

OUR *Guide* FOR USE IN *the Protestant Reformed Sunday School*

Lesson 76

A Riot in Ephesus

The Scripture Lesson *Acts 19:21 -20:1*

The Bible gives us one more story about the work of Paul in Ephesus. It starts when a man by the name of Demetrius tried to make trouble for Paul. This man was a silversmith. He earned his living by making things out of silver. He and other silversmiths in Ephesus made a lot of money by making and selling little images of Diana, the goddess of the Ephesians. They noticed that fewer people were buying the silver images, and they suspected that it was because more and more people were becoming *Christians*. Demetrius blamed Paul for this. So he called together all of his fellow silversmiths and warned them that something had to be done to stop Paul, or their business would be ruined.

The truth is that these silversmiths cared only about their *business*. But if they were going to stop Paul they would have to make it appear as if they were really concerned about *Diana*. So they went into the streets and began to cry, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." Soon crowds of people began to join them in shouting the same thing, till finally the whole city was in an uproar. The people grabbed Gaius and Aristarchus, two friends of Paul, and dragged them to the public theater.

Ephesians by the thousands crowded into this

OUR GUIDE is published by the Protestant Reformed Sunday School Association.

large open-air theater, shouting their devotion to Diana. At the same time they must have been saying bad things about the *Jews*, for they knew that Paul was a Jewish missionary. This made the Jews very nervous. They were afraid that the wrath of the whole city might come down on *them*. The Jews therefore took a man by the name of Alexander and brought him to the front of the theater so that he could explain to the people that their problem was really with the *Christians*, not with the *Jews*. But as soon as the crowd of people understood that Alexander was a *Jew*, they began to shout all the louder, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." For two whole hours this mob of people kept shouting, "Great is Diana...."

At last the townclerk, the highest government official of the town, came into the theater and got the people to quiet down. He told them that it did not make any sense for them to keep shouting that Diana was great, for everyone knew that Diana was great. Besides, he said, these missionaries have committed no crime. And even if they had done so, Demetrius must then bring them to a court of law, not start a riot.

The people were calmed by what the townclerk said. So, when he told them to leave the theater quietly, they did that. No harm, therefore, came to Paul or to his friends. But Paul thought it best

that he leave Ephesus. So he said good-bye to his friends in Ephesus and left for Macedonia.

Paul Looks to Rome

Acts 20:2-12

After visiting the churches of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea, Paul traveled southward into Greece, in order to come again to Corinth. Paul stayed in Corinth for three months, and while he was there he wrote what is probably his greatest epistle, the letter to the Romans.

Rome was the capital of the Roman Empire. Many Jews lived in that city. Some Christians had moved there too. They had been converted by Paul in cities like Ephesus and Corinth, and then they went to live in Rome. So there was a church in Rome, even though Paul himself had never been there. And now that his work in the eastern part of the Roman Empire is almost finished, Paul determined that, if the Lord willed, he would travel to Rome.

But since he was not yet ready to go, Paul decided to send a letter to the Roman Christians, to instruct them in the doctrines of the Christian faith. In that letter he taught that man is saved by *faith alone*, not by *works of the law*. He taught, too, that men are saved, not by their own decision to believe, but by the sovereign will of God. God says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." Still today, men do not like that doctrine. They argue that it would be unjust for God to punish people for not believing, if He had Himself determined that they would not believe. Paul warned the people of his day, and he warns us, that we must never accuse God of injustice for dealing with men the way He says He does in His Word. Paul said, "Nay but, O man, who art *thou* that repliest against *God*?"

After staying in Corinth for three months, Paul decided to return once more to Jerusalem. At his request the Gentile churches had taken collections in order to gather money for a gift to the poor people in Jerusalem. Paul was eager to deliver that gift. So he and his companions prepared to sail from Greece to Palestine. Just before sailing, however, Paul was told that the

Jews planned to kill him on that trip. So, instead of boarding the ship, he and his friends began walking northward, back to the city of Philippi, in order that they might sail from there instead.

Leaving Philippi by ship, Paul and his company came first to the city of Troas. There was in that place a small group of believers. Paul stayed here for seven days. On the day before he was to leave them, Paul met with this group of disciples. It was a Sunday, so there was a gathering for worship. Paul preached. Paul had very much to say to these people, since he would leave them early the next day. So he preached on and on and on. And the people did not complain; for they were as eager to hear what Paul said as Paul was eager to tell them.

