

ST ARMANDS KEY LUTHERAN CHURCH
SARASOTA, FLORIDA

COME, JOIN THE CONVERSATION!
ON
THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Lesson Plan for Thursday – April 25, 2013
Resource Book – Kerygma Series - *“into the world”*
Chapter 13 – *“Riots and Encouragement”*

Our Objectives this session:

1. To view scenes of reconstructed Ephesus, and see the importance of that city as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.
2. To review events of Paul’s journey from Ephesus to Jerusalem and understand the significance of that trip for the growing church.
3. To discuss the reasons for opposition to Paul and his message and relate those to the message and mission of the contemporary church.
4. To compare the ministry of encouragement in the early church to that same ministry in the church of today.
5. To describe worship practices that were emerging in the young church at Troas and relate same to our contemporary worship experiences.
6. To outline the principles of leadership that Paul discusses in his talk with the Ephesian leaders and think about their relevance for us.

Opening Prayer:

- I) A **Pictorial view of ancient Ephesus** at the time of Paul, the Great Apostle
(via PowerPoint presentation - pictures date from October, 2010)

II) Complaints Against the Message of the Gospel that Paul proclaimed:

Assignment: For each of the three situations described below.....

- a) describe the nature of the grievance
- b) describe the response given by Paul
- c) describe how this challenge affects 21st century congregations seeking to be faithful to the Gospel message

Situation 1: Acts 19:23-41 *23 At that time a great disturbance erupted about the Way. 24 There was a silversmith named Demetrius. He made silver models of Artemis' temple, and his business generated a lot of profit for the craftspeople. 25 He called a meeting with these craftspeople and others working in related trades and said, "Friends, you know that we make an easy living from this business. 26 And you can see and hear that this Paul has convinced and misled a lot of people, not only in Ephesus but also throughout most of the province of Asia. He says that gods made by human hands aren't really gods. 27 This poses a danger not only by discrediting our trade but also by completely dishonoring the great goddess Artemis. The whole province of Asia—indeed, the entire civilized world—worships her, but her splendor will soon be extinguished."*

28 Once they heard this, they were beside themselves with anger and began to shout, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

29 The city was thrown into turmoil. They rushed as one into the theater. They seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from the province of Macedonia. 30 Paul wanted to appear before the assembly, but the disciples wouldn't allow him. 31 Even some officials of the province of Asia, who were Paul's friends, sent word to him, urging him not to risk going into the theater. 32 Meanwhile, the assembly was in a state of confusion. Some shouted one thing, others shouted something else, and most of the crowd didn't know why they had gathered. 33 The Jews sent Alexander to the front, and some of the crowd directed their words toward him. He gestured that he wanted to offer a defense before the assembly, 34 but when they realized he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" This continued for about two hours.

35 The city manager brought order to the crowd and said, "People of Ephesus, doesn't everyone know that the city of Ephesus is guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven? 36 Therefore, since these facts are undeniable, you must calm down. Don't be reckless. 37 The men you brought here have neither robbed the temple nor slandered our goddess. 38 Therefore, if Demetrius and the craftspeople with him have a charge against anyone, the courts are in session and governors are available. They can press charges against each other there. 39 Additional disputes can be resolved in a legal assembly. 40 As for us, we are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since we can't justify this unruly gathering." 41 After he said this, he dismissed the assembly.

Situation 2: Acts 21:27-30; 22:1-22 *27 When the seven days of purification were almost over, the Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul in the temple. Grabbing him, they threw the whole crowd into confusion by shouting, 28 "Fellow Israelites! Help! This is the man who teaches everyone everywhere against our people, the Law, and this place. Not only that, he has even brought Greeks into the temple and defiled this holy place." (29 They said this because they had seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him earlier, and they assumed Paul had brought him into the temple.) 30 The entire city was stirred up. The people came rushing, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple. Immediately the gates were closed.*

