acts Ch 20:1-16

“Talk May Be Cheap, But Our Words Never Are”

Ch 19 ended in a pretty intense situation whereby a man by the name of Demetrius (who made these idols of the goddess Diana for his living) stirred up all the local silversmiths against Paul and his associates saying, “Paul has persuaded and turned away many people saying that they are not gods which are made with hands.” and Though he rallied them all around the banner of the great goddess of the Ephesians is in danger of being despised and her magnificence destroyed, vs 24 and 25 exposes his true motive and that was that he was worried about his profit and prosperity. But that in and of itself might not move people to come against Paul, but when he began to rally them around the negative impact Paul was having on their “great goddess” they started crying out, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians!” and The whole city was filled with confusion and they all rushed into the coliseum, some was saying 1 thing, some were saying other things, and ½ the people didn’t even know why they were there, but here was this massive crowd of 25,000 people in this theater. and The Jews pushed a guy by the name of Alexander out in the front to make their defense, to distance them from Paul’s perspective and assure the Ephesians that they weren’t all agreement with Paul and what he stood for. But when the crowd found out that *he* was a Jew, they just started shouting in a deafening roar “Great is Diana of the Ephesians!” Of course Paul wanted to get in there and share the gospel with this captive audience of 25,000 people, have a regular crusade kind of a thing. But all of his friends and even some of the officials of Asia said, “No way, don’t go in their they’ll tear you apart.” Finally the mayor type fella of the city stepped in got everyone quiet, told them that if they or Demetrius had a problem with Paul that the courts were open, but the fact is that he’d done nothing wrong, he hadn’t blasphemed Diana, he hadn’t sought to rip off their temples or anything like that. So if they didn’t want to lose the liberty that they enjoyed from Rome, they’d better quiet down and thin out, so he dismissed the assembly and that’s where we left off.

But I’d remind you again that Paul wasn’t on an anti-Diana campaign, that was clearly stated, he wasn’t going out and saying things about Diana, picketing her temple or anything else. He was just sharing the love of Jesus, and speaking of the 1 true living God, and when people turn to God from idols, whatever the particular object of worship may be in their lives. Than the natural result is forsaking sin and placing Jesus as your priority; the natural byproduct of these people coming to Christ was to quit buying these little silver trinkets of Diana. and We spoke last week of the fact that we don’t have to go on an anti-abortion campaign as such (though there’s nothing wrong with making your convictions clear) but if we go on a pro-Jesus campaign, in other words if doctors that perform abortions come to know Jesus, they’ll quit performing abortions. It’ll be a natural byproduct, or overflow of the reality of Christ in their life, and that goes across the board, could be bars, the bar owner comes to Christ, they’ll shut down the bar, could be homosexuality, or Meth-labs, drug dealers, and on and on it goes. The best way to clean up a community isn’t through legal legislation (though I’m all for laws that regulate a right standard), but it’s through turning the community on to Jesus, the rest He’ll take care of, well we read beginning in ch 20.

Vs1-3

So when everything calmed down Paul called all the disciples to himself, let them know that it had become apparent that he'd worn out his welcome there in Ephesus and that it would be best for all of them if he just moved on at this point.

Paul didn't desire to bring the disciples there or the work of the Lord into some sort of shady stigma, or put them into a position whereby they'd always be on the defensive. He knew that he was only there for a season and he wanted the church to be flourishing when he left, he didn't come there to make life difficult for them, so for the sake of everyone involved, when situations turned volatile, he just moved on.

We know from his 2nd epistle to the Corinthians that he whipped into Troas for a bit, and he was going to do some missionary work while he was there, he tells them that the Lord had opened the door and all. But when Titus (who was apparently supposed to meet up with him there and fill him in on the work and progress regarding the problems in Corinth) didn't show, he said that he had no rest in his spirit and so he had to take off and that's when they went on up to Macedonia where Titus finally caught up to him and that's when he wrote 2nd Corinthians.

But there were 2 reasons that he was making this circuit, the primary one is listed, the 2^{ndary} we have glean from his epistle. The secondary reason that he went was (as we mentioned last week) to collect the aid that the churches had stored up for the poverty stricken saints in Jerusalem. Paul had a huge burden to see the barrier between Jew and Gentile demolished, it was the work of the Spirit through him that made so emphatically clear the unanimity in Christ. That in Christ, *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”* Gal 3:28 To the Ephesians he wrote, *“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,”* Eph 2:14-15 He taught us that when one part of the body suffers, the whole of the body suffers along with it. When one member is honored, we're all honored, and so when the saints in Jerusalem were suffering, it was on his heart to bring relief from the Gentile churches. So as to demonstrate that that they were one *with* them and that they were there *for* them in their time of need.