Paul preached till midnight. The people were still listening intently. But there was one young man, by the name of Eutychus, who simply could not stay awake any longer. It happened that he was sitting in a window sill; so when he began to doze and then fell into a deep sleep, he lost his balance and fell out of the window. Eutychus fell from the *third* floor. Some of the people rushed down to see how he was and, to their great grief, they found that he was dead.

They carried the body back into the house, and by this time Paul had come down from the upper room. He at once laid his own body on that of the lad and put his arms tightly around him. And Eutychus began to breathe again. By the power of God, Paul had raised him from *death*. This was astounding! So what did the people do? They went back upstairs — and listened to Paul preach, till morning!

MEMORY WORK

Group A

Romans 9:20 "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?"

Group B

Romans 9:15b "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy."

ACTIVITIES

This paper has been prepared in the hope that it will be used by students of all ages. The activities are designed so that the oldest will be challenged, and the youngest will find some of it within reach. Parents should encourage their children to attempt only what they can handle without frustration. For some that will be much, for others little.

DO YOU AGREE?

If you do, write Yes; if you do not, write No.

- ___ 1. According to Demetrius, the temple of Diana was in danger of being despised because of Paul's preaching.
- ___ 2. The real worry of Demetrius, however, was that the preaching of Paul would hurt his business.
- ___ 3. A mob of people then rushed into the theater shouting, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians."
- ___ 4. When the Jews heard this great crowd shouting the praise of Diana, they put forward a good speaker by the name of Alexander to defend the apostle Paul.
- ___ 5. The mob was so pleased with the speech of Alexander that they cheered for two solid hours.
- ___ 6. The townclerk finally quieted the mob by promising to punish the preachers.
- ___ 7. After the uproar ceased, Paul left Ephesus to go to Macedonia.
- ___ 8. Paul visited again the churches in Macedonia, and then spent three months in Greece.
- ___ 9. During this time Paul wrote a letter to the church in Rome, telling them that he hoped soon to come and visit them.
- ___ 10. Before heading west, however, Paul planned to go first to Jerusalem to bring money to the poor Christians there.
- ___ 11. On the way to Jerusalem Paul stopped for a week in Troas.
- ___ 12. In Troas Paul preached a sermon that lasted till after midnight.
- ___ 13. During this long worship service in Troas Paul healed a man by the name of Eutychus, who was sick of the palsy.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER READERS

1. What kind of work did Demetrius do? Why was he upset that more and more people in Ephesus were becoming Christians?
2. How did the silversmiths try to make it look as if they were concerned more about religion than about money?
3. Why did the Jews of Ephesus try to arrange for Alexander to talk to the mob of Ephesians? Why did their plan not work out?
4. Who finally got the people in the theater to quiet down? What did this man then tell the people? What did the people then do?
5. What did Paul do after the uproar in Ephesus ceased?
6. What great epistle did Paul write while he was in Greece on this third missionary journey? How did it happen that there was already a church in Rome?
7. In his letter to the Romans Paul taught about the way of salvation. How, according to Paul in this epistle, is a man "justified" before God?
8. When Paul decided to return to Jerusalem, why did he not sail directly from Corinth? What did he do instead?
9. What did Paul do in an upper room in Troas?
10. What great miracle did Paul perform in Troas?

COMPLETING SENTENCES

1. After having spent about two and a half years in Ephesus, Paul at last began to think of moving on. He _____ in the spirit to pass again through Macedonia and _____, in order no doubt to strengthen the churches that he had established there some four years earlier. Then he planned to continue on to Jerusalem, after which, he said, he must also see _____ (Acts 19:21).

2. Soon afterwards, perhaps when Paul was “passing through” Macedonia or Achaia, the apostle wrote a letter to the Christians in Rome, telling them of his intention to visit them. “Whenever I take my _____ into _____,” he said, “I will come to you.” He added that he must first go to _____ to minister to the saints. The ministering of which he spoke was, this time, money for the poor. For, he said, it pleased them of _____ and Achaia to make a certain _____ for the poor saints which are at _____. Paul had himself been promoting that collection. He thought it fitting. For, he said, if the _____ have been made partakers of their _____ things, their duty is also to minister unto them (that is, to the Jews in Jerusalem) in _____ things (Rom. 15:24-28).

