

## Following Instructions Acts 19:1 – 20

### PAUL IN EPHEBUS

In Acts 19, Paul has reached Ephesus – another of the great cities in the Roman Empire. Ephesus was a centre for the worship of the goddess Diana, whose temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The cult of Diana led to many visitors, and a thriving trade in religious artefacts. Yet it is in Ephesus that Paul has some of his most poignant and meaningful experiences in sharing the gospel. This is his second visit, and he's there for well over two years. For an itinerant preacher, that was a long time to be ministering in this very secular and largely pagan city.

As we look at this passage we will see a number of different responses to the proclamation of the gospel.

Negative Results: Paul argued his case in the synagogue. He pointed to Jesus as the long awaited Messiah and tried to show the Jews and god-fearers in the synagogue that Jesus really was God become man. Since the discussion went on for three months he must have had some success. Some of the synagogue members heard and believed.

It was this fact that upset some of the others. They saw Paul's effectiveness and were concerned that they would lose their members. As a way of trying to silence Paul, they slandered the Christians and tried to assault their character. Paul and the other new believers left the synagogue. There comes a point when it is better to leave than to continue to stir up controversy.

Positive Results Paul was not discouraged. He made arrangements to have daily discussions in the hall of Tyrannus. This was a lecture hall. Some manuscripts add that Paul taught between 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. This suggests that he was able to use the hall, when the college lecturers were not there – through the heat of the day. The 'regular' teachers would teach in the cool of the day, early in the morning and in the evening hours. It was tradition in Ephesus for work to stop from 11:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. It seems that Paul was allowed to use the hall when nobody else wanted it.

Notice two things. *Paul was fervent in his witness.* He probably worked at tent-making during working hours and spent his free time teaching. He did this EVERY day. He was so committed to sharing the gospel that he was eager to do so at every possible opportunity.

Second, *Paul was creative.* When the door closed at the synagogue he looked for another meeting place. If he couldn't teach in the cool of the day, he would teach in the heat. He didn't give up just because he faced obstacles. As a result, all the Jews and Greeks in the entire province heard the gospel. He sets a good example. We learn a lesson in perseverance. How easily, when we meet an obstacle we assume that God has closed a door and say we "did our best". When Paul saw a closed door, he kept on knocking, until another one opened.

God will use us in His service if we will willingly devote ourselves to His purposes. If we, as a church, want to be used by God we must be prepared to roll up our sleeves and give ourselves to the message of the gospel. God cannot work if we insist on sitting on the sidelines. No one will hear the gospel if we keep waiting to be invited.

And because of Paul's faith, God was able to do 'extraordinary miracles' in Ephesus. We read that the gospel spread throughout the entire province. And many who had practiced sorcery were converted to the true faith and publicly burned their scrolls and manuscripts.

These were exciting, and challenging times for the church.