22 *"Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense."* ² *When they heard him address them in Aramaic, they became even more quiet.* ³ *Paul continued, "I'm a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia but raised in this city. Under Gamaliel's instruction, I was trained in the strict interpretation of our ancestral Law. I am passionately loyal to God, just like you who are gathered here today.* ⁴ *I harassed those who followed this Way to their death, arresting and delivering both men and women into prison.* ⁵ *The high priest and the whole Jerusalem Council can testify about me. I received letters from them, addressed to our associates in Damascus, then went there to bring those who were arrested to Jerusalem so they could be punished.*

⁶ *"During that journey, about noon, as I approached Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven encircled me.* ⁷ *I fell to the ground and heard a voice asking me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you harassing me?'* ⁸ *I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?'* *'I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are harassing,' he replied.* ⁹ *My traveling companions saw the light, but they didn't hear the voice of the one who spoke to me.* ¹⁰ *I asked, 'What should I do, Lord?'* *'Get up,' the Lord replied, 'and go into Damascus. There you will be told everything you have been appointed to do.'* ¹¹ *I couldn't see because of the brightness of that light, so my companions led me by the hand into Damascus.*

¹² *"There was a certain man named Ananias. According to the standards of the Law, he was a pious man who enjoyed the respect of all the Jews living there.* ¹³ *He came and stood beside me. 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' he said. Instantly, I regained my sight and I could see him.* ¹⁴ *He said, 'The God of our ancestors has selected you to know his will, to see the righteous one, and to hear his voice.* ¹⁵ *You will be his witness to everyone concerning what you have seen and heard.* ¹⁶ *What are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized, and wash away your sins as you call on his name.'*

¹⁷ *"When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I had a visionary experience.* ¹⁸ *I saw the Lord speaking to me. 'Hurry!' he said. 'Leave Jerusalem at once because they won't accept your testimony about me.'* ¹⁹ *I responded, 'Lord, these people know I used to go from one synagogue to the next, beating those who believe in you and throwing them into prison.* ²⁰ *When Stephen your witness was being killed, I stood there giving my approval, even watching the clothes that belonged to those who were killing him.'* ²¹ *Then the Lord said to me, 'Go! I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'"*

²² *The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they shouted, "Away with this man! He's not fit to live!"*

Situation 3: Acts 22:23-23:10 ²³ *As they were screaming, throwing off their garments, and flinging dust into the air,* ²⁴ *the commander directed that Paul be taken into the military headquarters. He ordered that Paul be questioned under the whip so that he could find out why they were shouting at him like this.*

²⁵ *As they were stretching him out and tying him down with straps, Paul said to the centurion standing there, "Can you legally whip a Roman citizen who hasn't been found guilty in court?"*

²⁶ *When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and reported it. He asked, "What are you about to do? This man is a Roman citizen!"*

²⁷ *The commander went to Paul and demanded, "Tell me! Are you a Roman citizen?" He said, "Yes."*

²⁸ *The commander replied, "It cost me a lot of money to buy my citizenship." Paul said, "I'm a citizen by birth."* ²⁹ *At once those who were about to examine him stepped away. The commander was alarmed when he realized he had bound a Roman citizen.*

³⁰ *The commander still wanted to know the truth about why Paul was being accused by the Jews. Therefore, the next day he ordered the chief priests and the entire Jerusalem Council to assemble. Then he took Paul out of prison and had him stand before them.*

23 Paul stared at the council and said, "Brothers, I have lived my life with an altogether clear conscience right up to this very day."² The high priest Ananias ordered those standing beside Paul to strike him in the mouth.³ Then Paul said to him, "God is about to strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit and judge me according to the Law, yet disobey the Law by ordering that I be struck."

⁴ Those standing near him asked, "You dare to insult God's high priest?"

⁵ Paul replied, "Brothers, I wasn't aware that he was the high priest. It is written, You will not speak evil about a ruler of your people."

⁶ Knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, Paul exclaimed in the council, "Brothers, I'm a Pharisee and a descendant of Pharisees. I am on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead!"