3. Paul’s interest in going to Rome was not in order to establish a church there. For that had already been done — perhaps by converts of Paul. He may therefore have planned to make of Rome another center of missionary activity (like Corinth and Ephesus) in order that he might reach out to the west, the farthest point of which, in Europe, would be Spain. We see something here, therefore, of Paul’s incredible energy and devotion. To the Corinthians he could write, without exaggeration, that in Asia “we were _____ out of _____, above strength, insomuch that we _____ even of _____” (II Cor. 1:8). And yet, when he contemplates leaving Asia, he does not think of retirement, or of a quiet pastorate in Antioch, but of going on to Italy and Spain.

4. Paul did not leave Ephesus at once. He sent _____ and Erastus into _____ while he himself stayed in _____ for a season. And it was during that same time that there arose no small _____ about the Christian faith in Ephesus. Largely responsible for the trouble was a certain man named Demetrius, a _____, who made silver _____ for the goddess _____. Demetrius called a meeting of all the silversmiths in Ephesus to stir up resentment against Paul,

who, according to Demetrius, turned away much people, saying that they be no _____ which are made with _____. Not only therefore, said Demetrius, is our _____ in danger of being set at nought, but also the _____ of Diana will be _____ (Acts 19:22-27).

5. By his reference to the glory of their goddess, Demetrius was able to add a cover of piety and of national pride to what was really only a matter of self-interest. And the silversmiths needed no further prodding. They were full of _____, and began at once to shout, “Great is _____ of the _____.” At that point things quickly got out of hand, for the cry of the silversmiths was soon picked up by others, till the whole _____ was filled with _____. Grabbing Gaius and _____, Paul’s _____ in travel, the mob surged with one accord into the _____ (Acts 19:28-29).

6. Concerned about his friends’ welfare, Paul thought at first to go to the theater and face the mob in person. Fellow Christians, however, and certain of the _____ of Asia who were Paul’s _____, urged him not to _____ himself into the theater. The Jews of the city, meanwhile, sensing that the fury of the mob was directed at the Jewish religion, decided to try to explain to the people that Paul was not one of them. To that end they put forward a man by the name of _____. But as soon as the people knew that he was a _____, they shouted him down, crying for the space of _____ hours, “Great is _____ of the _____” (Acts 19:30-34).

7. It was left to the townclerk to restore order. After learning what was going on, he was able to assure the people that Gaius and Aristarchus were neither _____ of churches nor yet _____ of their goddess. He warned Demetrius and the _____ who were with him that if they had a _____ against any man, the _____ is open. And he declared that the city of Ephesus could well be called in _____ for this day’s _____,

since the procedure here was clearly illegal. The whole affair thus ended quietly, with little gained by Demetrius or lost by Paul. But it does seem that Paul's plans to leave the city were speeded up just a bit by the riot. For, after the _____ was ceased, Paul called unto him the _____, and _____ them, and departed for to go into _____ (Acts 19:35-20:1).

8. Apparently Paul did not sail directly to Macedonia from the Aegean port of Ephesus but traveled first northward to the city of Troas, where this time he preached Christ's _____ and found that a _____ was opened to him of the Lord. Disappointed that he did not find _____ there, Paul left Troas and from that seaport he sailed west into _____ (II Cor. 2:12, 13).

9. And when he had gone over those _____ (no doubt visiting the churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea), and had given them much _____, Paul came into _____ and abode there _____ months (Acts 20:2). It was during this time that Paul wrote an epistle to the Christians in Rome. In it he told them that from _____ and round about unto _____ (the Roman province to the north and west of Macedonia), he had _____ preached the gospel of Christ. Three missionary journeys Paul had taken in that eastern part of the Roman empire, for which cause, he said, he had been _____ from going to Rome. But now, having no more _____ in these parts, and having had a great _____ these many years to go to Rome, he set his sights toward the western part of the empire (Rom. 15:19, 22-29).

10. The main theme of the epistle to the Romans is justification by _____, without the works of the _____ (Rom. 3:28). Paul begins by declaring that that justification is necessary for Gentile and Jew alike. The Gentiles have the work of the law written in their _____ (Rom. 2:15); and to the Jews have been committed the _____ of God (Rom. 3:2). But

there is not a righteous man among them, for all have _____ and come _____ of the glory of God. We are justified freely by His _____ through the _____ that is in _____ . Where is _____ then? It is _____ (Rom. 3:23, 24, 27). Paul shows, too, that justification is rooted in God's decree. God has _____ on whom He _____ have mercy, and whom He _____ He _____ (Rom. 9:18). And, finally, in the last part of the epistle, Paul deals with the life of sanctification that follows out of justification. He beseeches the Roman Christians, and us, to present our _____ a living _____, holy, _____ to God, which is our reasonable _____. Be not _____ to this _____, he warns, but be _____ by the _____ of your mind (Rom. 12:1, 2).

