



WEEKLY STUDY

Firm Foundation for the Future - Week Three

When Jesus builds his church...the world is changed. We are changed. As you study and pray this week, look for evidence that Jesus is actively building his church today.

Please note our prayer focus for the week in the box below. Join us in seeing what God will do as we unite in prayer.

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark Youngman

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from your own daily reflections and consider the Group Discussion questions below. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Prayer Focus:

- Join us for 28 days of prayer as we lay a firm foundation for our future. Text 'provchurch' to 855-615-7768 to receive daily prayer prompts.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: ACTS 19.18-22 (MSG)

Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed what they had done.¹⁹ A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas.²⁰ In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

²¹ After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. “After I have been there,” he said, “I must visit Rome also.”²² He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed in the province of Asia a little longer.

- Those who were coming to believe were repenting in a public way. They left nothing hidden about their past and in so doing, helped to kindle the power of the Gospel message that was spreading through the land. Can you think of modern examples of public repentance? What are barriers to that happening today? Is there something you need to bring into the light so that its power over you is removed?
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- **Prayer Prompt: If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. (Romans 10.9-10)**
- *God, reveal to me the things that remain in the darkness. Show me the path to true freedom in Christ. Amen.*

TUESDAY: ACTS 19.23-34 (NIV)

About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way.²⁴ A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in a lot of business for the craftsmen there.²⁵ He called them together, along with the workers in related trades, and said: “You know, my friends, that we receive a good income from this business.²⁶ And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that gods made by human hands are no gods at all.²⁷ There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited; and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty.”

²⁸ When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”²⁹ Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s traveling companions from Macedonia, and all of them rushed into the theater together.³⁰ Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him.³¹ Even some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, sent him a message begging him not to venture into the theater.

³² The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there.³³ The Jews in the crowd pushed Alexander to the front, and they shouted instructions to him. He motioned for silence in order to make a defense before the people.³⁴ But when they realized he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours: “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”

- This passage should serve as a warning about what happens when our understanding of the divine is co-opted for the economic well-being of a few. Paul was upsetting the status quo with the message of Christ. He was turning their world-view upside down. The people felt threatened and

began to cause a scene. Paul wanted to dive into the chaos, but he was warned that this was not the time to do so. We don't always have to dive into every controversy. If we are pursuing a higher cause, with the help of other disciples, we can discern God's higher call to action. Because, as Angela said, "when Jesus builds His church, God's love moves tangibly in the lives of tired people living in a broken world." Do you ever feel the pull (like Paul) to rush into the chaos? Who helps you to stay true to your true mission in life?

- **Prayer Prompt: Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. (1 John 4.1)**
- *God, thank you for those whom you have placed in my life to help better discern how I interact with the world. Give me wisdom and integrity as I represent your Son. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: ACTS 2.44-47 (NIV)

All the believers were together and had everything in common.⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

- In Sunday's message, Angela said, "When Jesus builds His church, no one is invisible anymore. People receive dignity instead of shame. Belonging instead of isolation. Hope instead of despair. Lives are renewed. Families are restored. Communities are healed and begin to flourish." That pattern was true from the beginning. In the community of the church, what is true and good is restored. Do you see evidence that Jesus is building his church? What does that look like? Do you see reflections of the early church described in Acts 2?
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- **Prayer Prompt: All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. (Acts 4.32)**
- *Jesus, I want to be a part of the building up of your church. Use me to reveal the hope and restoration that can take place through your church. Amen.*

THURSDAY: MATTHEW 16.15-18 (NIV)

“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

¹⁶ *Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”*

¹⁷ *Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.*

- The church will be built upon those who confess that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Peter was the first, and this imperfect man was given the name of “rock” upon which the church was built. When we confess belief in Jesus as the Son of God, we reveal Jesus himself. When we wonder what we are to do in a world that often seems to be “going to hell”, here is our answer. The gates of hell will not overcome the church, and in fact the church will be a part of redeeming every broken thing in this world. How do you see your own role in confessing Jesus, and allowing him to build his church through you?
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- **Prayer Prompt:** you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2.5)
- *Jesus, I don't really feel like I am the best construction material for your church. Surely you have stronger rocks. And so I am humbled at the thought of serving as a living stone and a part of a holy priesthood of all believers. Amen.*

FRIDAY: ACTS 9.1-2 (NIV)

Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

- Sometimes it's helpful to keep the whole story in mind as we read about the early church. It wasn't that long ago that we were reading about Saul (now referred to as Paul) and his persecution of those who were claiming to be a part of the Way (of Jesus). Ten chapters later, he was the ringleader of this Way that was causing a great disturbance. God works turn-arounds, and we do well to remember the scope of His work in our lives. What turn-arounds as God worked in your life? How do you share those redemption stories with others?
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- **Prayer Prompt: For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6.23)**
- *God, you have redeemed my life. You are redeeming my life. I am a work in progress, but I am secure in your never ending love for me. Thank you God. Amen.*

SATURDAY: ACTS 22.4-5 (NIV)

I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison,⁵ as the high priest and all the Council can themselves testify. I even obtained letters from them to their associates in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.

- Once again, Paul tells the story about his complex relationship with the followers of the Way. How does his sordid past bring credibility to his role in the movement? Your story of God's redeeming work in your life may not be as extreme as Paul's (or maybe it is!), but you have a story to share. Take some time to reflect on the ways God might want to use your story for his glory.

- **Prayer Prompt: And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Romans 8.28)**
- *God, use me today. Use my story of redemption to shine light on your power and mercy for someone else. Amen.*

GROUP DISCUSSION

From Sunday's message:

"Ephesus did not stop the movement of the church.

Not through fear.
Not through economics.
Not through power.
Not through pressure.

Throughout history, those things have never been able to stop the movement of the Way. And they won't stop it now. Jesus is still building His church. Artemis' temple collapsed, but Jesus is still building His church. And He does it the same way He always has. Through ordinary people who are willing to surrender their lives. Willing to trust him and live as if He really is the Lord of their lives."

- What outer or inner forces seem to come against the church today?
- How does your life reveal that you trust Jesus as the Lord of your life?