⁷ These words aroused a dispute between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.⁸ This is because Sadducees say that there's no resurrection, angel, or spirit, but Pharisees affirm them all.⁹ Council members were shouting loudly. Some Pharisees who were legal experts stood up and insisted forcefully, "We find nothing wrong with this man! What if a spirit or angel has spoken to him?"¹⁰ The dispute became so heated that the commander feared they might tear Paul to pieces. He ordered soldiers to go down and remove him by force from their midst. Then they took him back to the military headquarters.

III) Paul's Encouragement and Instructions to the early churches:

1) Romans 15:25-27 ²⁵ But now I'm going to Jerusalem, to serve God's people. ²⁶ Macedonia and Achaia have been happy to make a contribution for the poor among God's people in Jerusalem. ²⁷ They were happy to do this, and they are actually in debt to God's people in Jerusalem. If the Gentiles got a share of the Jewish people's spiritual resources, they ought to minister to them with material resources.

2) Acts 19:21-22 ²¹ Once these things had come to an end, Paul, guided by the Spirit, decided to return to Jerusalem, taking a route that would carry him through the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia. He said, "After I have been there, I must visit Rome as well." ²² He sent two of his assistants, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he remained awhile in the province of Asia.

3) Acts 20:1-2 ²⁰ When the riot was over, Paul sent for the disciples, encouraged them, said good-bye, and left for the province of Macedonia. ² He traveled through that region with a message of encouragement.

4) Acts 20:17-35 ¹⁷ From Miletus he sent a message to Ephesus calling for the church's elders to meet him. ¹⁸ When they arrived, he said to them, "You know how I lived among you the whole time I was with you, beginning with the first day I arrived in the province of Asia. ¹⁹ I served the Lord with great humility and with tears in the midst of trials that came upon me because of the Jews' schemes. ²⁰ You know I held back nothing that would be helpful so that I could proclaim to you and teach you both publicly and privately in your homes. ²¹ You know I have testified to both Jews and Greeks that they must change their hearts and lives as they turn to God and have faith in our Lord Jesus. ²² Now, compelled by the Spirit, I'm going to Jerusalem. I don't know what will happen to me there. ²³ What I do know is that the Holy Spirit testifies to me from city to city that prisons and troubles await me. ²⁴ But nothing, not even my life, is more important than my completing my mission. This is nothing other than the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus: to testify about the good news of God's grace.

²⁵ "I know that none of you will see me again—you among whom I traveled and proclaimed the kingdom. ²⁶ Therefore, today I testify to you that I'm not responsible for anyone's fate. ²⁷ I haven't avoided proclaiming the entire plan of God to you. ²⁸ Watch yourselves and the whole flock, in which the Holy Spirit has placed you as supervisors, to shepherd God's church, which he obtained with the death

of his own Son. ²⁹ I know that, after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you and won't spare the flock. ³⁰ Some of your own people will distort the word in order to lure followers after them. ³¹ Stay alert! Remember that for three years I constantly and tearfully warned each one of you. I never stopped warning you! ³² Now I entrust you to God and the message of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all whom God has made holy. ³³ I haven't craved anyone's silver, gold, or clothing. ³⁴ You yourselves know that I have provided for my own needs and for those of my companions with my own hands. ³⁵ In everything I have shown you that, by working hard, we must help the weak. In this way we remember the Lord Jesus' words: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

- 5) **Philippians 1:3-11** ³ I thank my God every time I mention you in my prayers. ⁴ I'm thankful for all of you every time I pray, and it's always a prayer full of joy. ⁵ I'm glad because of the way you have been my partners in the ministry of the gospel from the time you first believed it until now. ⁶ I'm sure about this: the one who started a good work in you will stay with you to complete the job by the day of Christ Jesus. ⁷ I have good reason to think this way about all of you because I thought keep you in my heart. You are all my partners in God's grace, both during my time in prison and in the defense and support of the gospel. ⁸ God is my witness that I feel affection for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. ⁹ This is my prayer: that your love might become even more and more rich with knowledge and all kinds of insight. ¹⁰ I pray this so that you will be able to decide what really matters and so you will be sincere and blameless on the day of Christ. ¹¹ I pray that you will then be filled with the fruit of righteousness, which comes from Jesus Christ, in order to give glory and praise to God.