But 1st and foremost it was on his heart (as you see there in vs2) to encourage; that is to come alongside and admonish, or exhort, strengthen and help solidify the believers in the churches that he'd planted. and How did he do that? “with many words.” Now Paul could be a long-winded preacher (as we'll see in a minute), but that's not the part I want to draw your attention to. His words were many, we see that, but I simply want to draw attention to the fact that he comforted and encouraged them through his words. Because I think that often times we can underestimate the impact our words may be having upon another persons life.

How influential we may be and not even know it, the power that our words can carry in another individual's life. But the bible draws tons of attention to the fact that we need to take heed to the words that come out of our mouths, for a # of reasons. Now I'm not going to get into the power of positive confession and things of that nature, I really don't find solid contextual biblical support for that. But I think that like many things, because of the abuse of a certain situation in the body, often times we have a tendency to allow the pendulum to swing to the extreme other end. So that when certain groups make the utilizing of the gifts of the Spirit like a circus side show, the backlash of that is other groups saying, "We *know* that the *Holy* Spirit, wouldn't be so ludicrous therefore the Spirit must not be moving at all in His gifts today." and They allow the pendulum to swing to the extreme opposite end so that you get dead orthodoxy, a people who speak the truth of the word of God, but they're not open to the Spirit really breathing life into it so it's a dry humdrum church experience. Both extremes are wrong, but there is a balance whereby we want the Spirit of God to be moving through the Word of God breathing life into the Word of God. Jesus said, "*It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.*" John 6:63

So to seek to divorce the Spirit of God from the Word of God is a major mistake. Likewise because certain groups have over emphasized (to a fault) the misnomer that you can speak whatever you want into existence thereby virtually becoming gods ourselves, others say, "That's ludicrous it doesn't matter what we say, our words don't make a difference." That's not true either; our words can make a major difference in people's lives. The bible says, "*He who gives a right answer kisses the lips.*" Prov 24:26 and Again, "*A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold In settings of silver.*" Prov 25:11 That is his/her words are set off as a thing of beauty in light of the circumstances that surround them, and they're fruitful, not cheap, apples of gold. Here's a couple more for ya, "*The lips of the righteous feed many, But fools die for lack of wisdom.*" Prov 10:21 The words of the righteous are like nourishment to the inner man, they feed us, but fools die because they don't feed on the words of the wise. Listen to this one, "*A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, But perverseness in it breaks the spirit.*" Prov 15:4 You can build someone up, or break someone in half by the power that resides in your tongue.

That's why it's so important to maintain and grow in our love relationship with Jesus, to abide in Him and allow *His words* to abide in us. To be allowing Him to wash over us by the water of the word, cleansing our hearts on a continual basis, because Jesus said that whatever it is that comes out of our mouth, is a direct reflection of what's in our heart! Think about that, all the ugly things that have poured out of your mouth (and my mouth) testify against us of the unclean that still abides in our hearts. Not positionally, positionally we're perfect, white like snow having been washed in the blood of Christ, but practically we've got so far to go and we'll never arrive entirely until we see Him face to face. But day-by-day we're to be growing in righteousness, allowing Him to have His way in our heart, and 1 result of that will be right words that will be *right* words that will pour forth out of your mouth. When wrong words pour forth out of our mouth what does that testify of? That Jesus doesn't have control of our heart in that area in that moment, we've relieved Him of duty and taken over ourselves.

Here's a couple NT references for ya, "*Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.*" Eph 4:29-31 What's the implication there? That when bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking, corrupt words proceed out of your mouth; it grieves the Holy Spirit, why? Because those things don't build up and encourage your brother or sister, but rather they wound, they tear down, they break the spirit, and injure the inner man of one for whom Christ died. 1 more, "*Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.*" Col 4:6 Seasoned with salt, that there be a preserving factor about your words, your words can cause a brother or sister to want to stay the course and hold on during tough times, or cause them to say, "What's the point, I'm done." Talk may be cheap, but your words never are, choose them carefully. The bible says, "*The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, But the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil.*" Prov 15:28 We're to be swift to hear, and slow to speak, and when we do speak we're to think before we do, weigh it in the balance and see if they're really worth the potential results that they may reap. Paul used his words to encourage the disciples, God help us to use our words in a like manner.

After he'd been through the upper regions he went down to Greece, visited the Corinthians again for 3 months, I told you back in ch 18 that it was when Paul was in Corinth that he wrote the book of Romans, and it was during this particular 3 month stint that he did it. Then when he was about to take off for Syria, but he learned that the Jews (perhaps heading to Jerusalem for Passover) were going to wait till they got out to sea and make fish food out of him we read that he decided to return through Macedonia, he had a change of mind about sailing.

