



Stuff They Didn't Teach Me In Sunday School



Episode 156 - Open Doors and Opposition (Acts 19-21)

Unexpected Opposition

Paul found Ephesus an excellent place to do ministry. The city magistrates didn't have any problem with his preaching or with the growing Christian church there. So, for two years Paul was free to preach and, as a result, a strong church was established in this important city. Actually, it grew so well that opposition finally did rise from an unexpected place. The silversmiths were unhappy. Sales of their shrines of Artemis had taken a nosedive.

- In what unexpected places have you encountered opposition or challenges arising from your faith?
- How do you witness to someone who is more concerned with possessions and finances than spiritual needs?

Prophecy of Danger

Paul's determination to go to Jerusalem is similar to Jesus' determination during His public ministry. Similar too was the opposition and dangers that awaited him there. But not even Agabus' prophecy of arrest and danger could deter him. Paul's companions and friends urged him not to make the trip. Surely there were other places in the Roman Empire he could go and preach the Gospel. Undoubtedly, there were good reasons to go to Jerusalem and many good reasons not to go. Paul set his face to go to Jerusalem and whatever dangers awaited him there.

Perhaps Paul was thinking of Jesus' own journey up to Jerusalem. Perhaps because Jesus had first taken this road and had faced arrest, condemnation, crucifixion and death in Jerusalem, Paul was inspired and knew his salvation was secure. Jesus had already paid the penalty for all his sins. And because Jesus had risen on the third day Paul had no fear of death, knowing Christ will raise him when He returns on Judgment Day.

- What does this reveal about Paul's trust in God and devotion to Jesus Christ?
- How can we tell if we are trusting God or just being reckless?

Did God Want Paul To Go?

This is a question we can't answer. Many times in life we find these same quandaries: does God want me to do this? Does God want me to wait? How can I decide?

- Describe a situation in your life when you faced two or more options and both seemed as if they would have been pleasing to God. How did you feel when you didn't know which way to choose?
- How did you decide your course?
- How do you handle the "what ifs" when you consider the path you decided *not* to take?
- How have you experienced God's blessing when the decision you made ended up not being the wisest course of action?