11. Planning at first to leave Greece by ship, Paul learned that the Jews _____ wait for him as he was about to _____ into Syria. To escape their hands he therefore _____ to return, by land, through _____. Thus it was that Paul sailed away from _____ and came again to _____ where he abode seven days (Acts 20:3-6).

12. The last day of their stay in Troas was a Sunday — the _____ day of the week, when the disciples came _____ to break bread. Paul _____ to them on that Sunday evening, and continued his sermon until _____. Perhaps because of crowded conditions in the upper _____ where they were gathered together, a young man by the name of _____ sat in a window. Sometime after midnight the young man fell into a deep _____ and then fell down from the _____ story and was taken up _____ (Acts 20:7-9).

13. Paul, however, went down, laid himself on the body of the young man, and _____ him said, _____ not yourselves, for his _____ is in him. Little wonder that, after an

experience like that, the people returned again with Paul to the upper chamber and continued to listen to the apostle a long time, even till _____ of day (Acts 20:10-12).

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

1. According to Acts 19:21, it was while Paul was still in Ephesus on his third missionary journey that he decided to go to Rome. In the epistle to the Romans, which he wrote soon after he left Ephesus, Paul declared to the Christians in Rome his intention of visiting them on his way to Spain (see Rom. 15:19-28). Concerning his plans for future missionary activity, as described in these two passages, consider the following:

a. What, according to Paul, had hindered him from going to Rome sooner? (See Rom. 15:19-22).

b. What does Paul mean when he says, in Romans 15:23, that he has “no more place in these parts”?

c. If Paul was not of a mind to preach the gospel “where Christ was named” (Rom. 15:20), why would he want to go to Rome, where a church had already been established?

d. Why did Paul want to pass first through Macedonia and Achaia and then go to Jerusalem before heading westward to Italy? (See Acts 19:21 and Rom. 15:25-28).

e. What do these aspirations of Paul tell us about the character and the dedication of this apostle of Jesus Christ?

2. How did it happen that the speech of a single silversmith, to a group of his fellow craftsmen, led to a huge public demonstration in the theater?

3. Why did the Jews, who surely had no sympathy for Paul or his companions, put forward one of their own to make a defense before the people? Can you show, from the reaction of the people to the mere presence of Alexander on the stage of the theater (Acts 19:33, 34), that the advice given to Paul by “certain of the chief of Asia” (vv. 30, 31) was wise counsel?

4. The townclerk quickly and masterfully brought the unruly mob and the angry silversmiths to the point where he could simply, and apparently suc-

cessfully, “dismiss” them. How did he manage to do that?

5. Paul was not afraid, if necessary, to face the whole mob (see Acts 19:30). Why, then, did he leave the city directly “after the uproar was ceased” (Acts 20:1)?

6. After passing through Macedonia, Paul spent three months in Greece (Acts 20:2, 3). Here, we believe, he wrote the epistle to the Romans. Paul had never been in Rome. But according to the 16th chapter of his epistle to the Romans, he knew a whole lot of people there. Does that give you some clue as to how Christianity came to gain a foothold in the capital of the empire?

7. Note that Aquila and Priscilla were among those in Rome to whom Paul sent his greetings (Rom. 16:3). Given their previous record as “helpers” to Paul, do you have any idea why they might have gone to Rome?

8. Do you see in Acts 20:3 the evasive action that was taken by Paul in order to foil a Jewish plot to kill him?

9. The men mentioned in Acts 20:4 were representatives of churches in the various areas where Paul labored. It is generally believed that they accompanied Paul on his trip to Jerusalem in order to carry the money collected in their respective churches for the relief of the poor in Jerusalem. Why, do you suppose, did Paul prefer that the money be brought in that way?

10. You will notice that in Acts 20:5 and 6 the writer of Acts begins again to use the pronouns “us” and “we” when recounting the activities of Paul. Who, therefore, must have rejoined the missionary party?

11. What evidence do you see in Acts 20:7 that the early Christian church already at this time gathered for public worship on Sunday (that is, as opposed to the Jewish Saturday Sabbath)?

12. It is possible that the reference to the “many lights” in Acts 20:8 was intended to serve as an explanation for the drowsiness of Eutychus. Do you see the possible connection?