There's something about learning that some guys are going to kill you if you go their direction that persuades you to take an alternate route. and So he headed back up north, swung through Philippi where he picked up Luke once again where he had been since the last time Paul was in Philippi (perhaps you remember).

Vs4-6

Couple of things here briefly, 1st all you've noticed that our text went from 3rd person singular to 1st person plural there in vs 5. The 1st 4 vs are speaking about Paul, what he did, but when you get to vs 5 you find the word us, and in vs 6 again we see the word, we. Which tells us what? That Luke is once again apart of the missions team having joined up with Paul when he passed through Philippi having been there for some 5 yrs at least since the last time Paul was there when Lydia and her household came to Christ, the Philippian jailor and his family, the church was planted. and Luke evidently stayed there to Pastor and establish the fellowship there these past 5 yrs or so and now he's on route once again with Paul.

Now in vs 4 we see 7 other men who were accompanying him (and really this is a world class missions team) we have Paul, Luke, Timothy, Tychicus, Aristarchus, all these guys that would be mentioned again by Paul throughout his epistles, Gaius and all the rest. and Notice many of them are from different regions, they're no doubt representatives of the various churches that Paul planted that have given to the church in Jerusalem, and they're going with Paul to help personally present it. and So in this group we see accountability with respect to the money, safety in the #'s traveling and a unanimity in the church which is the very thing that Paul so longed for and desired to see accomplished between the Jewish church and the Gentile church. Paul would argue that phrase, there's not 2 churches, you're either in Christ or you're not and that was the heart of the apostle, so he brought these guys with him to not only be accountable, but also that they might present the gift to their brothers and sisters in Jerusalem personally, bringing about further unity.

But what else do we note about this group? We've said it before, Paul was never into the "Lone Ranger" mentality. He delegated and facilitated ministry, he knew he couldn't do it all, and that there'd come a day when he wouldn't be here to do any of it. and So he would surround himself with a group of men who loved the Lord, were on fire for the Lord, who wanted to be used by the Lord, men of integrity, who were of proven character, and he'd pour himself into them, training them in the word, and in the ways of the Lord. and Then he'd encourage them to do the same thing, he told Timothy, "...*the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*" 2 Tim 2:2 So that whether you were a new believer, or had some miles on you in the Lord, he was always about taking you deeper, stretching you farther, challenging you to take your relationship with the Lord beyond where it currently is, and then he'd encourage you to be contagious with that mentality. That'd we'd provoke one another unto *good works*, so often we provoke one another to compromise, Paul would say, "Crucify that, provoke one another unto godliness." So these were no doubt local leaders in their churches there in Berea, Thessalonica, Derbe and Asia, Paul was just continually pouring himself into these guys. and We're to do the same for one another, the godly things that you've learned over the years, invest them into others that they might grow thereby and in turn commit those things to others still, it's called discipleship, passing the torch to the next generation.

But notice in vs 6 that the journey from Philippi to Troas was 5 days, now you may or may not remember that their journey from Troas to Philippi was only 2 days. Apparently the winds were with them before, but now they're blowing contrary.

That's just the way it goes, sometimes the winds are with you in the ministry and you're just clipping right along. Other times it seems that they're blowing contrary to you and everything is working against you, but that doesn't mean that you're out of the will of God. Perhaps God is teaching you perseverance, what it means to endure and trust in Him, spiritual warfare in the life of the believer is a very real thing, sometimes that can slow things up.

Dan ch 10, the angel comes to Daniel says, “Hey, your prayers have been heard from the 1st day, but I’ve been hindered in reaching you because I’ve been fighting the prince of Persia for 21 days.” There was a delay in his life because of the warfare that raged around him, but he wasn’t out of the will of God because things were rough in and around his life. So don’t be discouraged if the winds of life sometimes or perhaps currently seem to be blowing contrary to your direction. If you’ve been seeking the Lord, and are affirmed in your direction, carry on, soon enough a breakthrough will come and God will see you to His desired destination for your life. They got to Troas and stayed there for 7 days.