For personal thought and/or group discussion:

1. How does SAKLC actively nurture and strengthen new members in progressing to a deeper and more mature relationship with Christ?
2. How is SAKLC nurtured, strengthened and challenged within the wider fellowship of the Christian faith?

IV) Daily life in the Church at Troas:

Acts 20:7-12 ⁷ On the first day of the week, as we gathered together for a meal, Paul was holding a discussion with them. Since he was leaving the next day, he continued talking until midnight. ⁸ There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we had gathered. ⁹ A young man named Eutychus was sitting in the window. He was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell from the third floor and died. ¹⁰ Paul went down, fell on him and embraced him, then said, "Don't be alarmed. He's alive!" ¹¹ Then Paul went back upstairs and ate. He talked for a long time—right up until daybreak—then he left. ¹² They took the young man away alive, and they were greatly comforted.

For personal thought and/or group discussion:

1. What is the significance of the day on which the church at Troas gathered and the place where they met?
2. What can we infer from this about the relationship between the followers of "the Way" and the Jews?

3. What clues do we have about their form of Christian worship?
4. What place does “the breaking of bread” have in our worship?
5. In what ways is worship a ministry of encouragement to God’s people @ SAKLC? To you personally?

V) Leadership in the early church:

Direction: Read each of the following passages; then attempt to describe the essential qualities and duties of leaders in the church as set forth in that passage.

Acts 20:18-21 *18 When they arrived, he said to them, “You know how I lived among you the whole time I was with you, beginning with the first day I arrived in the province of Asia. 19 I served the Lord with great humility and with tears in the midst of trials that came upon me because of the Jews’ schemes. 20 You know I held back nothing that would be helpful so that I could proclaim to you and teach you both publicly and privately in your homes. 21 You know I have testified to both Jews and Greeks that they must change their hearts and lives as they turn to God and have faith in our Lord Jesus.*

Acts 20:22-24 *22 Now, compelled by the Spirit, I’m going to Jerusalem. I don’t know what will happen to me there. 23 What I do know is that the Holy Spirit testifies to me from city to city that prisons and troubles await me. 24 But nothing, not even my life, is more important than my completing my mission. This is nothing other than the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus: to testify about the good news of God’s grace*

Acts 20:25-31 *5 “I know that none of you will see me again—you among whom I traveled and proclaimed the kingdom. 26 Therefore, today I testify to you that I’m not responsible for anyone’s fate. 27 I haven’t avoided proclaiming the entire plan of God to you. 28 Watch yourselves and the whole flock, in which the Holy Spirit has placed you as supervisors, to shepherd God’s church, which he obtained with the death of his own Son. 29 I know that, after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you and won’t spare the flock. 30 Some of your own people will distort the word in order to lure followers after them. 31 Stay alert! Remember that for three years I constantly and tearfully warned each one of you. I never stopped warning you!*

Acts 20:32-35 *32 Now I entrust you to God and the message of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all whom God has made holy. 33 I haven’t craved anyone’s silver, gold, or clothing. 34 You yourselves know that I have provided for my own needs and for those of my companions with my own hands. 35 In everything I have shown you that, by working hard, we must help the weak. In this way we remember the Lord Jesus’ words: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”*

For personal thought and/or group discussion:

1. How relevant are the qualities and duties described in the passages above for leadership in the church today?
2. What items are still valid expectations? Which are not?
3. What does the world expect of a leader? How are the world's expectations and those of the church similar? Different?
4. Why are many modern-day Christians uneasy about offering themselves as examples?

UNISON CLOSING PRAYER (The Prayer of Ignatius of Loyola)

**Teach us, good Lord,
To serve you as you deserve;
To give and not to count the cost;
To fight and not to heed the wounds;
To toil and not to seek for rest;
To labor and not to ask for any reward,
Except for that of knowing that we do your will;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

FOR NEXT WEEK: MAY 2, 2013 (*our final session in this course of study*)

READ: ACTS RESOURCE BOOK – Chapter 14 “*Story Without End*”

ACTS 23:12 – 28:31

SAKLC – ACTS BIBLE STUDY 2013.04.25 per hjm