Vs7

See you guys only think you have it rough, Paul was preaching for some 6 hrs. Sunday was a workday for them so they would hold Sunday evening services, so from about 6pm till midnight Paul was hammering away. Now he knew that this would be his final farewell with a lot of these people and so again he wanted to pour into these people as much Jesus as he possibly could, water them, root them, ground them, equip them for the work of the ministry that they might go the distance and finish well. and Notice that they met on the 1st day of the week, so church on Sunday has been common from the days of the early church contrary to what the 7th Day Adventists and certain others might say. On the Sabbath Jesus was dead in the tomb, on the 1st day of the week He arose, the church was born on the 1st day of the week when in Acts ch 2 the Holy Spirit fell upon the disciples there in the upper room. But they would come together and study the Word, enjoy these potluck kind of dinners, and then cap the evening off with the Lord’s supper. Now many of the disciples were slaves, and so often times this would be the only really good meal they might get, but Paul stretched on and on into the night, 9 o’clock, 10 o’clock,, 11 o’clock, and like the energizer bunny he’s still going, now it’s midnight.

Vs8

So here they all are, it’s been a hard days work, it’s stuffy up there in this room, there’s all these candles, or oil lamps burning, filling the room with some smoke, and I’d imagine that the oxygen levels were a little low.

Vs9

You see, falling asleep in church can be a killer! and If there’s one thing I’m more efficient at than the apostle Paul it’s preaching people to sleep, it took Paul 6hrs to get one, I’ve put out 2 or 3 in the span of 45 minutes! He was setting over there in that window probably trying to get some air and all that smoke was drafting right over his way, he probably was being overtaken by carbon monoxide poisoning. and He was trying to fight it but this young guy just lost the fight, and as Paul just kept on keeping on he just slipped right out of that 3rd story and according to doctor Luke, he was dead.

Vs10

You know if someone falls out a window and dies during your preaching that might have a tendency to put a damper on the rest of the message. Now in that culture they had the women had these shrieks that they'd let out at someone's death, and they wailed and mourned in a very animated way.

Apparently that began to happen and Paul ran down there and fell on him in an "Elishaesk" sort of way and God restored this young man's life. So Paul was all, "Hey pipe down, his life is still in him." Which in a way was encouraging no doubt to the disciples, but a bummer for Eutychus because the bible teaches us that to be absent from the body (as believers) is to be present with the Lord. (2nd Cor 5) and So there he was surrounded in all of God's glory and then all the sudden He's pulled from the tangible presence of the Lord, and placed back in this tent of a body, and now he gets to go ahead and go through the hardships of this life, but at least the disciples were comforted and encouraged. and Eutychus became an object lesson of the power and grace of God, that we serve a God who gives life to the dead, not just physically, but spiritually. There was nothing Eutychus could do to bring himself to life, and that's a picture of all of us outside the grace of God, dead in sin, but God in His grace breathes life into us by the power of His Holy Spirit. What an awesome God we serve, who gives life, to the dead.

Vs11-12

They were really encouraged, and I'll bet everyone paid extra close attention from that point on and sleep wasn't an issue. But they ate together, shared the Lord's supper and when the sun came up, Paul had to take off.

Vs13-14

Which is to say that Paul decided to walk to the next port by himself rather than sail. He probably just wanted some alone time with the Lord, from what he says to the Eph elders (which we'll see next week) he no doubt already knew that difficult days lay ahead of him. Perhaps he was thinking of what he'd say to them when he seen them, and on the plus side exercise is just good for us.

Vs15-16

He'd just spent nearly 3 yrs there and he knew that he wouldn't be able to make a quick in and out if he went into the city, so instead he decided that he'd send for the elders of the church and speak to them in his final farewell of his heart for them and for the body of Christ. It's important, the words we choose, they might be the last words we use in a particular person's life. I'm not saying that we can't jest, and have fun, the Lord desires that we be full of joy, but that we choose our words carefully, because talk may be cheap, but words never are, sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me. I wish that were true, they can impact a person very deeply. So may no corrupt word proceed out of our mouths, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart *grace* to the hearers.

Prayer Points: Lord help us to speak the truth in love, to weigh our words carefully, studying how to answer, being sensitive how we ought to answer each one. Help us to guard our mouths from corrupt communication, knowing that gives way to what's in our hearts. God cleanse us, and may we build one another up, edify, and impart grace to one another. and May we take those things we've learned by our time spent with you and invest it into the lives of those around us Lord, that we might provoke one another to good works, for Your name's sake.

If you're here and you've never given your life to Christ, God wants to impart the gospel of grace to you. That you might know and understand that God loves you, wants to forgive you, and make you brand new in the person of His Son. Jesus laid down His life on the altar of the cross for you, shedding His blood for the remission of your sin, pouring out His life unto death, that you might never die, but have everlasting life. If you're willing to repent of your sin and place your faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for your forgiveness and right standing before God than today is the day of salvation for you. Just ask Christ to come into your heart and into your life, to forgive you of your sin and to help you lead your life for Him, and He'll take care of the rest.